

RCM JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

Musicianship classes 2026-27

Course descriptions

June 2026

Please note that the inclusion in 2026-27's timetable of all elective and additional classes is subject to student and staff availability, and also to there being sufficient interest in each elective/additional class to make it viable.

FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

Dalcroze Eurhythmics

Content

In Dalcroze Eurhythmics, musicianship is experienced through active listening, connecting the body, mind and emotion in a fun and engaging way. Classes are taught barefoot.

In Dalcroze classes, rhythmics equipment and whole-body movement are used to increase musical expression, concentration, coordination and posture. Aural perception, body awareness and cooperation with others are developed through a range of listening games, songs and repertoire. Musical concepts such as meter, tempo, phrase, form, rhythm pattern, accent, and others are explored through creative movement, ear training, improvisation and composition. Studying physically, in a group with others, increases self-confidence, leadership skills and communication, refines the ability to sense and analyse music, and develops auditory memory/creativity.

Suitability and Progression

This course is suitable for our youngest students, including those who are new to the JD. Students will typically study Dalcroze alongside, or move on to, a Foundation Musicianship Class upon the successful completion of this class. Some students taking Core Musicianship (Fundamentals) are also eligible.

Foundation (F) and Foundation Short Course (FS)

Content

This one or two-year course will equip students with the skills they need to successfully move through the JD Core Musicianship programme. In this class, students will listen to a wide range of musical works and they will follow the JD Foundation Aural and Musicianship syllabus. To develop essential analysis skills, they will study one or more representative examples of:

- a movement from a Classical sonatina/sonata
- a Bach Invention
- a Baroque chorus
- a Classical opera aria

Suitability and Progression

This course is suitable for students who are new to the JD. Students will progress to Core Musicianship (Fundamentals), although other options may be available for older students. Additional Grade 5 Theory classes will be available, timetable permitting, for those who have successfully completed this course.

FOUNDATION ELECTIVE CLASS

Grade 5 Theory (Foundation Level, Additional Class) (T5)

Content

This class is a continuation and consolidation of Foundation level work; students opting for this class will be expected to take the ABRSM Grade 5 Theory examination in the Summer Term. This class is offered as an additional Musicianship class (typically 45 – 55 minutes) if timetabling and availability allows.

Suitability

This class is available, as an additional Musicianship class, to students who have completed a Foundation class and who have demonstrated that they are ready to benefit from this theory course.

CORE MUSICIANSHIP PROGRAMME

Core Musicianship (Fundamentals) (CMF)

Content

This one or two-year course has been designed for students in curriculum years 5 – 7. Students will follow the JD aural syllabus, and they will begin to explore and practise higher-level skills in harmony and analysis. In order to develop essential analytical skills, and to learn about important musical conventions and developments in the period of common practice, students will study a range of works, focussing on the identification and use of:

- Structures
- Musical devices
- Textures
- Instrumental timbres and ensembles

The fundamentals of harmony and counterpoint will be explored through theoretical, practical and analysis exercises.

Suitability and Progression

Students taking this course will have already have demonstrated a good understanding of the core skills covered at Foundation level and in ABRSM Grade 5 Theory. They will also have demonstrated a good level of aural perception (through their completion of the Foundation class **or** their responses at audition). Upon successful completion of this class, students will typically move on to Core Musicianship (Level 1).

Core Musicianship (Level 1) (CM1)

Content

This one or two-year course has been designed for students in curriculum years 8 – 10. Students will follow the JD aural syllabus, and they will explore and practise higher-level skills. To develop important analytical skills, and to learn about important musical structures, and compositional and harmonic conventions in the period of common practice, students will study a range of musical works. In addition, students will complete stylistic composition exercises, where they will learn how to:

- Harmonise a melody
- Compose one or two lines in counterpoint against a given bass
- Harmonise a chorale phrase in the style of J.S. Bach

Suitability and Progression

Students taking this course will have demonstrated a secure understanding of the skills covered in ABRSM Grade 5 Theory, and they will have demonstrated a good level of aural perception (through their completion of a Foundation class or CMF Class, **or** their responses at audition). Upon successful completion of this class, students will typically move on to a Level 1 elective class or, if they are moving into Year 10 or Year 11, Core Musicianship (Level 2).

Core Musicianship (Level 2) (CM2)

Content

This one or two-year course is designed for students in curriculum years 10 – 12. Students will continue to follow the JD aural syllabus, and they will explore and practice high-level harmony and analysis. To develop advanced analytical skills, and to learn about stylistic developments during the period of common practice and the early twentieth century, students will also study a range of musical works. In addition, students will complete stylistic composition exercises, where they will learn how to:

- Complete a melodic line over a figured bass
- Harmonise a chorale melody in the style of J.S.Bach (including modulation)

Suitability and Progression

Students taking this course will have demonstrated higher-level aural, theory and analysis skills in CM1, and many are likely to have completed Grade 6 Theory. Upon successful completion of this class, students are eligible to study the Advanced Musicianship course and, subject to timetabling and availability, Level 2 electives.

Core Musicianship (Short Course) (CMS)

Content

This one-year course is intended for students who enter the JD in Year 11 or above, and who have passed a Grade 5 level theory qualification. Students will follow the Level 1 aural and musicianship syllabus in the first term, before moving on to Level 2, when ready, to explore and practise high-level skills. In order to develop advanced analytical skills, and to learn about stylistic developments during the period of common practice and the early twentieth century, students will also study a range of musical works. These typically include:

- a movement from a Classical sonata/symphony
- a Baroque fugue
- a Romantic Lied

Suitability and Progression

On the successful completion of this class, students are eligible to study the Advanced Musicianship course and, subject to timetabling and availability, Level 2 electives.

CORE MUSICIANSHIP, ELECTIVE CLASSES

Level 1 electives are intended for students who have successfully completed Core Musicianship Level 1 (CM1). Note that all students are expected to complete at least one year of **Core Musicianship 2** by the **end of Year 11**.

Composition and Arranging (Level 1 Elective) (CA)

Content

A composition class gives students the opportunity to apply knowledge of theory and experience of practical musicianship to the practice of composition. Students will be encouraged, under the guidance of their teacher, to experiment (in terms of how to develop musical ideas and in finding new sound possibilities). Although the emphasis of this class is on creativity and discovery, continued aural and musicianship training (Level 1) remains a fundamental component.

Improvisation Class (Level 1 Elective) (Imp)

Content

An improvisation class gives students the opportunity to develop improvisation skills and techniques in a variety of styles from Baroque embellishment to jazz and beyond (eg intuitive group improvisation) both on your principal study instrument (where this is not the piano) and at the keyboard. Though the emphasis of this class is on creativity and discovery, continued aural training (Level 1) remains a fundamental component.

Music Theory and Analysis (Level 1 Elective) (MTA)

Content

This class will enable students to develop their understanding of higher-level theory and analysis skills, with a specific focus on the ABRSM Grade 6 Music Theory syllabus. Content will, however, be broader in scope, and there will be a significant aural component in each lesson. This will combine with practical work to provide a holistic understanding of the syllabus content. Students will have an opportunity to sit the Grade 6 theory exam at RCM at the end of the summer term.

Practical Musicianship (Level 1 Elective) (PM)

Content

In this class, there will be a particular emphasis on supporting and developing the work covered at Grade 6 level from a practical perspective (score reading skills, transposition, clef reading etc). Exercises will be completed on the student's first study instrument and at the keyboard. An introduction to keyboard harmony and figured bass will be included in this course. Students can take this class before, after or alongside a Core Musicianship (Level 2) class.

Grade 6 Theory (Level 1 Elective) (T6)

Content

This class is a continuation and consolidation of Level 1 work; students will be expected to take the ABRSM Grade 6 Theory examination in the Summer Term. It is taken as an additional Musicianship class (typically 45 – 55 minutes), if timetabling and availability allows.

Suitability

This class is available, as an additional Musicianship class, to students who have completed Core Musicianship Level 1 and who have demonstrated that they are ready to benefit from this higher-level theory course.

ADVANCED MUSICIANSHIP PROGRAMME

Advanced Musicianship (AM)

Content

This one course is designed for students in curriculum years 11 – 13. Students will continue to follow the JD aural syllabus, and they will explore and practice advanced level harmony and analysis. To develop advanced analytical skills, and to learn about stylistic developments during the period of common practice and the early twentieth century, students will also study a range of musical works. In addition, students will complete stylistic composition exercises, where they will learn how to:

- Complete a contrapuntal composition in the Baroque style
- Complete passages of melody and accompaniment in a classical piano piece or chamber work
- Harmonise a chorale melody in the style of J.S.Bach (including modulation and melodic decoration)

Suitability and Progression

Students taking this course will have demonstrated higher-level aural, theory and analysis skills in CM1, and many are likely to have completed Grade 6 Theory. Upon successful completion of this class, students are eligible to study Level 2 electives, subject to timetabling and availability.

ADVANCED ELECTIVE CLASSES

In most cases, Level 2 electives are available to students who have completed **either** Core Musicianship, Level 2 (CM2) or Core Musicianship, Short Course (CMS).

Advanced Theory Grade 7 (Level 2 Elective) (T7)

Content

T7 prepares students to take the ABRSM Grade 7 Theory Examination in the Summer Term. Core topics include figured bass, chorale realisation and analysis. Students in a T7 class will continue to develop complementary aural and practical musicianship skills.

Suitability

Students opting for a Grade 7 Theory class must have passed Grade 6 Theory **or** have successfully completed a CM2/CMS course.

Advanced Theory Grade 8 (Level 2 Elective) (T8)

Content

T8 prepares students to take the ABRSM Grade 8 Theory examination in the summer term. Students in a T8 class will continue to develop complementary aural and practical musicianship skills.

Suitability

Students opting for a Grade 8 Theory class must have completed the Grade 7 Theory course **and** CM2/CMS.

Advanced Analysis (Level 2 Elective) (AA)

Content

These classes are intended for students in Year 11 and above who have completed, or are currently working through, CM2. Students will complete in-depth studies of a range of works, drawn from across the period of common practice and the twentieth century. Work in this class will provide opportunities for students to consolidate their understanding of historical, analytical and theoretical studies and to utilise advanced aural skills. This class will be particularly useful for those preparing for Conservatoire/University music study.

Advanced Composition (Level 2 Elective) (Comp)

Content

An advanced composition class gives students the opportunity to apply knowledge of theory and experience of practical musicianship to the practice of composition. Students will be encouraged, under the guidance of their teacher, to experiment (in terms of how to develop musical ideas and in finding new sound possibilities). Rehearsal skills, which may involve conducting, will be developed. Although the emphasis of this class is on creativity and discovery, continued aural training remains a fundamental component.

Advanced Improvisation (Level 2 Elective) (Imp)

Content

An improvisation class gives students the opportunity to develop improvisation skills and techniques in a variety of styles from Baroque embellishment to jazz and beyond (e.g. intuitive group improvisation) both on your principal study instrument (where this is not the piano) and at the keyboard. Though the emphasis of this class is on creativity and discovery, continued aural training remains a fundamental component.

Aesthetics (Level 2 Elective) (Aesth)

Content

Students will explore academic discourse on themes including music and meaning, the value of music, music and beauty, and music's relationship with the other arts. This class is intended for students in years 12 and 13 who are preparing for undergraduate level study. Continued aural training remains a fundamental component.

Keyboard Harmony (Level 2 Elective) (KH)

Content

This course gives students the opportunity to explore advanced harmony from a practical perspective. It is intended for students who have completed an advanced music theory course (Grade 7 or 8) and who can demonstrate a higher level of proficiency at the keyboard (Grade 7 level or higher). Students will work through a more complex range of keyboard harmony exercises that will help to prepare them for undergraduate level courses.

Practical Musicianship and Keyboard Skills (Level 2 Elective) (PM2)

Content

This class is designed for older students who are not first study pianists, but who play to at least Grade 5 level. It will include an introduction to keyboard harmony and there will be a particular emphasis on supporting and developing the work covered at Grade 6 and 7 Theory from a practical perspective (score reading skills, reading figured bass, transposition etc).

Style Composition (Level 2 Elective) (SC)

Content

This class has been designed for students who are in Year 11 and above and who have completed a higher-level theory course (Grade 7 or 8). In this class, students will learn about important harmonic and compositional styles through analysis and the completion of stylistic composition exercises. Topics will include Bach chorales, baroque counterpoint and fugue, classical quartets and sonatas, nineteenth century miniatures and lieder. This class will be particularly useful for those completing stylistic exercises at A Level and those preparing for University music study.

Collaborative Piano (CP)

Content

This interdisciplinary class has been designed for pianists and singers. Art song will be a focus, with students performing and analysing set repertoire. The class will provide pianists with further opportunities to develop their accompanying skills.

ADDITIONAL CLASSES

Conducting Class (Additional Class - limited capacity) (Cond)

Content

These classes, taught by Robert Hodge, provide students with the opportunity to develop their conducting skills in a small group context.

Suitability

The class is open to applications from students in Years 9 and above, although priority is given to students in Years 12 and 13.

Sight Singing (Additional Class) (SS)

Content

These classes, taught by Christina Lawrie, provide first study singing students with the opportunity to develop their sight-singing skills in a small group context.