

COMPOSITION  
DEPARTMENT

STUDENT HANDBOOK  
2019-2020

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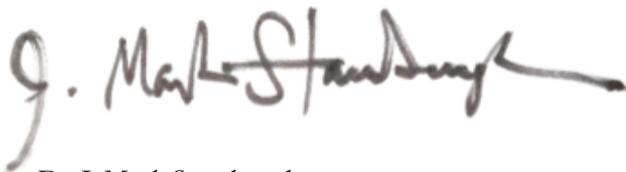
## INTRODUCTION

Dear Student:

On behalf of myself and the Faculty, I want to welcome you to the Composition Department of Manhattan School of Music in this academic year 2019-2020. For new students, I look forward to meeting you and getting to know you and your work. I know that you will find your experience at MSM a rewarding one, for the Department and the School have so much to offer you in terms of your development as musicians. For returning students, I am excited to see how you have progressed in your work and what the future may hold for you as you continue in your program of study.

I would ask that you read the materials in this handbook carefully, as they outline not only the opportunities the Department has to recommend, but also the guidelines and responsibilities that are expected of you as a member. Please know that their ultimate purpose is not only to make for a well-run and effective Department, but moreover to make your time at MSM as fruitful and pleasant as possible. I look forward to being of service to you in any way that I can.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Mark Stambaugh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. J. Mark Stambaugh

Composition Chair

# APPLIED LESSONS

## **Your Teacher**

Your teacher is among the most vital sources in helping you to make career decisions, both large and small. As in any relationship, issues may arise which require discussion and/or resolution. You are encouraged to discuss problems as they occur directly with your teacher. Unresolved issues and/or the sense that you cannot discuss problems with your teacher need to be addressed with the department chair or the Provost.

You are entitled to and required to have twenty-eight one-hour private lessons with your major teacher in the course of the school year. Some teachers give these lessons each week. Others, given the nature of other performance and teaching commitments, offer two-hour lessons and/or lessons at differing intervals. Others still have teaching associates or substitutes to give lessons at times when they are unable to do so. Make certain that you understand your teacher's lesson schedule plan. If you are concerned that you are not receiving the requisite number of lessons, or have a problem with the frequency of your lessons, notify the department chair.

## **Change of Teacher**

Students may request a change of teacher. This is an important decision to be thought over carefully and thoroughly. Student decisions to change teachers are often the result of miscommunication or lack of communication with the current teacher. You are therefore encouraged to discuss the matter with your teacher and/or with the departmental chair and the Dean of Students. If you wish to change teachers you must obtain a Change of Teacher Request Form from the Provost's office. Complete instructions are on the form. School policy prohibits any action against a student by a former teacher.

## **Attendance Policy**

Private lessons constitute the core performance study for every student. If a student needs to cancel a studio lesson for any reason, the student should immediately inform the studio teacher. In cases of documented illness or other emergency, the teacher will attempt to make up missed lessons at a mutually convenient time. The studio teacher is not obligated to adjust lesson times or make up lessons that were canceled for non-illness, non-emergency reasons. Any student who has two consecutive unexcused absences in his or her private lessons will be required to see the Dean of Students before lessons may resume.

## **Professional Leave**

No student may be absent from the school for professional engagements unless permission for such absence is granted by the Dean of Students well in advance of all such engagements. Students who wish to pursue a professional opportunity over several days must apply for a professional leave, using the form available in the Dean of Students office. Typically the professional leave may not extend for more than two weeks.

## **Faculty Concert**

Each year in the fall semester the MSM Composition Faculty present their works in a special concert. This is your opportunity to hear your teacher's work and to learn more about their ideas, techniques, and experiences.

# PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

## Student Composer Concerts

Every academic year the Composition Department offers eight concerts of new student works (three in the fall semester, five in the spring) presented in one of MSM's main performance spaces: Neidorff-Karpati Hall, the Gordon K. and Harriet Greenfield Hall, the William R. and Irene D. Miller Recital Hall, the Alan M. and the Joan Taub Ades Performance Space, and the Carla Bossi-Comelli Studio. All concerts and readings of the Composition Department are produced and publically advertised by MSM and recorded by the Charles Myers Recording Studio.

**All BM and MM students, and DMA students in their first two years, must have at least one performance of their work on a department concert during the year;** you may, of course, have work performed on more than one concert. Only new, previously unperformed works should be given on the concerts (or, in the case of first year students, recent works). To accommodate all the composers in our program and the concert length restrictions of the school, the normal duration limits for works presented is 10-15 minutes in length. However, longer works can be given if circumstances allow by permission of the department Chair.

Special opportunities are provided by our annual concert in Neidorff-Karpati Hall, where space and resources for large ensemble pieces are more readily available. Also, for works involving extended or prepared piano use, the concerts in Ades Performance Space, and the Bossi-Comelli Studio are provided. Information on opportunities to employ electronics is covered in a separate section below (Electronics/Computer Music Studios and Concerts). For all of these concerts, finding performers is the responsibility of the composer.

## Contemporary Performance Program and Composer's Orchestra Readings

Student Composer Workshops—The Contemporary Performance Program hosts two reading sessions (one per semester) for student composers, during which their works are read by student performers of the CPP and led by CPP faculty. These sessions are invaluable for workshopping new techniques and ideas, and should be seen as “safe havens” for experimentation. Sessions are recorded. NOTE: It is suggested that students review the scores they wish to submit to the CPP

readings with their private teacher before entering their materials. The CPP Directors may refuse acceptance of submitted materials should any parameters not be met.

Orchestration Class Readings—MSM also provides composition students in orchestration classes a series of reading sessions for their projects, both of arrangements and short original works. The various reading sessions are performed both by the CPP players and by the Composer's Orchestra. Sessions are recorded.

### **Electronics/Computer Music Studios and Concerts**

Concerts programming works that feature computer music, live electronics and/or computer controlled elements are also part of MSM opportunities for composers. Manhattan School of Music maintains four excellent electronic music studios, providing students with state-of-the-art computers, software, keyboards, and other equipment for composition, recording, editing, sound design, and performance.

One studio is focused on classical composition, sound design, and interactive performance. The studio offers students an opportunity to work with state-of-the-art equipment and to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to succeed in a professional or academic environment. Another studio provides students enrolled in Performing With Electronics experience in performing with technology. This facility allows students to explore current developments in music that involve electronics and computers with the most up-to-date music software systems, in addition to realizing older works using newer technology. It provides a basic, practical workshop for preparing pieces in the repertoire that involve electronics and a space to practice and rehearse with the equipment needed for each project.

Two additional studios, including the Jean Lignel Electronic Music Studio (Studio 506), focus on providing performance and compositional tools applicable to jazz, commercial music, and scoring for film and TV, as well as purely creative projects. The emphasis is on working with DAWs such as Protools, Digital Performer, and Logic, virtual instruments, MIDI protocol, sound design, multitrack recording and production techniques, and techniques for scoring to picture.

Students registered in related courses are allowed to schedule individual studio lab time when available.

## **Masterclasses and Seminars**

Masterclasses and Seminars are a regular part of the Composition Forum, a weekly, hour-long course required of all student composers in the Bachelors and Masters programs. The classes and seminars are given both by prominent guest composers and MSM Composition faculty. Scheduled masterclasses are determined by the instructor during the course of the semester. Students also have the opportunity to give presentations on their own works in Forum. Other masterclasses with prominent composers or performance groups are occasionally offered through the School.

## **Non-Departmental/Off-Campus Performances**

In addition to the concerts and readings sponsored by the Department, composers will discover that many performance opportunities will arise both within the school and in the city at large through collaboration with MSM student performers who are interested in new work, of which there are a substantial number. Some of our composers opt to apply for a Student Project in Performance, which if awarded provides the composer and opportunity to put on special performances of their work supported by the School. (Applications are made through the Provost's Office. Composers are required to find all performers for these concerts.) NOTE: The student's first responsibility is to the Department concerts and events. These take priority over individual projects.

## COMPETITIONS AND AWARDS

### **The Manhattan Prize**

Each year the Composition Department holds a competition for works composed for string quartet. The winning work is awarded \$500 and the premiere (produced by the Department) is featured on one of the Student Composer Concerts.

### **The Carl Kanter Award**

The Carl Kanter Award is a monetary prize given to graduating students for excellence in their Graduation Thesis work (see Graduation Thesis below).

### **The Nicolas Flagello Award**

The Nicolas Flagello Award is a monetary prize given to a graduating composer who has shown particular excellence in the field of composition.

### **Other Competitions**

In various years Windscape, the internationally acclaimed woodwind quintet in residence at MSM, holds a competition for a new work. The winning composition is then given its premiere by Windscape at one of their New York concerts. In addition, competitions by visiting ensembles have been offered on occasion.

## GRADUATION THESIS

The Thesis Project should represent the culmination of a student's composition studies at MSM through the writing and performing of a work for large ensemble. There are two options:

(1) **Orchestral Thesis**—a work for standard concert orchestra of eight minutes length. The work is first vetted and commented upon by the faculty at the end of the fall semester of the student's graduation year. Upon acceptance by the faculty, the work is extensively rehearsed by either a staff or guest conductor of international reputation and given a public performance in Borden Auditorium by MSM Composer's Orchestra in one of two concerts in the spring semester. Both the final dress rehearsal and the concert are recorded by the School. This is the "default" option for the thesis and is strongly encouraged by the faculty, as the opportunity for a student to have a work for orchestra publicly performed and recorded is a unique and special one that should be exploited if possible.

(2) **Alternate Thesis Project**—For those students who do not wish to write their thesis work for orchestra, the Alternate Thesis Project is available. You must have the permission of your teacher and the Department Chair to take advantage of this option. The goal is to compose a work for large ensemble of no less than eight performers with a duration of 15-20 minutes. The scheduling of the performance date, time, and venue, as well as finding the players for the performance will be solely the responsibility of the student.

### **Doctor of Musical Arts Recital**

In addition to the Thesis, composition majors pursuing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree must present a full-length concert of original music written primarily during the period of doctoral study as part of their graduation requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to be encouraged to participate as a performer or conductor in at least one work. The concert is adjudicated on a pass/fail basis by a minimum of two members of the composition faculty. Students will be judged on technical accomplishment, style, variety, the degree of challenge to the performers, and presentation.

# JURIES

## General Information

At the end of each academic year, every student at MSM has an adjudication of their work by the faculty of their discipline. This is the “Jury”. An aggregate score is achieved by averaging the individual scores of each member of the faculty, excluding the score of your own teacher, which does not count in this aggregate. This is based on the same point system as your admission adjudication and is the major component in scholarship calculation while you are at school. A significant rise or fall in the Jury score compared to your audition (first year students) or your previous Jury (BM 2nd and 3rd year students) can affect scholarship.

## The Composition Jury

At the end of each semester (late April) all Composition majors prepare a portfolio of their year’s work to present to the faculty. Portfolios should contain scores of each of the works you have written during the academic year, plus recordings of any performances you have of the portfolio scores. The Jury itself consists of a combination of listening to some of your work which either you or the faculty may choose and a conversation with the faculty about your compositions. Students are encouraged to discuss their portfolio and the Jury process with their private teachers. Specifics of the Jury are outlined in the five points below:

- (1) Jury for Nongraduating Students—Composition students in the first and third years of the Undergraduate program, and in the first year of the Masters and Doctor of Musical Arts programs will take the Jury for Nongraduating Students. This Jury will be based on the requirements listed in the preceding paragraph (The Composition Jury) and scored according to the process described in the General Information paragraph above. The Jury for Nongraduating Students is the major component used to determine scholarship at MSM.
- (2) Sophomore Continuation Jury—Undergraduate Composition majors completing the second year of their BM program will take the Sophomore Continuation Jury. This is a special Jury to determine the progress of BM students mid-way through the undergraduate program, in areas such as the quality and output of their work, and advancement in classroom studies, especially theory, instrumentation, and composition forum. In addition to the scores and recordings required of all juries (see The Composition Jury above) the student’s MSM grade reports may also

be referenced. Assessment of progress will determine whether or not a student should continue on to the junior and senior years in the Bachelor of Music program.

(3) Jury for Students Graduating from Undergraduate or Graduate Programs— Graduating students are given a Pass/Fail for their final jury grade. This will be the fourth-year jury for Undergraduates, the second-year jury for Masters and Doctor of Musical Arts students, and the sole Jury for Professional Studies. The goal of the jury is to reflect on the student's progress and accomplishments during the course of the degree program completed. Graduating students should give some thought to an overview of their MSM experience. The student's thoughts on the school and its programs are of great interest to the faculty.

(4) Jury for Professional Studies—Professional Studies students in Composition will take a Graduation Jury at the end of their single year of study at MSM. The Jury will be of the same Pass/Fail type as described in the paragraph above (Jury for Students Graduating from Undergraduate or Graduate Programs).

(5) Jury for Doctor of Musical Arts—Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition students will take two juries during the first two years of their residency at MSM, the first graded with reference to scholarship (see General Information above), the second a Pass/Fail jury as described in the paragraph above (Jury for Students Graduating from Undergraduate or Graduate Programs). The juries are given in tandem with the completion of their two years of private lessons, before moving onto the dissertation and comprehensive exam phase of the DMA program.

### **Advanced Standing Jury**

In rare cases, undergraduate students may accelerate their program in performance by means of an Advanced Standing jury. A successful Advanced Standing jury will allow a student to graduate early, provided all other academic requirements are also met early. Advanced standing can only be granted for one semester. To start the process, the student submits a petition for advanced standing to the Registrar's office. This petition must indicate the approval of both the major teacher and the department chair, and must be turned in no later than March 1 of the academic year in which the advanced standing jury is to take place.

## **Further Information on the Jury**

**Jury Comments**—Students have a right to see their jury comments and scores. They may elect to allow their teacher to see them.

**Grading System**—All juries are graded on a 10-point scale. The student's jury grade is the average of all scores received at the jury (excluding those of the primary teacher and any teacher who has previously taught the student at MSM).

**Jury Postponement**—The Provost's office will only consider a student petition requesting postponement of a jury in extreme medical conditions (documented by a physician), sudden family emergencies, or other exceptional circumstances. In all other cases, any student who fails to play a scheduled jury will receive an F for that jury. A failed jury may result in academic probation or dismissal from MSM. A postponed jury must be successfully completed not later than the first two weeks of the subsequent semester.

# EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

## **Orientation**

Orientation is held in the fall of each year during the first meeting of the Composition Forum class, led by the Department Chair. All composition majors in the Bachelors and Masters programs and Doctoral students in their resident years are required to attend this meeting. (Attendance will be taken.) Although Orientation is in part designed to acclimate new students to the Department, it is also a time to reacquaint continuing students with the policies of the Department, to establish contact information and to announce changes in policy.

## **Composition Department Concerts**

All composition majors in the Bachelors and Masters programs and Doctoral students in their resident years are required to attend all eleven official Composition Department concerts. These include the eight student concerts, the Faculty Concert, and the two Composer's Orchestra Concerts (Thesis Concerts). Attendance will be taken; conflicts must be addressed to the Department Chair. Attendance at other composition events—Student Performance Projects, DMA composition recitals—is voluntary.

## **Extended or Prepared Instrument Use**

The contemporary music world is one in which experimentation, particularly as regards instrumental and vocal technique, is frequently indulged. It is understood that many of our students will want to extend their knowledge of the instruments by employing the newer techniques. However, it should be kept in mind that not all student performers at the School will be comfortable performing all techniques. CPP players excel in this matter, and they are a resource that interested composers should seek out, with the understanding that there are limitations to the amount of music by MSM composers that CPP members can work into their busy schedules. In general it is wise to respect certain reasonable limitations in terms of experimentation with instrumental technique and to be sensitive to the players who have offered to perform your work.

Extended/prepared piano writing is strictly limited in the MSM performance spaces. Special pianos for extended writing are provided in the Ades Performance Space and the Bossi-Comelli Studio, but not in Borden Auditorium or Greenfield and Miller Recital Halls. Students wishing to compose works employing extended/prepared piano should schedule their works for the student concerts assigned to Ades or Bossi-Comelli.

## **Standards of Accomplishment**

It is expected that during the composition student's time at MSM there will be evidence of progress in the following areas: knowledge of instruments and the voice and fluency in composing for them; increase of technical skill in handling the materials of composition; development of the formal sense and comprehension of a work as a whole; increased self-awareness of the means and motivations behind the creation of a work; building a substantial portfolio of work (tempered by the composer's natural pace); developing professional skills related to: organization of time, rapport with performers, quality of presentation, performance skills, concert etiquette, concert production, and a collaborative sense. In addition, it is expected that composition students will maintain a good academic standing, and show particular ability in theory and analysis, class composition, aural skills, instrumentation, score reading and keyboard skills.

## **Department Etiquette**

It is expected that MSM composers will be punctual to all events and classes, respect the work and ideas of others, support Department events, abide by the rules and regulations of the Department, respond promptly to correspondence on all Department matters, and in general maintain a sense of decorum and respect for others.

## **Department Unity**

The MSM Composition Department is known for its tradition of camaraderie among the students and faculty, and for the absence of inter-studio rivalries. As a body the MSM Composition Faculty is devoted to this goal of a unified department and we encourage all our students to follow suit. That way we can insure a pleasant working and learning environment for all. It is also a tradition of the Department that student composers are frequently involved in helping their colleagues realize their works in concert, by conducting, performing as instrumentalists or singers, or simply by encouragement and support.

## OTHER ITEMS

### **Employment Opportunities and Career Development**

Although the Composition Department itself does not offer employment opportunities, composers enrolled in the Doctor of Musical Arts program (DMA only) regularly serve as Graduate Fellows and adjunct teachers in the Theory Department, as overseen by the Chair of the Theory Department. Career Development is the special focus of the school's unique Center for Music Entrepreneurship (see the MSM website for more details); in addition, information concerning various outside opportunities for competitions, masterclasses, and summer programs are regularly posted by the Composition Department Chair.



