

The BMG (Banjo, Mandolin, Guitar) Teachers' Course

in association with Victoria College of Music

Diploma in Mandolin Education

Associateship in Mandolin Education

Licentiate'ship in Mandolin Education

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Introduction

The BMG Federation Mandolin Teachers' course is the first of its kind in Britain. Its aim is to educate mandolin players and music teachers in all aspects of mandolin teaching.

The aim is to enable participants to sit any of the Mandolin Teaching Diplomas offered by Victoria College of Music. During the course, candidates can gain credits which count towards the requirements of the diploma examination. The BMG Federation is fully authorised by Victoria College to award credits where appropriate.

The course will further candidates' knowledge across the range of styles and techniques used on the mandolin. The course recognises the diversity of musical interests and acknowledges that many players and teachers may have had no formal training on their instrument while being skilful and even excellent players. By establishing this course we aim to lay the foundation for the future of the mandolin in Britain, to ensure quality teaching, and to raise the profile of the mandolin as an instrument that is equal amongst others.

The course is held on a modular basis. Although we want to encourage people to take part in all weekends there is the choice to select weekends according to which contents they find the most interesting.

Only people who have gained the necessary credits will be able to sit any of the diploma exams. People can choose from a range of options to suit their individual needs. Please refer to appendix 2 for a detailed description of each weekend.

1. The British BMG (Banjo, Mandolin, Guitar) Federation

The British BMG Federation was founded in 1929. In recent years it has been working intensely to regenerate the interest and education in the instruments which it represents. In all areas progress has been made to further education, performance and general awareness. In order to promote the education of mandolin teachers the BMG Federation has been collaborating with Victoria College of Music to establish a syllabus for Graded Exams in Mandolin playing, which was introduced in 2002. As an extension to the present syllabus (which is currently going into its second edition) Victoria College of Music is now establishing a syllabus of examinations for mandolin teachers.

These examinations will be held at three levels: The Diploma in Mandolin Education, the Associateship in Mandolin Education and the Licentiateship in Mandolin.

2. Certificates in Mandolin Education

Introduction

These diplomas in Mandolin Education are designed to meet the needs of varying teaching situations. They aim to encourage professional development and the progressive ongoing acquisition of learning and skills relevant to contemporary Mandolin education. The minimum age to sit these diplomas is 18 years. All the above qualifications are offered on a modular basis.

Requirements

To gain an award, teachers must

1. Register

Candidates must register for a fixed period.

Teachers must register in writing, clearly stating their full name, date of birth, and contact details. There is a registration fee of ten pounds sterling or fifteen Euros payable to Victoria College. Teachers may register more than once if they wish.

Registration will be acknowledged in writing clearly stating the date of registration.

2. Gain credits.

Full credits, or in some cases half credits, will be awarded on proven completion of an approved course of study. The training courses provided by the British BMG Federation are approved by the Victoria College of Music for the attainment of credits. Teachers may also nominate relevant courses run by other organisations including local authorities, other examination boards, professional bodies or educational institutions for approval as credit-bearing. Such courses must meet the following criteria:

- The objectives of the course are clearly defined
- The mandolin elements will extend the teacher's knowledge and skills
- There will be a minimum of a full day's tuition for a Full Credit, half a day for a Half Credit

3. Pass a viva voce exam

The viva voce examination could include some or all of the following:

- General approaches to teaching
- The structure and planning of lessons
- Methodology of mandolin teaching
- History and repertoire of the mandolin
- Procedures for assessing students' progress

4. Pass a practical exam

5. Essay (only in some diplomas)

2.1 Diploma in Mandolin Education

The Diploma in Mandolin Education (DipVCMEd) is a preliminary qualification suitable for independent teachers. In order to qualify, candidates must, within three years of the date of registration:

1. Provide evidence of 12 full credits or equivalent half credits.
2. Submit a pink diploma entry form and fee for DipVCM to Victoria College.
3. Pass a viva voce examination which will include some or all of the following:
 - General approaches to teaching
 - The structure and planning of lessons
 - Methodology of mandolin teaching
 - History and repertoire of the mandolin
 - Procedures for assessing students' progress
4. Pass a practical examination equivalent to Grade 7

2.2 Associateship in Mandolin Education (AVCMEd)

The Associateship in Mandolin Education (AVCMEd) is a diploma qualification for all independent mandolin teachers. In order to qualify, candidates must, within four years of the date of registration:

1. Provide evidence of 12 credits full credits or equivalent half credits.
2. Provide evidence of passing VCM Grade V in Theory of Music or GCSE (or equivalent) in Music.
3. Provide evidence of passing VCM Grade 8 in Mandolin Playing.
4. Submit a pink diploma entry form and current fee for AVCM to Victoria College.
5. In addition, candidates must pass a viva voce examination which will include questions from the examiner on some or all of the following:
 - General approaches to teaching
 - The structure and planning of lessons
 - Methodology of mandolin teaching
 - History and repertoire of the mandolin
 - Procedures for assessing students' progress
6. Provide evidence that they have gained experience assisting an established teacher in practical teaching for a period of not less than one term.
7. Pass a practical examination.
8. Submit and receive approval of an essay of at least 1500 words on the teaching of students.

For the level of difficulty, please refer to the new diploma syllabus by Victoria College of music. You can obtain this by visiting the website: www.vcmexam.com

2.3 Licentiateship in Mandolin Education (AVCMEd)

The Licentiateship in Mandolin Education (LVCMEd) is intended for independent teachers working with students of all ages or with special needs, and for advisory teachers who have special responsibility for mandolin education. All the above qualifications are offered on a modular basis. In order to qualify, candidates must, within six years of the date of registration:

1. Provide evidence of 12 full credits or equivalent half credits.
2. Provide evidence of passing VCM Grade VI in Theory of Music or A Level (or equivalent) in Music.
3. Already hold the AVCMEd, AVCM(TD) or AVCM in Mandolin or another stringed instrument.
4. Provide evidence that they have gained experience assisting an established teacher in practical teaching for a period of not less than one term.
5. Submit and receive approval of an essay of at least 2000 words on the teaching of students with special needs.
6. Submit a pink diploma entry form and current fee for LVCM.
7. Pass a practical examination.

3. The BMG Federation Teachers' Course

The British BMG Federation is hoping to run a second Teachers course in the near future.

The course for mandolin teachers hopes to fulfil the following aims:

- Educate musicians and music teachers in all aspects relating to mandolin teaching
- Enable participants to sit the Mandolin Teaching Diplomas offered by Victoria College of Music.

During the course candidates can gain credits which count towards the requirements of the diploma examination. The BMG is fully authorised by Victoria College to award credits where appropriate.

3.1 Contents

The course will be “holistic” in its approach, in recognition of the obvious fact that all aspects are related somehow. For organisational convenience though, the time table will be divided up into various areas of emphasis.

With the following statements we hope to give you a further insight into the course contents:

3.1.1 Instrumental technique

We know that people come from all sorts of backgrounds and that an attitude to technique is often determined by regional convictions. This is particularly true of an instrument like the mandolin, although it is probably a lot less true of more established instruments like the violin or piano. Even though there is a lot of agreement about how “established” instruments should sound and the means to produce these results, there is however, still a lot of room for different opinions. The common ground does make “objective” examinations possible though. Therefore one aim of the technique sessions will be to establish where this agreement exists, and to determine what is required to successfully complete the examination at the end of the course. Participants can observe for themselves, and also in conversation with the teachers and each other, where they stand. One possibility for sessions is to give participants the opportunity for self and/or (optional) peer assessment. If it becomes apparent that certain things work better than others (and what is meant by “better” anyway?), participants can decide whether it is advisable to adopt these principles:

- (a) during preparation for the examinations
- (b) later on, using the present level of technology/technique for the examinations
- (c) for various reasons, not at all.

These issues might also be a subject for informal or even formal discussion during the course. Participants will be introduced to some of the technical questions which might confront a mandolin teacher or performer. Certain self-evident principles will form a basis for the discussion. These include:

What expectations do people have of the instrument?

What sounds “good”?

What is “clarity” of sound? (“cleanness”)

The left hand

Is there an established tradition or attitude to “fingering”? (e.g. is there a “correct” finger for any given note?)

Does an attitude toward fingering have more to do with established opinions about the violin, the cello, the guitar...?

The right hand

How does the choice of plectrum influence results?

What substance the plectrum is made of, and how this might influence the sound produced;

How the plectrum is used (of course a very big and often vexed question!).

3.1.2 Lessons

These will have at their core, preparation for the diploma examinations. The needs of participants may well vary, however, and the teachers will try as much as possible to address individual needs. Some people may for example want more emphasis on technique, particularly in view of observations made in the technique sessions, whereas others may want to talk more about general musical and interpretational matters.

3.1.3 Teaching methodology

The emphasis here will be on practical matters:

What can/should pupils learn at various ages/stages?

What teaching aids (books, printed music, tutors etc.) are available?

Thinking logically about a sensible approach to technique (“how” to do things) and making music (“what” to use the technique for).

Pupils will have certain needs in common, regardless of their technical and/or musical convictions or those of the teacher (whether one is more interested in playing Irish folk music, blue grass, or the concert repertoire – not to mention whether one lives in Berlin, Sydney or Torquay.) All pupils can benefit from information about how to hold the instrument so as not to cause physical damage to the player’s body, and produce the notes they want to make in the way they want to make them. A sensible and systematic order in which to learn these things.

3.1.4 History and Form

Of course there will be a special emphasis on the history of the mandolin, but it is also desirable to have a general overview of musical history – an approach to how music has developed over time, and possible answers to questions of the importance of music for us human beings and our ancestors.

3.1.5 Repertoire

What music might be played on the mandolin – classical, contemporary, popular...

Participants can try out music requiring varying levels of technical skill, and there can be forum discussion of technical and didactic aspects. Pieces can be divided up for organisational convenience in terms of technical requirements (beginner, improver, advanced), period (when they were composed, or when they perhaps should have been composed - music written in 1940 might represent the style of 1890). There will be sessions dealing with special fields like Celtic music, Jazz and general popular manifestations. Course material in the form of handouts will be provided, and “homework” (of a pleasant and stimulating sort!) – the results of which will be analysed and discussed - will be an integral part of the course.

3.1.6 Preparation for the Musicianship Test

The musicianship test is part of the diploma examination. This session will give in an introduction to the requirements of this test.

3.1.7 Marketing

This session will be about YOU... how to market yourself and the skills you have.

3.1.8 Lessons observations

This will be a participation and group feedback session in which you will have the opportunity to watch other people teaching and learn from them. "Real" students will be provided.

3.1.9 Different methods of playing mandolin (e.g. "Italian School")

This session will give an insight to recognised mandolin teaching methods.

3.1.10 Homework, questions and review

3.2 Tutors

The British BMG Federation is very pleased that it was able to employ the services of Keith Harris as the main tutor of the first course which was held in 2006. Keith Harris held a teaching commission for mandolin at the Conservatorium of Heidelberg. He was director of music for the Federation of German Plucked String Musicians in the state of Hesse for 12 years.

Further to Keith Harris a number of other tutors covered special contents of the first course:

Stefanie Rauch - music history, mandolin tuition

Nigel Gatherer – Celtic mandolin methodology and repertoire

David Griffiths – Jazz mandolin methodology and repertoire

A more detailed portfolio of the 2006 course tutors is given at Appendix 1

3.3 Timescale and Dates

A typical course would be held on five weekends (three weekends Friday- Sunday, two weekends Friday- Monday). Between the weekends, participants would be given both practical and theoretical homework.

For a detailed overview over each weekend's contents please refer to appendix 2

3.4 Course Venue

The 2006 course was held in The Abington Hotel, Abington (Near Biggar), Lanarkshire, Scotland just off the motorway and less than 1 mile from Abington Services at junction 13 of the M74, making it easily accessible for participants from Scotland and England. We were impressed with the high standard of accommodation and friendliness of staff.

3.5 Costs

Cost overview of 2006 Course for informatin only

The BMG Federation was successful in gaining funding from the National Lottery towards the costs of the 2006 course and would make a similar application for future courses. The chart below shows the costs (prior to subsidy from National Lottery funding) of attending all the weekends and also the cost of attending individual weekends only. Please also note that participants taking any of the Victoria College examinations have to pay the registration fee of £10 and any appropriate examination fee to Victoria College (for the diploma and the mandolin education exams the cost was about £55)

	Course Fees	Accomodation	Total	Deposit Required	Balance Required
To attend all weekends	£640	£540	£1180	£50	5 instalments of £226
Cost of individual weekends (see below)					
Weekend 1 Fri - Sun	£120	£90	£210	£30	
Weekend 2 Fri - Mon	£160	£135	£295	£30	
Weekend 3 Fri - Sun	£120	£90	£210	£30	
Weekend 4 Fri - Mon	£160	£135	£295	£30	
Weekend 5 Fri - Sun	£120	£90	£210	£30	

Appendix 1 – Tutor Portfolio

Curriculum Vitae Keith Harris

Keith Harris, the conductor of the EGMYO in 2003, was born in Australia. He studied musicology and languages at Sydney University and worked in night clubs and television in Australia and England. His main interest however was always plucked string music (as well as playing in various plucked string ensembles in Sydney, he directed the Sydney Domra Ensemble for over a decade) and he came to Germany in 1979 to be involved more exclusively in the field. He quickly established an international reputation as performer, conductor and teacher, in wide demand throughout Europe, Australia, Japan and America.

He was director of music for the Federation of German Plucked String Musicians in the state of Hesse for 12 years (in this capacity also conductor of both the State Plucked String Orchestra and Youth Orchestra, with numerous CD recordings and international tours) and held a teaching commission for mandolin at the Conservatorium of Heidelberg until it was closed at the end of the 20th century. He has worked with the Plucked String Orchestra of the Municipality of Patras since 1990, and actually lived in Patras for two years. He still conducts the Austrian Cecilia Ensemble, and when not travelling somewhere in the world looks after mandolin clubs in Falkenstein (Taunus), Giessen and Treis.

Curriculum Vitae Stefanie Rauch

In her professional life, Stefanie Rauch has two main fields of interest; as a musicologist, she is currently working on her PhD thesis about the creative process of Arnold Schönberg. She makes practical use of the academic skills she acquires in the music archives of Hesse, where she is involved in various projects on the composer Gustav Jenner, the only composition pupil of Johannes Brahms.

Her first love, though, is the mandolin, which she started to play when she was a very young child. Stefanie Rauch began winning prizes in various competitions when she was ten. Parallel to her university studies, she studied the mandolin with Keith Harris. She is concert mistress of the State Plucked String Orchestra of Hesse. As a founding member of the European Guitar and Mandolin Youth Orchestra (EGMYO), she has had various functions including soloist (Bologna) and concert mistress (Patras). Among other things, she has performed widely all over Europe including Italy, Slovenia, Sweden, Greece, Austria and Belgium. In October 2005 she was invited to give solo concerts and hold workshops at the plucked string festival in Venice and the surrounding area.

Curriculum Vitae Dave Griffiths

Dave is a teacher of mandolin and double bass. He works as a professional musician and NLP practitioner. In a jazz career spanning nearly 20 years, amongst others, Dave has played alongside Dusko Goykovich, Barbara Thompson, Michael Hashim, Stan Tracy, Bobby Chew and Tal Farlow. Television and radio appearances with Paul Brett, Tight Like That, the Johny Hooper Trio, and BBC Jazz Parade with Dave Herrington Quartet, Duncan Anselm Quartet and Kafoozalum. For seven years Dave

was a tutor for the Bristol Jazz Workshops; he leads his own septet 'Mingus Fingers' and quartet "Mandolin Express". He also leads the quartet "Brejeiro" playing Brazilian Choro and Gipsy Jazz music. Dave also teaches and conducts the "Bristol Mandolin Ensemble".

Curriculum Vitae Nigel Gatherer

Nigel lives in Crieff, a small town on the southern fringes of the Scottish Highlands. His employment time is split between graphic design and teaching traditional Scottish music. For eight years now Nigel has also taught Scottish music in classes and to individual students. This now occupies half of the working week, which is a change from sitting alone in front of a computer. His students learn mandolin, penny whistle, guitar, and music in mixed instrument groups.

Nigel's main hobby is Scottish music, and in this field he has played with various bands, although since he moved away from Edinburgh his involvement in a formal band setting has been very limited. He also writes about music and song, and collects books and records concerned with traditional music. Nigel has founded and conducts the Edinburgh Mandolin & Guitar orchestra.

Appendix 2 – Course Content Overview

Weekend 1

Saturday

9-10 **Technique** - in groups of a reasonable size, depending on the number of participants. Examples of "normal" technical demands (which will be provided) will be used as the basis of discussion.

10:30-12:30 **Lessons** - aim at meeting the individual technical and musical requirements of participants. Participants should prepare music which interests them. Teachers will use their discretion as to whether supplementary material would be advisable.

14-15:30 **Teaching methodology 1** - these sessions will deal with both personal and musical matters; successful teaching requires both. Participants will be invited to use "role-playing" situations, in which one person takes the part of the teacher and another that of the pupil, as a basis for analysis and discussion.

16-17:30 **Methodology 1**

19-20:30 **Beginners literature 1** - these group sessions will aim at becoming familiar with the material available, and also at proposing solutions for possible technical and didactic questions.

Sunday

9-12:30 **Repertoire, History & Form 1 (18th century)** - The emphasis here will be on music for the mandolin; this will however necessarily include discussion of the different sorts of instrument loosely called "mandolin" two hundred years ago. There will also be excursions into other more general aspects of the wide field of music, in order to see the mandolin in some sort of context.

14-16:00 **Lessons**

16 -16:30 **Musicianship** –Introduction to contents of the musicianship test which is part of the diploma examination.

16-17:30 **Homework, questions and review**

Weekend 2

Saturday

9-10	Technique
10:30-12:30	Lessons
14-17:30	Repertoire, History & Form 2 (Classical)
19-20:30	Methodology 2

Sunday

9-10:30	Beginners literature 2
11-12:30	Lessons observations
14-16:00	Methodology 3
16-17:30	Intermediate literature
19-20:30	Ensemble literature/ leading 1

Monday

9-12:30	Repertoire, History & Form 3 (Romantic)
14-16:00	Lessons
16:30-17:00	Musicianship
17:00-17:30	Homework, questions and review

Weekend 3

Saturday

9-10	Technique
10:30-12:30	Lessons
14-17:30	Lessons observations
19-20:30	Methodology 4

Sunday

9-12:30	Repertoire, History & Form 4 (Contemporary)
14-16:00	Lessons
16:30-17:00	Musicianship
17:00-17:30	Homework, questions and review

Weekend 4

Saturday

9-10	Technique
10:30-12:30	Lessons
14-17:30	Repertoire, History & Form 2 (Celtic)
19-20:30	Celtic Literature

Sunday

9-10:30	How to get pupils
11-12:30	Methodology 5
14-17:30	Lessons observations
19-20:30	Ensemble literature/ leading 2

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9-10:30	Graded Exams
11-12:30	Methodology 6
14-16:00	Lessons
16:30-17:00	Musicianship
17:00-17:30	Homework, questions and review

Weekend 5

Saturday

9-10	Technique
10:30-12:30	Lessons
14-17:30	Repertoire, History & Form 2 (Jazz)
19-20:30	Jazz and Popular literature

Sunday

9-10:30	Marketing & Federations
11-12:30	Methodology 7
14-16:00	Lessons
16-17:30	Homework, questions and essay