

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS SECONDARY SCHOOL
2025 MUSIC
CURRICULUM HANDBOOK



Victoria's premier school for the training and education of talented young Dancers, Musicians, Theatre and Visual Artists.



Victorian College of the Arts
SECONDARY SCHOOL



Department
of Education



MUSIC CURRICULUM 2025

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VCASS MUSIC PROGRAM - OVERVIEW

All music students receive one to one individual lessons on their principal instrument. Additionally, after their first year at VCASS, students have an opportunity to apply to study a second instrument.

All students participate in a weekly Performance Seminar.

To develop their aural and theoretical skills, students participate in weekly choir, musicianship and theory classes.

Music analysis and composition is studied at all levels, and music technology is incorporated into these studies.

Chamber Music is a vital area of music training. Both Senior and Junior students participate in dedicated, tutored ensemble sessions each week.

All students participate in rehearsals and performances with at least two ensembles.

In all years, personal fitness and wellbeing forms part of the program. For years 7 to 9 there is a special MOVE! program. This covers aspects such as core strength, stretching, coordination, self care for musicians and connections with others. In Years 10 - 12, wellbeing and personal fitness are delivered via a combination of activities including yoga, meditation and visualisation classes.

Through Junior Music Industry and Year 10 Music Industry, students explore a range of contextual issues including recording technology, preparing for performance, music business and music advocacy.

In Year 10, students complete VCE Music Repertoire Performance Units 1 & 2 followed by Music Contemporary Performance or Repertoire Units 3 & 4 in Year 11.

VCE Music Composition studies are completed in Year 12 as a Unit 3 & 4 sequence.



PRACTICAL STUDIES

PERFORMANCES

Regular performances underpin all facets of the VCASS Music Training Program. Students are provided with many opportunities across a range of settings to perform both within the school and at public concerts. Weekly Performance Seminar and ensemble music making are cornerstones of musical development. Throughout the year, students also have the opportunity to participate in and observe instrument specific masterclasses and workshops.

INSTRUMENTAL LESSONS

All students receive 32 x 45 minute individual principal study lessons during the year. From their second year at VCASS, they may also apply to undertake a second instrumental or vocal study. These consist of 28 x 30 minute lessons during the year.

PERFORMANCE SEMINAR

VCASS students attend a weekly performance seminar, which functions as part concert, part masterclass. This forms an integral part of a student's instrumental study and performance training. Staffed by a music staff member and an accompanist, students have the opportunity to regularly perform solo repertoire and develop confidence while receiving feedback from highly experienced performers.

Students are assigned an accompanist who will work with them as an Associate Artist throughout the year providing regular coaching in their fortnightly rehearsals. This ensures highly sophisticated ensemble playing and that students are equipped with the skills to approach performance in a positive way. At certain times of the year, performance seminar classes are also used as a forum to discuss a range of aspects on preparation and performance.

ASSESSMENT

In addition to the multiple layers of ongoing informal assessment and feedback provided through weekly lessons and classes across the program, students undertake a formal performance assessment each semester.

Assessments are conducted as formal examinations – 20 minutes for principal study assessments, and 10 minutes for second study assessments. The assessment panel is comprised of a visiting specialist assessor and a VCASS staff assessor.

Each semester students receive a report and letter grade from their individual teacher, as well as written reports from the assessment panel, with the assessors' comments and a letter grade.

ENSEMBLES

Ensemble music making is highly beneficial and engaging for our emerging artists who will undertake studies in a combination of the following ensembles: String Ensemble (Junior or Senior), Wind Symphony, Symphony Orchestra, Big Band, Chamber Ensembles, Jazz Combos, Choir (Senior or Junior), and Chamber Choir.

Junior students participate in weekly tutored chamber ensemble rehearsals. In Semester Two, students may have the opportunity to prepare their own composition for performance at the end of year Junior Performance Season. Junior students also have the opportunity to participate in an elective Extension Chamber Music program. Pianists develop skills for accompaniment and other associated keyboard skills.

Senior students collaborate in tutored chamber ensembles to prepare for a range of performances and assessments most notably VCE Music Performance Unit 4 Externally Assessed Examinations. Senior ensembles also participate in our Festival of Chamber Music.

ENSEMBLE ASSESSMENT

There are two formal Senior Chamber Ensemble assessments held each year. Ensemble assessments usually last 10 minutes with students receiving feedback from two assessors as well as a letter grade. This is in addition to the written report and grade provided by the chamber ensembles tutor.

CHOIR & MUSICIANSHIP

All students at VCASS sing! VCASS prides itself on being a singing community. Both Junior and Senior Choirs regularly commission and premiere Australian works. Choir is an activity where all VCASS music students unite and share their combined talents in one vibrant ensemble. Chamber Choir is a selected voice ensemble that performs regularly outside the school and garners much praise for its artistic achievements.

All students receive thorough and comprehensive training in aural and theory skills. These courses help develop fluency and literacy in music as well as giving students a much greater and deeper knowledge and understanding of their performance studies, both solo and ensemble.

Specialist musicianship classes provide a holistic approach to the development of music literacy and aural skills. Students are immersed in a sequential learning program steeped in the tradition of Kodály methodology. Students use their voice, bodies and instruments to experience music making and to engage fully in music learning. The singing-based curriculum draws from rich repertoire sources and provides students the opportunity to further develop their music reading and notation skills, aural comprehension and ensemble music making.

Junior Theory studies supplements Junior Musicianship classes through the sequential reinforcement of theoretical concepts. Students focus their study on the language of music and develop their understanding of compositional structures. Students are also provided with pathways to AMEB Theory benchmarks.

In Senior Musicianship classes (Years 10 & 11), students build upon the skills and knowledge developed in Junior classes. Students are prepared for VCE aural exams through a song-based methodology that supports the development of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic language, whilst continuing to build on ensemble skills.

YEARS 7, 8 & 9 JUNIOR MUSIC INDUSTRY

Students discuss strategies used in preparing for performance such as time management, routines, goal-setting, rehearsal techniques, managing nerves and researching repertoire including critiques of recordings. Students reflect upon their own performances including recordings from Performance Seminar classes, documenting their observations and planning for future improvement.

Through an array of activities, students explore current industry trends and issues such as programming, funding, logistics, music education and inclusivity. An overview of the recording industry, exploring each step from concept to consumption, will be covered. This includes music technology principles in sound reinforcement and recording equipment. Students also undertake transcription challenges, sight reading assessments and develop basic conducting skills.

MOVE!

Developing connections through movement - Our Move classes promote connections between colleagues, connections within our bodies and connections with the world around us. Through physical activity such as dance, sports, yoga and games, our junior musicians have the opportunity to experience joy, calm, excitement and the outdoors leading to higher levels of wellness through movement.

YEAR 7

CLASSROOM MUSIC

In Year 7 Classroom Music, students draw on previous and new experiences in listening, analysing, notating, composing and performing music to consolidate and develop foundational skills and concepts. Through engaging class activities and assessment tasks students apply and discover new knowledge by experimenting, reflecting, collaborating and synthesizing knowledge.

SEMESTER 1

Creative Organisation of Sound: Develop skills in tuneful melody writing and harmonisation in the Classical style. They document and refine ideas using notation and music specific technology.

Musical Styles: Develop a historically informed understanding of the features of the Classical style and the instruments of the orchestra.

Investigation: Research historical and social contexts of the Classical period. Explore and analyse the use of melody and rhythm across a range of works.

SEMESTER 2

Creative Organisation of Sound: Demonstrate a basic familiarisation with Music Technology. Compose, rehearse and perform an original composition.

Musical Styles: Develop a historically informed understanding of the stylistic features of the African-American Spiritual and elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony and texture.

Investigation: Undertake written and listening investigation into the African-American Spiritual and complete a concert review.

YEAR 8

CLASSROOM MUSIC

Students continue to develop and extend their knowledge and skills through a range of experiences in listening, reading, performing and composing. Students develop increasingly advanced vocabulary and critical thinking skills to support their analysis skills, whilst also developing their stylistic understanding of genres.

SEMESTER 1

Creative Organisation of Sound: Further develop Music Technology skills, in particular Sibelius music notation software, and compose or arrange in the Australian Folk and Baroque Styles.

Musical Styles: Develop a historically informed understanding of the stylistic features of Australian Folk Music and the Baroque style. Listening analysis of studied and unfamiliar styles according to the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony and texture.

SEMESTER 2

Creative Organisation of Sound: Continue to develop Music Technology skills, in particular Sibelius music notation software, to compose a Ragtime 'Rag'.

Musical Styles: Develop a historically informed understanding of the stylistic features of subgenres of Jazz including the origins of Jazz, Ragtime, Dixieland, Swing, Modal Jazz and Be-Bop.

Investigation: Concert critical review.



YEAR 9

CLASSROOM MUSIC

In Year 9 Classroom Music, students consolidate and develop increasingly advanced concepts to extend their knowledge and skills. Drawing on previous and new experiences in listening, reading, analysing, reflecting, collaborating, notating, composing, performing and experimenting, students produce increasingly complex responses and creative works.

SEMESTER 1

Creative Organisation of Sound: To develop skills to compose and perform works idiomatic of the Medieval, Video Gaming, and Blues styles. Students transcribe their work using both traditional scoring and music technology.

Musical Styles: To develop a historically informed understanding of the instruments and main stylistic features used across a range of Medieval music and Blues music.

Investigation: Research historical and social contexts of both the Medieval period and the early Blues. Students analyse ensemble repertoire and acquire knowledge via a range of resources. Students also explore the interaction and impact of music in the context of moving image including video games.

SEMESTER 2

Creative Organisation of Sound: To demonstrate a familiarisation with music technology and collaborative skills to support the process of composition, rehearsal and performance of an original work.

Music Styles: Develop an understanding of stylistic features to support the expressive outcomes of their composition.

Investigation: Concert critical review. Reflection on their experience of preparing an original work for their performance.

YEAR 10

MUSIC STYLES

In Year 10 Music Styles, students continue to draw on previous and new experiences in listening and analysing a range of musical styles, developing a historically informed understanding of the stylistic features. Students develop and refine skills in score reading, including orchestral, chamber and contemporary music scores.

SEMESTER 1

Creative Organisation of Sound: Complete a short arrangement in a Swing style.

Musical Styles: To develop an understanding of the 19th Century Western Art music. Develop an understanding of the history and style of Swing Jazz.

Investigation: Development of a folio of analysis of 19th Century Western Art music works.

SEMESTER 2

Creative Organisation of Sound: Transcription and analysis of Soul music recording.

Musical Styles: Develop an understanding of the history and characteristics of Soul Music and 19th Century Romanticism.

Investigation: Analyse two Soul songs and research the influence of Soul on social change. Complete a written analysis encompassing all elements of music identifying the characteristics of 19th Century Romanticism.

YEAR 10 MUSIC INDUSTRY

Across the year students explore audio engineering and music production through a variety of activities. Developing audio production skills on Logic Pro, students will plan and implement a soundscape to a short film. They will record, mix and master sound effects and synchronise their recordings to motion picture.

In the second semester, students develop skills in audio engineering in live and studio environments. In VCE Music Unit 2 students will compose a musical work and bring this into Music Industry where they will plan for and implement a recording of that work.

Students will also examine how copyright laws protect and add monetary value to a musical work. They explore how copyrights are created, protected and exploited. While examining a variety of copyright infringement cases, students write a report demonstrating their understanding of the key concepts of intellectual property.

Years 10, 11 & 12 JAZZ THEORY (ELECTIVE)

The Jazz Theory elective is designed to support, supplement and extend students' theory knowledge applicable to performance, composition and arranging. Senior students will explore chord/scale relationships encompassing scales and modes, chord progressions, analysis of repertoire, as well as improvisation techniques. This is a practical class with students applying learning to their instruments in order to link sound to symbol through the exploration and development of theoretical concepts presented.



YEAR 11 MUSIC STYLE AND COMPOSITION

In this subject, students explore and develop their understanding of the diverse practice of music creators working in different times, places and traditions. They listen and respond to a wide range of music, becoming familiar with ways composers treat elements of music and use compositional devices to create music works that communicate.

Students analyse other composers' works, including multi-disciplinary works that combine music and non-music elements, and investigate how music combines with these other artforms to achieve specific effects and elicit responses. They compose and arrange new music including a multi-disciplinary work in response to their understanding of the music and the creative processes they have studied.

This course provides a broad and deep foundation for students as they progress towards **VCE Music Composition Units 3 and 4**.

SEMESTER 1

RESPONSES TO MUSIC

Students listen to music and discuss observations relating to the use of elements, compositional devices and other aspects.

ORGANISATION AND CONTEXT

Students undertake in depth study of selected works identifying and describing musical characteristics within the contexts of its creation.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

Students compose and arrange short music works and describe the creative processes used.

SEMESTER 2

RESPONSES TO MUSIC

Students identify and describe ways in which elements of music and compositional devices are used to create effects and elicit responses.

ORGANIZATION AND CONTEXT

Students describe characteristics of music in two works that combine music and non-music features (such as film), and discuss the contexts and processes used to create the music.

CREATIVE PROCESSES IN MUSIC FOR MULTI-DISCIPLINARY FORMS

Students create music for a work that combines music and non-music components, and describe the creative processes used.

VCE MUSIC

The VCE Music Study Design provides a sequential and purposeful curriculum framework which supports the continued growth and development of our emerging artists. VCE Music Subjects provide the opportunity for students to achieve a VCE and an ATAR score for entry into a tertiary institution.

In Year 10 Students undertake:

- VCE Music Units 1 & 2

In Year 11 Students undertake:

- VCE Music Contemporary or Repertoire Performance Units 3 & 4

In Year 12 Students undertake:

- VCE Music Composition Unit 3 & 4

For the full description of each subject, please visit: [VCAA VCE Music Study Design implementation in 2023](#)



VCE MUSIC

UNIT 1: ORGANISATION OF MUSIC

In this unit students explore and develop their understanding of how music is organised. By performing, creating, analysing and responding to music works that exhibit different approaches, students explore and develop their understanding of the possibilities of musical organisation.

They prepare and perform ensemble and solo musical works to develop technical control, expression and stylistic understanding on their chosen instrument/sound source. At least two works should be associated with their study of approaches to music organisation.

They create (arrange, compose or improvise) short music exercises that reflect their understanding of the organisation of music and the processes they have studied.

They develop knowledge of music language concepts and musicianship as they analyse and respond to a range of music, becoming familiar with the ways music creators treat elements of music and concepts and use compositional devices to create works that communicate their ideas.

AREA OF STUDY 1: PERFORMING - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to rehearse and present planned performances using technical control, expression and stylistic understanding in at least two works (solo or ensemble), which demonstrate knowledge drawn from their investigation of music organisation.

AREA OF STUDY 2: CREATING - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to create short music works/responses that demonstrate their understanding of different approaches to musical organisation, and reflect on the creative process.

AREA OF STUDY 3: ANALYSING AND RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe how music is organised in at least two music examples, responding to music characteristics in a range of music excerpts and identifying how music is organised, and identifying, recreating and documenting music language concepts presented in context and in isolation.

UNIT 2: EFFECT IN MUSIC

In this unit, students focus on the way music can be used to create an intended effect. By performing, analysing and responding to music works/examples that create different effects, students explore and develop their understanding of the possibilities of how effect can be created. Through creating their own music, they reflect this exploration and understanding.

Students prepare and perform ensemble and solo musical works to develop technical control, expression and stylistic understanding using their chosen instrument/sound source. They should perform at least one work to convey a specified effect and demonstrate this in performance.

They create (arrange, compose and improvise) short music exercises that reflect their understanding of the organisation of music and the processes they have studied.

As they analyse and respond to a wide range of music, they become familiar with the ways music creators treat elements and concepts of music and use compositional devices to create works that communicate their ideas. They continue to develop their understanding of common musical language concepts by identifying, recreating and notating these concepts.

AREA OF STUDY 1: PERFORMING - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to rehearse and present planned performances using technical control, expression and stylistic understanding in at least two works (solo or group), describing how they intend to convey specific musical effect(s).

AREA OF STUDY 2: CREATING - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit students should be able to create short music works/responses that exhibit their understanding of different approaches to musical effects and reflect on the creative process.

AREA OF STUDY 3: ANALYSING AND RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify the ways performers and creators convey effect in music, and they should be able to identify, recreate and document music language concepts in context and isolation.



VCASS Music @ Melbourne Recital Centre

UNIT 3: MUSIC PERFORMANCE - REPERTOIRE / CONTEMPORARY

In this unit students begin developing the recital program they will present in Unit 4. This preparation includes consideration of the historical performance practices and interpretative traditions that inform the styles represented in their programs.

Students use music analysis skills to refine strategies for developing their performances. They analyse technical, expressive and stylistic challenges relevant to the works they are preparing for performance, and present these strategies for assessment at a school-based discussion.

Students analyse interpretation in a wide range of recorded music, responding to and analysing musical elements, concepts and compositional devices. They develop their ability to identify, recreate and notate music language concepts such as scales, melodies, chords, harmony and rhythmic materials that relate to the works studied.

AREA OF STUDY 1: PERFORMANCE - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to perform a selection of solo and group works being prepared for the performance examination. They will explain the artistic and practical considerations used to select a program of works and demonstrate a diverse range of techniques and expressive qualities through performance of works.

In Repertoire Performance students include one work from the prescribed list intended for their final recital program and at least one ensemble work.

In Contemporary Performance students use a Performer's Statement of Intent to explain their choice of works for their program which must include one reimagined work.

AREA OF STUDY 2: ANALYSING FOR PERFORMANCE - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to demonstrate and discuss performance development techniques and approaches relevant to refining performance of selected works. Contemporary students will develop an outline of their intended approach to a reimagined existing work.

AREA OF STUDY 3: RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss a performer's interpretation and manipulation of music elements and concepts in works, and identify, recreate and notate music language concepts from examples presented, both in context and in isolation.

UNIT 4: MUSIC REPERTOIRE / CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

In this unit students continue to develop the performance program established in Unit 3 for their end-of-year practical examination. This preparation includes consideration of the historical performance practices and interpretative traditions that inform the styles represented in their programs. Contemporary students' programs will align with the student's Statement of Intent and include at least one performance that is a reimagined version of an existing work plus a work created by an Australian artist since 1990.

Students use music analysis skills to refine strategies for further developing and presenting their final recital. They analyse technical, expressive and stylistic challenges relevant to the works they are preparing for performance. Students continue to study the work of other performers and their approaches to interpretation and personal voice in performing music works.

Students analyse interpretation in a wide range of music, responding to and analysing musical elements, concepts, compositional devices and music language. Students also learn how to recognise and notate music language concepts such as scales, melodies, chords, harmony and rhythmic materials that relate to the works studied.

AREA OF STUDY 1: PERFORMING - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit students will perform a final recital of up to 20 minutes' duration, demonstrating a diverse range of techniques and expressive qualities reflecting an understanding of a range of music styles and performance conventions.

AREA OF STUDY 2: ANALYSING FOR PERFORMANCE - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit students will be able to demonstrate and discuss techniques (technical and expressive) relevant to the performance and development of a personal interpretation of works selected for performance.

AREA OF STUDY 3: RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit students will be able to discuss the interpretation of expressive elements of music in pre-recorded works. They develop and demonstrate their auditory discrimination and memory skills through identifying, re-creating and notating short examples.



VCE MUSIC COMPOSITION UNIT 3

In this unit students explore music works in a range of styles and genres to develop an understanding of the diverse practices of music creators working in different times, places and stylistic traditions. They expand their knowledge of the ways composers/music creators manipulate elements of music and concepts, and use compositional devices to develop music works and elicit responses. Students apply this knowledge as they develop skills in making critical responses to music excerpts.

Students develop knowledge about the music characteristics and style of two selected works or collections of minor works, one of which was a work created by an Australian composer since 1990.

Students explore the creative process through composing brief creative exercises in response to their understanding of the music characteristics and the creative processes evident in the works selected for study. They also devise a Design Folio Brief in preparation for an extended composition to be crafted in Unit 4.

AREA OF STUDY 1: CREATING - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to develop creative responses to works studied and document the creative process.

AREA OF STUDY 2: ANALYSING FOR COMPOSITION - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the use of the elements of music, concepts and compositional devices in music works, explain how musical material is developed within the works, and formulate a Folio design brief.

AREA OF STUDY 3: RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to aurally analyse music from a range of styles and formulate critical responses.

VCE MUSIC COMPOSITION UNIT 4

In this unit students consolidate their understanding of the diversity of music styles in different times, places and stylistic traditions. They expand their knowledge of the ways music elements, concepts and compositional devices are manipulated to create style, structure music works and elicit subjective responses. Students apply this knowledge to formulate and present critical responses to music excerpts.

Students document their own creative processes while creating an original work, or group of short works. and present an analysis of the final outcome in terms of unity, diversity and coherence.

AREA OF STUDY 1: CREATING - OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student will have created and evaluated an original work, or group of short works.

AREA OF STUDY 2: ANALYSING FOR COMPOSITION - OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student will describe and discuss their creative process and approach to creating a coherent work, and produce an analysis of their original music work(s) that explains their use of music elements, concepts of music and compositional devices.

AREA OF STUDY 3: RESPONDING - OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student will have aurally analysed music and made critical responses using appropriate music terminology to music from a range of styles..



YEAR 12 GRADUATION RECITAL

Across their Year 12 year, students develop and present a program of works showcasing their specific musical interests and strengths.



