

## A 'level Music Summer Task

The following composition works are the compulsory set works in the Vocal Music section. All students need to have a secure understanding for the Listening and Appraising component of the A 'level course.

1. **J. S. Bach, Cantata, Ein feste Burg, BWV 80: Movements 1, 2, 8**
2. **Vaughan Williams, On Wenlock Edge: Nos. 1, 3 and 5 (On Wenlock Edge, Is my team ploughing? and Bredon Hill)**

### J. S. Bach, Cantata, Ein feste Burg, BWV 80: Movements 1, 2, 8

Bach's church cantata *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* ('A mighty fortress is our God') was written in Leipzig where Bach was employed as Cantor of St Thomas's Church - a kind of 'director of music' responsible for composing music for the services, training and teaching the choristers and directing the music in the church itself.

This particular cantata, based on the hymn of the same name by Martin Luther, was written for the Reformation Day service traditionally held on 31 October, but we do not know exactly when Bach composed it - probably either in 1723 or some time between 1728 and 1731.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT** In order to appreciate the context of 'Ein feste Burg', it's essential that you develop a good knowledge and understanding of the religious landscape in Europe before and at the start of the 16th century, as well as understanding music's place in religion in the period immediately prior to the Reformation.

Listen to '*Music of the Middle Ages; Notre Dame School*' and '*Renaissance Music - Orlande de Lassus - Qui sequitur me*' to gain a greater understanding of how music of this period and context develop texturally.

**TASK 1:** Familiarise (aurally) yourself with each of these movements.

**TASK 2:** Create a presentation including information on;

1. Analyse the relationship music had with religion in Europe between 1500-1650. Consider how the music developed over this period of time, with clear links to texture.
2. What was the Reformation and how did this affect the music?
3. What is a Chorale?
4. What is a Cantata?
5. Describe the following elements as you listen to and appraise mvmts 1, 3 & 8;
  - a. Organisation of pitch (melodically and harmonically)
  - b. Tonality
  - c. Structure (or form)
  - d. Sonority (timbres and use of instruments)
  - e. Texture
  - f. Tempo, metre and rhythm
  - g. Dynamics

## Vaughan Williams, On Wenlock Edge: Nos. 1, 3 and 5 (On Wenlock Edge, Is my team ploughing? and Bredon Hill)

On Wenlock Edge is a song cycle by Ralph Vaughan Williams that sets some of *A E Housman's* poems from his collection 'A Shropshire Lad', reflecting on a variety of different themes.

Vaughan Williams set the following poems from the collection (the Roman numeral indicating the poem's place in *A Shropshire Lad*):

1. XXXI 'On Wenlock Edge'
2. XXXII 'From Far, from Eve and Morning'
3. XXVII 'Is My Team Ploughing'
4. XVIII 'Oh, When I Was in Love with You'
5. XXI 'Bredon Hill'
6. L 'Clun'

On Wenlock Edge is set for **tenor** and the unusual accompaniment of **string quartet** and **piano**

This composition followed a period in which Vaughan Williams was committed to folksong and ensuring its survival.

**TASK 1:** Familiarise (aurally) yourself with each of these compositions.

**TASK 2:** Create a detailed Mind map (use Prezi if you can - although not compulsory) showing how Vaughan Williams incorporated any of the following in these specific compositions;

- English Folk Song
- Use of modes (*link to Folk music AND early choral music, particularly that of Tallis and Byrd*).
- French influences: Vaughan Williams studied briefly with Ravel and Debussy
- Parallel movement between parts, especially 4ths and 5ths