

Scotland's Music

The module aims to provide the student with a sound knowledge and understanding of the music and song of the Highlands and Islands from both historical and social perspectives leading up to the present day. The instruments focused on include the bagpipe, fiddle and harp. By studying the characteristics of Scottish music students are better equipped to address the nature and extent of historical change and innovation. The module will investigate the various facets of such change.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Explore the history of the Highland Bagpipe from the 15th century and its position in society – the development of the instrument to include three drones, the music of the bagpipe (ceol mor, ceol beag and canntaireachd) and the schools of piping and the great pipers (MacCrimmon and MacArthur).
- Explore the history of the fiddle from the 16th century and its position in society – the development of the instrument as we know it today, the great fiddle players and composers (the Gows, Marshalls, etc.).
- Explore the history of the harp from the 9th century and its position in society – the Lamont and Queen Mary harps, wire and gut-strung harps, speculation as to the music of the harp, the great harpers, decline and revival.
- Explore the history of Song from the 12th century and its position in society – Labour songs, protest songs, church/psalm singing, bardic training, the Ballad tradition, vernacular poetry of the 17th century, and prominent singers such as Iain Lom etc.
- Explore some prominent contemporary sources from James MacMillan to Capercaillie to the Wrigley Sisters.
- Explore the development of classical music in Scotland from the enlightenment to the present day.

Weekly Summary

1. Introduction to the module: think about whether you have experiences with Scottish music or any preconceptions.
2. Ancient music: consider the evidence for the very earliest music in Scotland.
3. Medieval music: consider the evidence for the music played and sung in medieval Scotland.
4. Renaissance music: focussing mainly on the music of the Royal Court and of the church.
5. The bardic tradition: the role of bards in society from ancient until the early modern period.
6. The fiddle: a history of the fiddle in Scotland.
7. Pipes: the place of bagpipes within Scottish culture and identity.
8. Ballads: investigating the large range of surviving ballads, covering a huge array of topics.
9. Gaelic song: focussing on particular developments since the tumultuous period of change from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards.
10. Scotland and classical music: Scotland's relationship with classical music.
11. Folk in the modern day: considering the impact of the 'folk revival' on Scottish music and take stock of its place today.
12. What is the music of folk? Exploring the grassroots music scene in Scotland today.

Assessments

Essay 1: 40% of overall mark, 1200 words

Essay 2: 60% of overall mark, 1800 words

Queries

Contact the module leader for more information, Oisin Plumb: oisin.plumb@uhi.ac.uk.

Apply

Apply via the website here.