



GUITAR DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK 2025–2026

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Student:

Welcome to the Manhattan School of Music! Your years of study here will bring you into contact with many illustrious artists, including faculty members and guest teachers, as well as your fellow students, with whom you will surely cultivate friendships that could even last a lifetime. You will be exposed to new ideas and concepts that will encourage, develop, and inspire your abilities as musicians and communicators.

This handbook will assist you by answering many frequently asked questions. Please read it carefully and familiarize yourself with its contents.

And please do not hesitate to consult your major teacher or department chair with any questions you may have.

With best wishes,

David Leisner

Guitar Department Chair

APPLIED LESSONS

Your Teacher

This is one of the most important parts of a musician's development. 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 need 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 Departmental Chair or the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance.

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. 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, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance, or the Dean of Academic Affairs. If you wish to change teachers, may access the Change of Teacher Request form on the student portal under Provost's Office Forms.

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. Students who have two consecutive unexcused absences in his or her private lessons will be reported to the Office of the Provost and Dean of Students.

Professional Leave

Students may request to be excused from school for professional engagements for periods not longer than two weeks. The Limited Leave of Absence Form is available in the Office of the Provost.

Playing-related Pain or Dysfunction

If you experience pain or any kind of dysfunction before, during, or after playing your instrument, discuss it immediately with your major teacher. Physical pain or dysfunction is a sign that you are not using your body correctly.

There are referral sources available to help you with this before it becomes chronic or serious. If physical therapy or other help is needed, consult the Office of Student Affairs.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

In order to maintain the integrity of the educational process at Manhattan School of Music, the school has developed a set of criteria for entrance to, and graduation from all the degree programs offered at MSM. These standards include a combination of both technical and musical skills and they are the result of consultation with faculty, administration and professionals throughout our musical community.

All guitar students admitted to Manhattan School of Music will have demonstrated the following abilities:

Technical Skills

- Tune their instrument
- Hear and distinguish pitch relationships and intonation
- A basic sense of rhythm with an understanding and ability to play standard rhythms and meters
- Basic coordination and dexterity of both hands.
- Have the focus and endurance to participate in chamber music rehearsals and concerts.

Musical Skills

- Understanding of musical notation and familiarity with the most common musical terminology
- A basic understanding of several musical styles.

- A basic understanding of musical structure and harmony
- A basic understanding of musical nuance and the potential to grow as a musician

The Evaluation of Technical Standards at Juries

An annual jury is conducted to allow the faculty to assess the growth and progress of each student in all the above areas. All standards are judged in relation to the student's degree program and level of study. For BM students, the sophomore jury is a critical moment to evaluate the progress and potential of students to ensure that they are on the correct path to a successful completion of their Bachelor's degree.

Each year at MSM, students are required to present a wide and contrasting repertoire at their juries so that at the end of their degree program they will have demonstrated that they have attained the necessary skills for graduation.

ENSEMBLE REQUIREMENTS

Chamber Music

Students are required to complete a minimum of seven semesters (undergraduate), four semesters (graduate), and by assignment (professional studies/doctor of musical arts) of chamber music. First semester freshmen guitar majors are not required to take chamber music. The Manager of Chamber Music and Ensembles makes assignments in consultation with the Department Chair. Students are strongly advised to fill out a chamber music request form each semester. Specific requests for type of ensemble, fellow players, and coach are given serious consideration. The guitar department favors chamber music with other instruments and voice. However, second semester freshman and first semester sophomores are usually assigned to an ensemble of multiple guitars.

Please consult the Chamber Music Handbook for further information.

Choral Ensembles

Singing in a choir builds essential musicianship skills and artistic collaboration—uniting students from various majors in a shared pursuit of musical excellence. All 1st and 2nd year guitar students are required to successfully participate in choir during their first four semesters. Incoming students will receive specific information from the Large Ensembles Manager before the start of classes about auditions during Orientation Week. The audition is very simple—no preparation is needed unless you wish to bring a prepared song.

Students will be placed in a choir according to their skill level and to maintain an appropriate balance of voices. Students are expected to fully participate in a professional manner in the choir to which they are assigned for the entire academic year. If a student earns an F grade for their work in a semester, they must make up the semester in their junior year – they cannot take two choirs in the same semester. This may impact a student's anticipated course schedule in their junior year.

MSM Chorale

Rehearses on Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:00PM–5:20 PM. This is the largest choir in which most students will be placed.

Chamber Choir

Rehearses on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00PM–3:20PM. This is a select choir for students with choral experience and excellent musical skills.

Vocal Ensemble Singing

This is a performance class that provides students with no singing experience an opportunity to build basic musicianship, vocal, and ensemble skills. Classical Voice majors are not eligible to participate in this ensemble.

Cultural Inclusion Policy

The MSM guitar department is committed to including underrepresented composers in its curriculum. We believe an educational environment must be rooted in Cultural Inclusion to achieve academic and artistic excellence. Manhattan School of Music is committed to creating an inclusive environment that permeates every aspect of our students' experience. Cultural Inclusion at MSM includes learning and understanding individual identities and differences of people who constitute our community. Cultural Inclusion also requires the study and performance of works by and creators from a diverse range of backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, able-ness, and/or sexual orientation.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of advancing MSM's commitment to Cultural Inclusion. All students are required to play at least one piece by an underrepresented creator for each of their juries. All MSM performances require at least one work by an underrepresented creator to be performed. A list of underrepresented creators is listed at the end of the handbook, and please share with us if you have suggestions to add to the list.

JURIES

Jury for Non-graduating Students

One jury is required at the end of each year. Every student must play that jury during the May jury period of each school year until applicable jury and recital requirements have been fulfilled. A fall jury period will be scheduled each year, as necessary, for any students who need to take a jury at that time. Consult the repertoire requirements below early in the school year and prepare carefully for this important event. Juries are a vital part of your training as a performer, and the resultant scores have bearing on your academic record, scholarship, chamber music, and orchestra assignments, and other aspects of your standing within the School. The Office of the Registrar assigns jury days and times. In the rare situation that a student wishes to perform a concerto with accompanist, the student is responsible for providing her/his own accompanist for the jury.

Early planning will avoid last-minute scheduling problems. Jury comments are sent electronically to students approximately two weeks after juries. The jury performance time allotted in all non-graduating years is ten to twelve minutes of music for undergraduates, and 15-17 minutes of music for graduates.

Sophomore Continuation Jury

This jury, at the end of the sophomore year of study, establishes that a student's progress has been sufficient to reasonably ensure completion of the program of study. The evaluation will determine whether a student may continue in that 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.

Jury for Students Graduating from Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Students expecting to graduate from either program during the current school year must play a graduation jury. Consult the repertoire requirements below. Students are responsible for providing their own accompanists or chamber partners, if needed.

Graduation juries will take place during the May jury period. Juries are scheduled by the Office of the Registrar. A graduation jury and/ or graduation recital does not serve as a substitute for an entrance examination to a higher degree level.

Professional Performance Diploma

All students enrolled in the Professional Performance Diploma are required to perform a jury at the end of their first year to successfully complete the requirements for the program. The repertoire for the jury is determined in consultation with the major teacher and Department Chair.

Professional Studies and Doctor of Musical Arts

In most cases there are no juries.

Jury Substitution

All current students who take an entrance audition at MSM for a higher degree program and are accepted by the school are not required to play a graduation 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

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 Office of the Registrar 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 will result in dismissal from MSM. A postponed jury must be successfully completed not later than the first two weeks of the subsequent semester.

RECITALS

Scheduling Recitals

A graduation recital and/or jury, if required, must take place within the last two semesters of major lessons. A date for the recital must be applied for with the Scheduling Office. The recital program must be approved by both the major teacher and the Department Chair, and a copy of this program must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar as part of the student's graduation requirement.

Non-required Recitals

Students are encouraged to give recitals in non-graduating years. Consult with your teacher for approval. Most non-graduating recitals are given either in the fall semester or in the first few weeks of the spring semester, when recital space is less at a premium. Consult the scheduling office for a recital application. Students are responsible for providing their own accompanists or chamber music partners.

Required Recital—Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Students expecting to graduate from either program during the current school year are required to give a graduation recital, in addition to the graduation jury. Follow repertoire requirements carefully in building a recital program. All students are required to play at least one piece by an underrepresented creator. Make certain that your teacher approves of the chosen repertoire. Recital applications are available in the Scheduling Office.

Further, the recital repertoire approval form, also available from the Scheduling office, requires the approval and signatures of both your teacher and the Department Chair. The teacher's signature implies that the student is prepared to perform. Once the major teacher has signed the form, the teacher is not permitted to request a postponement of the recital. The signature of the Department Chair signifies approval of the repertoire and programming. The Department Chair will not sign a recital repertoire approval form until the major teacher has done so. Students should be certain that the program is accurately written before submitting it for signatures. The recital repertoire approval form is to be filed with the Scheduling office and the Department Chair at least four weeks prior to the recital date. Students must be enrolled for major lessons until the graduation recital and graduation juries (as applicable) have been successfully completed. A graduation recital and/or graduation jury does not serve as a substitute for an entrance examination to a higher degree program. Students are responsible for providing their own accompanists.

Required Recital—Professional Studies

Recital applications are available in the Scheduling office. Consult repertoire requirements carefully. Students are responsible for providing their own accompanists or chamber partners if needed.

Professional Performance Diploma

All students enrolled in the Professional Performance Diploma are required to perform a full recital at the end of their second year to successfully complete the requirements for the program. The repertoire for the recital is determined in consultation with the major teacher and Department Chair.

Doctor of Musical Arts Recitals

Consult the Assistant Dean for Doctoral Studies for procedures and requirements.

Recording of Recitals

The school records all required recitals when possible.

REPERTOIRE REQUIREMENTS

Guitar

It is encouraged that guitar students play by memory.

However, students may use sheet music if so desired and in consultation with their major teacher. The jury does not take into consideration in grading whether students use music. The result of fluency and level of mastery of the material is paramount.

Freshman Jury

- Repertoire determined by teacher and student, totaling ten to twelve minutes of music.
- No repetition of repertoire from entrance exam is allowed.
- You are required to study a work of an underrepresented creator. It is your choice of whether to present the work at your jury.

Sophomore Continuation Jury

This important jury establishes that a student's progress has been sufficient to reasonably ensure completion of the program of study. The evaluation will determine whether the student may continue in that program.

- Three works from contrasting periods totaling ten to twelve minutes. Repertoire to be determined in consultation with the major teacher.
- No repetition of repertoire from entrance exam or previous jury is allowed.
- You are required to study a work of an underrepresented creator. It is your choice of whether to present the work at your jury.

Junior Jury

- Three works of contrasting periods totaling ten to twelve minutes to be determined in consultation with the major teacher. Repertoire should be of appropriate scope and heft including movements of a Sonata, Suite, or other large-scale work.
- No repetition of repertoire from previous juries or entrance exam is allowed.
- One piece must be by an underrepresented creator.

Bachelor of Music/Diploma Graduation Recital and Jury

- Significant, complete recital works from two [or three] style periods, including the twentieth or twenty-first century.
- One piece must be by an underrepresented creator.

First-year Master of Music/Postgraduate Diploma Jury

- Music totaling fifteen to seventeen minutes to be determined in consultation with major teacher. The repertoire should reflect an advanced level of study and include large-scale single movements and/or multi movement works.
- No repetition of repertoire from previous juries or entrance exam is allowed.
- You are required to study a work of an underrepresented composer. It is your choice of whether to present the work at your jury.

Master of Music/Postgraduate Diploma Graduation Recital and Jury

- Significant, complete recital works from two [or three] style periods, including the twentieth or twenty-first century to be chosen in consultation with the major teacher.
- No repetition of repertoire from previous jury or entrance exam is allowed.
- One piece must be by an underrepresented creator.

Professional Studies Graduation Recital

- Significant, complete recital works from a wide range of style periods, including the twentieth or twenty-first century to be determined in consultation with the major teacher.
- No repetition of repertoire from entrance exam is allowed.
- One piece must be by an underrepresented creator.

Please consult the Assistant Dean for Doctoral Studies for subsequent DMA repertoire requirements.

MASTER CLASSES

Classes will be given periodically by visiting artists. Participation in master classes is determined by competitive auditions. You must receive permission from your major teacher to audition.

EISENBERG-FRIED CONCERTO COMPETITION

The guitar, harp and percussion concerto competition is held every other year. The next one will be held in February 2026. Applications are available in the office of the Manager of Chamber Music and Ensembles, Room 305. The signature and approval of the major teacher are required.

Application deadline is February 1, 2026. The winner will be chosen from auditions and there will be no interdepartmental finals. The following concerto is ineligible:
Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Concerto No. 1, Op. 99

CONTACT INFORMATION

Chair of the Guitar Department

If you need to contact the Department Chair, please send an email to David Leisner (dleisner@msmnyc.edu).

Please note: All forms must be completed and with all other necessary signatures completed before obtaining the chairman's signature.

UNDERREPRESENTED CREATORS – GUITAR DEPARTMENT

This is a suggested list of repertoire. This list is not complete. Faculty or students who would like to contribute suggestions to this repertoire list should contact the Department Chair and/or the Dean of Instrumental Performance and Orchestral Studies.

BLACK CREATORS:

Ulysses Kay—Guitarra
Francis Bebey—The Magic Box
Jean Bosco—Mwenda Masanga
Tania León—Paisanos Semos, Bailarín
Justin Holland—Complete Works
Duke Ellington (arr. Dyens): Take the A Train
Dizzy Gillespie (arr. Dyens) A Night in Tunisia
Frantz Casseus—Haitian Dances
Thomas Flippin—Complete Works
Ronald Roxbury—Two Songs of Walt Whitman
Adolphus Hailstork—Three Preludes
João Luiz—MadrigAfro II, Preludios, Batuque, Jequibau

WOMAN CREATORS:

Emilia Giuliani—Guglielmi Preludes, Op. 46
Fernande Peyrot—Theme and Variations
Maria Luisa—Anido Preludos Nostálgicos
Clarice Assad—Complete Works
Jana Obrovska—Hommage á Bela Bartók, Due Musici,
Japanese Pictures
Ida Presti—Complete Works
Joan Tower—Clocks, Snow Dreams
Barbara Kolb—Umbrian Colors, Three Lullabies
Marilyn Ziffrin—Rhapsody, Incantation and Dance, Three Movements
Sofia Gubaidulina—Serenade, Toccata
Katherine Hoover—Canyon Echoes
Thea Musgrave—Postcard from Morocco, Sonata for Three
Kaija Saariaho—Adjö

Caroline Shaw—Anni's Constant, Come Again (Again)

Vahda Olcott Bickford—Method for Guitar

Ursula Mamlok—Five Intermezzi

Vivian Fine—Canciones y Danzas

Ester Mägi – Cadenza and Theme, Three Miniatures, Cantus, A due, Processus,
Whoops, A tre

ASIAN CREATORS:

Toru Takemitsu—Complete Works

Yuquijiro Yocoh- Sakura Variations

Takashi Yoshimatsu—Complete Works

Tan Dun—Seven Desires

Yuji Takahashi—Chained Hands in Prayer

Chen Yi—Shuo Chang

Akemi Naito—Secret Song, The Idea of Order at Key West

ARAB CREATORS:

Halim El-Dabh—A Tribute to Segovia

Enyss Djemil—Petite Suite Médiévale

Mohammed Fairouz—Airs

LGBTQ+ CREATORS:

Francis Poulenc—Sarabande

Benjamin Britten—Nocturnal, Songs from the Chinese,
Folk Songs, Vol. 6

Hans Werner Henze—Drei Tentos, Royal Winter Music, El Cimarron, Carillon Récitatif,
Masque, Kammermusik 1958

Lou Harrison—Serenade

David Del Tredici —Facts of Life, Acrostic Song

David Leisner—Complete Works

Chester Biscardi—Resisting Stillness, Finding Beauty
in Small Places

Ned Rorem—Romeo and Juliet, Suite

Libby Larsen—Three Rilke Songs, Argyle Sketches, Sarabande: In Profane Style, Blue
Third Pieces

Ronald Roxbury—Two Songs of Walt Whitman

Michael Tippett—Songs for Achilles, The Blue Guitar

Richard Rodney Bennett—Sonata, Five Impromptus

Henri Sauguet—Soliloque, Cadence, Trois Preludes, Six Pièces Faciles, Musique pour
Claudel, Révérance à Johann Sebastian Bach

Carlos Surinach—Sonatina

LATINX CREATORS:

Sergio Assad—Complete Works

Emil Awad—Fouad

Carlos Chavez—Three Pieces for Guitar

Ernesto Garcia de Léon—Complete Works

Juan Orrego-Salas—Esquinas

Julian Orbón—Preludio y Danza

Roberto Sierra—Sonatas No. 1 & 2, Toccata y Lamento, Trés homenajes húngaros, Duo
Sonata, Cronicas del Descubrimiento, Triptico

Pedro Ximénez de Abril Tirado—100 Menuets