

**CONDUCTING
DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK
2026–2027**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Manhattan School of Music!

My name is Mei-Ann Chen, and it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Conducting Program at Manhattan School of Music as Director of Orchestral Activities. This program is designed for young, pre-professional musicians and offers the advanced training necessary to create and sustain a successful and meaningful career as a conductor.

As you proceed on your educational journey, this handbook will be of use to you. You will find that it summarizes the policies, procedures and requirements that apply to you as a student in the Conducting Program. Please read it carefully and keep it for reference throughout the year. The responsibility for knowing the information contained within, as well as all school policies and procedures, rests with you.

I hope this handbook answers any questions you may have. Please feel free to reach out to me regarding any questions or concerns.

If you need to reach me, please send an e-mail to me **mchen@msmnyc.edu**.

With best regards,

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor

APPLIED LESSONS

Your Teacher

This is one of the most important relationships while here at MSM. As your teacher, I will be a resource in helping you make career decisions, large and small. Issues may arise which need discussion or resolution. You are encouraged to discuss problems, as they occur, directly with me or JT Kane, the Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance, (jkane@msmnyc.edu).

You are entitled to fourteen hours of private lessons each semester you are enrolled (score study and preparation before an orchestra session).

Attendance Policy

Private lessons are central to study at MSM 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 are canceled for non-illness, non-emergency reasons. Faculty must refer to the Office of the Provost and the Dean of Students any student who has two or more unexcused absences in his or her private lessons.

Limited Leave of Absence

A planned Limited Leave of Absence for personal or professional engagements may be requested through the Office of the Provost. A Limited Leave of Absence for sudden family or personal situations may be requested through the Dean of Students. A limited leave of absence generally is not granted for a period more than two weeks per semester. 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. The student remains registered for the semester and is responsible for all missed course work, exams, and juries, and for all fees associated with that semester.

Conducting-related Pain

If you experience pain before, during, or after conducting, discuss it immediately with your major teacher. Physical pain 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.

ENSEMBLE REQUIREMENTS

All conducting students must participate in Conductor's Orchestra every semester. The goals of the Conductor's Orchestra sessions are the following:

- To evaluate the baton technique of the conductor: the clarity of the beat, the expressive sweep of the hands, and does the baton and the body language reflect the articulations, the dynamics, and energy of the music.
- To refine a technique for dealing with faulty intonation and balancing a complex chord.
- To develop a general rehearsal technique that is efficient with time and is clear in articulating what the conductor wants from the musicians. This includes dialogues and discussion with the orchestra players to give feedback.

Cultural Inclusion Policy

The MSM Conducting 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 conduct works by underrepresented creators for their juries and recitals. Underrepresented creators for conducting include but are not limited to, Black, Latinx, Women, LGBTQIA+, Asian and AAPI, Indian and Native American.

JURIES OR ADJUDICATED PERFORMANCES

An annual jury or adjudicated performance is required by the end of each school year and is conducted to allow the faculty to assess the growth and progress of each student. This is a vital part of your training as a performer and has a bearing on your academic record and scholarship. The jury performance can be either a small ensemble put together by the student conductor, or a performance with the full MSM orchestra.

These are a vital part of your training as a performer, and the resultant scores have bearing on your academic record and scholarship.

Jury Postponement

The Office of the Registrar will only consider a student petition requesting postponement of a jury in extreme medical conditions (documented by 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. An approved postponed jury must be successfully completed no later than the first two weeks of the subsequent semester.

RECITALS

Scheduling Required Recitals

Your graduation recital must take place within the last two semesters of major lessons. (This recital does not replace your jury.) A date for the recital must be applied for with the Scheduling Office. The recital program must be approved by the major teacher and the Conducting Department Chair, and a copy of this program must be submitted to Canvas. All recital programs will need to include a work by an underrepresented composer. Further, the recital repertoire approval form, also available from the Scheduling Office, requires the approval and signatures of your teacher (implies that the student is ready to perform) and the Department Chair (implies approval of the repertoire and programming). Students should be certain that the program is accurately written before submitting it for signatures. This approval form is to be filed with the Scheduling Office at least four weeks prior to the recital date.

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 in the fall semester when recital space is less at a premium. Consult the Scheduling Office for a recital application.

Accompanists for recitals

Reimbursement for school accompanists for recitals is the student's responsibility. Payment to school accompanists for private lessons is covered by the school. Any extra rehearsal time is the student's responsibility.

Repertoire requirements

All recital programs are required to include a work by an underrepresented composer. Underrepresented repertoire includes works by Black, Latinx, Women, LGBTQIA+, Asian and AAPI, Indian and Native American