

**CONTEMPORARY
PERFORMANCE
PROGRAM
HANDBOOK
2025—2026**

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WELCOME LETTER

Dear Students,

Welcome to the Contemporary Performance Program at the Manhattan School of Music! We are grateful for the commitment you have shown to the music of our time by enrolling in CPP. Now is an exciting time to be involved in contemporary music. The burst of energy and creativity in recent years, with the inclusion of new voices and the exploration of modern and traditional styles, makes this a golden era of new music. The Contemporary Performance Program is designed to prepare you to be an artistic advocate for the age and an expert interpreter of the music of our time. This handbook is a guide to the practical aspects of the program. In it you will find the details that help us function as a community. Please read through it carefully. If you have questions, do not hesitate to reach out to us for more information. We look forward to working together with you to create powerful learning experiences that serve as the foundation for your emerging career.

Erin Rogers and Matt Ward,
Co-Artistic and Administrative Advisors of CPP

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Contemporary Performance Program (CPP) is a two-year graduate program at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM). The successful completion of all requirements results in the awarding of the degree Master of Music in Contemporary Performance.

APPLIED LESSONS

Your teacher is among the most vital sources in helping you to make career decisions, both large and small. As in any program, 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 Dean of Academic Affairs.

You are entitled to and required to have **twenty-four one-hour private lessons** with your major teacher in the course of the school year. Some teachers give these lessons each week. Others offer two-hour lessons and/or lessons at differing intervals. In some instrumental areas, more than one faculty member teaches lessons. In such cases, the teachers ultimately decide how many lessons the student has with each teacher. Make certain that you understand your 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, please notify the department chair.

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 or more unexcused absences in their private lessons will be reported to the Office of the Provost.

No student may be absent from the school for professional engagements unless permission for such absence is granted by the Office of the Provost well in advance of all such engagements. Students who wish to pursue a professional

opportunity over several days **must apply for a Limited Leave of Absence**, using the form available from the Office of the Provost.

If you experience any pain related to the playing of your instrument, please consult your major teacher. It is important to address such issues immediately in order to avoid developing more serious and/or chronic conditions. If physical therapy or other help is recommended to you, please visit the Office of Student Affairs for assistance in arranging such help.

Split Lessons

MSM students are eligible to request having lessons split between two teachers. In order to split lessons between two teachers, they must first receive approval from their current teacher, requested teacher, Department Chair, and Division Dean. After approval from all parties, students must submit a Split Lesson Request petition available on the student portal: my.msmnyc.edu/ICS/STUDENTS/. Split lessons in Contemporary Performance are only permitted one semester per year of study, and may not split in their first semester of study. All students receiving split lessons must fill out the form each year if they wish to continue splitting lessons.

Students may also request to split lessons between their major instrument and lessons in another division. (e.g. contemporary clarinet and classical clarinet). The student must receive approval from all parties before submitting the Split Lesson Request petition. Students will only participate in juries in their major instrument/degree program and are upheld to the jury requirements as published in their major instrument/degree handbook.

TECHNICAL AND MUSICAL 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 CPP students admitted to Manhattan School of Music have demonstrated the following abilities:

- High level of technical skill in areas of intonation, tone quality, rhythmic precision, accuracy, and projection of sound
- Fluid performance of both standard and contemporary repertoire
- Demonstrated knowledge of contemporary music as evidenced in audition interview
- Excellence in both solo and ensemble playing

Upon graduation from MSM, a CPP performer should carry forward the following abilities:

Literacy: Students will demonstrate the ability to perform works of the 20 and 21st century with fluency, exhibiting both deep musicianship and, in the major performance area, a level of skill relevant to professional standards appropriate for the chosen instrument, and style of music.

Technique: Students will demonstrate the technical skill requisite for artistic self-expression in the chosen works and be able to master the multimedia techniques and technical elements required.

Composition: Students are encouraged to create music in a personal language with a requisite level of craft and to be creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial in spirit.

Improvisation: Students possess general fluency with either harmonically defined or undefined territories through electronic and/or acoustic means. They may learn from a common performance practice, especially in fields where improvisation is prevalent, or develop a personal approach to spontaneous musical expression.

Analysis: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the common elements and organizational patterns of music and their interaction, and the ability to employ this understanding in performance as well as in written and aural forms when required.

Performance Preparation: Students must be able to demonstrate the ability to learn new works independently and to acquire new repertoire with accuracy, establishing the work in a stylistic manner and interpretative approach.

Interpretation: Students must use theoretical and historical analysis to create an informed hearing of a given musical work in their own original voice as a musical artist. Students should continue to honor cultural inclusion as an

indispensable and powerful element of artistic expression and humanity.

Collaborative Competence: Students must be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills to work at every level of an ensemble, from leadership positions to supportive roles and to move easily between these functions, illustrating their understanding that music is a social art form that depends on the artistic integrity and cooperation of all involved. Upon graduation, students will operate at a professional level, and be able to function as a reliable member of a professional contemporary ensemble.

First-year juries and second-year recitals are required of all students in the Contemporary Performance Program. All standards are judged in relation to the student's degree program and level of study. At the end of their degree program, students should be able to demonstrate that they have attained the skills necessary for graduation.

ENSEMBLE REQUIREMENTS

The students of CPP form the core of **Tactus**, MSM's premier contemporary ensemble. Participation is mandatory during each semester of study. Tactus presents multiple concerts per year at MSM. The members of Tactus also participate in two composer workshop/reading sessions per semester.

The department chair, in consultation with faculty and students, chooses repertoire for Tactus. Many factors inform the repertoire choices, including available instrumentation, stylistic breadth, diversity, and overall artistic considerations.

Students provide the **program notes** (written or oral) for Tactus chamber music concerts. If program notes are in written form, they must be submitted well in advance of the performance.

***TactusTime* is Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 4 PM to 6:50 PM.** *TactusTime* is used for rehearsals, coachings, master classes, repertoire classes, composer readings, workshops, and CPP special events. All CPP students must keep this entire time available, even if they are not performing in or rehearsing every piece, and even after the final Tactus event of the academic year has been completed.

Attendance is mandatory for all CPP events that take place during *TactusTime*. The one exception to this rule is that students need not attend rehearsals of pieces in which they are not playing. It is understood that, in a program of this caliber, occasional conflicts may arise between MSM obligations and professional opportunities. If you develop a schedule conflict with a particular rehearsal date, please contact the department chair well in advance of the date. Your first obligation is to CPP, however. We will seek but cannot promise resolution of such conflicts. Multiple absences during any given cycle will result in a grade penalty.

If you must miss a *TactusTime* event due to illness, please contact the department chair and your coach before the event takes place. If you do not do so, you will be marked absent without excuse, and your semester grade will drop. The first unexcused absence results in a semester grade of "B+", the second a "B-" and the third a "C", at which point your academic standing is in jeopardy. Please be respectful of your colleagues and coaches at all times.

Arrive 15 minutes early to help set up the rehearsal space and stay as needed to help reset the space. Learn your music before the first rehearsal and cue your part.

JURIES

The Office of the Registrar assigns jury days and times for students at MSM. CPP juries take place in early May. Each jury is 15 minutes long. Juries are required for first-year CPP students only.

Repertoire requirements are as follows:

- One piece from the 20th century
- One piece from the 21st century
- One piece demonstrating significant technical skill

Students are required to present at least one work by composers from historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, genders, and/or cultures.

Students are responsible for providing their own accompanists, if needed. Please plan early, to avoid last-minute scheduling problems.

Students receive their jury comments and scores from the Office of the Registrar two weeks after final examination week, and may elect to share them with their teachers. All juries are graded on a 10-point scale. The student's jury grade is the average of all scores received at the jury.

The Registrar's Office will consider a student petition for jury postponement, but only in the case of a medical condition (documented by a physician), sudden family emergency, or other exceptional circumstance. In all other cases, a 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

A graduation recital must take place within the last two semesters of study at MSM. The major teacher and the department chair must approve the recital program. A copy of this program must be uploaded to Canvas as part of the student's graduation requirement.

Repertoire for CPP graduation recitals should demonstrate the student's global understanding of contemporary music styles. Students are encouraged to show fluency with electronics and/or improvisation. They may choose to offer composition(s) by themselves or colleagues, in addition to other works from the contemporary repertoire. Students are required to present at least one work by composers from historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, genders, and/or cultures. These groups include, but are not limited to, Black, Latinx, Women, LGBTQIA+, Asian, and AAPI, Indian, and Native American. Students must also prepare written or oral program notes for the graduation recital.

CPP students are encouraged to give non-required recitals in their first year of study, and to take advantage of other playing opportunities at MSM.

REPERTOIRE CLASSES

Repertoire classes are scheduled throughout the year. They take place during *TactusTime* and may be led by CPP faculty or guest artists. Students are encouraged to perform as often as possible. Attendance at all repertoire classes is mandatory for CPP students.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

CPP students undertake an independent study during their second year. Each student pairs with an advisor to focus on an area of interest that is not covered in CPP coursework. Some possible projects include:

- Preparation of a lecture recital
- Research on a particular genre or composer
- Production of an off-site performance
- Exploration of performance related software
- Creation of a composition-related project
- Examination of audience trends

Guidelines for the independent study are as follows:

- Select your project and potential advisor early in the fall semester of 2nd year.
- Clear your project and advisor with the CPP Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisors by October 1st.
- Once your project is cleared, contact your potential advisor. An advisor must be willing to meet with you three to five times during the spring semester.
- If an advisor agrees in principal to participate, please forward the advisor's contact information to the CPP Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisors by October 15th.
- Faculty advisors are paid for their services directly by Manhattan School of Music.
- The CPP Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisors will inform you when your project is confirmed. You must then submit the Independent Study form to the Registrar's Office by November 1st. Meetings with your advisor take place during the spring term.

COMPOSER/PERFORMER PROJECTS

First year CPP students collaborate with an MSM student composer on the creation of a solo piece with electronics. CPP students premiere these works in a concert near the end of the second semester. CPP faculty member David Adamcyk oversees the collaborative process and the final performance.

Second year CPP students collaborate with an MSM student composer on the creation of a short solo piece. The year's process includes instrumental or vocal demonstrations, coachings, concert attendance, and written assignments. Towards the end of the second semester CPP students present the premiere performances of the pieces that result from these collaborations. CPP Co-Artistic and Administrative Advisor Erin Rogers oversees the work in this course.

First year collaborations result in credit for composers, while 2nd year projects result in credit for performers. It is understood that in both cases, composers and performers will enter the collaboration with good will and put forth their best effort in bringing the project to a successful completion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements can be found in the MSM Academic Catalog.

Students are expected to attend and participate in class and to complete homework as assigned.

Students must successfully complete all degree requirements in order to receive their Master's Degree. The class professors determine grades. Students who have issues with a course may bring those issues to the attention of the professor and/or the department chair.

ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY (COACH) LIST

Administration

Erin Rogers, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor, saxophone

(347) 284-7704 erogers@msmnyc.edu

Matt Ward, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor, percussion

(347) 661-4134 mward@msmnyc.edu

Faculty

Gregg August, bass

Valerie Coleman, flute

David Cossin, percussion

Anthony DeMare, piano

Monica Ellis, bassoon

Oren Fader, guitar

John Ferrari, percussion

Susan Jolles, harp

Margaret Kampmeier, piano

David Krakauer, clarinet

William Lang, trombone

Curtis Macomber, violin

Kevin Newton, horn

Tara O'Connor, flute

John Pickford-Richards, viola

Todd Reynolds, electronics

Brandon Ridenour, trumpet

Lucy Shelton, voice

Fred Sherry, cello

Keve Wilson, oboe