

CMA Music Theory Curriculum

From Autumn 2025

Overview

Theory at CMA is taught in three classes:

Class	Music Explorers	Theory Builders	Theory Warriors
Level	Beginners-Grade 1	Grade 2-3	Grade 4-5
Duration of course	2 years	2 years	2-3 terms
Maximum numbers	Up to 40	Up to 40*	Up to 12
Cost to parents	Included in membership fee	Included in membership fee	£75 per term

Music Explorers and Theory Builders are both 2-year courses with a creative approach to developing reading and general musicianship. Specific elements of music theory are covered and consolidated over four years.

- The 'together' part of each class will develop general musicianship and understanding through practical activities, listening and creativity
- The 'divided' part of each class will cover specific elements of the grade 1 - 3 ABRSM music theory curriculum

Students should graduate from Theory Builders when they are ready to learn the remaining elements of the grade 4 and 5 ABRSM syllabus in Theory Warriors.

*As numbers rise, two leaders will be assigned to each group to enable division by experience.

Music Explorers

General Musicianship

- Talking music: understanding common terms for tempo, dynamics, expression and articulation
- Rhythm versus pulse:
 - Practical experience of making sounds in time with others / music / conductor
 - Playing a rhythm in time with a pulse or a different rhythm
- Listening:
 - Appreciation of music from all genres and cultures
 - Listening for instruments and their expressive qualities
 - Listening for pulse and time signature
 - Interpreting purpose, mood, story or emotion in music
- Musical instruments and voices:
 - Musical instrument classification
 - Seeing / hearing / identifying instruments in recorded music and in the orchestra
- Composition:
 - Creating and organising sounds to relay a narrative or express a mood
 - Composing and notating simple rhythms
 - Experimentation with sounds, including voice, body percussion, simple hand percussion and instruments
 - Sharing musical ideas, giving and receiving feedback, refining a composition
- Ensemble skills:
 - Listening, watching, taking direction, conducting / being conducted
 - Teamwork, coordinating own performance with other parts or with a given pulse
 - Informal performances of compositions

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Theory

- Note values:
 - Semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver and semiquaver, and their equivalent rests
 - Tied notes
 - Single dotted notes
- Time signatures:
 - 3/4, 4/4
 - Bar-lines and the grouping of notes and rests
- The stave:
 - Treble (G) and bass (F) clefs
 - Names of notes on the stave, including middle C in both clefs
 - Sharp, flat and natural signs, and their cancellation
- Major scales:
 - Construction including position of tones and semitones
 - Scales and key signatures of the major keys of C, G, D and F in both clefs, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (by number only)

Theory Builders

General Musicianship

- Create and compose music on their own and with others
- Understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated through pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notation
- Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Theory

- Consolidation of Music Explorers curriculum (see above)
- Time signatures:
 - 2/2, 3/2, 4/2, 3/8 - simple time
 - 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 - complex time
 - Grouping of notes and rests
- Note values:
 - Triplets, and triplet note groups with rests
 - The demisemiquaver and its equivalent rest
- The stave:
 - Extension beyond two ledger lines
 - Transposition at the octave from the treble clef to the bass clef, and vice versa
- Scales:
 - Relative major and minor keys
 - Construction of the minor scale (harmonic and melodic)
 - Scales and key signatures of major and minor (harmonic and melodic) keys up to and including four sharps and flats, including tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (number and type)