

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

MUSIC MAJOR MUSIC THEORY CURRICULUM

Introduction

Music Theory Area courses prepare BME, BM, and BA students for success in music.

Music Theory Area pedagogical objectives include the:

- acquisition of basic theory concepts
- use of basic theory concepts
- development of voice-leading skills
- cultivation of creativity
- application of analysis to interpretation
- refinement of aural perception
- enhancement of musicianship skills
- responsibility to follow directions and meet deadlines
- preparation for the MSU Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination
- preparation for upper division music courses

Music Theory Area instruction involves:

- experiential learning
- required readings
- required homework
- required examinations

MUSIC THEORY AREA EXAMINATIONS, POLICIES, AND COURSES

Music Theory Placement Examination

- Students entering the MSU Music Department as first-year music majors take a brief diagnostic examination, administered during the first Music Theory I class of the Fall semester, which evaluates their readiness for that course.
- Diagnostic test items determine a student's:
 - a) ability to recognize notes using treble and bass clefs
 - b) recognition of simple key signatures
 - c) familiarity with common musical symbols
 - d) comprehension of basic rhythmic and metric concepts
 - e) ability to distinguish half from whole steps
- Students earning 70% or higher on this test are invited to continue in Music Theory I and Ear Training I. Students earning 69% or lower on this test are advised to take Music Fundamentals in the spring semester and attempt the diagnostic test again in the following fall semester before taking Music Theory I and Ear Training I.
- Contact the Music Theory Area Coordinator for more information about the Music Theory Placement Examination.

Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination

- A degree requirement for the BME, BM, and BA degrees in music, the Music Theory UDPE is open to students who have completed at least three semesters of music theory and ear training courses.
- The Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination (UDPE) includes three component tests, including the written music theory test, the musicianship skills test, and the aural dictation test, which correspond to the final examinations in Music Theory III and Ear Training III.

- The written music theory test of the Music Theory UDPE, equivalent to the final exam in Music Theory III, contains sections on:
 - a) theory fundamentals
 - b) figured bass realization and harmonic analysis
 - c) chord writing
 - d) musical analysis involving harmonic analysis and analytical statement completions
- The musicianship skills test of the Music Theory UDPE, equivalent to the final musicianship skills exam in Ear Training III, involves examiner-selected items from musicianship skills materials prepared in the month before the test that include:
 - a) selected ascending and descending intervals sung on "la"
 - b) major and minor scales sung using solfège
 - c) modes sung using solfège
 - d) a given harmonic progressions, arpeggiated using solfège
 - e) an unfamiliar major or minor melody sung on solfège
 - f) a given single line rhythm hand-tapped in a steady tempo
 - g) a given two-hand rhythm hand-tapped in a steady tempo
 - h) a given selected melody sung using solfège
 - i) a given "Sing & Play" with a melody sung on solfège, self-accompanied on piano
- The aural dictation test of the Music Theory UDPE, equivalent to the final aural dictation exam in Ear Training III, includes:
 - a) notation of ascending and descending melodic intervals
 - b) notation of harmonic intervals
 - c) chord identification by quality and inversion
 - d) notation of a short duet
 - e) notation of a short rhythm
 - f) notation of a short melody
- Music Theory UDPE tests are not entrance tests but a music degree requirement.
- Music Theory UDPE are offered in May, August, and December.
- Transfer students take the Music Theory UDPE tests in May or August, prior to beginning coursework.
- Students who need to take the MSU Music Theory UDPE should contact the Music Theory Coordinator at least a month before the announced examination date in August, December, or May, and to obtain the musicianship materials to be prepared for the musicianship skills test.
- Music Theory UDPE tests offered in May and August are equivalent to final exams administered in Music Theory III and Ear Training III in December during final exam week. Satisfactory passage of the Music Theory UDPE requires a 70% or higher score on the written theory test (100 points) *and* a 70% or higher score on the combined musicianship skills (50 points) and ear training (50 points) tests.
- Students who need to take the Music Theory UDPE should check the Departmental News webpage to learn when the tests are offered and contact the Music Theory Area Coordinator in advance. Passing the Theory UDPE means passing *both* the written theory *and* the aural/skills "halves" of the UDPE. When the Music Theory UDPE is fully satisfied, a student's Degree Works audit shows a green check mark and a "Y" next to the "Music Theory and Aural Skills Proficiency" line.
- Students may attempt the Music Theory UDPE tests three times. If not fully passed after the third attempt, students are advised to retake Music Theory III and/or Ear Training III to reattempt the Theory UDPE.
- The Music Theory UDPE is part of a comprehensive proficiency examination process described on the Upper Division Proficiency Exam webpage elsewhere on this website.
- Contact the Music Theory Area Coordinator for more information about the Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination.

Music Theory Area Policies

- In accord with MSU's current Quality Enhancement Plan (see <https://www.qep.msstate.edu>), Music Theory Area courses pursue a variety of engagements that involve "learning by doing" experiences.
- Required instructional materials for Music Theory Area classes include textbooks and workbooks available from the MSU Bookstore. See course syllabi and MSU AOP 10.14, "The Adoption and Sale of Textbooks and other Instructional Materials," for more information.
- Students must bring required workbooks to regular class meetings, unless otherwise directed, plus pencils and rulers, which are essential to the active learning experiences that pursue pedagogical objectives of music theory area courses.
- Attendance will be recorded at the start of class and reported to MSU's attendance system.
- All absences are unexcused absences until converted to excused absences by the student's submission of appropriate and acceptable documentation via email, plus its acceptance by the professor. See MSU AOP 12.09, "Class Attendance and Reporting Absences," for more information.
- Three (3) "lates" correspond to one unexcused absence.
- Students' or parents' phone calls or e-mail messages are not acceptable as documentation for absences.
- Job duties, fraternity/sorority activities, studying for a test in another class, oversleeping, a family vacation, and possession of a plane ticket, do not enable excused absences.
- Students who accumulate four (4) unexcused absences in Music Theory Area classes lose the course's points or percentages devoted to attendance
- Cell phones may not be used in Music Theory Area classes. See MSU AOP 10.08, "Classroom Regulations," for more information.
- All coursework submitted for evaluation is understood to have been produced individually by the student submitter. See the MSU Student Honor Code Operation Procedures Manual, which states on p. 3: "Students should assume that all assignments are to be completed individually unless the instructor indicates otherwise." Questionable submissions will be forwarded to the Honor Code Office for review and action.
- Following directions and meeting deadlines regarding required course work represent pedagogical objectives in Music Theory Area courses that are recognized to develop the responsibility and discipline essential to success in music.
- Music Theory I–IV and Ear Training I–IV are designed to prepare music majors for the competitive music professions they hope to enter. Course requirements and standards apply to all class members.
- Students must take *all* Music Theory and Ear Training examinations at their scheduled times. Evaluated exams will be returned in a timely manner.
- Failure to take a scheduled exam due to an unexcused absence earns a score of 0 for that exam.
- Submission of appropriate and acceptable documentation that supports conversion of an unexcused absence at an administered examination to an excused absence enables a makeup examination.
- An unexcused absence at the final exam will earn a zero (0) for that exam, and an "Incomplete" will not be reported. See MSU AOP 12.04, "Final Examination," for more information.
- Policies and procedures established in Music Theory Area course syllabi apply to all class members.
- Accommodations recognized by MSU's Disability Resource Center and communicated to the professor are enabled in Music Theory Area courses.
- A grade of C is required by the MSU Music Department for Music Theory Area courses to count toward a music degree, and a grade of C is required for progress to the next course in each sequence.

Music Theory Course Sequence

The MSU Music Theory sequence for students pursuing the BME, BM, and BA degrees includes the four semesters of Music Theory I–IV, which carry three credits each. Each music theory course is a pre-requisite of the next course in its sequence, and each is taken simultaneously with its co-requisite in the MSU Ear Training Sequence. Music Theory I–IV require the following textbook and workbook, available through the MSU bookstore:

L. Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus, *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony*, 3rd ed., (New York: Norton, 2024).

L. Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus, *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony Workbook*, 3rd ed., (New York: Norton, 2024).

The following descriptions appear in MSU's Course Catalog:

Music Theory I (MU 1213)

(Prerequisite: Music or Music Education major or permission of the instructor). Three hours lecture. Fundamental concepts of notation of key signatures, intervals, scales, chords, and clefs. Principles of Common-Practice Period Functional Harmony. Co-requisite: MU 1321 or permission of instructor.

Music Theory II (MU 1413)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 1213, Music or Music Education Major or permission of the instructor). Three hours lecture. Further elements of harmony, including seventh-chords, non-chord tones, chromatic vocabulary. Small forms. Co-requisite: MU 1521 or permission of instructor.

Music Theory III (2613)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 1413). Three hours lecture. Chromatic vocabulary, including augmented sixth chords, Neapolitans and modulation, Late Romantic and early 20th Century innovations such as extended tertian chords and substitution chords. Co-requisite: MU 2721 or consent of instructor.

Music Theory IV (MU 2813)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 2613 and MU 2721, or equivalents; Co-requisite MU 2921 unless already passed with C or better.) Three hours lecture. Advanced harmony and musical structure; mastery developed through readings, exercises, examinations, and creative projects.

Ear Training Course Sequence

The MSU Ear Training sequence for students pursuing the BME, BM, and BA degrees includes four semesters of ear training classes, which carry one credit each. Each ear training course is a pre-requisite of the next course in its sequence, and each must be taken simultaneously with its co-requisite in the MSU Music Theory sequence.

Ear Training I–IV require the following textbook, available through the MSU bookstore:

Sol Berkowitz, Gabriel Fontrier, Edward Smaldone, Perry Goldstein, *A New Approach to Sight Singing*, 7th ed., (New York: Norton, 2024).

Ear Training I–IV also require this online aural training resource, available by subscription:

Artusi (<https://www.artusimusic.com>)

The following descriptions appear in MSU's Course Catalog:

Ear Training I (MU 1321)

(Prerequisite: Music or Music Education major or permission of the instructor). Two hours laboratory. Aural identification, singing and dictation of major and minor scales, diatonic melodies, isolated harmonies, simple intervals and rhythms. Co-requisite: MU 1213 or permission of instructor.

Ear Training II (MU 1521)

(Prerequisite: Music or Music Education major or permission of the instructor). Two hours laboratory. Aural identification, singing and dictation of major and minor scales, diatonic melodies, isolated harmonies, simple intervals and rhythms. Co-requisite: MU 1413 or permission of instructor.

Ear Training III (MU 2721)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 1521) Two hours laboratory. Aural identification, singing and dictation of diatonic melodies with chromatic inflection, seventh chords and rhythms. Co-requisite: MU 2613 or consent of instructor.

Ear Training IV (MU 2921)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 2721; co-requisite: MU 2813 or consent of instructor). Two hours laboratory. Aural identification, singing and dictation of modes, artificial scales, non-triadic chords, modulating melodies, compound intervals.

Advanced Music Major Courses in Music Theory

Advanced courses in MSU's Music Theory Area include:

- Orchestration (MU 3333)
- Band Arranging (MU 4322)
- Form and Analysis (MU 4313)
- Composition (MUA 1810, 2810, 3810, 4810)

The following descriptions appear in MSU's Course Catalog.

Orchestration (MU 3333),

(Prerequisite: C or higher in MU 2813 and MU 2921, or equivalents, plus fully-passed Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination.) Three hours lecture. Study of instruments and orchestration techniques; mastery through readings, exercises, examinations, presentations, and creative projects.

Form and Analysis (MU 4313)

(Prerequisite: C or higher in MU 2813 and MU 2921, or equivalents, plus fully-passed Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination.) Three hours lecture. A survey of forms in music literature, with emphasis on harmonic structure and analytical techniques.

Band Arranging (MU 4322)

(Prerequisite: Passing scores on both written and aural portions of the Music Theory Upper Division exam.) Two hours lecture. Study of idiomatic writing for instrumental ensembles, including marching, concert, and jazz bands.

Applied Composition (MUA 1810)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MU 1213 and permission of instructor). Variable one or two credit hours studio. Individual instruction in music composition techniques, forms, and creativity.

Applied Composition (2810)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MUA 1810). Variable one or two credit hours studio. Individual instruction in music composition techniques, forms, and creativity.

Applied Composition (MUA 3810)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MUA 2810, plus a fully passed MSU Music Theory Upper Division Proficiency Examination). Variable one or two credit hours studio. Individual instruction in music composition techniques, forms, and creativity.

Applied Composition (MUA 4810)

(Prerequisite: C or better in MUA 3810). Variable one or two credit hours studio. Two credit hours with professor permission. Individual instruction in music composition techniques, forms, and creativity.

Other Music Theory Area Courses and Programs in Music

The following descriptions appear in MSU's Course Catalog.

Fundamentals of Music Theory (MU 1003)

Three hours lecture. Development of skills for music reading, writing, listening and analyzing. Topics will include pitch, rhythm, meter, scales and basic harmony.

Seminar in Music Theory (MU 8023)

(Prerequisite: Admission to MME Degree Program). Three hours seminar. Advanced study of music theory concepts, pedagogy, and creative applications.

Details regarding content and policies of Music Theory courses are specified in course syllabi.

More information regarding theory courses is available from the Music Theory Area Coordinator.

Information about minoring in music is available from the Academics section of this website on the Music Minors page.

Information about the Master of Music Education program is available from the Graduate Coordinator and in the Graduate section of this website at the Master of Music Education page.

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