

# Music

## Information for successful applicants

Studying Music at Cambridge will introduce you to a wealth of new approaches to music, while challenging you to deepen your current interests and skills. The most important thing at this stage is to begin thinking about music in a creative and disciplined way, exploring different repertoires and traditions for yourself, but keeping in mind the ways in which music is presented to you as an object of knowledge. The following notes are intended to provide some suggestions to ease the transition from the types of teaching you may have encountered at school to the more independent learning expected at University. Later in the summer you will find on the Faculty website detailed descriptions of each of your first-year courses, including specified reading and listening; the suggestions below are deliberately of a more general nature.

### Approaches to Music

To get a sense of the range of different approaches to music currently available, you might try reading Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000) or *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, edited by Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2012).

### Analysis

Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (Oxford, 1994) will introduce you to some of the ways in which one can think about musical structure and form.

### Music History

You should begin to acquire an outline of the chronology of western music—the major composers, genres, developments—from the beginnings of plainchant up to the present day. Browsing a single-volume textbook – e.g. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York, multiple editions) – will provide a framework, which you should complement by listening to as many of the examples discussed as you can. It would also be good to explore at least one form of non-western or popular music: a useful beginning point would be Philip V. Bohlman, *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2002).

### Harmony and Counterpoint

You might begin to familiarize yourself with the styles and procedures of the following:

- later sixteenth-century sacred music, e.g. Palestrina's *Missa Aeterna Christi munera*;
- Baroque fugues, especially by J. S. Bach, e.g. the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*;
- Classical minuets, e.g. as found in Haydn's op. 17 quartets;
- the Romantic Lied, e.g. Schubert's song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Relevant scores are now available to download for free from [imslp.org](http://imslp.org).

### Aural and Practical Skills

It would be worthwhile exploring musical repertoires other than those related to your principal instrument(s). Where possible, follow a recording or performance with a score: this will help you to begin to make connections between sounds and their notation. In time, you will acquire the ability to 'hear' a score—including one that you are writing—in your head; meanwhile, you might practise score-reading at the piano, beginning with simpler passages from string quartets and other chamber works. Conversely, these techniques will help in 'visualising' the score of a piece to which you are listening. It is not easy to suggest fail-safe methods of acquiring these

skills; nonetheless, they will aid enjoyment of your studies at Cambridge, and you are encouraged to work at them.

Once in Cambridge, you will be able to use the excellent library resources available, but it is well worth building up your own personal library of books and study scores, so that you have them to hand as and when you need them. Music and music books can be expensive, but bear in mind that they can be put to multiple uses: a volume of Mozart or Beethoven string quartets, for example, will be relevant to work in harmony and counterpoint, analysis, and history, as well as providing excellent material for score-reading practice. Dover editions are relatively inexpensive, and offer a very wide range of repertoire. If you don't have a good book or music shop near where you live, [abebooks.co.uk](http://abebooks.co.uk) is an excellent source for second-hand (and out-of-print) material. And don't neglect your local Oxfam or other charity shop—there are often bargains to be had.

We hope that you find these notes helpful. Your College Director of Studies will be happy to explain matters in more detail, and to provide further advice on reading, listening and other preparatory study.