GCSE REVISION NOTES – MUSIC

Make sure you understand the meaning of the words in: coloured/bold/underlined!! If you need to follow the explanations up with more information then please either: ask your teacher, use the Internet or look up in the GCSE books used in the lessons. Youtube is a fabulous musical resource!!

Always try to use the appropriate words in lessons and in your writing e.g. if you are listening to a piece of music and discussing 'texture' try to use the word 'homophonic' rather than saying 'all of the parts are moving at the same time'.

This work is to be found in the shared drive – go into the GCSE folder and then into the Revision notes. You can print out these notes at school (but it will not be in colour!)
Musical examples will also be there in Sibelius format. Unless you have Sibelius at home you will only be able to print these out at school.

RHYTHM and METRE AoS 1

• **Metre** = a pattern of beats shown by the time signature
  You may be asked to identify different metres simply by listening to the music. Use the underlined words when describing these different metres

**Pulse** = most music is built on a pulse/beat.
  When you find yourself tapping your foot or clapping in time you are probably copying the pulse/beat.

**Time Signatures** = two numbers at the beginning of the music:
  TOP NUMBER = describes the number of beats in a bar
  BOTTOM NUMBER = describes the beat itself

Regular rhythms fall into two time signature categories and have regular strong beats that you can easily tap a pulse to:

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<th>and</th>
<th>COMPOUND</th>
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<tr>
<td>duple</td>
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<tr>
<td>duple</td>
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N.B. Notice there are duple triple and quadruple times in both Simple and Compound time signatures. Don't forget though that all of the beats in Compound time are dotted!

All **time signatures** normally only have either: 2, 4, 8 or 16 as the bottom number. See Examples 1 and 2 on the sheet.

**Irregular rhythms** do not fall into the above patterns of duple, triple or quadruple. They have time signatures of: 5 7 or 11

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<th>11</th>
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These time signatures do not have regular strong beats and you cannot clap a steady pulse to them e.g. in a 5/4 time signature the beats that are often emphasised are 1 and 3.
Like the simple and compound time signatures they normally only have either 2, 4, 8, 16 as the bottom number. e.g.3
**Free rhythms** is music that has no definite metre or pulse. The music may have accents in different places, giving the impression that the time signature keeps on changing.

- **Rhythm** = different lengths of musical sound in time.

**Rhythmic features** that you might be asked about in your music may include the following and you should try to use these words when answering questions about rhythms in either the melody, the harmony, the accompaniment, in ostinato patterns, on percussion instruments etc...:

**Augmentation** where the original rhythm of the melody or notes is doubled e.g.4

**Diminution** where the original rhythm of the melody or notes is halved e.g.5

**Cross rhythm** when the rhythm cuts across the normal beats. In a 4/4 time signature where there is a whole bar of quavers but the ones that are strong are 1, 4 and 7 instead of 1, 3, 5, and 7 see e.g.6

**Hemiola** where a melody/rhythm in 3 time changes for a short while to a feel of 2 time. This often occurs just before a cadence e.g.7

**Dotted rhythms** where the rhythm has a feeling of ‘long – short / long – short’ i.e. the first in every pair of notes is emphasised by the fact it is a longer note. Here you can see how to change an even rhythm to a dotted one e.g.8

**Triplets** normally used in a simple time signature. Squeezing 3 notes in the space of 2 e.g. You show that it is a triplet by writing a 3 above/below – otherwise it looks as if there are too many beats in the bar!!! e.g.9

**Syncopation** where the normally strength of the beat is lessened and the weaker beat is strengthened e.g.10

**Tempo** is the musicians’s word for the speed of the music. Often the speed is written at the beginning of the music and is in Italian. Here are some Italian terms you should be aware of:

- Grave= heavy or serious
- Lento=slow
- Largo=slow and broad
- Andante=walking pace
- Moderato=moderate speed
- Allegretto=quite lively and light-hearted
- Allegro=lively or cheerful
- Vivace=full of life
- Presto=fast
- Prestissimo=very fast

Look at the tempo indicator in your pieces. Sometimes it may tell you how many crotchets per minute there should be.

**Rubato** means ‘robbed time’ and is where the speed of the music is not strictly adhered to; the performer gets slower and faster as they wish. Rubato is easier when only a soloist is performing – you only have to tell yourself to speed up and slow down!!

**Polyrhythm** two or more rhythms performed at the same time and producing a rich, complex texture. Commonly found in African and Afro-Cuban music. Youtube may be a good resource here!
**Bi-rhythm** when two rhythms are played simultaneously. Try this exercise where 2 is against 3:

| Right Hand | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Left Hand  | 1 | 2 |   |

**Drum fills** when the drums have a rhythm to 'fill' in the gap between phrases or sections. Most likely to appear in popular music and can be quite flambouyant

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**HARMONY and TONALITY** AoS 2

- **Harmony** = normally refers to the chords/ the accompaniment

  You may be asked to identify different **harmonies** by listening to or looking at the music. Use the underlined words when describing these **harmonies**

**Diatonic harmonies** when only the notes of the key are used and no extra sharps or flats are added in to the music

**Chromatic harmonies** when the music uses notes that are outside the key. Chromatic chords are often used to bring 'colour' to the music

When only using a pair of notes it can be described as an **interval**. The **intervals** of a $3^{rd}$, $5^{th}$, $6^{th}$ and the octave create **consonance**; the intervals of a $2^{nd}$, $4^{th}$ and $7^{th}$ create **dissonance** (see below). However it is more common to have 3 notes in a chord. Chords with three notes as close as possible and either all on the lines or all in the spaces are called **triads**.

The bottom note of the chord determines which position (i.e. root position, 1$^{st}$ inversion, 2$^{nd}$ inversion) it is in BUT the most stable position is 'root position' See e.g. **11** for a whole section on chords!

When writing out chords use upper case Roman numerals for major and augmented chords and lower case for minor and diminished chords.

**Cadence** two chords that come at the end of a musical phrase or the end of a piece. The four types are:

- **Perfect** = chords $V$ $I$ and sounds **very** final
- **Plagal** = chords $IV$ $I$ and sounds final but not as strong as the Perfect Cadence
- **Imperfect** = chords $V$ $?^{rd}$ and doesn’t sound final
- **Interrupted** = chords $V$ $vi$ doesn’t sound final and ends on a minor chord!

**e.g.12**

Remember that the chords I $IV$ $V$ and VI are built upon the notes of the scale. Sometimes these chords are referred to as **TONIC, SUB-DOMINANT, DOMINANT** and **SUB-MEDIANT** because they are built upon those note names! It would be VERY useful for you to know what **all** of the names of the notes in the scale are called:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number and name of the notes in the scale (major or minor):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonic</td>
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Dominant 7th chord needs mentioning here. It is the dominant chord (chord number V) with the added 7th in it. It normally moves on to the dominant and is a slight alternative to the Perfect cadence. In both the major and the minor scale/key this chord is a major chord e.g. 14

Consonant when the harmony is pleasing

Dissonant when the harmony is unpleasant and clashing

Pedal when a note is sustained or repeated whilst the harmony (chords) change. A pedal note is normally either the tonic or the dominant note. It is often a bass note hence- bass pedal – but if is higher up in the texture it is an inverted pedal. Listen to the first few bars of 'In the Air Tonight' Phil Collins on youtube

Drone normally two notes either held or repeated. They are normally a fifth apart and often the tonic and the dominant notes e.g. C and G and are in the bass. Scottish bagpipes have a drone all the time!! Try listening to some Scottish pipes on the Internet. Folk music or medieval music will often use a drone.

•Tonality = the key or scale that is being used for a piece of music e.g. if a piece of music uses a major scale then it is described as a major tonality and it will use notes of a major scale. In tonal music you can normally tell on which chord/note the music needs to end on at the end of phrases or the end of the piece. Use the underlined words when answering questions on tonality

Major tonality is where the music, in the main, uses notes from a major scale. Major tonality tends to sound 'happy' but doesn't always have to have a quick tempo

Minor tonality is where the music, in the main, uses notes from a minor scale. Don't make the mistake that all minor music is slow!!

You have already looked at one major and one minor scale in e.g.11. All major and minor keys have a key signature i.e. a number of sharps or flats shown at the beginning of the music. You should learn the following keys and their key signatures – DON'T FORGET that some major and minor keys are related in that they share the same key signature e.g.15

Modulation where a piece of music changes key. The most common key change is to the dominant but another modulation you will need to recognise is to the relative minor/major. The way to identify a modulation is if accidentals are added and there is a perfect cadence (V – I) into the new key.

Here is a plan for modulating into a dominant key:

D major key - (the addition of a G# and the chord of E7 into) - A major

Here is a plan for modulating into a relative minor key:

F major key - (the addition of a C# and the chord of A7 into) - D minor

Modes are types of ancient scales that sound like a cross between major and minor scales. Start on G and play only the white notes up to G' and that is a mode. Do the same for D, E, F and A and you have the most widely used modes. Notice how they all sound slightly different to each other. The C mode is our major scale!
TEXTURE and MELODY  AoS 3

- **Texture** = how much is going on in the music and how the parts relate to each other

You may be asked to identify different **textures** simply by listening to the music. Use the underlined words when describing these **textures**.

*Harmonic/Homophonic* where the parts move mostly together in chords. A hymn is normally homophonic and the tune moves with the underlying chords

*Melody with accompaniment* where there is a clear melody (normally at the top) and where the accompaniment is mostly **homophonic**

*Polyphonic/Contrapuntal* where independent tunes weave together but fit together harmonically

*Broken Chords* where the chords are split up into patterns. **Alberti bass** is a particular pattern where of the chord notes you will hear: the lower note, the middle note, the upper note and the middle note again.

*Imitative* literally one instrument imitating another but not necessarily at the same pitch. Quite often imitation takes place when parts or instruments make an entry but then break off and do their own thing

*Canonic* a particular type of imitation where parts or instruments where the imitation continues for the whole melody e.g. **a round**

*Layered* is where the music is made up of layers including, possibly, any rhythms. Typical examples of this are found in African music

*Unison* where all instruments/voices are playing/singing at the same pitch

*Octaves* where instruments play the same line but at different octaves

*Single melody line* a single line of music without harmony

*Antiphonal*, where the different instruments/voices have a musical conversation e.g. the strings play a passage then the woodwind play a passage etc.. This term was originally used in sacred music (i.e. of the church) where two choirs would answer each other from different sides of the church/cathedral

- **Melody** = a horizontally organised pattern of single notes

You may be asked to identify different **features of the melody** either by listening or by having some music in front of you. Use the underlined words when describing these **melodic features**
Intervals the distance from one pitch to another e.g.16

Conjunct where the melody moves mainly by step i.e. it uses notes that are next to each other

Disjunct where the melody moves mainly by leaps

Triadic where the melody begins by using the notes of the tonic triad

Scalic where the melody uses notes that follow the pattern of a scale

Arpeggio where the notes of a chord are played in order either up or down

Passing note a note in the melody that connects two notes belonging to the harmony. They are normally on weak beats e.g.17

Acciaccaturas = an ornament (a decoration) in the melody. Often written as a small note with a line through and performed as a very short note. It is either a tone or a semitone below or above the melody note e.g.18

Appoggiaturas look similar to the acciaccatura but has no line through it and is given its full value. Sometimes they are written out and you can hear them as they sound like 'leaning notes' e.g.18

Blue notes flattened 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of the scale used in the Blues. They add a bitter sweet 'colour' to the music when the harmony is essentially major e.g.19

Diatonic when only notes in the scale are used in the melody

Chromatic when notes that are not in the scale are added into the melody

Pentatonic music/scale with only 5 different pitches. This characteristic sound can often be found in Folk music, African and East-Asian music e.g. Oh Susanna. On Wikipedia you can see and hear examples of both the major and minor pentatonic scales e.g. 20

Whole tone (melody) based on a scale comprising only of tones e.g. 21

Modal music that uses a mode (see tonality)

Augmentation already covered in the Rhythm section
Diminution already covered in the Rhythm section

Sequence a melodic phrase that is repeated at a different pitch. You can have ascending or descending sequences e.g.22

Inversion an 'upside down' melody e.g.23

Slide/Glissando/ Portamento a slide from one note to another. See e.g.24 to see how it is indicated on the music

Ornamentation how the music is decorated. Acciaccatura and appoggiatura have already been mentioned but there is also: the trill, the turn and the mordent see e.g.24, 25 and 26

Ostinato a short rhythmic or melodic phrase that is repeated
Riff this is the same as an ostinato but this term is used in popular music. 'Bass riff' is a device sometimes used in Rock music

**Phrasing and Articulation** how the music should be performed. You should know these terms:

- **Legato** = smoothly
- **Staccato** = short and detached
- **Slur** = a curved line indicating that the passage should be played in a smooth, unbroken legato style e.g. 27

**Pitch bend** when a note is raised or lowered in pitch slightly. Guitarists use this technique. Also listen to some Sitar music on the Internet!

**Improvisation** when music is made up on the spot. Commonly found in Jazz

**TIMBRE and DYNAMICS  AoS 4**

- **Timbre** = the characteristic sound of an instrument or voice.

  Composers use an instrument OR a group of instruments to achieve a particular effect. You will need to recognise individual instruments, groups of instruments, and technologically achieved sounds and instrumental/vocal techniques. You will need to listen to a wide variety of music and ensembles to really do well in this area. The Internet will be useful for listening to instruments of the orchestra and those used in World music with which you are unfamiliar. Recordings of instrumental and vocal ensembles e.g. Benjamin Britten's 'A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra' and any choral music.

**Instrumental techniques include:**
- **Con sordini** (bowed strings) – an instruction to use their mutes which dulls the tone
- **Pizzicato** (bowed strings) – an instruction to pluck the strings rather than bow
- **Arco** (bowed strings) – resume playing with the bow
- **Tremelando** (bowed strings) – rapidly move the bow back and forth on the string (sounds shimmery)
- **Double-stopping** (bowed strings) – where two or more notes are played simultaneously
- **Con sordini** (brass) – use the mute which makes the sound nasal and pinched

**You will need to know the types of voices:**
- **Soprano** the highest female voice
- **Treble** the highest boy's voice before his voice breaks
- **Alto** a lower female voice
- **Countertenor** a male voice in the alto range: will require him to sing 'falsetto'
- **Tenor** a high male voice but not falsetto
- **Bass** the lowest male voice

**Vocal techniques include:**
- **Falsetto** where a man can use his head voice and sing high e.g. the Bee Gees
- **Portamento** sliding between two notes. Used especially in Operas
- **Vibrato** the use of a slight variation in pitch where the note pulsates a little. Many vocalists and instrumentalists use this technique to add warmth to the music but it is particularly used in Opera
The use of Technology:

- **Reverb** to make the sound last longer
- **Distortion** an aggressive sound often used in Rock music
- **Chorus** when a recorded vocal or instrumental sound is multiplied to make it sound like many
- **Multi-tracking** where separate sounds can be recorded but played back together
- **Compression** where the quietest sound is balanced with the loudest sound. Gives an impression of an increase in volume but without the louder sounds dominating
- **Vocoder** electronically changes the human voice
- **Sequencer** a device used to record, edit and play back music data
- **Panning** when the sound is electronically moved across from one speaker to another

- **Dynamics** = musical word for volume
- Most music has a dynamic instruction set by the composer. Generally the more recent the composition the more detail!! You may be required to describe the dynamic of an excerpt using the appropriate sign, term or symbol.

You will need to know what the following dynamics mean:

- **ppp** pp p mp mf f ff fff

Also these dynamics:

- fp fz sf/sfz sfp crescendo (cresc.) decrescendo/diminuendo (decresc./dim.)

**STRUCTURE and FORM AoS 5**

- **Structure** = the format of the music e.g. repeated sections etc... Sections are given a letter name i.e. 'A' for the first section, 'B' for the next new section etc.. Some structures have proper names and these are called forms. You will need to recognise these in a short musical excerpt.

Here are the structures and forms you will need to know:

- **Binary form** where the music has two sections of music that are roughly equal in length. The first section 'A' often modulates to the Dominant key and then the 'B' section returns back to the tonic.

- **Ternary form** is an 'ABA' structure and the 'B' section contrasts with 'A' e.g. it could be in the relative minor

- **Call and response** where a musical phrase performed by one musician is followed by a phrase performed by a group of musician. Common in African music

- **Rondo form** is where the 'A' sections returns in between contrasting sections i.e. A B A C A D A. Rondo literally means 'to return'.

- **Theme and variations** where the initial theme is heard at the start and then on further hearings it has been changed. Listen to the set of variations on 'Twinkle twinkle little star' by Mozart on the Internet
**Arch-shape** is quite simply ABCBA

**Sonata form** is a large scale form and you will not have time to listen to a piece in this form!! BUT it is a very important form from the Classical era and has three sections: Exposition, Development and Recapitulation.

**Minuet and Trio** is the third movement of a Classical symphony. Originally the Minuet was popular in the 17th and 18th centuries is in triple time, was very elegant and played at a moderate tempo. To it was added the Trio which is basically another Minuet. The format is as below:

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MINUET I       TRIO          MINUET I
II: A :II: B :II  II: C :II: D :II  II A II B II
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you can see that the first time through the Minuet each section is repeated but this is not the case when it is repeated after the Trio

**Strophic form** where the same music repeated for the verses of a song e.g. a hymn

**Through-composed** where there is new music for each verse of a song i.e. the opposite to Strophic

**A Da Capo aria** a song found in Opera. It is basically an 'air' for a solo singer with orchestral accompaniment. It is in ternary form and at the end of the 'B' section are the letters D.C – meaning 'from the head' i.e. from the beginning

**Cyclic form** is constant repetition of a number of beats, or melodic pattern. Each cycle can change by improvisation, changes in texture or dynamics e.g. African, Indian and Asian music

**Popular song forms** often include verses and chorus. Other features that may be included are: An intro, an outro, fills and an instrumental (sometimes called the middle-eight). An example here is the 12-bar blues

**Ground Bass** where the bass line melody is repeated whilst the upper melody and harmonies might change providing variation. A very famous example is Pachelbel's Canon

**Tierce de Picardie** where a piece of music that is in a minor key unexpectedly ends on a major chord. E.g. .. the piece is in A minor and the final chord is an A major chord.

**Anacrusis** where there is an incomplete bar at the beginning. Commonly called an 'upbeat'.

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**Additional Information**

- **Exposition** is the introduction of the theme or idea.
- **Development** is the exploration and expansion of the idea.
- **Recapitulation** is the re-presentation of the main themes in a similar manner to the exposition, but with variations.