

Precon Songwriting Course

Course tutor: Richard Barnard

Length: 10 weeks (+ Recording/Performance session)

Overview:

This is a course for young composers who want to develop their song-writing skills and understand how to create a professional standard song or choral piece and hear it performed and recorded. Students will learn how to use text, write well for different voices and vocal combinations, compose accompaniments and complete an effective, performance-ready song.

Tutor:

Richard Barnard is a professional composer of choral and vocal music. His music is regularly commissioned by singers and choirs and has been performed on BBC Radio 3. He composed one of 8 works shortlisted in the VOCES8 composers' competition 2023. He also has experience working with musicians in many different styles including jazz, folk, opera and music for theatre.

Course focus:

- Songwriting with a foundation in classical, jazz and choral styles moving into other genres
- Composing for solo voice, choirs and vocal groups
- How to write well for voice
- Telling stories in song; choosing and setting texts effectively
- How to use texture and harmony with multiple voices
- Compose accompaniment parts
- Structure an effect song or choral work
- The chance to have your music performed and recorded

Course outline:

WEEK 1: *Telling Your Story*: How to choose or write your own text. The importance of words and finding the right length, atmosphere and style of text.

WEEK 2: *Style*: Analysing and understanding the different forms of song and vocal music using listening, score study and group singing. Finding a style to influence and guide your composing.

WEEK 3: *Melody*: How you find a solo melody for your chosen lyrics. Use of improvisation, imagination, technical tips including rhythmic stresses, modes, melisma, ornamentation etc.

WEEK 4: *Developing melody*: How to repeat and develop ideas and build long phrases.

WEEK 5: *Accompaniment*: Using instruments, chord options, texture, how to support a melody or change its emotional impact with accompaniment.

WEEK 6: *Structure*: Verse / chorus structures, transitions, pacing, beginnings and endings,

WEEK 7: *Multiple voices*: Writing for choirs and backing vocals, combining harmony and melody. Understanding range and voice-types.

WEEK 8: *The first draft*: Working on drafts of pieces with 1-1 feedback

WEEK 9: *Finishing touches*: Score details, articulation, dynamics, score layout etc.

WEEK 10: *Completing pieces*: 1-1 and peer feedback

RECORDING & PERFORMANCE SESSION e.g. end of term concert