

The Junior Advanced Course

OVERVIEW

Students	Graduates of JXC
Length	2 years
Lesson format	Group lesson plus individual lesson
Frequency	Weekly lessons, 36 weeks a year
Duration	60 mins (group) plus 30 mins (individual)

MATERIALS & COSTS

Please see the fees page for current prices: <http://matrixmusicschool.co.uk/fees>

INSTRUMENT AT HOME

At this level, we strongly recommend that children have an instrument with weighted keys at home. Ideally, this will be a good acoustic piano, which is tuned regularly. An electronic keyboard with weighted keys and sustain pedal is satisfactory. (This does not mean that you need to dispense with your original instrument – the tone colours and recording facilities are useful for composition and creative activities.)

ABOUT

The Yamaha system with its emphasis on 'timely education' means a development in approach at this stage.

JAC is when parents see their children move to a higher level in their musical skills – for example, harmony becomes quite sophisticated, and students also analyse musical structures, how music is 'built'.

JAC students really benefit from having received the solid foundation of independent learning skills that JXC offers. The new one-to-one lessons are very exciting for the children - their piano skills will take off! But it is important to remember that the group lessons continue to be an extremely important part of the curriculum, with subjects and opportunities that is not available to those following the 'individual only' route.

A JAC Book 8 student will have the practical and theoretical knowledge that will make A level music much easier.

FOR PARENTS

Parents' Role

Your role continues to be important, of course. Although parents do not attend lessons (although please ask your teacher if you'd like to visit), and may not be familiar with the approach for each piece, you are still invaluable.

This is what you can do:

- Be interested! Know what pieces your child is studying, harmony, repertoire and ensembles - and be a friendly and non-judgemental audience;
- Encourage regular practice for both lessons;

- Make sure there is lots of listening to the CD at home (really important), perhaps help to download the tracks to an ipod;
- Check whether your child needs any help with the written homework, and that it is completed;
- Make sure your piano/keyboard and CD player/ipod are 'inviting' – are they within easy reach? Do you need to upgrade?
- Encourage your child to communicate their musical likes and dislikes to their teacher, especially to individual teachers, so they can enjoy playing their favourite styles of music;
- ...and last, but certainly not least: enjoy the music!

CURRICULUM

Repertoire is now studied in individual lessons. The teacher will choose the relevant textbook for each student to study, and support in making choices. This doesn't mean that all the pieces played are from the textbook: teachers will also encourage students to ask for pieces they've always wanted to play!

The group provides a friendly audience where children can play polished pieces to their friends and inspire each other further. We also provide Performers' Platforms in the hall at Matrix for JAC students to experience playing to a bigger audience.

Lyric and solfege singing remain part of the course. Many songs are in two parts, and students have the full scores in their books to sing from. The songs are carefully chosen for lots of experiences of different harmonies, keys, styles, structures and so on: these key musical elements provide a 'musical database' for the children to draw on and also act as their first experience of various elements before they appear in other parts of the curriculum.

Keyboard Harmony

Harmony becomes more sophisticated at this level, and children learn how to accompany themselves, but also how to make different styles of two handed accompaniments. The CD provides some really great and fun music for this activity – from famous classical tunes (e.g. the Can Can) to more traditional or folk tunes (e.g. the Muffin Man).

Improvisation and composition are an important part of the course and this is studied in the group lessons. Supporting this activity are illustrations and exercises to complete in the textbooks. Children are encouraged to make a habit of writing down their musical ideas – writing one's own music is a fantastic way to get better at writing music.

Ensembles combine many musical skills in JAC. The first ensemble of each book is for ear-training – students listen to the CD to hear their part and write it in their books. Ensembles with part scores now make an entry into the curriculum: in much the same way as orchestral scores are presented, and learn these as a reading activity - by eye, rather than by ear.

Exercises and theory are studied in the group lessons too – there will usually be writing to do at home which follows these up.

EXAMS

Exams are not compulsory but the curriculum prepares students to the level of Yamaha Music Foundation Grade 7 or 8 by the end of the Junior Advanced Course.

It is possible to take ABRSM exams if this is desired, please discuss with your teacher. However, please be wary of following the 'exam a year' route – in most cases, this can be unhelpful for progress and motivation.

Yamaha exams do not have prerequisites. ABRSM exams have only one prerequisite: to take the higher grades (Grade 6, 7 and 8), one must have passed either a Grade 5 in theory, musicianship or jazz exam. This means that it is quite possible to start with a higher level grade.

For more information on Yamaha Music Foundation exams:

<http://matrixmusicschool.co.uk/downloads/exams.pdf>

MUSIC FOR LIFE

JAC students continue to reap the benefits of learning in a group, whilst developing their own style of playing in individual sessions.

JAC students will have gained the skills to play their own and other peoples' music for pleasure, but will also have the broad range of skills and knowledge needed to study music beyond school level.