

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
Graduate School
Field of Music

THE D.M.A. IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION AT CORNELL

An Introduction

Revised August 2010

The doctoral program in composition is uniquely flexible; it is developed individually, in consultation with the student's Special Committee, and students may combine their study in the Field of Music (historical musicology, ethnomusicology, theory, composition, performance, and performance practice) with work in other Fields at Cornell.

"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), currently Neal Zaslaw, coordinates the activities of the Field, including such concerns as admissions, financial aid, advising, and job hunting, and represents the Field vis-à-vis the Graduate School. Even though it will not have much effect on your program, it is useful to know that the Department of Music and the Field of Music are not coterminous; 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 from German Studies, Carol Krumhansl. from Psychology, and Trevor Pinch from Science and Technology Studies.) The current Chair of the Department is Roberto Sierra, and the current Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) is Xak Bjerken.

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The nature and history of Cornell's D.M.A. degree. The first bona fide appointment in music at Cornell went to a composer, Arthur Farwell, who served from 1899 to 1901. The proper history of the composition program really begins in 1941, though, with the appointment of Roy Harris as Composer-in-Residence under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. It was Harris who established the first graduate seminar in composition, and Harris who guided John Vincent to the first Cornell Ph.D. in composition in 1942. He was succeeded in 1943 by his own student, Robert Palmer, under whose leadership for the next thirty-seven years the program came to national prominence. In 1954 Karel Husa left Paris for Cornell, replacing Hunter Johnson (1948-54), and Husa's growing reputation in the 1970s and '80s further secured Cornell's prominent role in the training of American composers. Palmer retired in 1980, to be succeeded by his own student Steven Stucky, who is now the Given Foundation Professor of Music; Husa, in 1992, to be succeeded by Roberto Sierra, who is now the Old Dominion Professor of Humanities, Music. For many years, electronic music pioneer David Borden (an associate of Robert Moog and founder of the world's first live synthesizer ensemble, Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company) taught electronic music, mostly to undergraduate non-majors, but in 2005 Kevin Ernste came to Cornell as director of the Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center.

Cornell instituted a separate doctorate in composition in 1957. At that time the faculty in music argued for the establishment of the professional degree Doctor of Musical Arts instead of the more scholarly Doctor of Philosophy. In technical terms, the D.M.A., being a professional degree like J.D. or D.V.M., is subject to certain requirements of the State of New York as well as to the jurisdiction of the Graduate School and the Field of Music. In practical terms, the D.M.A. is widely looked upon as emphasizing professional skills more than scholarship or research, and during the latter part of the twentieth century it became the terminal degree for most composers in American graduate programs.¹

¹Some schools, e.g. Eastman, give both degrees, with the Ph.D. program weighted toward research and theory, the D.M.A. toward practical composition. In recent years, there is a tendency for D.M.A. composition programs to reside chiefly at conservatories (e.g., Juilliard) and schools of music (e.g., Michigan, Indiana), while more academically oriented university programs offer the Ph.D. (Chicago, the

The situation at Cornell is somewhat different. Here the D.M.A., while still fundamentally a professional degree in composing, aims at a balanced combination of professional training and scholarly endeavor. This dual emphasis exists in part in response to Cornell's distinguished tradition of musical scholarship, its eminent faculty in musicology and theory, and its outstanding library system, and in part to a realistic assessment of the state of the profession: composers who hope to enter college-level teaching must be competent not only at composing but also at a broad range of academic musical subjects. Thus it is in the nature of the Cornell D.M.A. that, although each candidate will follow a different course, each will be expected to pursue excellence in both spheres, the professional and the scholarly.

The Master of Fine Arts degree. Applicants who wish to earn only the master's degree in composition are not admitted, but those who enter the doctoral program without having already earned a master's do receive the M.F.A. in the course of their study toward the D.M.A. The master's degree requires a thesis consisting of a work of chamber music of at least fifteen minutes' duration.² The final exam for the M.F.A., at which the thesis is presented and defended, is combined with the doctoral Admission-to-Candidacy Examination, described below.

The Cornell M.F.A. cannot be granted to a student who has already earned any master's degree in music at another institution.

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Outline of the requirements for the D.M.A. (Unless otherwise noted below, these are Graduate School requirements that apply to all doctoral students in every Field.)

1) The Special Committee. Each graduate student's program is supervised by a so-called "Special Committee" of professors. Although the Field as a whole has policies, many of which are described below, it is the Special Committee that certifies that the various requirements for graduate degrees have been satisfied.

2) Residence. Normally, at least six semesters of full-time study, or the equivalent.

3) Language. [Field requirement.] Reading proficiency in one foreign language, usually but not always German.

4) Courses and independent work as required by the Special Committee.

5) The Admission-to-Candidacy Examination ("A" exam), in three parts: (a) a written exam in technique, (b) a written exam in music history and theory, especially of the twentieth and early twenty-first century, and (c) an oral exam.

6) The D.M.A. recital. [Field requirement.]

7) The D.M.A. thesis, in two parts: (a) a composition or portfolio of compositions, and (b) an essay or essays.

8) The Final Examination ("B" exam), also known as the thesis defense.

University of California system, Harvard, Princeton, et al.). The distinction is by no means clear-cut, however; Cornell, Columbia, and several other research institutions offer the D.M.A., while some schools of music (e.g., Minnesota) have opted for the Ph.D. Moreover, one cannot assume that Ph.D. programs are more rigorous or more "academic" than D.M.A. programs; Cornell's D.M.A. requirements, for example, are more stringent than those of some well-regarded Ph.D. programs.

²In this respect, it differs from the M.A. awarded to Ph.D. candidates in musicology upon the successful completion of their A exams. The latter is what the Graduate School calls a "Special Master's" (i.e., one for which no thesis is required). The M.F.A. awarded to composers, since it does require a thesis, is not "special."

Each of these requirements is described in detail below.

The programs and activities in music at Cornell are rich and varied. Only certain aspects of the formal requirements are described here. For other details, and for information about anything else, you should ask your Special Committee Chair, the DGS, other professors, and fellow students. The flexible, decentralized Special Committee system means that, ultimately, the shape of your program and what you get out of it depend primarily on you. The more questions you ask of the greater number of people, the better will be your chances of formulating your own best answers.

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1) The Special Committee. The Special Committee of a doctoral candidate comprises three or four professors who are members of the Graduate Faculty. Each of the three regular members of your Committee must represent a particular “concentration,” as defined in the legislation of the Graduate School. In music, these are composition, performance, performance practice, ethnomusicology, historical musicology, and theory of music.

Every Committee comprises a chair and two or three “minor members.” The chair always represents the major subject — composition, for our purposes. Two minor members also represent official subjects or concentrations.³ The minors available to you include theory, musicology, ethnomusicology, performance (which includes conducting), and performance practice within the Field of Music, and, of course, countless possibilities in other Fields. One minor fairly often lies outside the Field; you may even elect *two* outside minors, but only with prior approval of the Field as a whole. (No more than three subjects are ever represented on a Special Committee. If you include a fourth professor, officially he or she “does not represent a minor subject.”) Retired professors with the status of Graduate School Professor may co-chair a committee, but at the present time there are no retired *composers* with this status, so for our purposes the question is moot.

Your Special Committee, then, will assume the following form:

Chair:	Composition
Minor member:	Theory, musicology, ethnomusicology, performance, or performance practice
Minor member:	One of the above, or an outside minor
[Fourth member:	Not representing a subject (optional); often used for an “extra” composer]

Currently, the subjects and concentrations within the Field of Music are normally represented by the following members of the Graduate Faculty:

Composition

Composition: Ernste, Sierra, and Stucky

Musicology

Ethnomusicology: Boettcher, Groos, Harris-Warrick, Hatch, Moseley, Peraino, Pond, Richards, Stucky, Webster, Yearsley, and Zaslav

Theory of music

Krumhansl, Moseley, Sierra, Stucky, and Webster

³Although Graduate School rules permit Special Committees on which two members represent composition (and thus on which there is only one minor subject), we will urge you instead to choose three *different* subjects so as to increase the breadth and balance of your program. At the same time, the other Graduate Faculty composers (Ernste, Sierra, or Stucky) not serving as your Chair may also be added to your Committee anyway, either to cover an official minor subject such as theory (entailing separate courses or other formal work in this area), or simply as a fourth member not formally representing a subject.

Performance Practice

Bilson (minor only), Bjerken, Kellock (minor only), Richards, Yearsley, and Zaslaw

Music Performance

Bilson (piano and fortepiano, minor only), Bjerken (piano), Hatch (gamelan), Kellock (voice, minor only), Richards (organ), Tucker (conducting), and Yearsley (organ, harpsichord, clavichord)

Other arrangements are possible. You may also petition the Field for permission to include as a minor member other members of the Music Department faculty who are not on the Graduate Faculty (e.g., Professors Johnston-Turner, Lin, or Kim to represent performance).

If you wish formal supervision in a discipline that is not adequately represented at Cornell, you can, with the approval of your Special Committee, petition the Graduate School to permit the appointment of an authority from outside Cornell. You must have three Cornell members on your Special Committee in any case; an outside member would thus become a fourth. All decisions regarding the composition of your Committee are subject to the approval of the entire Committee.

Note: There is understandable confusion about the difference between a “subject” and a “concentration.” As a D.M.A. student, your major subject is “music,” your concentration “composition.” The Special Committee form that you will fill out asks for a faculty member’s “concentration.” This is a category that is recognized and tracked by New York State legislation and that represents our degree programs. For most faculty members in the Field of Music, the concentration will be the same as the subject. The one exception is the concentration “performance practice.” Professors Bilson and Bjerken should be listed with this concentration; Professors Harris-Warrick, Richards, Yearsley, and Zaslaw may be listed either with this concentration or with “musicology.”

The formation of your Special Committee is an important step, not to be rushed into pro forma. During the transition period in your first year, the DGS, acting as your temporary chair, can sign the necessary forms and can offer advice about forming your Committee. You must have chosen at least a chair by the beginning of your second year; ideally, you will have formulated your entire Committee by then, since to delay this step much further would seriously jeopardize your progress toward the degree. It is important to work with all three faculty composers, if at all possible, during your first year, since before the beginning of classes in the fall of your second year you will have to invite one of them to chair your Committee. You will want to be sure that you are going to be comfortable doing the bulk of your composition study with that person for the remaining three years.

At first, almost nobody will have a clear idea about minor members and minor subjects. The most natural and effective way to get to know the professors in the Field is to take courses with them or work with them independently, and this is a powerful reason to take as heavy a load of courses and other work in your first year as you can manage. When setting up your Committee, do not take a professor’s participation for granted. Any professor may refuse to serve on any Committee. A request to serve should be preceded by extended acquaintance and prior consultation.

You may *change* your Committee on your own initiative. Although this is not something to be done lightly or frequently, it is a normal procedure and should be considered whenever a substantial benefit seems probable. Unless you have already passed the A exam, no special permission is required except that of the remaining and new members of the reformulated Committee. (The retiring members and the DGS must also sign the form — they may not decline to do so — so that each professor concerned and the Field as a whole understand the reasons for the change.)

From one Committee to another, the substance and style of a chair’s supervision, the relationships among the various subjects, and the extent to which the minor members take an active role, all vary widely. In these as in many aspects of your study at Cornell, it is up to you to formulate your own goals and to suggest ways of achieving them. Moreover, only you can take the initiative necessary to explore the potential

connections among your subjects and to stimulate the active interest of your Committee members. You must ensure, among other things, that your Committee formally meet with you as a group at least once every semester. (This is a policy of the Field as a whole.)

2) Residence. The normal minimum residence requirement for the D.M.A. is six “residence units.” A residence unit is defined as satisfactory full-time study for one semester, with appropriate progress towards the degree. (The Special Committee is required to certify to the Graduate School at the end of each term whether your progress has been satisfactory and your work “full-time,” and to recommend whether you should receive a full residence unit for that term.) The minimum requirement is thus equivalent to six semesters of full-time study. It is possible to earn credit “in absentia,” while studying away from Ithaca, and to earn partial credit even if you must work more than 15 hours a week. A student who comes with a master’s from another institution may petition for reduction of the minimum requirement, usually to four units. (In practice, however, it is very rare for any D.M.A. candidate to do fewer than eight units, with or without a prior master’s degree.) At least two of the minimum six units must be spent in consecutive semesters of full-time study in Ithaca. At least two of the six must *follow* the passing of the A exam (although this requirement, too, can be waived upon petition).

3) Languages. The minimum Field requirement for composers is reading knowledge of one foreign language. At one time it was presumed that German (sometimes French) was the best language for general purposes of research, for using the resources of the Music Library effectively, and for doing well in musicology and theory seminars. Nowadays, though, when more and more of the literature about music is in English, the strongest influence on your choice of language will probably be your dissertation topic and other specific research interests. Although German and French are still the most frequent choices, doctoral composers have also used Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, and Polish because their dissertations demanded those languages. (Of course, the ideal solution might be German for general research and a second language germane to your own topic, but this is not always practical within a four-year residency.) In consultation with your Special Committee, you should settle as early as possible the question of which language or languages you are expected to know. Native speakers of other languages are a special case. Sometimes their native language is appropriate for their dissertation research, and that’s fine; if not, though, the Field or the Special Committee might insist on yet a third language more closely connected to the work at hand.

Since reading knowledge will prove essential right away in course work and in preparing for the A exam, the requirement should be satisfied as soon as possible, preferably during the first year of residence. (In any case, the language requirement must have been completed before you will be permitted to attempt “A’s.”) Both the usual undergraduate language courses and special courses meant for graduate students preparing for exams are available to you; consult the DGS and the online pages of the Language Resource Center. The Field administers its own exams in French and German at least once a year, and in other languages as needed. (Currently, Italian, Spanish, Mandarin, Hungarian, and Indonesian are all represented within the Graduate Faculty of Music.) At the end of your first year, certification that you have made satisfactory progress toward the degree will hinge in part on your having passed the language requirement by then, or at least having demonstrated that you are close to doing so.

4) Courses and independent work. There are no formal requirements about stated courses, numbers of courses, or credit hours. You and your Committee decide on your courses and other activities each term. Ideally, each semester’s decisions fit into your long-range program, whose goals become increasingly clear from term to term.

While there are no formal course requirements, however, certain general expectations do exist. You will be expected to take Composition (Music 7111) every semester. Whatever your stated minors, most Special Committees will expect you to do some work in theory, musicology, computer and electroacoustic music, and possibly ethnomusicology. In the Composition program, Committees often expect students to take a minimum number of courses in music, perhaps six or eight, numbered 4000 or above (excluding composition, ensembles, and performance lessons); these might also include courses in a minor subject

outside the Field of Music. For most students except those who have had substantially the same courses in master's programs elsewhere, these are likely to include the following graduate courses:

Music 6101 (Analytical Technique)
 Music 6201 (Introduction to Bibliography and Research)
 Music 6420 (Techniques for Computer Music)
 Music 6421 (Electroacoustic Composition)
 Music 7101 (Topics in Tonal Analysis)
 Music 7102 (Topics in Post-Tonal Theory and Analysis)
 Music 7121 (Advanced Orchestral Technique)
 Music 7206 (Seminar in Music of the Twentieth Century)

In addition, those students who need them may be asked to take the following upper-level undergraduate courses:

Music 4101 (Counterpoint)
 Music 4121 (Conducting)

In addition to formal work in music theory, Committees usually expect at least one formal seminar in musicology (or ethnomusicology), for several reasons: to create opportunities to explore the interconnections among subjects and the relationships between scholarship and creative work; to strengthen academic credentials with a view to winning a college teaching position; and to provide practice in those modes of academic thinking and writing necessary to complete a successful doctoral dissertation.

Ph.D. students in musicology are generally considered to carry a full-time load if they take three seminars for credit and do a modest amount of independent work. For composers, the notion of full-time load is sometimes treated more flexibly, owing chiefly to the demands of composing. Indeed, the general expectation is that you will present new work on the concerts of the Cornell Contemporary Chamber Players (CCCP) at least twice a year, and that you will write works for the Festival Chamber Orchestra (FCO) twice during your four-year residence, and taken together these expectations already represent a formidable commitment of time and energy even before formal courses are added to your load. In general, formal participation in courses will be greatest during the first two years, when students usually sample widely within the Field, satisfy the language requirement, and explore minor Subjects within the Field or outside. In later years, less and less time is spent in seminars, as students prepare for exams and write theses. Moreover, the Field feels strongly that all candidates in music, D.M.A. and Ph.D. alike, should have teaching experience. Other things being equal, every graduate student in music will be offered teaching assistantships beginning in the second year, and teaching duties tend naturally to limit the time one has for other activities. A good rule of thumb for composers is to take about three courses each term in year 1, two courses each term in years 2 and 3 (always including Composition as one course every term). This pace would produce a total of eight courses besides Composition, and the faculty considers that to be about right.

The Field as a whole offers about three to five graduate seminars each term. (The catalogue gives a misleading impression of the number of graduate courses actually offered at any one time.) Some courses are offered by only one professor and thus will be omitted if he or she is on leave or offers a different course. Composition is offered every term. In general, Music 6201 (Introduction to Bibliography and Research) is offered every fall for first-year students, and 6101 (Analytical Technique) is (in principle) offered every other year, so that every student will have taken it by the end of his or her second year. An attempt is made to offer every other "active" course at least once every second or third year. But there is no guarantee that any particular course will be offered within any given period of time, or that any particular pattern of courses will be maintained without change. At the beginning of each term, the graduate courses to be offered that term and, where possible, in succeeding terms are described in a general meeting of graduate students and Graduate Faculty.

Many important topics, and even whole areas of study, are not covered by formal courses. The faculty believe that this price is worth paying for the benefits of a small, intimate program, including high-level

research seminars and a great deal of individual attention. *The chief responsibility for filling in the gaps lies with you.* The techniques you learn in formal courses should carry over to your independent work. Your professors will expect you, on your own, to keep up with recent acquisitions in the Music Library, to read articles and reviews in current journals, to study and listen to music, to attend meetings, conferences, and festivals when feasible, and so on.

As for composing, it is impossible to generalize about what constitutes an acceptable level of productivity; this is a matter for you and your Special Committee, and it depends on many variables. But it is important that, at a minimum, you be represented (preferably by new work) on the concerts of the Cornell Contemporary Chamber Players at least twice a year. Much depends on these concerts, since they provide the only opportunity for the Field as a whole to assess your progress. In the spring semester of your second and fourth years, you will be expected to present a new work for the Festival Chamber Orchestra (instrumentation: 1111 - 1110 - 1 percussionist - keyboard - string quintet).

5) The Admission-to-Candidacy Examination. Every D.M.A. candidate must pass a general examination in composition, theory, and twentieth-century music, called the Admission-to-Candidacy Examination, or "A exam" or "A's" for short. (The term *candidacy* refers to acceptance into doctoral status.) The A's may not be attempted earlier than the beginning of the third semester, nor later than the beginning of the seventh semester of full-time study. Most students take them during the fifth or sixth semester. The date is jointly agreed between you and your Committee. For composers, the A's consist of three parts: (i) written problems in technique; (ii) written questions in twentieth-century music history, theory, and analysis; (iii) the oral exam and dissertation proposal. Often these three parts are taken over the course of a week or two, but there is no reason they cannot be spaced more widely, even over several months, if that suits you and your Special Committee.

(i) The first written exam usually occupies two days and comprises written problems set by your chair in composition, orchestration, counterpoint, or other aspects of technique.

Before you can prepare for the second written exam and the orals, you and your Committee must first agree in advance on a subject list and a repertoire list. The subject list usually consists of fourteen twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers distributed into three groups:

Group I. One composer, about whom you will become as thorough an expert as possible, and who in most cases will be the subject of Part II of your D.M.A. thesis. (In some cases, Group I might be devoted to a theoretical or critical topic instead of a single composer, or to a pre-twentieth-century composer.)

Group II. Three composers, whose works you know in considerable detail and about whom you know the scholarly and analytical literature well.

Group III. An additional ten composers, for each of whom you know a handful of important works well and about whom you have a good working knowledge of the musical and analytical issues.

The repertoire list comprises ten to twelve works or movements which you will learn as thoroughly as possible. (These may overlap the works of composers on the subject list.) You should be prepared to play them from memory; to analyze them; to discuss their history, significance, and social context; and to relate them to each other, to other works, and to your own composing, performing, teaching, and research interests. About half the list should come from before 1900, about half from after. There should, as far as possible, be something from each of the historical periods as they are conventionally described: medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, twentieth century. At least some of the repertory must demonstrate facility at keyboards, even if the piano is not your major instrument, but you may also play other instruments, sing, or conduct. *At least a full year before you plan to take your A's, i.e. early in year 2, is none too soon to have agreed with your Committee the content of your two lists and to have begun to learn the pieces on the repertoire list.*

(ii) The second written exam occupies an eight-hour period; you may use the Music Library and other written sources as you like. This exam covers but is not limited to the composers in Groups II and III on your subject list. In general, each member of your Committee contributes questions to this exam.

(iii) The oral exam covers the results of both written exams, but it focuses primarily on your dissertation topic under Option B (see below), i.e. the composer (or other topic) you named as Group I in your subject list, and on your repertoire list. Some Committees will require the submission of a written thesis proposal, prospectus, or completed chapter at this time. Under Option A, both thesis articles must already have been accepted in final form before you will be permitted to attempt the orals.

In principle, your subject and repertoire lists merely give a framework around which you organize your study; your Committee can ask you anything it considers necessary for your professional credentials. 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 your Committee and by the DGS. Any member of the Graduate Faculty is entitled to attend the orals and to ask questions, but only your Special Committee votes on your performance. A unanimous vote is required to pass; you will be informed of the result immediately. Should you fail, you will probably be given a second chance after another semester or two. But, provided you have worked closely with your Committee as you prepare, its members are not likely to let you schedule the exam before you are ready for it. Most students who prepare conscientiously pass the first time.

For students earning an M.F.A. (i.e., any D.M.A. candidate who does not already hold a master's degree in music from another institution), the final exam for that degree is held concurrently with the oral A exam, and the student presents a master's thesis consisting of a work of chamber music of at least fifteen minutes' duration. N.B.: you must schedule this exam at least seven days beforehand by having the appropriate Graduate School forms signed by all your Committee members; if you are also doing the M.F.A., you must *also* schedule that final exam on another form, even though in practice it is all the same exam.

6) The D.M.A. recital. At some time during your study, usually after the A exam but always before the B exam, you must present a public concert comprising at least 30 minutes of music in various media composed during your study at Cornell. Selecting the program, procuring performers, and rehearsing are your responsibility. The Music Department provides a modest subsidy toward the cost of hiring performers.

7) The D.M.A. thesis. Part I of the thesis is a composition or compositions totaling at least twenty minutes' duration. If a single twenty-minute work is submitted, it must be scored for "large forces"; if a portfolio is submitted, it should cover a range of forces and genres, but again at least one work should be for large forces. Further details are agreed between you and your Committee, but in general large forces means at least the "sinfonietta" complement (1111 - 1110 - 1 percussionist - 1 keyboard player - string quintet).⁴ The D.M.A. portfolio may *not* include a work already submitted as the M.F.A. thesis. Like all aspects of your thesis, the D.M.A. composition or portfolio should be discussed with your Committee well in advance. The Committee must agree to your plans about whether to submit a single long piece or a portfolio of shorter works. Aside from the thesis abstract, no accompanying written analysis of the composition(s) in Part I is required.

Part II consists of scholarly writing on some aspect of music (analytical, theoretical, critical, or historical). There are two ways of satisfying this requirement:⁵

⁴In practice, very often the D.M.A. thesis portfolio will contain a "sinfonietta" work composed for the annual Festival Chamber Orchestra concert. The relationship between this concert and Part I of the thesis is not fixed, however, and need not dictate the shape of the portfolio. The FCO is not a formal degree requirement, and there is no guarantee that its instrumentation or the frequency of its concerts will remain the same from year to year.

⁵ Since Option A is new, all of the old composer theses you will see collected in the Music Library are of the original, Option B type.

Option A. Two substantial articles, each of a standard judged by your Special Committee to be publishable in a reputable professional journal. The topics of these two articles will normally arise during seminars in your first two years; the texts will often continue to be polished into your third year. Both articles must be submitted to your Committee and accepted as finished *before* you will be allowed to schedule Part III of the A exam (the orals); in practice, this means by the end of the third year at the latest. When they are judged ready, you will be encouraged to submit them to a peer-reviewed journal for publication, although it is not required that they have been accepted for publication before the exam.

While there are advantages and disadvantages to both options, Option A will mean that as a job applicant during your fourth year you will have in hand finished, chapter-length work to submit rather than (as too often happens) merely an outline or a general description of what your thesis might be like. On the other hand, Option B will also entail heavier, deeper involvement in academic seminars early in your program.

Option B. One longer, thesis-length essay, which need not be completed before the A exam, but the subject and outline of which are agreed upon by you and your Committee by the end of the third year at the latest. Ordinarily its subject is identical with or closely related to the Group I subject of the A exam.

Whether you choose Option A or Option B, the resulting articles or the longer thesis essay will be “defended” at your B exam and will be submitted to the Graduate School afterward as part of your official thesis.

It is important that you consult your chair, or the Committee member whose interests and expertise are closest to your thesis topic, at every stage of choosing whether to pursue Option A or B, and throughout planning and writing the essay. A thesis simply handed in as a *fait accompli* is sure to encounter rough sailing, whereas one written in constant consultation with one or more members of your Committee can serve a composer as a valuable apprenticeship in academic writing. As compared to Ph.D. dissertations in musicology, D.M.A. essays are usually shorter, and they need not always set out to prove an original “thesis.” But in every other way they must hew to the same high standard of organization, writing style, bibliographic control (where it applies), and value to the profession. In short, like the Ph.D. dissertation (and, for that matter, like Part I of the D.M.A. thesis), the essay as finally presented should be publishable, in terms of both its quality and its interest.

On matters of general style, follow the latest edition of the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style* (also available online). Follow, too, the published instructions distributed online by the Graduate School, and consult the Thesis Secretary frequently.⁶ To write a double thesis of high quality is no small accomplishment. It takes time. It would be reasonable to spend a whole year doing little else but writing the thesis essay, completing and polishing the composition portfolio, and presenting the D.M.A. recital. Thus a student who succeeds in finishing within four years will usually have followed approximately the following timetable:

Year 1

Take about four courses (in addition to Composition, for a total of about six)
 Pass the language requirement
 Compose works for the Cornell Contemporary Chamber Players

Year 2

Take about two courses (in addition to Composition, for a total of about four)
 Propose the dissertation topic (Option B), or formally select Option A instead
 Propose the A exam lists
 Compose works for the CCCP and Festival Chamber Orchestra⁷

⁶Rules and standards change; do not simply model your format on old theses in the library.

⁷In recent years, students have typically composed for the FCO in their second and fourth years, but it cannot be taken for granted that the CCCP and FCO will continue indefinitely to operate just as they do now; they will surely continue to evolve over time. The basic principles are these: you are expected to

If using the Option A thesis, have the first versions of both articles in hand by the end of the year

Year 3

Take about two courses (in addition to Composition, for a total of about four)

Compose works for the CCCP

If using the Option A thesis, have both articles accepted by your Committee by the end of the year

Complete the A exams

If eligible, submit the M.F.A. thesis composition

Year 4

If you are using Option B, complete the thesis

Compose another FCO piece and present the D.M.A. recital.

Complete the B exam

It is important to finish on time, because the days when an A.B.D. (“all but dissertation”) could get a teaching job seem to be over, as do the days when additional financial aid was sometimes available for extra years of residence beyond the four-year guarantee.

8) The final examination (thesis defense). This examination is oral, based on complete and polished versions of your D.M.A. composition portfolio and essay(s), in their final form save for minor corrections arising during the exam itself. (By false analogy with the A exam, this exam is often called the “B exam.”) It focuses primarily on the thesis itself, but it may also raise broader issues arising out of the thesis topic or the D.M.A. composition(s). The examination must be passed and the thesis accepted by unanimous vote of your Committee. (The provisions for visitors are the same as for A’s.)

Under Option A, the prose portions of your thesis will already have been accepted by your Committee before the As. Under Option B, you are required to submit an outline and early draft of the D.M.A. essay to all members of the Special Committee *at least six weeks before the B exam*, and to submit a printed copy of the final version to all members at least seven days before the exam. Be sure to discuss the entire schedule of drafts with your Committee well in advance.

The final examination must be passed within seven calendar years of the date of your matriculation. (You need not be in residence at the time, however.) If your thesis is submitted after this deadline, the B’s may not be scheduled until a petition, endorsed by your Committee and by the DGS, is approved by the Graduate School.

write a substantial amount of music in each of your four years; these works should cover a wide range of performing forces and formal types; and the Music Department and Field will help provide performance opportunities for some but probably not all of these works.