

Unit 27: Music Theory and Harmony

Unit code:	F/600/6961
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to develop skills and knowledge of music theory, in order to facilitate the practical application of essential theoretical principles.

● Unit introduction

This unit is designed to enable learners to gain theoretical knowledge that they can apply in practical situations such as rehearsals and performances. In addition, the unit gives learners the necessary language for copying, transcribing, composing and arranging music. There are many instances in the life of a working musician when theoretical knowledge is required, for example copying music for additional performers, transposing music to fit the ranges of different instruments or singers, clarifying written arrangements through the use of dynamics and expression markings. On completion of this unit, learners will have acquired a musical vocabulary and understanding of some of the fundamental skills to enable them to use theory in the working environment. Those gaining the highest grades will be expected to have the ability to apply this knowledge creatively in professional situations where time is limited.

This unit is designed for all musicians and can encompass all styles of music. Learners may want to use computer software packages to notate music, eg Sibelius, and this is encouraged where appropriate. However, learners must develop the underpinning knowledge in order to apply theoretical principles to practical situations, without the aid of technology.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to notate pitch, rhythm and harmony using staff notation
- 2 Be able to notate music, showing dynamics, tempo and expression
- 3 Be able to harmonise melodies using chords
- 4 Be able to transpose melody and harmony to various keys.

Unit content

1 Be able to notate pitch, rhythm and harmony using staff notation

Pitch: clefs (treble, bass and alto (viola clef)); note names; accidentals; intervals (simple and compound); scales (major, harmonic and melodic minor); key signatures (ALL major and minor)

Rhythm: bars, bar lines, double bar lines; all note values (including 'dotted' notes), all rest values (including 'dotted' rests); time signatures, simple time, compound time; correct note and rest groupings

Harmony: triads; primary chords; secondary chords; root position, first inversions, second inversions, 7th chords (major and minor), secondary 7th chords

2 Be able to notate music, showing dynamics, tempo and expression

Dynamics: changes in volume; crescendo; diminuendo; use of text, use of signs and symbols

Tempo: beats per minute (bpm); Italian and English terms; changes in tempo

Expression: staccato; legato; slurs; accents; phrase marks, instrumental techniques eg bowing, double-stopping, bending, glissando, trills, pedal marks, etc

3 Be able to harmonise melodies using chords

Harmonise melodies using chords: adding chords to melodies; harmonising individual melody notes – range of available chords for each scale note; block chords

4 Be able to transpose melody and harmony to various keys

Transpose: eg to and from all keys, for F, Bb and Eb instruments

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 use staff notation to write pitch, rhythm and harmony with few errors	M1 use staff notation to write pitch, rhythm and harmony, accurately	D1 use staff notation to write pitch, rhythm and harmony, accurately and within appropriate contexts
P2 notate music using dynamic, tempo and expression markings	M2 notate music showing different methods of applying dynamic, tempo and expression markings	D2 notate music showing different methods of applying dynamic, tempo and expression markings accurately and within appropriate contexts
P3 apply appropriate primary and secondary chords in the harmonisation of melodies	M3 apply appropriate primary, secondary and 7th chords in the harmonisation of melodies	D3 apply appropriate primary, secondary and 7th chords in the harmonisation of melodies, showing some creativity
P4 transpose melodies and harmonic progressions to major and minor keys, with few errors, using staff notation.	M4 transpose melodies and harmonic progressions to major and minor keys, accurately, using staff notation.	D4 transpose complex melodies and harmonic progressions to major and minor keys, accurately, using staff notation.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For this unit, learners should have access to equipment to play recordings where necessary and also to record practical sessions for monitoring and assessment. Assessment will be through learners' portfolios of written and recorded evidence.

Ideally, this unit should be delivered through a combination of lecture-based and practical sessions. Learners should be encouraged to demonstrate their ability to read appropriate forms of notation in a practical way. Recognition of different components of music should also be tested in a practical way, perhaps by short listening tasks that demonstrate that learners can hear harmonic, rhythmic and melodic development. All of the tasks should allow learners to explore a variety of musical traditions so that they can recognise different elements across a number of styles. Certain components may be more easily demonstrated by examples from the Western classical tradition but this unit need not be delivered entirely through Western classical music.

This unit should be delivered through a range of activities but mainly through listening and practical work. Learners should be introduced to the components of music in ways with which they feel comfortable as well as challenged. Introducing the concepts and ideas to learners through music with which they are familiar would be a positive starting point. Learners should have the opportunity to investigate and explore a wide variety of musical styles over the course of this unit. When exploring different types of score and notation, learners should be encouraged to work practically with resources. Discussions about graphic scores and different interpretations are likely to lead to a greater depth of understanding. Work on realising a graphic score is best carried out in groups.

Whilst this unit covers the theoretical basis of music, dry theory lessons should be avoided as far as possible.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit – whole class activity.
<i>Be able to notate pitch, rhythm and harmony using staff notation</i> – ongoing whole-class activity.
Assignment 1: Pitch, Rhythm and Harmony – P1, M1, D1
Assessment feedback and review learning outcome 1.
<i>Be able to notate music, showing dynamics, tempo and expression</i> – ongoing whole-class activity.
Assignment 2: Dynamics, Tempo and Expression – P2, M2, D2
Assessment feedback and review learning outcome 2.
<i>Be able to harmonise melodies using chords</i> – ongoing whole-class activity.
Assignment 3: Harmonising Melodies – P3, M3, D3
Assessment feedback and review learning outcome 3.
<i>Be able to transpose melody and harmony to related keys</i> – ongoing whole-class activity.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 4: Transposing – P4, M4, D4

Assessment feedback and review learning outcome 4.

Be able to transpose melody and harmony – ongoing whole class activity.

Assessment

Much of this unit should be assessed using vocational scenarios. This will provide interesting and relevant assessment activities for learners. An obvious approach is to assess as much of the content as possible in association with other units. For example:

Learning outcomes 1 and 2 could be integrated into composing assignments involving the production of scores and parts in staff notation. This can be linked to MIDI sequencing if learners use technology to compose. Learning outcome 3 could be integrated with musical arranging activities involving the harmonisation of a melody and the transposition of the individual harmonies for different instruments.

Learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 could be linked with rehearsal and performance units – learners may need to create instrumental and vocal parts for rehearsal and performance. Parts may need transposing to fit instrumental or vocal ranges.

Learning outcomes 1 and 2 could be integrated with aural skills activities involving the transcription of rhythm, harmony and melody. Learning outcome 4 could be integrated with musical arranging or performance units. For example, keyboard harmony parts in staff notation may need to be rewritten as chord charts for guitarists.

These examples represent just a few ideas. It is expected that tutors will find other creative methods for integrated assessment of this unit.

Despite the obvious need for integrated activities, stand-alone assessments need not be ruled out. Learners should be prepared to complete theoretical tasks within a limited period of time. This is not just to prepare them for higher education entry tests, but also to give them an awareness that sometimes these tasks have to be carried out quickly. For example, an instrumental part in concert pitch may need rewriting for a transposing instrument minutes before a performance.

Although much of this unit can be assessed through work generated using computers, it is essential that learners demonstrate the underlying knowledge to perform all theoretical tasks, such as transposition (learning outcome 4) and chord identification and construction (learning outcome 3) without the aid of technology.

Evidence for this unit can be generated in a variety of ways. Learners may wish to show their knowledge of music theory through any or a number of the following: written examples; audio examples; by demonstrating on their instrument; a presentation to their peers.

The following information provides guidance on what learners need to do to satisfy the grading criteria. However, it is not the intention to imply that the grading criteria should be assessed in isolation from each other.

Learning outcome 1 deals with the actual writing of pitch, rhythm and harmony using conventional staff notation. For P1, learners should be able to notate these elements with just a small number of errors. For M1, the learner should be able to notate accurately. For D1, learners must notate clearly and accurately.

Learning outcome 2 concerns dynamics, tempo and expression markings. Once the learner has a basic grasp of the concepts, assessment could be made either through written work or through the use of practical exercises or, indeed, a combination of the two. For P2, learners should be able to identify examples of a range of relevant markings both visually (on scores) and aurally, via played examples. For M2, learners should demonstrate the ability to use different methods of notating dynamics, tempo and expression markings. For D2, in addition to the accurate notation of these markings, learners should be able to explain some of the conventions involved, eg why Italian terms are used in some types of music, but English is used in others.

Learning outcome 3 brings in the element of harmony. Learners need to ‘apply appropriate primary and secondary chords’ chords. This means that they should be able to recognise different chords both visually and aurally and then be able to apply them appropriately. For P3, the learner needs to be able to apply primary and secondary chords in the harmonisation of melodies. At this level, melodies might include accidentals and/or modulations. For M3, they should add 7th chords (major and minor 7ths) where appropriate. For D3, they should show some imagination and creativity in their choices of harmonies. It will be of enormous use to learners if they can develop a good facility in the use of these chords, especially in a range of keys.

Learning outcome 4 introduces transposition. At this level, learners should be expected to be familiar with ALL major and minor keys. For the purpose of assessment, learners should transpose melodies and harmonies both with and without key signatures, so as to become familiar with the use of accidentals. To satisfy P4, learners should show that they can transpose melodies and harmonies with few errors. For M4, the transpositions should be accurate. In order to gain D4, learners should transpose complex melodic and harmonic material to major and minor keys, accurately.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Pitch, Rhythm and Harmony	In preparation for performance and composition work, you are required to improve your level of theoretical knowledge.	Answers may be written or practical, as directed by the tutor.
P2, M2, D2	Dynamics, Tempo and Expression	To use appropriate dynamic, tempo and expression marks in your own performances, arrangements or compositions, you need to gain an understanding of these elements of music.	Answers may be written or practical, as directed by the tutor.
P3, M3, D3	Harmonising Melodies	You need to develop the skills to enable you to apply effective harmony to your compositions and arrangements,	Answers will be written or practical, as directed by the tutor.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P4, M4, D4	Transposing	So that you can compose and/or arrange music for different instruments, you need to learn how to transpose music effectively.	Answers will be written or practical, as directed by the tutor.

Links to other BTEC units

This unit forms part of the BTEC Music and Music Technology sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Music and Music Technology suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Aural Perception Skills
		Composing Music
		Arranging Music

Essential resources

The centre should provide a wide range of recordings of different music, including Western classical music, contemporary art music, popular music, jazz music and music from around the world. There should be adequate facilities for learners to be able to listen to these examples. Access to a range of scores is required, including graphic scores.

There should be sufficient space for learners to be able to work in groups as appropriate. Where possible, learners will benefit from access to keyboards to be used as tools to underpin theoretical concepts.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Creative thinkers	creating and experimenting with harmony for musical effect.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	following scores and musical parts to familiarise notation techniques
Creative thinkers	suggesting chord voicing and page layouts
Reflective learners	considering the needs of others, musicality, idiomatic writing.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	using notation packages and sequencing packages to notate music
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	using notation packages and sequencing packages to notate music
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	using notation packages and sequencing packages to notate music.