

# TRINITY LABAN



## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Programme	MA Songwriting
Awarding Institution	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
Location of study	Online with a one-week in-person Intensive at King Charles Court, Greenwich, London
Mode and duration	One year full-time; two years part-time
UK Credits	180
ECTS	90

## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The MA Songwriting is a one-year online Intensive postgraduate programme of study for creative artists and musicians who want to develop their musical skills and authentic artistic voice leading to a sustainable career as a songwriter and performer. The programme values originality and the edgy type of Songwriting that is the hallmark of the UK music creative scene. There is the option to take the programme part time over two years.

The programme is delivered online, allowing for independent study as a part of a vibrant community of learners, and culminates in a one-week in-person Intensive at Trinity Laban. It champions individual creativity and innovation, fostering an environment for you to develop your musical identity whatever your style. As such, the MA Songwriting offers opportunities for both in-person and online interaction, encouraging a dynamic exchange of ideas and skills.

The core curriculum consists of modules in Songwriting, Music Production, and Industry Studies. Research Lab and the Personal Specialism Project lets you explore a research area, create a professional project, or curate a performance of your choice. The programme can be completed as a one-year full-time course or part time over two years, with modules taken in sequence, offering flexibility for busy professionals.

The research-led ethos embraces the broad scope of Songwriting, including its relationship with various artistic, historical, philosophical, cultural and business contexts. At its heart, the MA Songwriting places a strong emphasis on sophistication in the art of Songwriting accompanied by music production while gaining a thorough grasp of, and research into markets, audience, publishing, and the monetisation of work.

The year consists of three terms of online study, ending with an in-person Songwriting Intensive, modelled on Trinity Laban's CoLab and Warner Chappell Songwriting camps. This one-week session in July includes focused songwriting,

practical collaborative work (which can be recorded in the studio) with lectures and masterclasses from world-leading artists and industry professionals. The Intensive content is tailored throughout the year to address students' strengths and challenges, with input from students playing a crucial role in shaping the activities. The camp takes place three weeks before the final portfolio submission, allowing time for finalising your assessed work.

Mastering Songwriting at postgraduate level involves advanced musical theory, including harmony, melody, and chord progressions, along with lyrical craftsmanship, using poetic devices, metaphor, and storytelling. It also includes melodic development, arranging, orchestration with an understanding of rhythmic complexity for depth and the latest technologies, including the role of artificial intelligence. According to Aristotle, prosody combines all these elements to create persuasive and emotionally stirring works with emotional resonance, key to a leading songwriter, evoking deep connections with listeners. Critical listening and researching others' work help you to appreciate the elements of key works across western and non-western genres. You will gain a deep understanding of repertoire, genre complexity, fluidity, and innovative song structures, leading to sophisticated recorded outcomes.

The programme focuses on innovation and industry relevance, equipping you with skills and insights for success in an ever-evolving music industry. The programme also emphasises the broadening and deepening of cultural capital, recognising the importance of a well-rounded musical education that goes beyond technical proficiency.

The programme aims are:

- To provide advanced training in the art and craft of Songwriting, which encourages the demonstration of individual musical talent, creative flair, and scholarship, underpinned by research and sophisticated critical self-reflection, to a professional standard.
- To enable independent artists of proven ability in Songwriting, music performance and production to gain relevant proficiencies and professional expertise through focused activity, as they advance and refine their skills and deepen understanding.
- To demonstrate a research-led understanding of the significance of musical context in Songwriting, highlighting the relationship of music to wider artistic, historical, philosophical, cultural and social practices, issues and adaptability to relevant industry markets.
- To understand and apply industry ready work to clearly identified and defined audiences in live performance, music release, publishing and emerging means of monetising work.
- To cultivate a self-sustaining virtual community of artists who can work in a variety of complex musical groupings and multi-disciplinary environments with

the ability to apply that learning to in-person and live work in and beyond the scope programme and to exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and leadership.

- To provide an inclusive and diverse online learning environment, celebrating the significance of non-western traditions from around the world and to cultivate a community where all individuals, regardless of background, find a welcoming space to express their unique voices through songwriting and the production, performance, and release of work.
- To create a nurturing research-led learning environment that encourages risk and creativity and innovation, reflecting, wherever applicable, cutting-edge thinking within the profession, and taking advantage, where appropriate, of advances in digital, artificial intelligence and other technologies.
- To produce enterprising musicians equipped for existing and developing employment opportunities as Songwriters and performers in today's diverse, internationalised and ever-changing music profession.
- To nurture curiosity and an exploration of the application of artistic research within a clearly defined area of music.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this programme, a student will be expected to be able to demonstrate:

### Knowledge and understanding

- A1. Profound knowledge of the craft of Songwriting, its musical and lyrical concepts, allowing for their application, challenge, and adaptation in diverse creative contexts.
- A2. Research-informed critical analysis and comprehension of the broad scope of Songwriting, including its relationship with various artistic, historical, philosophical, cultural, and social dimensions, particularly within music creation, recording, and performance realms.
- A3. A conceptual grasp of research methodologies into creative processes, originality and innovation that lead to new ideas in music making as a part of individual and collaborative working.
- A4. Comprehensive understanding of popular music production techniques: listening, crafting, analysing, and exploring digital recording and editing to articulate an individual artistic visions effectively, enabling critical evaluation and advancement of innovative and boundary-pushing work.

- A5. A systematic understanding of the music industry and its landscape, including how music is published, distributed and monetized from global to personal perspectives.
- A6. A comprehensive understanding of the application of research methods relating to audience development, personal brand and the potential for monetisation of work through the identification of existing and emerging markets.
- A7. A systematic understanding of how Songwriting and its production can be shaped into a personal life strategy for the music industry with the view to personal development and career planning.

#### Skills

- B1. A unique and distinctive Songwriting identity by honing technical craft, interpretative skills, and utilizing a diverse array of creative approaches to foster an original artistic voice.
- B2. The ability to technically produce and realise work through established and emerging recording and music production techniques.
- B3. The ability to identify and engage audiences to develop, publish and release musical repertoire through a clearly articulated identity.
- B4. The ability critically to analyse and synthesise knowledge of the essential components of musical language and structures through a range of different approaches.
- B5. The ability to work creatively with others online and in-person.
- B6. The ability to be a self-critical and motivated learner, able to produce independent work of high quality, to guide the learning of others, and to manage their own continuing professional development.
- B7. The ability to evaluate, refine and apply research methodologies in a range of Songwriting and related contexts.
- B8. The ability to analyse, present and communicate research discoveries in informed and concise methods.

#### Values and attitudes

- C1. A desire to create original work in a commitment to Songwriting.
- C2. A commitment to online collaborative processes and co-operative working, recognising the role of individual responsibility within the creative process, and an understanding of relevant professional expectations.
- C3. Curiosity and autonomy of learning, researching and presentation/communication with others.
- C4. Flexibility and responsiveness to individual and collective innovation and creativity, recognising risk as an element of that creativity.

- C5. A professional, reflective, and responsible attitude to their practice which embodies engagement in practical artistic research as a means of developing knowledge.

## GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Trinity Laban Graduate programmes prepare artists and practitioners to contribute to the leadership and future development of the global creative ecology in a sustainable and responsible way. Those who have participated in a postgraduate programme should be able to:

- Demonstrate practical skills in Songwriting, music production and the release of work, while also developing an understanding of the social and ethical implications of their work and being advocates for equality and a sustainable world.
- Understand how their work is situated within the context of the music industry, investigate, and interrogate their practices by analysing existing bodies of knowledge, theories, and research processes to inform the realization of a range of practical production and performance outcomes.
- Enhance creativity and innovation in research, embracing play and openness within research processes, involving risk-taking and experimenting with new ideas and approaches.
- Demonstrate original thinking relevant to their practice and the conceptualization of work in their discipline by demonstrating a deep understanding of their field and the ability to think critically and creatively.
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to participate as creative and artistic leaders in the music industry by developing leadership and management skills, as well as understanding the monetisation of work.
- Communicate and collaborate with other artists, industry partners and stakeholders in the realisation of work.
- Develop marketing and music publishing strategies to identify and develop audiences through established and emerging means in the promotion of their brand leading to sustainable careers in music.

## CURRICULUM

Module Title	Credits	Module Code	Core/ Elective	Mode of delivery	Compensation Y/N	Level
Musicianship for Songwriting	20		Core	Online	N	7
Songwriting	40		Core	Online	N	7
Songwriting Intensive	with above		Core	In Person	N	7

Songwriting: Repertoire and Context	20		Core	Online	N	7
Music Production for songwriters	30		Core	Online	N	7
Industry Studies	30		Core	Online	N	7
ResLab	10		Core	Online	N	7
Personal Specialism Project	30		Core	Online	N	7

### Key Progression Points

There are six core subject modules: Songwriting, Musicianship for Songwriting, Music Production for Songwriters, Industry Studies and a Personal Specialism Project that is supported by the ResLab module. Each module is comprised of an array of components with formative tasks. The learning and feedback from the formative tasks feed into the final module's summative assessment point.

### Pre and Co-requisites (if applicable)

It is highly recommended that ResLab is taken prior to embarking on the Personal Specialism research Project. All students are expected to participate in the summer Intensive with an online alternative run in parallel for those who are unable to attend in person.

## PART TIME STUDY

Students can opt to study part time over two years. The first year involves taking the ResLab module that sets the tone for research-led master's level study accompanied by the creative Songwriting module and Songwriting musicianship and Songwriting repertoire and contexts modules. Further to these modules students will take a bespoke asynchronous music production skills unit to assist in the basic techniques of sound capture, editing and producing music, which is a requirement for creating a portfolio of songs. The unit will also provide a list of key resources for to further learning. Students will participate in a music tech tutorial to ensure they have the basic set-up to participate in the programme.

Throughout the second year, the study pattern follows music production, Industry Studies and the Personal Specialism Project, enabling students to finesse the portfolio of songs and to develop business strategies for the release of their music. The personal Specialism Project takes place in the second year, giving the options giving students the opportunity to further their creative portfolio or to develop other areas of research or to reflect critically on a work-based learning experience. Students need to pass 90 credits to progress the second year. Students not completing 90 credits can take outstanding modules in the second year or opt for a further year of study at the discretion of the assessment board.

## Part time study Pattern

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year

Asynchronous Production for Songwriting skills unit offers students an introduction to the basic requirements of recording set-up and production in order to produce materials for the songwriting modules.

The teaching Unit will offer formative tasks to benchmark and assess levels and will be accompanied by a one-hour individual tutorial that the technical needs of learning can be met.

Basic tech set-up – microphones, audio interface, etc. Signal Flow, gain staging, folder organisation, micing techniques, basic mixing, EQ, panning reverb etc.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year pattern of study

Module Title	Credits	Module Code	Core/ Elective	Module credit	Mode of delivery	Compensation Y/N	Level
Musicianship for Songwriting	20		Core	100%	Online	N	7
Songwriting	40		Core	100%	Online	N	7
Songwriting intensive	with above		Core	P/F	In Person	N	7
Songwriting: Repertoire and Context	20		Core	100%	Online	N	7
ResLab	10		Core	100%	Online	N	7

### 2nd year pattern of study

Module Title	Credits	Module Code	Core/ Elective	Module credit	Mode of delivery	Compensation Y/N	Level
Music Production for songwriters	30		Core	100%	Online	N	7
Industry Studies	30		Core	100%	Online	N	7
Personal Specialism Project	30		Core	100%	Online	N	7



## LEARNING AND TEACHING

Total learning hours	1800
Total self-directed study hours	1525
Total synchronous learning and teaching hours	275
Including 16 hours of individual tuition and tutorials	

## LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

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The MA Songwriting programme employs a multi-layered approach to learning, blending formal instruction, personal study, and research, supplemented by robust online support through Moodle. Central to the learning experience are regular group sessions and occasional one-on-one tutorials, conducted online, with additional face-to-face online tutorial and supervision opportunities.

Each learning activity within the programme emphasizes the importance of independent study, encouraging students to engage actively with course materials, participate in online forum discussions, and undertake reflective practice tasks. Throughout their studies, students integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, honing their songwriting skills and cultivating their creativity.

A key objective of the programme is to equip students with independent learning strategies for lifelong learning. Tutors provide guidance and support, fostering a culture of reflection and assisting students in formulating personal study plans and targets.

Collaborative learning is integral to the programme, offering students opportunities to work alongside peers, assume leadership roles in projects, and benefit from valuable shared experiences. The curriculum encompasses a diverse range of learning and teaching methods, primarily delivered online through lectures and practical classes.

### Synchronous Learning

Classes focus on developing practical and cognitive skills, with active student participation. A flipped learning approach is adopted, whereby students engage with course concepts before class, completing short formative tasks and readings. These synchronous lectures are also recorded enabling students to revisit content. allow for flexible learning, empowering students to take ownership of their educational journey.

### Asynchronous Learning

Certain components, such as Production building blocks, are delivered asynchronously, enabling students to progress at their own pace. Accompanied by sequential tasks, these sessions culminate in final assessments, providing students with a structured learning pathway.

### One-to-One Teaching

Students receive 12 hours of individual tuition, tailored to their chosen area of specialization (e.g., Songwriting, Production, Business, Voice, Guitar, Keyboards). Tutors are assigned based on an initial tutorial session held during induction at the start of the programme. In addition, four hours of tutorials are delivered through the curriculum.

### Forums and the Live Lounge

The programme offers regular opportunities for performance and feedback through the Live Lounge, a virtual space dedicated to student showcases. Additionally, the Songwriting Forum provides an online platform for students to share tracks and ideas, fostering a supportive learning community.

### Industry Engagement

The MA Songwriting programme maintains strong connections with the music industry, featuring masterclasses and guest lectures from industry professionals. Collaborations with Warner Chappell and Universal A&R departments facilitate feedback and potential industry exposure for students' work. While formal industry placements are not part of the programme, students can pursue work-based learning as a part of their personal specialism.

### Programme Intensity

The MA Songwriting programme is rigorous, requiring students to dedicate approximately 40 hours per week to fully engage with course materials, practice Songwriting, and undertake recording activities.

## ASSESSMENT

### Overview

Each module has a single summative assignment that provides a grade and feedback that form the culmination of a scaffolded learning experience. These summative submissions are supported through a range of formative tasks as students build toward their final portfolios. Feedback is provided at each stage of learning in relation to the specific subject areas. A culture of sharing and critical analysis is encouraged through a structured process of peer evaluation in group sessions and forum tasks.

Two-week independent study periods at the end of each teaching block provide time to focus on self-learning and completing assignments for developing the main portfolio content.

Assessment at level 7 is focused on high level critical thinking skills, research and a proto-professional standard of work. The prime focus of the programme is the creation and realisation of work. As a songwriter it is not an imperative to have a professional singing voice, but you are expected to be able to perform the songs you have written. You can also write songs for others to sing. For your portfolio, you will learn to create professional standard demos whether sung by you or others.

voice, however, the ability to produce work of a high standard is valued in presentation of the assessment criteria.

What do I have to do to pass?

To pass the programme, you must achieve the credit for each module. You must pass each module with an overall mark of 50%. There is no compensation between modules.

## AWARDS

Award	HE Level	Credits
Master of Arts	7	180
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120
Postgraduate Certificate	7	70

Classification	% required
With Distinction	70
With Merit	60
With Pass	50

## ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Admission to the programme is assessed through application, submitting a recorded portfolio of three works, a video statement and an interview. The programme actively encourages songwriters in any genre with a variety of instrumental, vocal and production specialisms.

Academic Entry requirements

- A degree, or equivalent training and/or professional experience is normally required. For entry, applicants are normally expected to hold a good pass in a BA, BMus (Hons) or equivalent qualification. The programme welcomes applicants who do not hold an undergraduate degree but can demonstrate equivalent previous study and/or experience. Applicants without a degree will be required to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning to demonstrate suitability for postgraduate study.

Considerable professional experience in songwriting and/or performance settings, which should normally be current or in the last three years.

- (for International Students) IELTS Academic 6.5 in all areas.

### Application Process

Applications are made online through UCAS Conservatoires, with audition material uploaded to Embark. Students should select Music as their area of study on UCAS Conservatoires. Individual tuition provision will be discussed as a part of the interview process.

Personal statements should address:

- The applicant's background and relevant experience.
- The reasons for applying to Trinity Laban.
- The relevance of the programme to the applicant's current practice and their future
- Professional aspirations.
- Why the applicant is interested in the programme at this point in their career.
- Career/education/personal and professional development.

A successful applicant to the programme will need to demonstrate the following:

- The capacity for independent, critical, and reflective judgement.
- Intellectual curiosity and the potential for Songwriting development and related skills
- An articulation of career and personal development aims.
- The ability to organise and articulate opinions and arguments in writing using relevant specialist vocabulary.
- High levels of technical fluency and convincing interpretative skills in Songwriting and in a personal specialism (voice, instrumental, production).

The admissions process aims to be inclusive ensuring that applicants are supported and enabled to show their work and represent themselves in their best light at every step of the audition process. It is important to recognise experience and acquired ability as well as the potential to learn and to develop a distinct artistic voice.

