

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

**Graduate School**

**Field of Music**

**THE D.M.A. IN KEYBOARD STUDIES**

The Doctor of Musical Arts in Keyboard Studies at Cornell is a specialized advanced degree designed for professional caliber performers who wish to combine the performance of specific repertoires with research, teaching, and writing about those repertoires. The program is highly competitive, admitting only one new student each year to study their instrument(s) with performers on the faculty while taking full advantage of the intellectual and cultural resources of the music department and the university. The program is focused on keyboard culture, potentially of all periods, but the strengths of the keyboard faculty lie particularly in performance practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (fortepiano, organ, harpsichord); nineteenth and twentieth centuries (fortepiano, organ, modern piano); twenty-first century (piano). Beyond the basic course requirements outlined below, the program is flexible and is developed individually in consultation with the student's Special Committee. Students may combine their study in the Field of Music (historical musicology, ethnomusicology, theory, composition, performance practice) with work in other Fields at Cornell.\*

Cornell's Keyboard Studies D.M.A. aims to balance professional training and scholarly endeavor, reflecting Cornell's distinguished tradition of musical scholarship, its eminent faculty in musicology and composition, and its outstanding library system. Performers who hope to teach on a college level must be competent at a broad range of academic musical subjects; candidates will be expected to pursue excellence in both spheres, the professional and the scholarly. Students are expected to take full advantage of Cornell University's community of practicing musicians and scholars, working closely with musicologists, composers and fellow students to combine skills gained from lessons, practicing, and performing with knowledge and insights gathered from library research and seminar work.

Cornell has historically been highly visible as a center for keyboard studies. The university has an outstanding collection of world-class keyboard instruments, which includes historical, modern and transitional pianos (from fortepianos to Steinways), three harpsichords, and four organs (see website for details). Fortepiano pioneer and Professor Emeritus Malcolm Bilson continues to teach performance in the program, alongside Professors Xak Bjerken, Annette Richards, and David Yearsley. Performers can expect to work with all members of the faculty in musicology and composition (not just those with particular interests in performance practice and keyboard culture) (<http://music.cornell.edu/people/faculty/>). In the area of contemporary keyboard studies, there are many opportunities for interaction with the composition program at Cornell, including the Electroacoustic Music Center. In addition, Cornell is the home of the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies (spanning the earliest keyboard repertoires to present day keyboard culture, see [www.westfield.org](http://www.westfield.org)), as well as the journal, *Keyboard Perspectives*, which emphasizes the symbiosis of scholarship and performance.

### **Requirements for the Degree:**

**1. Special Committee.** A graduate student's program is supervised by a Special Committee, comprising three or four professors selected by the student. The Committee is largely responsible for setting the student's requirements and evaluating his or her progress. The professor who teaches the student's primary instrument will ordinarily be the Chair (or Co-Chair) of the Committee; at least one minor member must be a musicologist.

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\*"Field of Music," or "Field" for short, is the official Graduate School designation for the graduate programs and the Graduate Faculty in music. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), (<http://music.cornell.edu/graduate/>) coordinates the activities of the Field, including such concerns as admissions, financial aid, advising, and professional development and represents the Field in the Graduate School. It is useful to know that the Department of Music and the Field of Music are not a single entity; some faculty members of the Department are not members of the Field, and most graduate Fields

include faculty members from several departments. (The Field of Music, for example, includes: Arthur Groos who has appointments in German Studies, Medieval Studies, and Music; Carol Krumhansl from Psychology; Trevor Pinch from Science and Technology Studies; Gail Holst-Warhaft from the Institute for European Studies.)

2. **Residence.** Normally six semesters of full-time study at Cornell. (In exceptional cases, this may be reduced to five or four semesters.) The first two terms of residence must be consecutive and fall within a single academic year. With the permission of the Special Committee, the remainder of the residence requirement may be fulfilled in non-consecutive semesters; this permits the alternation of on-campus study with the pursuit of a performing career. The final two semesters of residence ordinarily follow completion of the Admission-to-Candidacy (“A”) Examination.

3. **Language.** [Field requirement.] The minimum is reading proficiency in one foreign language, usually but not always German, French, or Italian. Special Committees may require additional languages if appropriate for individual students. The language requirement may be modified by petition to the Field of Music. It must be satisfied before the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination may be attempted.

#### 4. **Required Academic Activities.**

a) Intensive study of the major instrument each semester.

b) At least one full-length concert (or equivalent as determined by the committee) each semester in residence with program notes prepared for each recital and reviewed by the committee.

c) Satisfactory completion of at least six seminars numbered 6000 and above in Composition, Theory, Musicology, or Ethnomusicology. With the permission of the Special Committee, formal independent study may be substituted for one seminar. Music 6201 (Introduction to Bibliography and Research) is a required course, as well as the performance practicum course, Music 7211, offered every other year. Likewise, it is

reasonable to expect that seminars in other departments will be of interest to DMA candidates, as they are to candidates for the DMA in composition and the Ph.D. in musicology. At least four music seminars must be completed before the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination may be attempted.

d) A portfolio (of at least two) performances done both on and off campus from the student's first academic year, to be submitted for review by the Graduate Field in early September of the second year.

e) Submission of a revised seminar paper from the student's first academic year, to be submitted for review by the Graduate Field in early September of the second year.

**5. Lecture-recital.** A presentation of approximately one hour, combining performance of one or more works or movements with a formal lecture interpreting them in a manner relevant to the student's historical period or repertory. The lecture-recital is ordinarily given during the fourth semester of residence and is viewed as a way of focusing the D.M.A thesis subject; it will usually be completed before the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination is attempted. In the semester in which the lecture-recital is delivered, the candidate need not give another recital.

**6. Admission-to-Candidacy Examination.** The Admission-to-Candidacy Examination ("A" exam) is in two parts: (a) a written exam comprising questions relevant to the proposed D.M.A thesis topic and (b) an oral/performance exam addressing issues of performance practice in different repertories.

Every D.M.A. candidate must pass a general examination covering topics in music history, music theory, and performance practice; this is called the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination, or "A exam." (The term candidacy refers to acceptance into full eligibility to receive the doctorate on completion of the remaining degree requirements.) The A exam may not be attempted earlier than the beginning of the third semester, nor later than the beginning of the fifth semester of full-time study. The dates of the exam

are jointly agreed upon between the candidate and the Committee. Often the two parts are taken over the course of a week or two, but there is no reason they cannot be spaced more widely if such a schedule is agreed to by the candidate and the Special Committee.

(i) The written exam, taken first, comprises three to five essay questions proposed by the Committee whose subject areas are relevant and complementary to the development of the student's proposed D.M.A thesis topic. During the exam, the Music Library and other written sources may be used. In general, each member of the Committee contributes questions to this exam. The point of this part of the exam is to allow the student to demonstrate a mastery of: critical thinking and writing; ability to develop a bibliography of sources regarding the topic and in so doing gain control of the scholarship on that particular topic; to develop solid competence in a range of scholarly themes that proves useful, even if indirectly, to the thesis, but that are also valuable in future teaching efforts at a college or university.

(ii) The second exam is an oral exam, two to three hours in length. The candidate will be asked questions about the essays from the written exam. In addition, the candidate should be prepared to perform and discuss twelve works drawn from a repertoire list agreed upon by the Committee. This repertoire list comprises works or movements to be learned as thoroughly as possible. The candidate must be able discuss these twelve works critically and from a number of perspectives: analytical, historical, cultural, hermeneutic. That is, the candidate should be able to speak to the works' history, significance, social context, and performance practices, and to relate the works to each other, and to other non-keyboard works. Before preparing for the written exam and the orals, the candidate and Committee must first agree in advance on a repertoire list. This repertory should be finalized by the third semester in consultation with the Committee.

The twelve works should be by no fewer than nine different composers in the following categories: a central figure in the dissertation; three others from the broad historical and cultural context of that same composer (these three composers might also figure in the dissertation); five other composers from outside the context of the dissertation. How

these “other/non-dissertation” contexts are to be defined is to be decided in close consultation with the Special Committee, but the essential point is to establish the historical breadth of the candidate not only in the realm of performance, but also in history, literature and culture of his or her instrument(s).

The repertoire list merely provides a framework around which to organize study for the oral exam; the Committee can ask anything it considers necessary to establish the professional credentials of the candidate. Some Committees will require the submission of a written thesis proposal or prospectus (with full bibliography) to be turned in at the time of the orals. Only the orals are scheduled formally through the Graduate School, and this must be done at least one week in advance, on a form signed by the Committee and by the DGS. Any member of the Graduate Faculty is entitled to attend the orals and to ask questions, but only the Special Committee votes on admission to candidacy. A unanimous vote is required to pass; the results are made known to the candidate immediately. If the exam is failed, the candidate will likely be given a second chance after another semester or two. But, provided the candidate has prepared for the exam in close cooperation with the Committee, its members are not likely to allow the exam to be scheduled unless the candidate is ready to take it. Most students who prepare conscientiously pass the first time.

**7. D.M.A. recital.** A full-length, formal recital with appropriate written program notes demonstrating research activities and writing skills in the student's historical period or repertory. It should be given during the final semester of residence. Without being pedantic or overly schematic, this recital should have a theme, or even, represent a kind of musical argument, one that should be reflected on in the program notes and be touched on in a few (no more than five minutes) spoken words at the concert itself.

**8. Thesis.** Following the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination, the student writes a thesis on some aspect of performance practice. It is ordinarily directed by the chair of the

committee in conjunction with the minor members; the Special Committee should therefore have at least one member representing musicology.

**9. Thesis defense.** Candidates need not be in residence as full-time students when the examination is taken. The defense is a formal meeting with the student's Special Committee to discuss the dissertation. Students are expected to submit a complete draft of the thesis - including an abstract not to exceed 600 words - to all members of their committee at least four weeks before their defense, unless otherwise specified by the Committee. This examination is oral, based on a complete and polished version of the thesis, though the committee will typically ask for some revisions, corrections, and the like. (By false analogy with the A exam, this exam is often called the "B exam.") The defense focuses primarily on the thesis itself, but it may also raise broader issues arising out of the thesis topic. The examination must be passed and the thesis accepted by unanimous vote of the Committee. The defense must be passed within seven calendar years of the date of matriculation unless an exception is granted by the Graduate School. If the thesis is submitted after this deadline, the B's may not be scheduled until a petition, endorsed by the Committee and by the DGS, is approved by the Graduate School. Also to be supplied by the candidate at the thesis defense is a portfolio containing all of the recitals (with program notes) that the candidate performed during the period of residency. The nature, scope, and intention of these programs can also serve as a topic of questioning and debate during the exam.

[Note: the Thesis and Dissertation Guidebook, as well as formatting guidelines may be found at <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/thesis-and-dissertation>.]