

Year 8

During Year 8 we aim to develop the basic skills students have learnt in Year 7. The topics covered have been selected build on the students' ability to perform, read, listen to and analyse music. The composition element in Year 8 becomes more of a focus, providing students with the basic tools required when composing chord progressions, melodies and simple bass lines.

As with Year 7, their musical learning is separated into 3 key areas:

Theory / Listening – students will read and perform from more complex notation (pitch and rhythm). They will continue to develop their understanding of musical elements, how these are used in music and how to analyse music using more complex musical language confidently.

Performance – students will develop a range of instrumental skills and be encouraged to play and sing in groups. They will be given access to simple pieces and encouraged to try more challenging pieces, providing extension tasks in order to support their developing practical skills. They will have access to Ableton, Ukuleles, Guitar, Piano and Drums and continue to develop their solo and ensemble skills, building on the confidence which they have gained during their musical experiences in Year 7.

Composition – students will develop their compositional skills by responding to a range of musical genres, creating their own melodic ideas, chords and bass lines. They will continue to develop their use of music software (Ableton) by arranging their own pieces, creating drum patterns and exploring musical textures.

The specific topics we cover in Year 8 are:

Term 1

Pop

Students will develop their composition skills by creating their own pop song. They will start by exploring the use of the 4 chord trick (a commonly used chord progression used in many pop songs). Once they have recorded this basic chord progression into Ableton we will start to add well known melodic patterns. Drawing on skills developed in year 7, ensuring that the parts are recorded in time. Students will then be set a series of composition tasks where they will draw on their own knowledge as well as knowledge gained from analysis in class.

This unit will begin with student composition of a simple bass line to compliment the given chords and melody. They will then embark on creating a contrasting 2nd section which will consist of a composed 4 chord pattern, a simple melodic idea and a bass line. Throughout this composition process students will analyse popular melodic ideas and basslines analysing commonly used techniques and patterns - which they will then apply to their own compositions. There will be opportunity to develop their own piece further by adding a drum pattern which will complete their series of composition tasks.

Reggae

Students enter the world of Jamaican reggae in our topic focussing on the songs of Bob Marley. Students will explore the cultural context and beliefs of Bob Marley and how these are present in his songs. Students will develop their singing ability by singing as a class and in small groups. Students will also select an instrument on which they will learn a series of chord progressions. They will focus on Ukulele and Piano, developing their ability to move more quickly between chords and play using a Skank rhythm (syncopated rhythm) which is typical of the Reggae genre. Students will then continue to develop their performance skills by combining these musical parts within small groups, focusing on keeping in time, discussing methods of improvement and co-operating with others.

Term 2

Canon Fusion

As shown within students Year 7 musical learning we aim to ensure that students receive a well-balanced musical experience by including a variety of musical styles, focusing on popular music, world music and exploring classical traditions. Classical music is a significant style to explore and gives students a developing understanding of the roots of musical conventions which then support their wider understanding of the subject as a whole. Within this unit we explore the conventions of Baroque music which is a subgenre of Classical and a style of music which is influential when looking at the development of music as a whole. We analyse specific techniques, instrumentation and arrangement styles.

By using a recognisable piece we draw on students' notation skills (treble and bass clef), playing skills and recording skills. Pachelbel's Canon tasks are broken down into levels of difficulty, they start with performing and recording the bass line which is a basic starting point and then through guided demonstrations will work through more complex extension tasks, students are encouraged to approach these independently in order to develop their confidence.

The aim for this topic is to complete their own arrangement of canon, starting with the groundbass, then progressing through more challenging melodic patterns which the students have to record into Ableton. This process involves developing their understanding of our music software. Students have to set a suggested tempo, record in the bass making sure that they are in time with the metronome and then become familiar with the editing process. Students then repeat this process by creating a number of different layers recording in melody 1, 2 and 3, in canon until they have created their own version of the well-known piece. The melody tasks increase in complexity and challenge the students' ability to read and understand more complex notation and play in more complex musical rhythms than in Year 7. This process requires more accuracy than previous projects on Ableton as students must ensure that the melodies are all in time with each other and the previously recorded Ground Bass. They will also have the opportunity to create their own melodic pattern to add to their arrangement and explore the concept of fusion, where they can change the instrumentation and style of the piece.

Classical

The next unit has a direct link with music from the Baroque period, we explore how music continued to develop, the orchestra grew and instruments changed. Structure of music became more complex. Building on students' understanding of how music has developed through time. Students are introduced to the music of Mozart and Beethoven, the orchestral possibilities they explored and the newly invented piano. Students become familiar with a wide range of music from the Classical piano repertoire through listening. We then start our practical tasks which aim to develop students piano skills, they start with a simple version of Fur Elise and then progress to a more complex 2 handed version which has independent movement between the left and right hands. As soon as students have mastered this there are a range of classical piano pieces which are extension tasks, these may have more complex melodies, rhythms and more independent movement between the left and right hands. The overall aim of this unit is to develop their ability to perform the piano two handed in an increasingly complex way, by using well known classical pieces.

Term 3

Blues

In order to expand on students knowledge of a broad range of music we start to explore the Blues era. Students will learn about the historic and musical context of the Blues before exploring the music through a range of listening and discussion based activities. They will develop instrumental recognition skills and confident use of musical language which will result in the completion of a listening assessment in which students will be required to identify instruments, describe the movement of melodic patterns and bass lines, describe the structure of the blues and recall contextual information about Blues music and the development of this musical style. During this topic students will continue to develop their notation and performance skills by recording in a 12 bar blues chord progression, a blues walking bassline and a given melody, the musical demands of which are more challenging than in previous units, stretching their ability to move quickly and fluently between chords, keep a complex bassline moving in time and play a syncopated (off beat) melodic pattern. Students will also have the opportunity to develop their composition skills by improvising melodic ideas using the Blues scale in C. They will explore the use of syncopated rhythms, call and response and blues notes which they will be expected to understand and demonstrate (where possible) within their musical arrangements.

Ballads

Students learn the art of composition of a musical ballad, perfect for that special someone! We discuss prior knowledge of Ballads and encourage students to make links between musical Ballads and Ballads studied in English. They will learn that, after a close analysis, most ballads share similar traits and we can replicate these, creating a convincing and effective ballad in the classroom. Students firstly develop their understanding and knowledge of chords. Focusing on using more

advanced terminology when discussing chords and developing their understanding of how Primary and Secondary chords are used within Ballads. They will experiment with chords with a view to creating their own chord progression played in the style of a Ballad (broken chords, arpeggios or block chords) . Secondly we will look how melodies link with the chords composed. This time focusing on more complex melody writing skills. They will also be given the opportunity to create lyrics for their ballad and record their ideas into Ableton. This topic aims to develop their confidence when composing music, which becomes more of a focus as we move into Year 9.