

**COMPOSITION  
DEPARTMENT  
HANDBOOK  
2025–2026**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION	3
APPLIED LESSONS	4
Your Teacher	4
Change of Teacher	4
Attendance Policy	4
Professional Leave	4
PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES	5
Student Composers' Concerts	5
Contemporary Performance Program and Composer's Orchestra Readings	5
Electronics/Computer Music Studios and Concerts	6
Masterclasses and Seminars	6
Non-Department/Off-Campus Performances	6
COMPETITIONS AND AWARDS	7
The Carl Kanter Award	7
The Nicolas Flagello Award	7
The Giampaolo Bracali Award	7
The Jan Williams Award	7
The Commission Prizes	7
GRADUATION THESIS	8
Doctor of Musical Arts Recital	8
JURIES	8
General Information	8
The Composition Jury	9
Advanced Standing Jury	10
Further Information on the Jury	10
EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS	11
Orientation	11
Composition Department Concerts	11
Extended or Prepared Instrument Use	11
Standards of Accomplishment	12
Department Etiquette	12
Department Unity	12
OTHER ITEMS	11
Employment Opportunities and Career Development	12

# 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 2025–2026. For new students, I look forward to get to know you and your work. My colleagues and I will work hard to make your experience at MSM a rewarding one. 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,

Dr. Reiko Fütting

Head of the Composition Department

## STATEMENT ON CULTURAL INCLUSION

---

The Composition Department at Manhattan School of Music is committed to encourage students to be inspired by a variety of musical practices while maintaining integrity and sincerity. In addition, inspirations drawn from fields other than music (artistic and beyond) are understood to create rich, diverse, and relevant art.

# APPLIED LESSONS

---

## Your Teacher

Your teacher is among the most vital sources in helping you to make important 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 Division Dean or the Dean of Academic Affairs.

You are entitled to and required to have twenty-eight one-hour private lessons with your major teacher during the school year. 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 Head.

It is possible to split lessons among two teachers, however it is only possible to split lessons during the last year of study or of taking lessons (4th year for BM, 2nd year for MM, 2nd year for DMA students). It is not possible to split lessons for PS students. However, students who are returning to MSM for a master's or doctoral degree may split lessons during the first year of the degree. If a student would like to split lessons, a form needs to be submitted which requires the signatures of both teachers. A teacher may not agree to splitting lessons. Submission deadlines usually fall at the end of the prior semester.

## Change of Teacher

Students may request a change of teacher. This is an important decision to be thought over carefully and thoroughly. If you wish to change teachers, you must obtain a Change of Teacher Request Form from the Office of the Provost. 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 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 or non-emergency reasons. Any student who has two consecutive unexcused absences in their private lessons are referred to the Office of the Provost and Dean of Students.

## Professional Leave

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

two weeks. 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.

## **PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

---

### **MSM Composers' Concerts**

Every academic year the Composition Department offers nine concerts of new student works presented in one of MSM's main performance spaces. All concerts of the Composition Department are produced and publicly advertised by MSM, recorded by the Charles Myers Recording Studio, and occasionally streamed by the Orto Center.

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, including the thesis concerts; you may, of course, have your 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 typical maximum duration is 10–15 minutes. However, longer works can be given if circumstances allow by permission of the Department Head.

### **Contemporary Performance Program and Composer's Orchestra Readings**

Student Composer Workshops – The Contemporary Performance Program hosts two workshops (one per semester) for student composers, during which their works are workshopped by student performers of the CPP and led by CPP faculty. These sessions are to try new ideas and techniques and should be seen as “safe havens” for experimentation. 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 undergraduate 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 Symphony Orchestra. Typically, the reading 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 606), 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 part of the Composition Forum, a weekly course required of all student composers in the Bachelors' and Masters' programs. The classes and seminars are given both by guest composers and artists and MSM Composition and Instrumental Faculty. Scheduled masterclasses are determined by the instructor during the semester. Students also have the opportunity to give presentations on their own works in Forum.

## 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. 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 a monetary prize 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.

### **The Giampaolo Bracali Award**

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

### **The Jan Williams Award**

The Jan Williams Award is a monetary prize given to a graduating composer and CPP student for excellence in the CPP Collaboration 2 Project.

### **The Commission Prizes**

There are at least five Commission Competitions in cooperation with ensembles at Manhattan School of Music as well as non-MSM affiliated ensembles.

1. Windscape Commission Prize for Wind Quintet (MSM)
2. Tactus Commission Prize for Mixed Ensemble (MSM)
3. Percussion Ensemble Commission Prize (MSM)
4. Camerata Nova Commission Prize (MSM)
5. New Chamber Ballet Commission Prize

# 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. 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 and given a public performance by the MSM Symphony Orchestra in one of two concerts in the spring semester. 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 Head to take advantage of this option. The goal is to compose a substantial work 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 find all the performers. The student is 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, 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.

Manhattan School of Music is committed to its Cultural Inclusion Initiative and students' jury presentations should include inspiration drawn from a variety of musical practices to create rich, diverse, and relevant art.



# The Composition Jury

At the end of each academic year, 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 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 Office of the Registrar. This petition must indicate the approval of both the major teacher and the Department Head, 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 Office of the Provost 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 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 Head. All composition majors in the Bachelor's and Master's programs and Doctoral students in their resident years are required to attend this meeting. 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 Bachelor's and Master's programs and Doctoral students in their resident years are required to attend all twelve official Composition Department concerts. These include the nine MSM Composers' Concerts, the Faculty Concert, and the two Composer's Orchestra Concerts (Thesis Concerts). Attendance will be taken; conflicts must be addressed to the Department Head. 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 accordingly.

# 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 ensure 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 Doctoral Assistants and Doctoral Fellows in the Theory Department, as overseen by the Dean of Academic Core. Career Development is a special focus of the school's Center for Career Readiness & Community Impact (CCRCI)—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.