TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

Your complete guide to inspiring music progression

With exclusive piano booklet sample access inside

trinitycollege.com

Introduction

For over 150 years, Trinity has turned music practice into real progress

For generations, teachers and schools have trusted Trinity to nurture musical potential and celebrate achievement. Our qualifications are built to inspire creativity, support individuality and make learning music an experience that lasts a lifetime.

This handbook gives you a practical overview of how Trinity College London qualifications can help you motivate your learners, strengthen your teaching offer and connect your classroom to an internationally recognised standard of excellence.

Explore Music qualifications →

It's not just about passing exams – it's about building musicians.

150 years of history

1872
Bonavia Hunt and Sir Frederick A Gore Ousley establish the Church Choral Society and College of Church Music, London.

1875
Trinity College London is incorporated under Companies Act 1862 consisting of two divisions, Academic and Choral.

1877
Trinity College London is founded as the external exams board for Trinity College of Music. The first tests are in elementary musical knowledge, quickly expanding to practical music exams. Just two years later, these exams are administered in 200 local centres throughout the UK.

1881
The local theoretical exams are extended to India.

1895
Practical exams are introduced in Australasia and South Africa.

1904
Trinity College London changes its name to Trinity College of Music London.

1921
Trinity College of Music registers 53,180 exams.

1938
Trinity begins English language assessments.

1947
The early music department is re-formed as the Department for Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Music. The department subsequently moves to Fenton House in Hampstead before all activities finally transfer to the main college premises.

1972
The College celebrates its centenary with a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey, a concert at the Royal Albert Hall, and a dinner attended by almost 700 invited guests at Grosvenor House, Park Lane.

1992
A separate company, limited by guarantee, Trinity College London Ltd (TCL), is established. The company is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission in the UK.

1993
Formal separation of the exams business Trinity College London from Trinity College of Music.

1995
Trinity College London Argentina is established.

1996
Trinity College London receives Queen's Award for Exports.

2001
Trinity College of Music relocates from London's Marylebone to the iconic Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

2004
Trinity College London performing arts exams division merges with the external department of the Guildhall Music and Drama to form Trinity Guildhall.

2005
Arts Award launches in the UK, in partnership with Arts Council England, with a mission to support young people to deepen their engagement with the arts, and build creative and leadership skills.

2006
Trinity Guildhall Music, Drama and Speech syllabus launches.

2010
Trinity College London India is established.

2012
The name Trinity Guildhall was dropped and the board's performing arts exams are now offered under the Trinity College London brand.

2012
Trinity launches groundbreaking new Rock & Pop graded qualifications, with a huge range of hit songs spanning all contemporary styles.

2015
The first ten Secure English Language Test centres, operated by Trinity College London, open nationally in the UK.

2016
BCELT (now Trinity College London Italy) is acquired into the Trinity family.

2020
Trinity College London launches digital grades and diplomas, allowing candidates to take exams fully online.

2021
Trinity College London Spain is established.

2022
Trinity College London China is established.

2022
Trinity, in partnership with Sounds of Intent, offers the industry-first, innovative Awards and Certificates in Musical Development, which set a new standard for fully-accessible, inclusive music assessments, available to all music learners.

Why music qualifications matter today

Helping every student see their progress and their potential

Music education is evolving. Teachers are expected to inspire, assess, and adapt to different learning styles, all while keeping students engaged. A well-designed qualification brings clarity and motivation to that journey.

Trinity's graded exams give students clear goals to aim for and tangible proof of their development. They encourage self-expression, creativity and confidence – qualities that go beyond the exam room and into every performance.

For teachers, qualifications offer a shared framework that supports planning, feedback, and measurable growth, while still allowing full flexibility in repertoire and delivery.

The value of structured progression

- Builds measurable milestones that keep students motivated
- Recognises real-world skills such as creativity and communication
- Encourages continuous improvement, not just one-off success

Supporting creativity and inclusivity

- Flexible pathways for different abilities and musical styles
- Choice of digital or face-to-face assessments
- Accessible materials for learners with additional needs

Explore Music exams →

> **Trinity's structured approach helps my students see their progress clearly – and inspires them to reach even further.**
>
> **Ravina, piano teacher and former mentor, The Recording Academy**

Discover Ravina's journey →

Practice
Qualification
Confidence

Benefits for institutions and teachers

Supporting teachers. Advancing institutions.

Trinity qualifications help schools and music departments stand out as centres of excellence. They provide external validation that parents and students recognise and trust. In England, Trinity is an international awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), and inclusion in the UCAS tariff for Grades 6-8. Various arrangements are in place with governmental education authorities worldwide.

For teachers, Trinity offers practical resources, expert-written syllabuses and flexible exams that adapt to individual teaching approaches. The result is more time spent on creativity and less on administration – with students achieving their best because they feel supported and inspired.

Learn about recognition →

Benefits overview:

- Strengthen your school's reputation with globally recognised credentials
- Offer diverse routes to success – from Classical & Jazz to Rock & Pop
- Access high-quality teaching tools and publications
- Join a worldwide community of educators committed to excellence

> We wholeheartedly agree that music isn't a means to an end; it is also an end in itself. The provision of high-quality, innovative and creative music-making opportunities opens doors for learners, enabling young people to change their own lives.
>
> **Trinity College London**
>
> Source: The power of music to change lives

Trinity partnership

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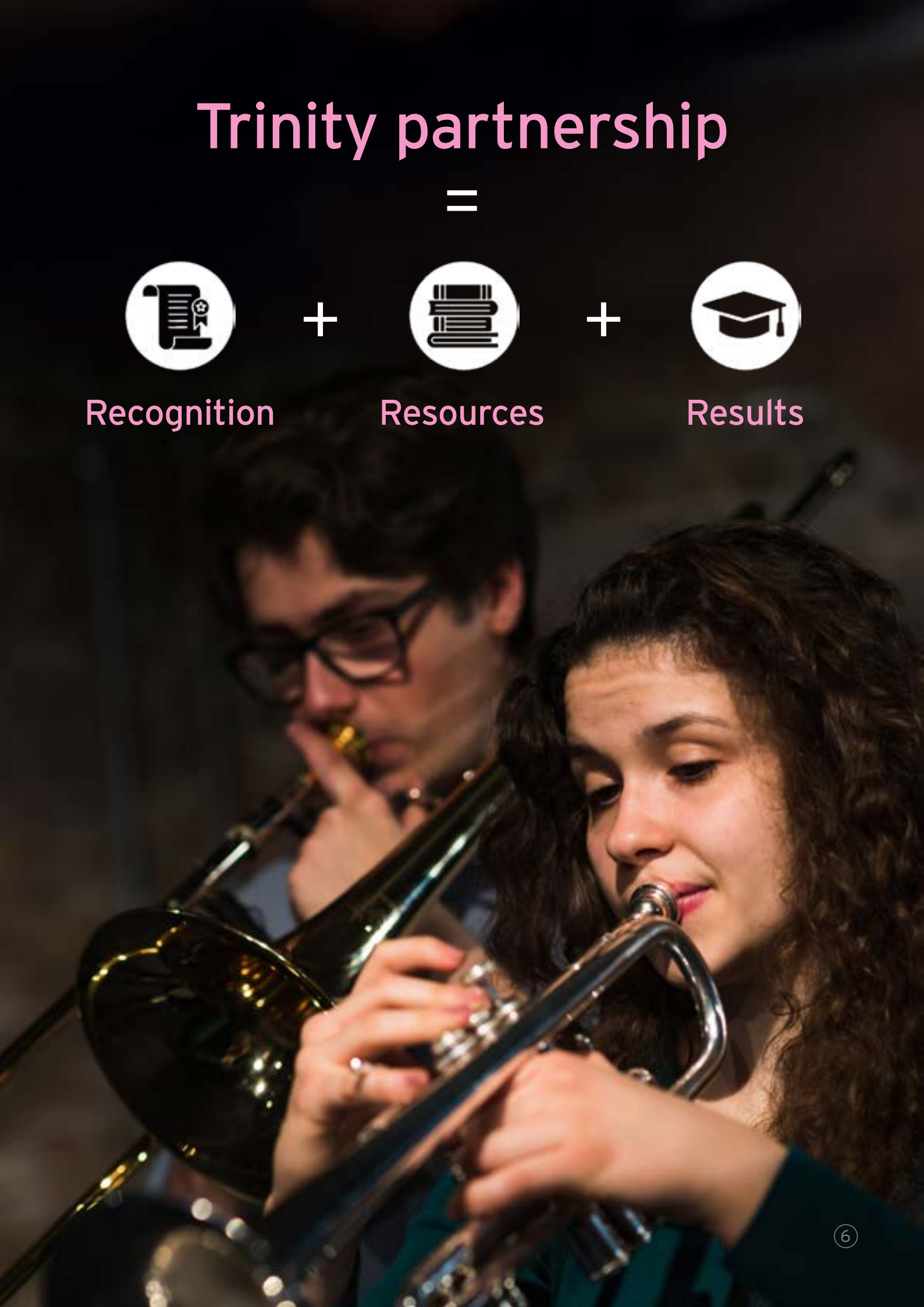
Recognition + Resources + Results



Benefits for students and parents

Inspiring every student to learn, perform and grow with confidence

Every student's musical journey is different. Trinity's qualifications are designed to celebrate individuality and make every learner feel recognised. From first notes to advanced performance, each step builds confidence and practical skills that last a lifetime.

For students, Trinity means freedom to explore music they truly enjoy. They can perform classical masterpieces, jazz standards or contemporary hits, developing the same essential musicianship across genres. This approach nurtures creativity while giving them a clear sense of progress and achievement.

Trinity also recognises that some students thrive in different ways. Digital assessment offers an alternative for learners to Trinity's face-to-face exams, and the Repertoire-only pathway is available for those who prefer performance-focused goals. It provides a supportive, flexible experience that still upholds Trinity's global standards.

For parents, Trinity provides reassurance and measurable value. The qualifications are globally recognised, regulated by Ofqual and contribute UCAS tariff points at Grades 6 to 8. That means their child's passion for music can also open academic and professional opportunities.

UCAS* points

Practical (Classical & Jazz, Rock & Pop)

The following applies both to face-to-face and digital grades.

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Pass: 8	Pass: 12	Pass: 24
Merit: 10	Merit: 14	Merit: 27
Distinction: 12	Distinction: 16	Distinction: 30

Theory

The following applies to both paper-based and digital theory.

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Pass: 4	Pass: 6	Pass: 8
Merit: 5	Merit: 7	Merit: 9
Distinction: 6	Distinction: 8	Distinction: 10

*UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

> The Repertoire-only pathway has been especially brilliant for students who thrive with performance-based goals and for learners with additional needs or anxiety around formal assessments.
>
> **Sarah Loddington, piano teacher & owner of The Bee's Keys**

Pathways to progress

Supporting every step of the musical journey

Trinity offers a clear, flexible pathway that supports learners at every stage of development. From the earliest grades through to professional diplomas, students and teachers can choose the route that fits their goals and teaching style.

The graded exams in Classical & Jazz, Rock & Pop and Theory of Music provide a solid foundation for building technical skill and musical understanding. Each exam encourages personal interpretation and creativity, rather than rote repetition, helping musicians feel proud of their unique sound.

Trinity's Digital Theory exams also make progression more accessible than ever. Students can now demonstrate their knowledge online, with the same recognition and credibility as traditional paper-based exams. Digital Theory carries the same Ofqual-regulated status, ensuring that students gain official credit and confidence in their theoretical understanding – wherever they are learning.

Trinity's Certificate exams offer a performance-only alternative to graded exams for solo performers or groups, at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels. They give learners the chance to construct a recital, including the opportunity to present own-choice repertoire.

Beyond the grades, Trinity's Diploma options recognise advanced musicianship and teaching excellence. These qualifications are ideal for students aiming for professional performance, higher education, or careers in music education.

Our Awards and Certificates in Musical Development are industry-first, innovative qualifications which set new standards for fully-accessible, inclusive music assessments, available to a music learners whatever their needs.

Teachers appreciate the consistency and adaptability of Trinity's system, knowing that progression is both structured and personalised. It helps them design lessons that inspire students to keep improving, one stage at a time.

Explore:

- Classical & Jazz →
- Rock & Pop →
- Theory of Music →
- Diplomas →

> Your Digital Grade opens doors to the worlds of education and industry in the same way your face-to-face Grade exam does. They carry the same Ofqual regulatory status, including UCAS points.
>
> **Trinity College London, Digital Grades and Diplomas**

Grades
Certificates
Diplomas

Tools and support from Trinity

Helping teachers focus on what matters most – the music.

Trinity's tools are designed to make teaching easier. Every resource, from digital platforms to printed publications, helps teachers spend less time managing and more time teaching.

Learn more about NoteLab Music →

NoteLab Music brings together intelligent tools for planning, feedback and progress tracking. SmartBook offers personalised content recommendations, while Trinity College London Press provides a vast range of repertoire and learning resources that support every step of the journey.

Trinity's support resources contain videos and tips on selected pieces and technical exercises, together with advice on recital preparation, repertoire ideas and interviews with inspirational musicians showing where your exams can take you – whether it be the studio, a function musician, touring or the concert stage.

All of this reflects Trinity's commitment to innovation and flexibility. Whether you teach in person or online, you can depend on reliable digital tools, inclusive materials and ongoing support to make your teaching more effective and enjoyable.

Support when you need it

A network of experienced, friendly Trinity Representatives help run our Public Exam Centres across the UK and Ireland. They are on hand to help you with bookings, queries and much more.

For our private Registered Exam Centres we have a dedicated team available to answer your queries, provide useful CPD support and help you with delivering successful exam sessions in your setting.

Exclusive resource: Piano sample booklet

Experience Trinity in action with a free piano sample booklet.

This guide includes a ready-made piano sample booklet created by Trinity's team of musicians and examiners. It gives teachers a hands-on way to explore our approach to progression, creativity and performance.

Access the interactive piano booklet here

Access here

Case studies and testimonials

Real stories, real progress

The impact of Trinity qualifications is best seen through the teachers and students who use them every day. These stories highlight how Trinity inspires creativity, builds confidence and supports teachers in guiding their students to real-world success.

All the songs are ones that the students really love; they span across so many contemporary styles and develop improvisation skills, sight-reading skills and achieve their goals.

Gaz Siggins, session musician, teacher and Trinity examiner

Engaging with the CME has changed my practice – I am now more confident working collaboratively and reflectively.

Zoë Challenor, Certificate for Music Educators (CME) learner

When I started teaching 25 years ago, I stayed with Trinity as my exam board of preference. The exam structure helps me set both short- and long-term goals for pupils. When they achieve the aim of their goal they feel a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Kate Griffin, founder of All Sorts of Music

Explore more case studies →

Watch a session drummer's testimonial →

Watch a piano teacher's testimonial →

Step in and start today

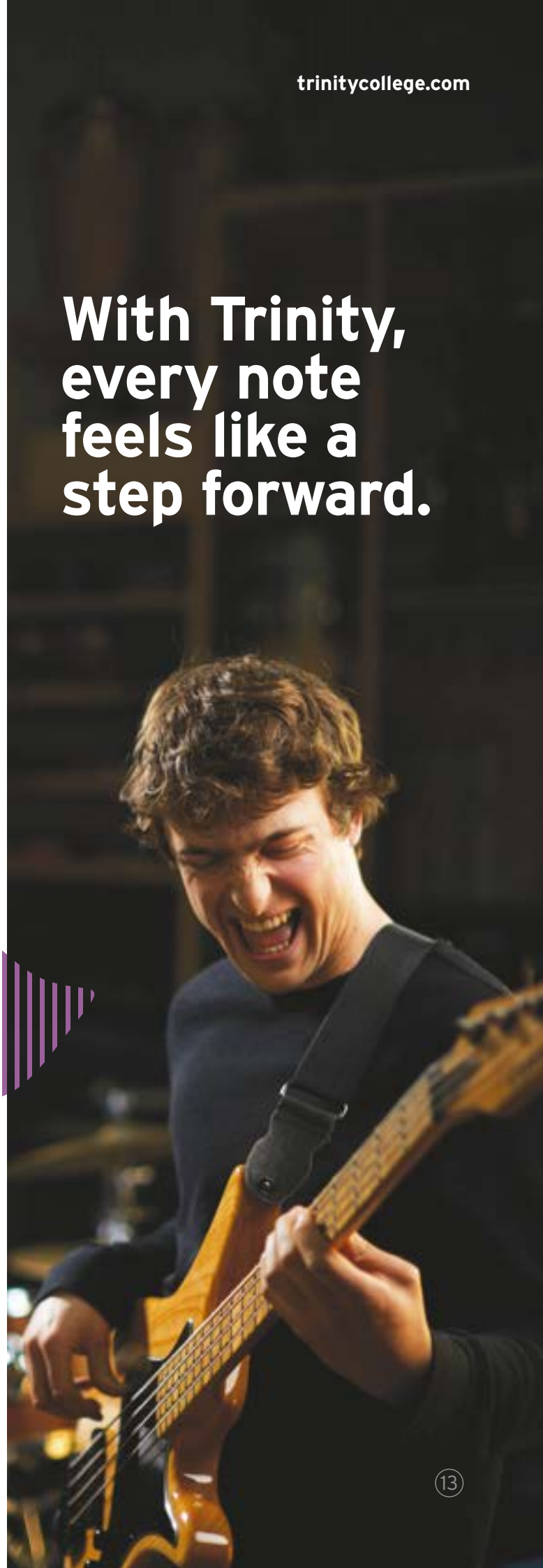
Join the global community that's shaping the future of music education

Whether you lead a department, teach privately or support your own child's musical journey, Trinity is here to help you turn passion into progress.

Download additional materials, explore the full range of syllabuses or connect with our local advisors to see how Trinity can support your goals. Together, we can inspire the next generation of musicians.

Full qualifications list →

Contact us →



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