UNLV School of MUSIC

COMPOSITION/THEORY DIVISION HANDBOOK

2016-2017
DISCLAIMER AND LIMITATIONS

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Welcome!

Comprised of faculty of national and international reputation, the School of Music at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has been Nevada's principal venue for the composition and performance of new music for many years.

The composition program at UNLV trains students who wish to pursue professional and/or academic careers in music composition. Student composers benefit from a variety of opportunities to hear their works performed. These performance opportunities include N.E.O.N. (Nevada Encounters of New Music), NEXTET, and the numerous UNLV ensembles.

Starting in 2007, N.E.O.N., a festival and symposium directed by Virko Baley, has amplified UNLV's visibility in the area of contemporary music.

NEXTET, UNLV's contemporary music ensemble founded by Virko Baley, has a history that goes back to the early 1970s. NEXTET has performed hundreds of contemporary works, including dozens of world premieres. Currently co-directed by Charles Halka and Cynthia Wong, NEXTET presents music by faculty, guest, and student composers.

UNLV has several ensembles, such as the UNLV Symphony Orchestra as well as choral and wind ensembles, which offer a rich array of performance opportunities for composition students.

The department has featured renowned guest composers including Steven Stucky, Roger Reynolds, Libby Larsen, Bernard Rands, Paul Chihara, Zhou Long, John Harbison, Stephen Hartke, among others.

The Music Department offers degrees for Bachelor of Music in Composition and Master of Music in Theory/Composition.

The composition program at UNLV is committed to providing the students with the most comprehensive experience in the field of music composition. Faculty encourages creative work for different media, and provides hand-in-hand experience in the professional field of new music.

We sincerely hope that you find your educational experience at UNLV most valuable and exciting. Our best wishes for a productive year
COMPOSITION/THEORY FACULTY

Full-time Faculty:

Dr. Diego Vega, Assistant Professor of Composition/Theory, division coordinator  
Office: HFA 233  
Office phone: (702) 895-5040  
Email: diego.vega@unlv.edu

Dr. Cynthia Wong, Assistant Professor of Composition/Theory  
Office: HFA 230A  
Office phone: 702-895-4471  
Email: cynthia.wong@unlv.edu

Dr. Jennifer Bellor, Visiting Lecturer in Composition/Theory  
Office: HFA 218  
Office phone: (702) 895-  
Email: jennifer.bellor@unlv.edu

Dr. Charles Halka, Visiting Lecturer in Composition/Theory  
Office: HFA 208  
Office phone: (702) 895-0813  
Email: charles.halka@unlv.edu

Part-time Faculty:

Julie Ivy, part-time instructor in theory  
Email: jmivy@writeme.com

Dr. Jocelyn Jensen, part-time instructor in theory  
Email: jensen.jocelyn9@cox.net
PART I: UNDERGRADUATE BACHELOR OF MUSIC IN COMPOSITION - DEGREE CONCENTRATION

Students in the bachelor of music in composition must declare an area of performance concentration:

a) Piano
b) Other instruments
c) Vocal

A jazz option of an additional 19 credits is also available.

ADMISSION POLICIES:

Students applying as undergraduate freshmen must meet the minimum requirements listed below.

The School of Music requires a minimum GPA of 3.0.

Transfer Policies: Transfer students must meet the cumulative GPA of 2.30 with a 2.70 GPA in the area of concentration. Transfer students will be placed in the appropriate applied level based on the audition for their area of performance concentration. All entering music majors and those transferring from other institutions must take a theory placement examination.

Theory Placement Examination: This exam tests the student’s level of theory knowledge and ear training and determines if he/she needs to take an introductory music theory course. All entering music majors and those transferring from other institutions must take a theory placement examination. Examinations are given the first day of the semester during the theory class.

Students may not retake placement exam or take it later than the first semester of matriculation. Students who don’t take this test need to register for MUS 102E and MUS 102F.

To prepare for this test, it is recommended that students review:

1. Recognition (aural and visual) and writing of key signatures of all major and minor keys in treble and bass clef
2. Recognition (aural and visual) and writing of scales, intervals, and triads in root position and inversions in treble and bass clef
3. Ability to sight read and play at the keyboard basic music notation in treble and bass clef
4. Ability to play at the keyboard and aurally differentiate intervals in one octave, triads (major, minor, augmented, diminished), and scales (major, natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor)
5. Ability to take melodic dictation of simple diatonic melodies or rhythmic phrases in binary and ternary meters

Suggested bibliography:


DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to the online Undergraduate Catalog and/or the attached degree checksheets for the requirements for the Bachelor of Music in Composition. Freshman and Sophomore students must make appointment with the College of Fine Arts Advising Center (see ADVISEMENT section on page 8.) before registering for classes. Below, a sample course schedule for the freshman year:

**First Semester:**
MUS 113 Fundamentals of Music Composition, 2 cr.
MUS 201 Musicianship I (Theory and Aural Skills), 3 cr.
MUSE ___ Ensemble, 1 cr.
MUSA___ Applied Lesson, 2 cr.
MUS 109 Functional Piano I, 2 cr.
MUS 100, Recital Attendance, 0 cr.
ENG 101, 3 cr.
HIST 100, 2 cr.

**Second Semester:**
MUS 213 Fundamentals of Music Composition, 2 cr.
MUS 131 Introduction to Music Literature, 3 cr.
MUS 202 Musicianship II (Theory and Aural Skills), 3 cr.
MUSE ___ Ensemble, 1 cr.
MUSA ___ Applied Lesson, 2 cr.
MUS 110 Functional Piano II, 2 cr.
MUS 100, Recital Attendance, 0 cr.
ENG 102, 3 cr.
FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC COMPOSITION

All incoming freshmen must register for MUS 113 Fundamentals of Music Composition. Students are allowed to register for MUSA 451 Private Composition after they have passed MUS 113 and MUS 213, and have received approval from the composition faculty.

PIANO PROFICIENCY

Functional piano must be taken in sequence: MUS 109, 110, 209, 210. Private piano study can be taken in lieu of Functional Piano. Composition majors must pass the piano proficiency exam for composers before enrolling in senior level Private Composition.

Composition Major Students taking the Piano Proficiency test are expected to be able to play, as a minimum:

1. All major or minor scales in 2 octaves
2. Sight-read a Bach chorale and pieces from Books 1 & 2 of Bartok's Mikrokosmos.
3. Perform works on the level of Mozart's and Clementi's Sonatinas, Beethoven's Sonata Op. 49, Schoenberg's Op. 19, Schumann's Scenes from Childhood, etc.
4. Realize figured bass exercises on the piano to show practical knowledge of keyboard harmony. Recommended textbook: R.O. Morris, Figured Harmony at the Keyboard, Part 1, Oxford University Press

RECITALS AND RECITAL HEARINGS

Each student must present a half recital (20 min.) in the junior year and a full recital (40 min.) in the senior year. Students present a junior recital in their area of performance concentration (piano, instrumental, vocal) or, with special approval of the composition faculty, a recital of the student’s own compositions. The senior year recital consists of a full-length recital (40 minutes minimum) of the student’s original compositions.

Prior to the scheduled Junior, Senior, and Master Recital, students are required to schedule a hearing of their recital repertoire with the composition faculty. The date of this hearing will be scheduled based on everyone’s availability one month prior to the recital. At the hearing, 75% of the music should be ready to share with the faculty, upon which the student will receive feedback.

APPLIED INSTRUMENTAL/VOICE LESSONS

Each composition major, while taking applied lessons in his/her instrument or voice, must perform regularly in a studio or repertory class. Those who are enrolled in Applied Music (MUSA) level III or higher also must appear in scheduled student convocations at
the discretion of the instructor, but not less than once each semester. Each composition major, while taking Applied Music for Majors, must appear before a departmental jury at the end of each semester for performance examination and grading recommendations.

RECITAL ATTENDANCE

All music majors must attend a minimum of ten on-campus recitals and/or concerts for eight semesters of full-time registration as part of their graduation requirement. Students not fulfilling this requirement will not be recommended for graduation (see MUS 100 in the UNLV Undergraduate Catalog).

Composition majors taking private composition lessons or Fundamentals of Music Composition MUS 113/213 are required to attend all Composition Area and new music events including but not limited to NEXTEM concerts, new music events, recitals by guest artists, et al. Unexcused absence to each Composition Area or new music event will negatively affect the final MUSA 451 or MUS 113/213 grade at the instructor’s discretion and/or as stated in the course syllabus.

ENSEMBLES

All music majors will be required to take ensemble courses appropriate to the major, as determined by the department, every semester throughout the first eight semesters of the degree program. All students electing additional ensembles will be required to audition and get permission from the department. Times and places of auditions will be announced.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To ensure satisfactory progress, students are required to register concurrently for Basic/Advanced Musicianship MUS 201, 202, 303, 304, 404 (E and F) and Functional Piano MUS 109, 110, 209, 210 (or private piano study) each semester until these sequences are completed. Composition majors must pass all Musicianship and Functional Piano courses with a grade no lower than a B.

ADVISEMENT

Freshman and Sophomore students must make an appointment to meet with an advisor
It is the student’s responsibility to meet with his/her advisor once per semester, at which time an advising sheet will be completed with the recommended course schedule for the following semester.

**MUSA 451 PRIVATE COMPOSITION**

In order to be considered for advancement to the upper level private lessons (MUSA 451) students must have successfully completed four semesters of music theory, MUS 131 and made satisfactory progress towards their degree. In addition, students are expected to pass the piano proficiency exam for composers.

After at least 2 semesters of Fundamentals of Music Composition (MUS 113/213) and Basic/Advanced Musicianship (MUS 201, 202, 303, 304 E and F) have been fulfilled with a grade no lower than a B, and/or with permission by the composition faculty, composition majors may fill out a request to register for MUSA 451, Private Composition. The composition faculty will assign a composition instructor for each student based on the student’s particular needs and availability of the faculty.

**Composition Lessons Expectations**

**Composition**: A minimum of compositional work is expected each week, including:

- coherent sketches of musical ideas composed or developed during the previous week
- a thorough exploration of developmental possibilities from the musical ideas
- the adherence to a compositional plan for each piece or set of pieces
- references to repertoire from the 20th and 21st Centuries
- weekly progress towards the completion of their compositions for the semester.

**Notation**: The students should be able to notate their music proficiently and accurately by hand and to transcribe it to the computer with all performance and...
expression details using notation software (Sibelius, Finale, MuseScore). When the music is already transcribed in the notation software, the student should bring a printed hard copy of the score to each lesson.

**Performance:** The students should be able to play on an instrument, conduct, or sing gestures, motives, lines, textures or phrases from their weekly work. In addition, MIDI performances or recordings are useful to get an idea of the music composed as a whole.

**Talk about the music:** The students should be able to talk about the structure, the content, and the technical and expressive aspects of their music in an articulate manner.

**Repertoire:** In agreement with their instructor, the students should establish a reference repertoire that will serve as a model for certain aspects of their composition. The students should be well acquainted with this repertoire both aurally and analytically.

**Minimum requirements for Freshman and Sophomores:**

By the end of the 4th semester, the student must have mastered the following forms and have a portfolio of the following examples:

- A short cycle of miniatures for piano, exploring simple forms (binary, ternary, dance forms, aria da capo, ritornello forms, etc).
- Excerpts or exercises of 2 or 3-voice contrapuntal composition, along the lines of Bach's Inventions and Bartok's polyphonic pieces in Mikrokosmos.
- At least one vocal piece (voice and piano or voice and a small group of instruments).
- At least one example of theme and variations: for piano or small ensemble.

Note: All compositions should demonstrate appropriate use of different techniques of pitch, melodic, and rhythmic organization as well as good understanding of idiomatic writing.

**Minimum requirements for Juniors and Seniors:**

Each semester the student must complete a minimum of 10-15 minutes of that has been approved by the teacher. Techniques and instrumentations should demonstrate an evolution with respect to the previous years of work.

In their 3rd year, composition students are required to present a junior recital that includes performance on their instrument and at least 15 minutes of their
own music approved by their instructor.

In the senior year students are required to give a full recital of their compositions approved by their instructor.

**COMPOSITION JURY**

All composition students enrolled in MUSA 451 or MUSA 661W will have their work evaluated at the end of every semester by a jury composed by faculty members. Composition juries will take place during the week of final exams. Two hard copies of all scores composed during the semester and their recordings (MIDI acceptable) should be submitted for evaluation at least one week before the day of the jury. Scores should be engraved using any professional music notation software. Recordings can be submitted as sound files in a memory stick, via email, or in a CD.

Composition juries as well as junior, senior, and master recitals will evaluate the following aspects in each composition:

- Formal organization
- Melodic construction
- Pitch organization
- Rhythmic organization
- Texture and instrumental writing
- Unity, character, and expression
- Notation

**NEXTET CONCERTS**

Students can submit pieces to be considered for performance in a NEXTET concert. Submissions need to be made during the semester prior to the one in which the concert will take place. The composition faculty will make final decisions on which works will be programmed.

**COMPOSITION SEMINAR**

All students registered for MUSA 451 or recital credits must attend the Composition Seminar, taking place on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM (or otherwise stated).

Students are expected to:
- Attend all seminar sessions
- Be prepared to ask questions or to comment on what is being presented
- Prepare their own presentations: Select, in agreement with your instructor, any topics on: music analysis, aesthetics, technique, etc.
• Be prepared to report in the seminar about their progress in their composition. The use of MIDI performances, recordings, and scores is encouraged.

LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS

Several guest composers visit UNLV every year. Selected students will be given the opportunity to have private lessons with guest composers. After student has agreed to receive a lesson with the guest composer and dates and times have been arranged, attendance is mandatory. An unexcused absence will incur in a 1/2 of a letter grade reduction from the MUSA 451 grade.

RECITAL POLICIES

The senior year recital consists of a full-length recital (40 minutes minimum) of the student’s original compositions.

Doc Rando Hall must be booked for the student’s senior recital at the beginning of the semester in which the recital will take place. Please be advised that Rando Hall’s availability is limited, so plan accordingly.

Four weeks before the planned recital date (at the latest), the student must submit the Request for Recital Approval Form containing detailed information about the pieces to be presented (title, instrumentation, and duration) the names of all performers involved, and a list of all logistic needs. In addition to this form, the student must submit scores of all music to be performed during the composition recital. In no case shall the student distribute scores/parts to the performers before receiving approval from his/her advisor. It is the student’s advisor’s responsibility to attend at least one rehearsal for each of the compositions to ensure acceptable quality of performances. The student’s advisor reserves the right to cancel pieces in which the preparation is not adequate or to postpone the entire recital.
PART II – GRADUATE

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers the degree of Master of Music in Theory/Composition.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to submitting an application and transcripts of all college-level work to the Graduate College, students applying for admission into the program must present the following credentials:

1. An overall undergraduate grade point average of at least 2.75 or 3.00 in the last two years.
2. An undergraduate grade point average of at least 3.00 in music.
3. Two letters of recommendation from former instructors attesting that the student is capable of doing graduate work at an acceptable level of performance. These letters are to be sent to the School of Music.
4. Official transcripts of all college-level work must also be sent to the department.

Additional Requirements

The materials listed below are also to be sent directly to the School of Music.
1. A portfolio of compositions including at least one work from three of the following categories: a) orchestra, band or chorus; b) solo instrument and piano or for solo piano; c) string quartet, brass quintet, woodwind quintet, or other small ensemble; d) set of songs for solo voice and piano; e) original composition scored for jazz ensemble. Additional works may be included.
2. A 500-word essay defining career goals and explaining how graduate studies in music will advance applicant toward these goals.

PLACEMENT EXAMINATION

Prior to registration, all graduate students must take placement examinations in history, theory, and sight-singing. The student must pass history and theory placement examinations (or complete review courses) before registering for courses in these areas.

Graduate Theory Placement Exam

This exam determines if incoming graduate students need to take a music theory review course before beginning their graduate theory coursework.
Examinations are given one week prior to the first day of instruction in the Fall and Spring. Fall 2016: Monday August 22, 2016, 4 PM, room HFA 147; Spring 2017: Monday January 9, 2017, 4 PM, room HFA 147

The following regulations about the Graduate Placement test can be found in the Graduate Handbook:

- Prior to registration, all graduate students must take placement examinations in music theory, and aural skills/sight-singing, regardless of their area of concentration.
- Passing scores on these exams, or passing grades in the appropriate review courses (‘B’ or higher) are required before students may enroll in graduate level theory courses.
- Course credit associated with review courses will not be applied towards the degree.
- Students who show deficiencies in the test will be required to register for the appropriate review course (MUS 602, 604).
- Students may not retake placement exams or take them later than the first semester of matriculation.
- UNLV students are not exempt from taking the exams.
- Students must take the exam at the designated time; no make-up examinations will be given. Students who do not take the exam at the scheduled time must complete the review courses before enrolling in any other music history or music theory courses.

The Graduate Music Theory Placement Examination may include:

1. 4-part writing: harmonization of soprano or bass cantus firmus including the use of secondary dominants, diatonic modulation, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixth.
2. Figured bass realization including the use of secondary dominants, diatonic modulation, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixth.
3. Harmonic analysis of Bach chorales
4. Harmonic and formal analysis of music from the 18th and 19th Century
5. Recognition of scales, intervals, triads in root position and inversions, and seventh chords in root position and inversions.
6. Melodic dictation (1 or 2 voices) of diatonic and chromatic melodies, and rhythmic dictation (1 or 2 voices) in simple, compound and irregular meters, including syncopation and tuplets.
7. Aural analysis of harmonic progressions, including secondary dominants, diatonic modulations, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixths
8. Sight-singing of diatonic, chromatic, or atonal melodies in treble, alto, tenor, or bass clef
Suggested bibliography:


DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The minimum number of credits required for the Master of Music in Theory/Composition is 32. No more than eight hours of 600-level course work may be applied to the candidate’s degree program. The requirements for the M.M. in Theory/Composition are as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Music History</td>
<td>6 cr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Theory</td>
<td>6 cr. (MUS 706, 707 or 708)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied Music</td>
<td>4 cr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition (private instruction)</td>
<td>8 cr. (MUS 765A x 4 semesters)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recital</td>
<td>2 cr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elective (with approval)</td>
<td>3 cr. (preferably a theory course)</td>
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TOTAL: 32 cr.

All candidates for the M.M. in Theory/Composition are required to take written and oral comprehensive examinations. Throughout work for the degree, the student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00, with no more than two grades of C (2.00), and no grade lower than B (3.00) in the major area of concentration. A thesis is optional and may, with approval, be used in lieu of six credits in the student’s program. Participation in large ensembles is required throughout the student’s residency.

Minimum requirements for Graduate Students (MUSA 661W):

- Each semester graduate students must complete a minimum of 20 minutes of music approved by their instructor.
- These works should demonstrate understanding and high quality writing of different genres and ensemble combinations.
Each student must complete at least one work for orchestra or wind orchestra at some point during their degree.

The graduate recital must include a minimum of 60 minutes of music approved by their instructor.

**NEXTET CONCERTS**

Students can submit pieces to be considered for performance in a NEXTET concert. Scores and parts must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the concert date. The composition faculty will make final decisions on which works will be programmed.

**ATTENDANCE TO COMPOSITION AREA EVENTS**

All graduate composition majors are required to attend all Composition Area and new music events including but not limited to NEXTET concerts, other new music events, recitals by guest artists, masterclasses, et al. Unexcused absence to each Composition Area or new music event (i.e. without a doctor’s note) will negatively affect the final MUSA 765A grade at the instructor’s discretion and/or as stated in the course syllabus.

**COMPOSITION SEMINAR**

All graduate students registered for MUS 765A or recital credits must attend the Composition Seminar, taking place on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM (or otherwise stated). Unexcused absences to Composition Seminar will negatively affect the student’s final MUS 765A grade.

**LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS**

Several guest composers visit UNLV every year. Selected students will be given the opportunity to have private lessons with guest composers. After student has agreed to receive a lesson with the guest composer and dates and times have been arranged, attendance is mandatory. An unexcused absence will incur in a 1/2 of a letter grade reduction from the MUS 765A final grade.

**GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE**

M.M. Theory/Composition candidates require an advisory committee. Students must
select elect this committee after completing 12-16 credit hours and prior to establishing and submitting your proposed degree program. Advisory committee chairs and Graduate College representatives on advisory committees must have full graduate faculty status. Graduate advisory committee members must hold full or associate graduate faculty status.

**PROPOSED DEGREE PROGRAM FORM**

Part 1 and Part 2 of the proposed degree program form must be submitted to the Graduate College before completing 16 hours OR by the sixth week of the first semester of admission if 12+ hours (taken prior to admission) will be considered part of your degree program. RECITAL

Master’s students are required to present a full-length composition recital (45 minutes minimum) during their last semester of studies. Doc Rando Hall must be booked for the recital at the beginning of the semester in which the recital will take place. Please be advised that Rando Hall’s availability is limited, so plan accordingly. Four weeks before the planned recital date (at the latest), the student must submit the Request for Recital Approval Form containing detailed information about the pieces to be presented (title, instrumentation, and duration) the names of all performers involved, and a list of all logistic needs. In addition to this form, the student must submit scores of all music to be performed during the master’s recital. In no case shall the student distribute scores/parts to the performers before receiving approval from his/her advisor. It is the student’s advisor’s responsibility to attend at least one rehearsal for each of the compositions to ensure acceptable quality of performances. The student’s advisor reserves the right to cancel pieces in which the preparation is not adequate or to postpone the entire recital.

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

After the Master’s recital is successfully completed, the candidate may schedule the written portion of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examination. If approved, the candidate may schedule the oral portion of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examination, within one week of completing the written portion. Results of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examinations must be submitted to the Graduate College two weeks prior to the last day of instruction.

**APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION**
Please check the Graduate College website http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu for the exact deadlines to apply for graduation. All deadlines normally take place at the \textit{beginning} of the semester in which the candidate expects to graduate.