Department of Music

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Programs of Study

The Department of Music at the University of Chicago offers the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in three areas: composition, ethnomusicology and the history and theory of music.

The program in composition is designed to develop students’ creative and technical abilities at writing new music. Students take individual composition lessons with faculty members, often studying with more than one faculty member in the course of their residence. Students also receive training in a wide variety of related areas and skills, including score reading and conducting, orchestration, musical analysis, twentieth century styles, historical periods and computer music. A portion of this training will lead to the development of a minor field in ethnomusicology, musicology, theory and analysis or research in computer music. There is a weekly seminar for all of the students in the composition program, designed to broaden the perspectives and address the problems of aspiring composers.

The program in ethnomusicology prepares students to carry out scholarship and writing about the place of music in various cultures. Students receive grounding in cultural theory, anthropology, ethnographic methods, problems in cross-cultural musical analysis, and a variety of world and popular musics. They also conduct fieldwork on some of these musics. The program is interdisciplinary, drawing upon course offerings in music, anthropology and a variety of area studies.
The program in music history and theory prepares students to carry out various kinds of scholarship and writing about music, especially (but not solely) in traditions of European and American repertories. Students may emphasize either the historical or theoretical side of scholarship, according to their interests, and may also choose to pursue a minor field in composition. Students emphasizing music history typically concentrate on varieties of musicology that include cultural history, textual criticism, stylistic studies, institutional history, hermeneutics and critical theory. Students emphasizing music theory typically concentrate on detailed analysis of individual works, clusters of works (by genre or composer, for example), theoretical systems and the history of theory. Most students who complete the Ph.D. in music history and theory seek academic employment, but others have gone on to work in fields such as publishing, operatic production, and commercial editing.

The Degree of Master of Arts

Students seeking a master’s degree should apply to the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH), a three-quarter program of interdisciplinary study. MAPH students often take classes with students in the Ph.D. programs. Further details about the MAPH program are available at http://maph.uchicago.edu/

FINANCIAL AID

PhD students who matriculate in Summer 2020 and after will be guaranteed to have funding support from the University of Chicago, external sources, or a combination of the two for the duration of their program to include the following:

● Full tuition coverage
● Annual stipend
● Fully paid individual annual premiums for UChicago’s student health insurance (U-SHIP, the University Student Health Insurance Plan)

The goal of the University’s commitment to ensuring that students are supported is to allow students to prioritize their studies and prepare for rewarding careers. We expect students to remain in good academic standing and to be making progress toward completing degree requirements.

Students in the Division of the Humanities who entered their PhD program in Summer 2016 or later, and who are still enrolled in 2022-2023 will be fully incorporated into this new funding model, and will receive at least the guaranteed stipend level (subject to applicable taxes), full tuition coverage, and fully paid health insurance premiums for the duration of their program. Students are expected to remain in good academic standing.

Students who matriculated before Summer 2016 will receive at least the funding they were offered at the time of admission and may be eligible for additional funding, such as dissertation completion fellowships. Over the past several years, the Division of the Humanities has increased investments in funding to support students in degree completion.

Additional fellowships and awards are available to support language study, conference travel, and research travel.

Pedagogical training is a required component of doctoral education, and University resources can help students acquire the skills and experiences they need to feel at ease in the classroom, whether leading a discussion section, lecturing in the Humanities Common Core, or teaching a course of their own design.

COURSES

The following provides a general outline of educational opportunities and degree requirements in the programs, but in no way replaces the detailed information given to all prospective students and enrolled students in the department. Up to date information about academic programs and courses is available on the website of the Music Department at http://music.uchicago.edu (http://music.uchicago.edu/).

During the first two years of study students take a number of required offerings (numbered between 30000 and 39900) including analysis courses, proseminars in historical periods and in ethnomusicology, courses on particular skills and individual composition lessons, depending on their programs of study. At the same time they take seminars (numbered above 41000), which tend to be more specialized and more advanced. About half of a student’s schedule consists of electives, which may include non-required courses in the department, courses given outside the department and reading courses (i.e. independent studies).

Students entering the program without a master’s degree in music from another institution take seventeen courses during the first two years of registration (before taking comprehensive exams). Those entering with a master’s degree from another institution normally take nine courses in the first year of registration (before taking comprehensive exams). Composers entering without a master’s degree take twelve courses in their first two years, and those with a master’s will take nine courses in their first year. All composers take three years of regularly scheduled lessons, followed by meetings with their advisors. In addition to courses and other requirements (listed below), students who wish to obtain an M.A. must submit two seminar papers, or a composition of at least eight minutes, for approval by the faculty.

During the second two years of study, students in the scholarly programs are required to take three seminars, and students in composition are expected to develop a minor field of four courses. Standard minors for
composition students include ethnomusicology, musicology, theory and analysis, or computer music research. After the comprehensive exams, students fulfill remaining requirements and begin work on the dissertation (see below).

Students entering their program of study without a master’s degree in music can expect to complete their course work in three or four years. Those entering with a master’s can expect to complete their course work in two or three years.

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

Students ordinarily take comprehensive exams (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Comprehensive_Examinations) just prior to the beginning of the third year in the program. Analysis exams are typically offered earlier in the summer, at the conclusion of the spring term in June. Students entering with a master’s degree in music from another institution have the option of taking their exams at the beginning of their second year.

Students in composition take three comprehensive examinations:
- The composition of a work based on a set of given guidelines
- An oral examination on six compositions from the repertory
- A close analysis of a single work or movement

Students in ethnomusicology take examinations distributed over four components:
- Conceptual Foundations: essays covering broad issues of theoretical importance to ethnomusicology and musicology.
- Cultural Areas: two sets of essays demonstrating knowledge of two world musical cultural areas
- A Repertory Exam of four items, drawn from a list of sixteen (ten recorded, six notated)
- A close analysis of a musical work, selected by faculty prior to administration of the examination from three options:
  a. An ethnomusicological example (which may involve transcription from a recording, analysis of a previous transcription, or some combination of these)
  b. A tonal Western example
  c. An atonal Western example

Students in history and theory take examinations distributed over four components (within some distribution guidelines):
- The identification of musical scores or excerpts drawn from European traditions of the 9th to the 21st centuries. Students pursuing a minor field in composition may substitute a two-hour oral examination on musical repertory
- History concentrators will take two sets of essays on the history of European traditions, corresponding to the four proseminars in music history (Music 32500, 32600, 32700, and 32800). Theory concentrators will take two sets of essays: a history set on music before or after 1800, and a set of essays in the history of music theory
- A close analysis of a single work or movement, to be selected from tonal analysis or atonal analysis
- One further set of essays, to be drawn from the following:
  - a set of essays in Conceptual Foundations of Musical Scholarship (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Ethno_conceptual_foundations)
  - a further set of essays in History (for theorists) or in the History of Music Theory (for historians)
  - a further analysis exam (tonal, atonal, or ethnomusicological)
  - an ethnomusicological cultural area (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Ethno_cultural_areas)

While coursework helps prepare students for comprehensive exams, students are expected to be enterprising in their efforts to determine both areas of weakness that they need to work on, and ways to synthesize and interrelate knowledge about history, repertory, theory, and so forth. Students should expect to spend an extended period of time engaged in intensive individual study in preparation for comprehensive exams, particularly during the summer before taking them.

**SPECIAL FIELD EXAMINATION/DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

After having passed the comprehensive exams, students in music history and theory and in ethnomusicology also take a two-part oral exam at some time during the third or fourth year. For students in ethnomusicology, the first part of the oral tests the student's knowledge of, and ability for, synthetic thought within a selected area of world music. For all students, the exam is a defense of the dissertation prospectus, demonstrating the propriety and feasibility of the topic and the student's knowledge of the existing literature about it. Normally students take this exam in the third or fourth year. The exam is administered by the student's
dissertation committee (often including a person from outside the department), with additional faculty members sometimes attending as well.

**Dissertation**

For students in music history and theory and in ethnomusicology the dissertation for the Ph.D. consists of a book length study that makes an original contribution to research and thought. Students in composition must complete a large scale composition that shows professional competence, which should be completed and defended by the end of the fourth year. All students are required to defend the dissertation before receiving the degree.

**Language Examinations**

Language Examinations ([https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Language_Examinations](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Language_Examinations)) are administered by the Language Center, and are focused on reading comprehension. In the case of languages not offered by the Language Center, the Department will make arrangement for a written translation exam. Specific details about language requirements are listed in the curriculum for each area of study.

**Musicianship Examinations**

Examinations in practical musicianship skills ([https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Musicianship_Examinations](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Musicianship_Examinations)) are administered by the Department of Music. These include examinations in basic musicianship skills and advanced musicianship skills. Examinations in basic musicianship include musical dictation, sight singing, and sight reading at the piano or another instrument in the Western musical tradition. Advanced musicianship skills include three skills to be realized at the piano (for students with advanced keyboard skills) or realized in written form (for students with no advanced keyboard skills): figured bass, reading of open vocal scores in old clefs and orchestral score reading (with a 24-hour preparation period). Other advanced musicianship skills are atonal dictation, transcription of music from oral or improvisatory traditions, improvisation in an improvisatory tradition, and playing in a University ensemble for at least one year concluding with a public concert. Students may petition to play in a recognized performing group other than official University ensembles. Students may also petition to fulfill the ensemble requirement through a solo performance in a university concert.

The number and kind of musicianship examinations for composition, ethnomusicology, history, and theory vary according to the respective programs as specified in the department’s Graduate Curriculum ([https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Musicianship_Examinations](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview_Exams_Musicianship_Examinations)). Musicianship examinations are given during each of the three quarters. There is no limit to the number of examinations a student may take at a single sitting, and no limit to the number of times that a student may retake a musicianship examination. The Department offers free, informal, non-credit instruction in these skills. Instruction will be offered on an individual basis. The Department is not obligated to offer instruction in the area chosen by the student.

All departmental master’s degrees require successful completion of two musicianship examinations, except composition, which requires successful completion of three.

**Colloquium**

The Colloquium is a series of lectures followed by discussion and normally given by speakers from other institutions who are specially invited by the Music Department to share their recent research or compositions with students and faculty. Attendance at a total of six quarters of colloquium is required, and students may register for colloquium in any quarter. Students must attend at least half of the lectures in a given term to fulfill the colloquium requirement for that term.

**Graduate Teaching**

Students are trained to become scholars through coursework, reading lists, qualifying exams, writing a dissertation, and above all through advising and mentoring. Similarly, students are trained to become teachers through pedagogical training and corresponding teaching assignments to prepare them for future careers and to make them competitive on the job market. Within this pedagogical training plan, there exist a number of opportunities for teaching during students’ graduate careers. The various teaching opportunities range from assistantships to individual course assignments for which students have virtually full responsibility. The kinds of courses taught or assisted by graduate students include those in history, appreciation, theory, ear training, and world music. A student’s teaching experience typically will be structured progressively, e.g. beginning with Writing Internships and Teaching Assistantships and leading to a Graduate Student Lectureship in the student’s discipline and/or in the College Core Curriculum.

In addition to these assignments, students may be nominated for Stuart Tave Teaching Fellowships in the Humanities Collegiate Division, which allow advanced graduate students in the humanities to teach upper level undergraduate courses in their own areas of research.
PERFORMING ACTIVITIES

Students are expected to be able to perform creditably on some instrument or to sing, and candidates for the degree are encouraged to participate in one or more of the performance organizations on campus supported by the Department of Music. These include the University Symphony Orchestra, University Chamber Orchestra, University Wind Ensemble, University Chorus, Women’s Ensemble, Motet Choir, Rockefeller Chapel Choir, Percussion Ensemble, Chamber Music, Early Music Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Middle Eastern Music Ensemble, and South Asian Music Ensemble. The Piano Program and the Vocal Studies Program offer intensive study in those areas with private instruction, master classes and quarterly performance opportunities.

APPLICATION

Applicants to the programs in music history and theory and in ethnomusicology will be asked to submit two papers as samples of their previous works in addition to the usual application forms, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and GRE scores. In addition to these materials, applicants in composition will be asked to submit scores, preferably three, and recordings if available, digitally or in hard copy.

In addition to their scholastic skills, students need at least a modicum of proficiency in fundamental musical skills in order to succeed in the program. It is expected that entering students have competence in playing a musical instrument or singing, as well as possess basic skills in ear training and music theory.

Prospective applicants seeking more detailed information about the course requirements, exams, etc. than is given here should refer to the Graduate Curriculum.

Further information about the various aspects of the graduate program, such as course descriptions and the Graduate Curriculum (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/musiccurriculum/#Overview), can also be obtained from the Department of Music’s home page on the World Wide Web, http://music.uchicago.edu. Students interested in the program can apply online.

The application process for admission and financial aid for all graduate programs in Humanities is administered through the divisional Office of the Dean of Students. The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions, deadlines and department specific information is available online at http://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions/.

International students must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Questions pertaining to admissions and aid should be directed to humanitiesadmissions@uchicago.edu or (773) 702-1552.