

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS (DMA) DEGREE IN THE FIELD OF COMPOSITION

Program Learning Outcomes for the DMA Degree

Upon completing the DMA degree, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate technical and musical competence in performance or composition at a professional level.
2. Develop highly developed analytical skills in advanced music theory and a profound understanding of how those skills inform music performance.
3. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relationship between music history and music performance with greater familiarity of a wide variety of historical and contemporary performance practices.
4. Develop career development skills that complement their professional-level performance skills.
5. Develop working knowledge of and have experience with both classroom teaching and studio teaching methods at the conservatory and university levels.

Requirements for the DMA Degree

For general university requirements, see [Doctoral Degrees \(https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees/). For additional requirements, regulations, and procedures for all graduate programs, please see [All Graduate Students \(https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/). Students pursuing the DMA degree in all fields of study must complete:

- A minimum of 90 credit hours to satisfy degree requirements.
- Students must register for a minimum of 9 credit hours per semester of enrollment. Upon achieving candidacy, students are expected to make progress towards the completion of their degree each semester.

Requirements for the DMA Degree in the field of Composition

The requirements listed in the General Announcements (GA) satisfy the minimum requirements for this degree program. In certain instances, courses (or requirements) not officially listed here may be substituted upon approval of the program's academic advisor or, where applicable, the department or program's Director of Graduate Studies. Course substitutions or any exceptions to the stated official curricular requirements must be approved by the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies \(https://graduate.rice.edu/\)](https://graduate.rice.edu/). Students and their academic advisors should identify and clearly document the courses to be taken.

Summary

Code	Title	Credit Hours
Total Credit Hours Required for the DMA Degree in the field of Composition		96

Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Credit Hours
Composition Requirements		
MUSI 601	COMPOSITION FOR MAJORS ADVANCED AND GRADUATES (minimum of 6 semesters)	3
MUSI 603	GRADUATE COMPOSITION SEMINAR (minimum of 6 semesters)	1
MUSI 605	ADVANCED ELECTRONIC AND COMPUTER MUSIC SYSTEMS	3
MUSI 606	ADVANCED COMPUTER SOUND SYNTHESIS	3
Doctoral Recitals		
MUSI 751	DOCTORAL SOLO RECITAL (2 solo recitals required, 1st recital) ¹	0
MUSI 751	DOCTORAL SOLO RECITAL (2 solo recitals required, 2nd recital) ¹	0
Performance Requirements		
Select 8 credit hours from Performance Coursework ²		8
DMA Core Requirements		
MUSI 611	CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY	3
MUSI 711	ANALYTICAL APPROACHES	3
MUSI 733	DOCTORAL SEMINAR I: CAREER SKILLS	3
MUSI 735	DOCTORAL SEMINAR II: REPERTORY	3
MUSI 737	DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN MUSICOLOGY	3
MUSI 738	DOCTORAL INDIVIDUAL PROJECT	3
Academic Coursework ³		
Select 5 courses from the Music History course offerings (see course list below)		15
Select 4 courses from the Music Theory course offerings (see course list below)		12
Elective Requirements		
Select 7 credit hours at the 300-level or above ⁴		7
Classroom Teaching		
Students must complete the Classroom Teaching requirement		
Examinations ⁵		
Piano proficiency		
Aural Skills proficiency		
Written and oral qualifying examinations ⁵		
Doctoral Document		
MUSI 700	GRADUATE RESEARCH (variable credit hours and repeatable for credit) ⁶	1-9
MUSI 800	DISSERTATION (2 semesters) ⁶	3
Total Credit Hours		96

Footnotes and Additional Information

- ¹ Two (2) Doctoral recitals of original compositions are required. One (1) recital may be a Lecture recital (MUSI 754).

- ² Performance coursework may be satisfied by any combination of private instrumental and/or vocal study (such as MUSI 251:297 except MUSI 281 *Secondary Piano*, MUSI 351:373, MUSI 381:398), classes in conducting, score reading, performance in large ensembles, or other performance courses (such as MUSI 334, MUSI 436, MUSI 444, MUSI 502, MUSI 514, MUSI 585, or MUSI 640). Piano lessons are strongly recommended.
- ³ 5 courses (3 credit hours each) comprise the 15 credit hours required of Music History coursework. 1 Music History course (3 credit hours) must be taken during the first semester of enrollment. 4 courses (3 credit hours each) comprise the 12 credit hours required of Music Theory coursework.
- ⁴ Electives may be selected from any university course at the 300-level or above. A maximum of three (3) credit hours of MUSI 649 *Graduate Independent Study* can count towards degree requirements. Additional hours of required coursework may not count toward the elective requirement.
- ⁵ At the end of their sixth semester of coursework, each doctoral student will receive four exam questions, two each from the Musicology Department and the Theory Department, and be assigned a faculty mentor from each Department. With assistance from the mentors, the student will also generate one additional question in both musicology and theory on topics of the student's choosing. The students will use the summer to research and write draft answers to these six questions. In the fall semester, the student will have two check-ins with the mentor before the essays are submitted, one during the first week of class and another 2-3 weeks later. The students will submit their completed essays at the end of the eighth week of the fall semester. These will be evaluated by faculty from each department, and students will receive written feedback on each of their essays once the entire exam process is completed. If the student fails to submit all of the written materials, students will fail MUSI 700 and be placed on academic probation by the university, and would need to petition the Graduate Studies Committee for the opportunity to do a fresh slate of 6 questions for the spring semester on an accelerated timeline/without the benefit of the time afforded by the summer break.
The students will also sit a subject exam for their major area. For performance majors, the subject exam will be a four-hour written exam, created and graded by the studio teacher. For composition students, students will receive a composition prompt at the end of the 7th week of the fall semester and have a week to complete the project.
The oral examinations will be scheduled in the 10th and 11th weeks of the fall semester, and will last for two and one-half hours before a committee that will include the studio teacher and a non-mentor faculty member from each of the Musicology and Composition/Theory Departments. The main element that the student will prepare for the oral examination will be mock classroom lectures of approximately twenty minutes on one musicology and one theory question of the mentors' choosing. These will be followed by question-and-answer sessions that will cover the lectures, the remaining essays, and the subject exam.
In each academic discipline (musicology and theory), students will be graded pass/fail separately on each of the three essays and the oral exam. Failing one essay requires a revision of that essay; failing two essays requires successfully answering a new essay question, and failing three essays requires a revision of one essay and answering a new question. Failing the oral exam requires creating a new presentation, either on an existing successful essay or, if the student has also failed all three essays, on the topic of the new essay question. Failing the major area exam requires a revision of that exam.
- ⁶ Students are required to write an original composition of substantial dimensions. The composition must be publicly defended and submitted, following the university's regulations and procedures for candidacy, oral examination, and thesis (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees/#text>). MUSI 700 and MUSI 750 may be repeated until the document is defended.

Academic Coursework

Academic Coursework is comprised of a minimum of 5 courses (15 credit hours) from Music History course offerings and a minimum of 4 courses (12 credit hours) from Music Theory course offerings.

Music History Courses

Code	Title	Credit Hours
MUSI 524	AMERICAN MUSIC	3
MUSI 525	PERFORMANCE PRACTICES SEMINAR	3
MUSI 527	TOPICS IN EARLY MUSIC	3
MUSI 528	TOPICS IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES	3
MUSI 529	TOPICS IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES	3
MUSI 530	MUSIC, MAGIC, AND SCIENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD	3
MUSI 534	PROGRAM MUSIC IN THE 19TH CENTURY	3
MUSI 543	MUSIC AND MODERNISM IN FRANCE	3
MUSI 621	SELECTED STUDIES IN MUSIC HISTORY	3
MUSI 623	J.S. BACH: CAREER, WORKS, AND CRITICAL RECEPTION	3
MUSI 624	SEMINAR ON A SELECTED COMPOSER	3
MUSI 625	MOZART OPERAS	3
MUSI 626	THE CLASSICAL STYLE	3
MUSI 627	ROMANTIC SONGS AND PIANO PIECES	3
MUSI 716	MUSIC OF THE MIDDLE AGES	3
MUSI 717	RENAISSANCE MUSIC	3

Music Theory Courses

Code	Title	Credit Hours
MUSI 512	ANALYTICAL SYSTEMS	3
MUSI 513	MODAL COUNTERPOINT	3
MUSI 514	SCORE READING AND THEORY AT THE KEYBOARD	3
MUSI 516	ADVANCED ORCHESTRATION	3
MUSI 517	EARLY MODERN MASTERS	3
MUSI 605	ADVANCED ELECTRONIC AND COMPUTER MUSIC SYSTEMS	3
MUSI 606	ADVANCED COMPUTER SOUND SYNTHESIS	3
MUSI 610	MUSIC THEORIES OF THE WORLD: CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACHES TO PITCH, MELODY, AND RHYTHM	3
MUSI 611	CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY	3
MUSI 613	TONAL COUNTERPOINT	3
MUSI 614	SPECIAL TOPICS IN MUSIC THEORY AND MUSIC THEORY COMPOSITION	3
MUSI 615	MUSIC OF RAVEL: MUSIC THEORY AND COMPOSITION	3
MUSI 617	MUSIC SINCE 1950	3
MUSI 711	ANALYTICAL APPROACHES	3
MUSI 712	SEMINAR IN ADVANCED ANALYSIS	3
MUSI 713	SPECIAL TOPICS IN ADVANCED ANALYSIS	3
MUSI 723	AESTHETICS OF MUSIC	3

Policies for the DMA Degree**Shepherd School of Music Graduate Program Handbook**

The General Announcements (GA) is the official Rice curriculum.

As an additional resource for students, the Shepherd School of Music publishes a graduate program handbook, which can be found here: https://gradhandbooks.rice.edu/2025_26/Shepherd_School_of_Music_Graduate_Handbook.pdf.

Admission

A live audition is required for Instrumental Performance and Vocal Performance applicants. Composition applicants must submit a portfolio of representative works and interview with faculty. All doctoral applicants must complete exams in Music History and Music Theory and provide a recent research or analytic paper.

Academic Standards**Curriculum and Degree Requirements**

Further information on curricular requirements for all majors and degree programs is available from the Shepherd School of Music.

Grading Policy

For DMA students, a grade of C+ (2.33 grade points) or lower in any course is unsatisfactory and will not fulfill degree program requirements. A minimum grade of B- (2.67 grade points) per course is expected of all music students in their major applied area. A grade of C+ (2.33 grade points) or lower in a course in the student's major applied area is considered unsatisfactory and will be evaluated in the following manner:

- A music major who receives a grade of C+ (2.33 grade points) or lower in a course in their major applied area will be placed on music probation. Music probation signifies that the student's work has been sufficiently unsatisfactory to preclude graduation unless marked improvement is achieved promptly. A student on music probation may be absent from class only for extraordinary reasons and may not represent the school in any public function not directly a part of a degree program.
- If a student receives a second semester of C+ (2.33 grade points) or lower in a course in their major applied area, whether for consecutive semesters or not, the student will be discontinued as a music performance major and merit scholarship from the Shepherd School will be discontinued.

Graduate degree requirement: a minimum overall grade point average of 2.67 is necessary for graduation.

Leaves of Absence and Voluntary Withdrawal

Music majors must obtain permission in writing from the dean of the Shepherd School before requesting a leave of absence from the university. Requests must be in the dean's office before the first day of classes in the semester for which leave is requested.

Music majors taking voluntary withdrawal from the university are not guaranteed readmission into the Shepherd School and may be asked to reapply/reaudition. Students should explain the reasons for their withdrawal to the dean before leaving campus.

Transfer Credit

For Rice University's policy regarding transfer credit, see [Transfer Credit \(https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#transfer\)](https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#transfer). Some departments and programs have additional restrictions on transfer credit. Requests for

transfer credit must be approved for Rice equivalency by the appropriate academic department offering the Rice equivalent course (corresponding to the subject code of the course content) and by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS). Students are encouraged to meet with their academic program's advisor when considering transfer credit possibilities.

Program Transfer Credit Guidelines

Students pursuing the DMA degree should be aware of the following program-specific transfer credit guideline:

- Transfer credit coursework cannot be applied or used to meet any of the degree program's course requirements.

Additional Information

For additional information, please see the Shepherd School of Music website: <https://music.rice.edu> (<https://music.rice.edu/>).

Opportunities for the DMA Degree

Other Musical Opportunities

Lectures and Performances

A visiting lecturer series, a professional concert series, and numerous distinguished visiting musicians contribute to the Shepherd School environment. The Houston Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Chorus, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Masterworks Chorus, Da Camera, Context, and Chamber Music Houston, as well as the activities of other institutions of higher learning in the area, also provide exceptional opportunities for students to enjoy a wide spectrum of music.

Additional Information

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