

**ORCHESTRAL
PERFORMANCE
DEPARTMENT
HANDBOOK
2025—2026**

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Students of the Orchestral Performance Program,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Graduate Program in Orchestral Performance at Manhattan School of Music. This program is designed for the young professional musician and offers the advanced training necessary to win and sustain a successful and fulfilling orchestral career.

This handbook has been assembled to summarize the policies, procedures and requirements that apply to you as a student in the OP Program. Please read it carefully and keep it for reference throughout the year.

Our role is to provide OP students with the tools and resources necessary to have the most fulfilling possible experience during your time at MSM. Please use us as a resource as you navigate all that MSM has to offer.

David Chan

Head of Orchestral Performance

Concertmaster, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

HISTORY

In 1991, Manhattan School of Music created the Graduate Program in Orchestral Performance, the first accredited degree program of its kind in the United States. The program seeks to produce polished musicians of the highest artistic caliber, who are prepared intensively in the orchestral repertoire for careers as symphonic players. Students are trained to participate fully in both performance and other nonmusical aspects of life in the modern orchestra, such as orchestra governance, artistic planning, community engagement, and audience development.

The Graduate Program in Orchestral Performance recognizes that the art of orchestral playing is a skill in itself. We strongly believe that a career as a member of a symphony orchestra or other large ensemble is as desirable and as artistically rewarding as a career as a solo performer and offers specific training vehicles and curricula to fulfill these objectives.

Statement on Cultural Inclusion:

Manhattan School of Music is committed to creating an inclusive environment that permeates every aspect of our students' experience. We believe an educational environment must be rooted in Cultural Inclusion to achieve academic and artistic excellence. 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. In orchestral music, those creators that are underrepresented include Black, Latinx, Women, LGBTQIA+, Asian and AAPI, Indian, and Native American.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of advancing MSM's commitment to Cultural Inclusion.

PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Students enrolled in the Orchestral Performance Program have the option of one of three tracks of study. They are as listed below:

- Master of Music in Orchestral Performance
- Professional Studies Certificate in Orchestral Performance
- Professional Performance Diploma in Orchestral Performance

The Master of Music degree consists of a total of 52–57 credits as defined in the Manhattan School of Music catalog. There is a two-year residency requirement. Students who have not placed out of the prerequisites for the program will be required to take those courses in addition to other course requirements for the master's degree.

The professional studies certificate is a one-year course of study specifically designed for the post-masters student who wishes to further his/her studies in a more concentrated fashion. The course work includes Musician as an Educator in addition to all Orchestral Performance Program music performance courses.

The Professional Performance Diploma is a two-year course of study designed to elevate your musicianship to a professional level and learn critical skills in entrepreneurship, freelancing work, and other business-related skills. Students enrolled in this program will identify a focus area that complements their major area studies and supports the development of their professional and artistic goals.

ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE FACULTY

Violin

David Chan, *Concertmaster, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*

Lisa Kim, *assistant principal second violin,*
New York Philharmonic

Viola

Shmuel Katz, *associate principal viola,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Cello

Alan Stepansky, *former associate principal cello,*
New York Philharmonic

Qiang Tu, *cello, New York Philharmonic*

Bass

Timothy Cobb, *principal bass, New York Philharmonic*

Blake Hinson, *assistant principal bass, New York Philharmonic*

Flute

Robert Langevin, *principal flute, New York Philharmonic*

Oboe

Robert Botti, *oboe, New York Philharmonic*

Sherry Sylar, *associate principal oboe, New York Philharmonic*

Stephen Taylor, *principal oboe, Orchestra of St. Luke's;*
co-principal oboe, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Clarinet

Pascual Martinez-Forteza, *clarinet, New York Philharmonic*

Bassoon

Evan Epifanio, *principal bassoon, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*

Kim Laskowski, *associate principal bassoon,*
New York Philharmonic

William Short, *principal bassoon, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*

Horn

Michelle Reed Baker, *former second horn,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Richard Deane, *associate principal horn, New York Philharmonic*

Javier Gándara, *horn, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*

David Jolly, *former horn, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra*

Allen Spanjer, *horn, New York Philharmonic*

Trumpet

Ethan Bendorf, *trumpet, New York Philharmonic*

David Krauss, *principal trumpet, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra*

Trombone

Per Brevig, *former principal trombone,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

George Curran, *bass trombone, New York Philharmonic*

Colin Williams, *associate principal trombone,*
New York Philharmonic

Tuba

Kyle Turner, *principal tuba, American Symphony Orchestra*
and Orchestra of St. Luke's

Harp

Mariko Anraku, *associate principal harp,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Susan Jolles, *harp, NY Chamber Symphony;*
American Composers Orchestra

Percussion

Christopher Lamb, *principal percussion, New York Philharmonic*

Duncan Patton, *former principal timpani,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Steven White, *percussion and assistant timpani,*
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

APPLIED LESSONS

Major Teacher

Your major teacher is an important resource and mentor during your time at MSM. As in any relationship, issues may arise which require discussion 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 head, the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance, or the Dean of Academic Affairs.

You are entitled to and required to have twenty-eight one-hour private lessons with your major teacher in the course of the academic 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 may 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 required number of lessons or have a problem with the frequency of your lessons, please notify the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance.

Change of Teacher

Teacher assignments are made with great care and consideration for each student. Requesting to change your major teacher is an important decision that should be considered carefully. Often, a desire to change teachers can be the result of a lack of communication with the current teacher; for that reason, the student is encouraged to discuss the desire to change teachers with the current teacher, the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance, or the Dean of Academic Affairs prior to submitting paperwork.

Changes can only be made via the submission of a Change of Teacher Request form which is available from the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance.

After a student changes teachers, the former teacher is excluded from grading the student at subsequent juries and auditions. In addition, teacher assignments are subject to change based on teacher availability.

Attendance Policy for Private Lessons

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 teacher is not obligated to adjust lesson times or make up lessons that were canceled for non-illness,

non-emergency reasons. Students who have missed two or more consecutive unexcused absences in his or her private lessons are reported to the Office of the Provost.

Time Off Policies

Students should not accept any outside work or book any flights to play with another ensemble or take an audition before receiving approval from the Instrumental Ensemble Office. After a student has been approved for a time off by the Large Ensembles Manager, they must then fill out a Limited Leave of Absence Request Form. A planned limited leave of absence requires that the Limited Leave of Absence Form be submitted at least four weeks in advance of the requested limited leave, unless opportunities or situations are truly unforeseen. The form requires review and approval by the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Academic Division Dean, Office of the Provost, and approval from each of the student's instructors. International students also require the approval of International Student Services.

All Time Off requests must follow the Time Off Policies listed in the Orchestra Handbook found on the MSM website:

<https://www.msmnyc.edu/info-for-current-students/orchestra/>

Juries and Evaluation of 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 degree programs offered at MSM. These standards include a combination of both technical and musical skills defined by the faculty in accordance with the artistic standards of the school.

An annual jury is conducted to allow the faculty to assess the growth and progress of each student. All standards are judged in relation to the student's degree program and level of study.

At their juries, students in the OP program are required to present repertoire specific to their instrument, distributed at the beginning of each academic year, to demonstrate that they have attained the necessary level of technical and artistic proficiency.

As students in the OP program are not required to perform a recital for completion of their degree, juries are considered the most important cumulative events in an OP student's time at MSM. PPD students are required to play a recital, however, they may replace their recital with a jury by submitting a General Petition form.

REQUIREMENTS

Besides their lessons, OP students have the following performance-related program requirements:

- Orchestra (LP 1500)
- Chamber Music (SP 1500)
- Orchestral Repertoire Classes (OP 2351-2, 2451-2)
- Orchestral Performance Core (OP 1200) which includes the following activities:
 - OP Mock auditions
 - OP Masterclasses
 - OP Orchestra Rep Readings
 - Special OP Performances
 - OP Faculty Panel Discussions
 - Attend and/or play at outside MSM Development and Donor Relations events

Orchestra (LP 1500)

Students enrolled in orchestra are assigned to projects with various orchestral ensembles. The typical assignment is between 3-4 concert projects per semester. Assignments are made based on audition scores with an eye to providing each student with a breadth of experience with various ensemble formats.

For more information regarding Orchestra at MSM, please see the Orchestra Handbook & Course Syllabus, available on the MSM website at <https://www.msmnyc.edu/info-for-current-students/orchestra/>

Chamber Music (SP 1500)

OP students, with a few exceptions, are required to play in a chamber group every semester of enrollment. Please see the Academic Catalog for more information.

Orchestral Repertoire Coaching Classes (OP 2351-2, 2451-2)

Taught by Manhattan School of Music program faculty and guests, the Orchestral Repertoire Classes have been designed as a four-semester, two-year sequence of coaching sessions on the craft of orchestral, ensemble, and performance techniques. The course offers students intensive study and performance experience in a diverse range of orchestral repertoire to help prepare students to win and sustain orchestral positions.

All OP students are automatically enrolled in the OP repertoire class for their instrument. These classes are occasionally joined by the highest scoring students from the classical division when it is deemed necessary and possible by the faculty instructors.

- Course structure: Individual instrumental sessions of two hours in length will be taught by a single faculty member or invited guest.
- Course schedule: Schedules for the entire semester of classes for each instrument are emailed at the beginning of the semester.
- Repertoire Packets: Repertoire packets for the semester are picked up from the Performance Library. The Performance Library staff will notify you when the packets are ready for pickup.
- Course Grading & Attendance Policy: Your grade in repertoire class will be based on attendance, preparation and performance. You are required to attend each repertoire class in a given semester. Absence is only permitted in the case of documented illness or excused absence per the Time Off Policies. Your course instructor will inform you of their specific grading policy.

Orchestral Performance Core (OP 1200)

This one credit course encompasses all of the vital performance activities in which OP students are expected to participate. All OP students are required to enroll in OP 1200 each semester.

The value of the OP program lies in the rigor of the activities in the OP Core umbrella. For that reason, all OP students are expected to attend and participate in all OP Core activities to which they are assigned, unless they have an excused absence per the Time Off Policies. .

OP Core includes the following activities:

- OP Mock auditions
- OP Masterclasses
- OP Orchestra Rep Readings
- Commencement Brass
- OP Faculty Panel Discussions
- Attend and/or play at outside MSM
- Development and Donor Relations events

General attendance and grading policy for all OP Core Activities

The following attendance policy applies to all activities that fall under the umbrella of OP Core:

- Attendance is mandatory for all OP Core activities unless a student has an excused absence per the Time Off Policies.
- The Instrumental Ensembles Office takes great care to ensure that OP Core activities are scheduled apart from other academic/ensemble commitments at MSM. Nevertheless, you must always make sure that OP Core engagements do not conflict with your other MSM commitments. If they do, you must communicate those conflicts as soon as you become aware of them and no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the OP Core activity. Except in the case of a true emergency, notifying Instrumental Office Staff of a conflict or a double booking inside of the 14-day window is unacceptable and will result in a lowered OP core grade.
- Students may request to be excused from OP Core activities for an approved professional gig or professional or educational audition. Students must submit a copy of their contract or written agreement (in the case of a gig or professional engagement) or a copy of the audition invitation for such requests to be considered.
- In the case of absence for illness or personal emergency, students must notify the Instrumental Ensembles Office by email as soon as possible. They must then submit a note from a doctor or other health professional for the absence to be considered excused.
- Grading criteria:
 - All unexcused absences for any OP Core activities will lower a student's OP Core grade by -12 points.
 - Any notification of conflicts with OP Core activities past the deadlines listed in the Time Off Policies from the affected activity will lower a student's OP Core grade by -8 points
 - Late submission of required materials (repertoire for master classes, etc) will lower a student's OP Core grade by -8 points
 - All Time off Requests must be submitted in the Time Off Request Form located on the orchestra site.

OP Core Component 1: Mock Auditions

Since mock auditions are a powerful tool in preparing to win an orchestral audition, Orchestral Performance majors will perform in a series of regularly scheduled mock auditions during their two-year program.

Mock auditions are designed to mimic realistic orchestra auditions, paralleling preliminary, semifinal, and final orchestra audition standards and practices. Adjudication panels for mock auditions include OP program faculty as well as other coaches from major New York City and New Jersey orchestras and performing ensembles.

OP Mock Auditions are a critical part of your OP Core grade. Unexcused absences, last minute cancellations, failing to bring your materials, or showing up late and/or unprepared will result in a lower grade. Please consult the section entitled 'General attendance and grading policy for all OP Core Activities' for more information.

All mock auditions are performed blind.

Schedule: Mock audition schedules will be emailed at the beginning of the semester. Students are notified when times are posted and are expected to cross-reference their personal schedule with their audition time and notify staff immediately of any conflicts.

Repertoire: Please use the year-end jury repertoire list as your guide and consult your teacher to determine which solo work and excerpts are best for you to perform at each mock audition. With the approval of your major teacher, you may substitute repertoire in preparation for an actual orchestra or summer music festival audition you may be taking.

Mock Audition Materials: You are required to provide two complete, collated, and annotated sets of your repertoire list, including copies of all solo works and excerpts. All of these assist the coaches in making comments on your performance. Make sure that these materials are typed, legible and well prepared. It will affect your overall presentation and results.

Attire: Although these auditions are played blind, students should dress appropriately for the portion of the mock auditions where feedback is received by adjudicators.

Required Format for Materials

Two collated and stapled sets, each containing:

- A cover sheet listing your complete repertoire list, including movements or rehearsal/bar numbers where appropriate. Do not print your name on these sheets or anywhere on your materials.
- A copy of each of your concerto and solo choices, annotated and bracketed with felt-tip marker to indicate start and finish.

- A copy of each of your orchestral excerpts, in the order listed on your repertoire list, noting composers and titles of works at the top of each page, annotated, and bracketed to indicate start and finish of each excerpt.
- Your name should not appear on any of these materials, as the first portion of your audition is performed blind.

Printing of required materials: If you do not have adequate access to a printer, the Instrumental Ensembles Office can assist you by printing your materials. In this case, a single PDF file containing all materials to be printed must be emailed no later than 1 week before the scheduled mock audition. You will be sent an email when your materials are available for pickup.

OP Core Component 2: OP Master Classes

One of the advantages of studying in New York City is that it is a cultural center and a major tour stop for international and American orchestras. In addition to the program faculty, Orchestral Performance students have the opportunity to perform for extraordinary orchestral musicians from other parts of the world. Each year, OP students will perform a master classes given by members of national and international orchestras.

Guest artists from visiting orchestras are selected by OP faculty members, based on the schedule of orchestras visiting New York City during the season.

Scheduling: You will be notified of the date and time of the OP master classes for your instrument by MSM email.

Format: All students performing in an OP master class should prepare to perform a solo and/or concerto movement in addition to 4–5 orchestral excerpts. Students typically will perform for 30-45 minutes in a given class. Occasionally, if time permits, the OP program will invite the highest scoring students from the classical division to participate in the master class.

Master Class Materials: Students are required to submit their repertoire for all OP master classes at least two weeks in advance or risk a penalty to their grade.

Students should consult with their teacher to determine their repertoire and come prepared with one photocopy of their scores for the guest artist.

Student master class performances often capture the attention of noted national and international performers and conductors. In the past, they have opened doors for program students into orchestral and ensemble jobs. You should present yourself in a professional manner, as if it were an audition.

Students are not required to engage an accompanist for OP master classes. If they wish to do so, they may engage an accompanist at their own expense.

Attendance: OP Master Classes are OP Core activities and follow the grading and attendance policies for general OP core activities.

OP Core Component 3: Readings

All OP students are expected to play in the OP readings. These readings are specifically designed for the needs of the OP students and are aimed at exposing students to a wider variety of repertoire than what we are able to program in a given orchestral season at MSM.

Structure: OP students are expected to cover the principal and most important roles in these OP readings. Students from the classical division join OP readings in order for all parts to be covered. The Large Ensembles Office will assign students based on the placement audition scores and availability.

Attendance: OP Readings are OP Core activities and follow the grading and attendance policies for general OP core activities.

OP Core Component 4: Special Performances

OP students represent the highest standard of instrumental playing at MSM and as such are occasionally called upon to represent the school for high-profile performances. These performances are administered and assigned by the Head of OP or Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance and participation in these activities are required unless a student has an already approved time off request.

JURIES

As students in the OP program are not required to perform a recital for completion of their degree, juries are considered the most important cumulative events in an OP student's time at MSM. PPD students are required to play a recital, however, may replace their recital with a jury by submitting a General Petition form.

OP majors will have a year-end final jury in the form of a professional orchestral audition, performing requested solo works and orchestral excerpts for the faculty of the OP program. The repertoire for first and second-year juries has been formulated by program faculty and is distributed each year via email. The jury repertoire lists have been created to assimilate standards for semifinal (first-year repertoire list) and final (second-year repertoire list) orchestra auditions. (Any special repertoire exceptions should be arranged in consultation with your major teacher.) Students will be allotted 10–20 minutes per jury, including concerto and excerpts.

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. In orchestral music, those creators that are underrepresented include Black, Latinx, Women, LGBTQIA+, Asian and AAPI, Indian, and Native American. All students must include one piece by an underrepresented creator to be played on their jury.

Schedule: Jury schedules are created and communicated by the Office of the Registrar.

Jury Procedure: Please plan to arrive at least 10 minutes before your scheduled time. Warm-up rooms will be available during jury times. Please prepare accordingly and be especially attentive to communications regarding date, room, and time assignments. Your jury will be adjudicated by OP faculty members. Juries are modeled as an orchestral audition.

As in an orchestral audition, you may begin with your choice of solo work, and faculty members will call the excerpts. In addition, members of the audition jury may interrupt students to request interpretive modifications.

Jury Materials: If you are performing works not on the OP jury repertoire list, please provide the adjudicators with copies of those excerpts, properly annotated, collated, and stapled together. Otherwise, a printed program following the format of your mock audition programs should be prepared for each adjudicator. Make sure that these materials are typed and organized. It will affect your overall presentation and results.

Probationary Review: The final jury for first-year students will also serve as a probationary review audition. At this jury, faculty members will determine the student's continuation in the second year of the program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

David Chan

Head of Orchestral Performance
Concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
dchan@msmnyc.edu

JT Kane

Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance
917-493-4589
jkane@msmnyc.edu
Office: Room 303