Music composition is the creation of new works ranging from pieces that sound conservative to the most avant-garde pieces, which may include nontraditional instruments, video images, dancers and lighting effects. Computers and electronic devices such as MIDI synthesizers are also frequently used in music composition.

Pursuing Music – Composition at Ohio State

Students interested in music composition should develop performance skills in preparation for the School of Music entrance audition. Piano lessons and music theory classes are also recommended, if available.

All freshman applicants are considered within a competitive admission process for the Columbus campus; find admissions criteria at go.osu.edu/admissions.

Students planning to pursue a music major complete an entrance audition and the Theory Placement Exam (TPE) during the senior year in high school on a scheduled Audition Day. Transfer students and students already at Ohio State should also plan to complete an audition and the TPE. For additional information about auditions, visit music.osu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-procedures or contact School of Music Undergraduate Admissions at music-ug@osu.edu or 614-292-2870.

Acceptance into the Bachelor of Music in Composition program requires a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative point-hour ratio (CPHR) in first- and second-year music theory courses and in first- and second-year aural-training courses, admission to the second-year level of performance (private lessons) on the student’s principal instrument, a portfolio of the student’s original music compositions, and approval by the music theory and composition area faculty.

School of Music students should apply for acceptance into the Bachelor of Music in Composition program at the end of the second year or the beginning of the third year of study.

Music – Composition Requirements

Music courses required for the degree:
• First- and second-year music theory, music technology, and aural training
• Music history and world music
• Ensembles and composers’ seminar
• Principal instrument, 2 years
• Minor instrument (must be piano if piano is not the principal instrument)
• Keyboard harmony
• Beginning conducting

• Orchestration, counterpoint, composition
• Advanced composition and electives
• Senior project: senior composition and half recital of student’s original compositions

Composers are encouraged to take private composition lessons for freshman and sophomore theory/composition majors and Composers’ Workshop. The Composers’ Workshop is a weekly gathering of people interested in composition and features occasional guest composers, presentations on topics of interest and new music concerts.

Educational Objectives

Students majoring in music composition will achieve the following learning outcomes:
• Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the area of specialization, including significant technical mastery, capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work.
• Students will engage in applied studies each semester that will provide appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to prepare students for graduate programs and professional careers in the field. They will demonstrate an understanding of a wide range of historical styles and periods.
• Students will complete courses in music theory, music history, and area-specific literature and pedagogy that will provide appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to prepare them for professional careers in the field. These courses will represent a wide range of historical styles and periods.
• Students will have the ability to communicate musical ideas, concepts and requirements to professionals and lay persons related to the practice of the major field. Such communication may involve musical, oral, written and visual media.
• Students will complete curricular requirements that include courses designed to develop oral and written communication skills.
• Students will gain knowledge and experience in pedagogical methodologies in their area of specialization.

For more information, check these websites:

School of Music: music.osu.edu
Arts and Sciences: artsandsciences.osu.edu
Ohio State: osu.edu
Admissions: undergrad.osu.edu
Multicultural Center: multiculturalcenter.osu.edu
First Year Experience: fye.osu.edu
Students will gain an understanding of the nature of the music field in the professional world, particularly related to organizational structures, work ethics, technological resources and entrepreneurial skills required for advancing their careers.

- Students will complete a required course in music technology. They will prepare numerous assignments in music theory and music history courses employing a wide range of software and Web-based sources and skills covered in this course.
- Students will build workplace skills through independent studies with applied faculty and ensemble directions.
- Students will gain experiences in general studies sufficient to prepare them for a range of career options.
- Students will gain skills sufficient for clear and effective verbal and written communication.
- Students will include a broad range of general studies courses in their curricula appropriate for complementing degree requirements that address their specific music concentrations.

Co-Curricular Opportunities
Ohio State offers many opportunities for students to learn and grow outside of the classroom. Whether students intend to enter the job market upon graduation or apply to graduate school, internships provide the experience students need to differentiate themselves from other candidates. Employers and graduate school committees are looking for graduates that have already taken the “next step” to becoming professionals in their field.

Internships provide the direct, field-related experience and application of classroom knowledge that is necessary to advance career goals. Ohio State’s career placement office provides a database of available internships, as well as internship advisors. For more information, visit asccareerservices.osu.edu/students/jobsandinternships.

Ohio State also offers more than 100 study abroad programs in 40 countries around the world. In addition, there are hundreds of student organizations on campus to meet the interests of a diverse student population.

Honors & Scholars Opportunities
Ohio State offers the Honors and Scholars programs to create an environment of intellectual support and stimulation within a close-knit community of high-ability undergraduate students. Through these programs, students have access to smaller classes, undergraduate research opportunities, close working relationships with faculty, priority scheduling and unique housing options. Learn more at honors-scholars.osu.edu.

Career Prospects in Music - Composition
Some composers are able to support themselves by means of grants, commissions and other awards or find work in video and film production studios. Most composers continue their studies in graduate school and earn a doctoral degree before becoming a college teacher.

Curriculum Sample
This is a sample list of classes a student will take to pursue a degree in music composition. Since university students need more than specific education in a narrow field, they also will take classes to complete General Education (GE) requirements. Because GE courses come from a variety of academic areas of study, this course work helps students develop fundamental skills essential to collegiate success and allows them to tailor these courses toward their interests. Note: This sample represents one of several possible paths to a degree in music composition. Visit music.osu.edu for details.

Freshman Year:
Survey course 1
Keyboard Skills I–II 2
Ensembles 2–4
Music History I 3
Applied Lessons 4
Music Technology 2
Music Aural Training I–II 4
Music Theory I–II 4
GE courses 9
Total hours 31

Sophomore Year:
Keyboard Skills III–IV 2
Ensembles 2–4
Applied Lessons 4
Music Aural Training III–IV 4
Music History II–III 6
Music Theory III–IV 4
GE courses 6
Total hours 28

Junior Year:
Keyboard Harmony 4
Ensembles 2–4
Orchestration I-II 4
Composition 4
Counterpoint 2
World Music 3
GE courses 13
Total hours 32

Senior Year:
Conducting 2
Theory and Analysis 2
Extended Tonality 2
Senior Project 6
Advanced Theory or Composition 2–3
Music Electives 5
Composers Seminar 2
GE courses 12
Total hours 33

Revised September 2015. Information subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on the music composition program, visit music.osu.edu.

Contact information:
School of Music
1866 College Road | Columbus, Ohio 43210-1170
614-292-2870 | music-ug@osu.edu