

Module code: MOD008396	Version: 3 Date Amended: 22/Jan/2025
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1. Module Title
Chords, Contours and Grooves - Songwriting Practice

2a. Module Leader
Paul Rhys

2b. School
Cambridge School of the Creative Industries

2c. Faculty
Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences

3a. Level
5

3b. Module Type
Standard (fine graded)

4a. Credits
30

4b. Study Hours
300

5. Restrictions			
Type	Module Code	Module Name	Condition
Pre-requisites:	None		
Co-requisites:	None		
Exclusions:	None		
Courses to which this module is restricted:	BA (Hons) Music Performance, BA (Hons) Music Production		

LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

6a. Module Description

Chords, Contours and Grooves – Songwriting Practice will allow you to apply theoretical knowledge to specific musical examples in a more advanced critical manner. You'll develop further understanding of the musical parameters of genre and style with a practice-based approach, with an emphasis on the analysis of melody, harmony, rhythm and arranging. You'll be introduced to the concepts and techniques of a wide range of compositional styles, with projects that might include exercises in contrapuntal writing, harmonisation techniques, vocal setting, arranging for small instrumental groups, or combining electronic and acoustic resources.

You'll also develop songwriting and arranging skills through composition assignments, which you'll workshop using recorded audio demonstration and practical performance, with an emphasis on producing creative work in audio format, accompanied by clear scores and individual lead sheets/parts and reflective commentaries. This module builds on existing skills with a greater emphasis on achieving a higher standard of arranging and composition.

6b. Outline Content

- Development of more advanced techniques for analysing a broad spectrum of music styles both in text and notation.
- Transcription of instrumental parts from recordings.
- Ability to critique tonal terminology and evaluate its usefulness in the contexts of a variety of music forms.
- Functional Harmony: keys, chord progressions, chord labels, functions, and voicings.
- More advanced analysis of melody: pitch, volume, contour, embellishment and use of the voice in popular styles.
- Terms, Time and Space: analysis of rhythm in terms of specific popular styles – accentuation, cross-rhythms, syncopation, metre, tempo, and subdivisions of the beat.
- Live performance of original material for formative feedback before final submission of audio recordings, scores and commentaries.
- Arranging skills developed through live workshop performance. Band coaching will be undertaken with a view to arranging songs/compositions in several versions, demonstrating idiomatic techniques for variation to develop stylistic awareness.

6c. Key Texts/Literature

The reading list to support this module is available at: <https://readinglists.aru.ac.uk/>

6d. Specialist Learning Resources

Instrument as required (student to supply, with the exception of piano or percussion)

7. Learning Outcomes (threshold standards)		
No.	Type	On successful completion of this module the student will be expected to be able to:
1	Knowledge and Understanding	Knowledge and Understanding - Analyse music recordings in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre in detail, drawing on a variety of analysis techniques appropriate to style.
2	Knowledge and Understanding	Demonstrate a knowledge base of the key components through which music is created and realised, and identify the different elements of songwriting, including methods of notation, across a range of styles. Understand how to write idiomatically for specific instruments and instrument combinations.
3	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Analyse, critically evaluate and interpret composition practices, and the structure, form, content and of music artefacts.
4	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Demonstrate the ability to convey personal expression and imagination in practical work employing appropriate technical and interpretive means and an ability to reflect critically on your development to increase the range and diversity of compositional work.

8a. Module Occurrence to which this MDF Refers				
Year	Occurrence	Period	Location	Mode of Delivery
2026/7	ZZF	Template For Face To Face Learning Delivery		Face to Face

8b. Learning Activities for the above Module Occurrence			
Learning Activities	Hours	Learning Outcomes	Details of Duration, frequency and other comments
Lectures	0	N/A	N/A
Other teacher managed learning	48	1-4	Lectures and seminars, 2 hrs x 24 weeks
Student managed learning	252	1-4	Group and independent learning
TOTAL:	300		

9. Assessment for the above Module Occurrence

The assessment for some modules includes a presentation (see below for details on how this particular module is assessed). We recognise that presenting, especially to a large group, can cause significant anxiety or distress for some students. If this may affect you, please contact your Module Leader or the Disability and Neurodiversity Service as early as possible. We will work with you to consider appropriate reasonable adjustments. Depending on your individual needs, these might include, for example, presenting to a smaller group or presenting only to a member of academic staff.

Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
010	Coursework	1-4	50 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)

Portfolio of Technical Exercises, 3000 word equivalent

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011	Coursework	1-4	50 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)

Portfolio of Technical Exercises, 3000 word equivalent

In order to pass this module, students are required to achieve an overall mark of 40% (for modules at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6) or 50% (for modules at level 7*).

In addition, students are required to:

- (a) achieve the qualifying mark for each element of fine graded assessment as specified above
- (b) pass any pass/fail elements

[* the pass mark of 50% applies for all module occurrences from the academic year 2024/25 – see Section 3a of this MDF to check the level of the module and Section 8a of this MDF to check the academic year]