

# MASTER OF ARTS IN COMPOSITION

The master of arts program in composition at Mills has trained generations of composers from all over the world in the American experimentalist tradition. Composition students at Mills learn in a free-thinking environment that encourages creative work in a wide variety of styles. In addition to taking courses in orchestration, tonal and post-tonal analysis, and contemporary music criticism, they are encouraged to cross disciplinary boundaries and to pursue studies in special areas of interest that may include improvisation, indeterminacy, and environmental sound composition, as well as composing for dance and film.

Our core composition faculty have won international renown as composers and performers across the musical spectrum, from conventionally notated work to a wide range of experimental practices. We regularly invite distinguished guest composers to teach at Mills—most recently Hilda Paredes and Zeena Parkins—and composition students may study electronic and computer music with faculty from the Center for Contemporary Music, the historic electronic music studio that has been a pioneering presence in American music for more than 40 years. Also teaching in the Composition Program is music theorist David Bernstein, a specialist in the music of John Cage and the tonal theories of Arnold Schoenberg, and performer and musicologist Nalini Ghuman, whose research focuses on early twentieth-century music, North Indian Music, and issues of gender, Orientalism, nationalism, and cross-cultural musical exchange.

To enhance our students' learning experience, Mills sponsors at least one visiting composer each year. Lou Harrison was the first Jean Macduff Vaux Composer-in-Residence in 1998–99, followed in consecutive years by Gordon Mumma, José Maceda, Bun-Ching Lam, Cecil Taylor, Meredith Monk, Terry Riley, James Tenney, Maggie Nicols, Helmut Lachenmann, Muhal Richard Abrams, Julia Wolfe, Christian Wolff, Alvin Lucier, Laurie Anderson, George Lewis, and in 2018, Ashley Fure.

## Program Goals

- To have a developed understanding of cultural, political, social, and intellectual issues in diverse contemporary and historical musical & sound art practices.
- To have distinctive creative ideas and the ability to realize them successfully on a professional level.
- To be able to critically analyze & clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in her/his own work, & the work of others.
- To be able to productively collaborate with others in professional contexts relating to her/his area of expertise.
- To demonstrate a technical mastery of her/his instrument or discipline, and a comprehensive knowledge of its styles and repertoire, past and present.

## Requirements

Two-year residency requirement during which all students must complete their degree.

Minimum of 44 semester course credits

Code	Title	Hours
<b>Required</b>		
MUS 210	Selected Issues in Contemporary Performance and Improvisation	4
MUS 212 or MUS 237	Seminar in 20th-Century Literature and Theory Seminar in Music Literature and Criticism	4
MUS 224 or MUS 266	Contemporary Instrumentation and Orchestration Advanced Orchestration Seminar	4
MUS 248	Post-Tonal Theory and Analysis	4
MUS 250	Thesis for the Master's Degree <sup>1</sup>	4
MUS 256	Tonal Analysis	4
MUS 291 or MUS 205	Composition Seminar <sup>2</sup> Selected Issues in Composition	4
And two courses (4 credits total) of:		4
MUS 225	Individual Instruction in Performance and Composition	
MUS 260	Practicum	
<b>Electives</b>		<b>12</b>
MUS 291	Composition Seminar (may be taken a second time to fulfill an elective credit.)	
The following undergraduate courses are open to graduate students as well:		
MUS 101	20th-Century Styles and Techniques I: 1900–1945	
MUS 102	Experimental Music: From 1952 to the Present	
MUS 116	Women, Gender, and Musical Creativity	
MUS 117	Studies in European Music and Culture to 1750	
MUS 118	Classical and Romantic Music	
MUS 120	American Music	
MUS 121	Film Music: Mood and Meaning	
MUS 141	The Music of India: Brahma to Bhangra	
MUS 147	Introduction to Electronic Music	
MUS 154	Introduction to Computer Music	
MUS 155	Advanced Chromatic Harmony and Post-Tonal Theory	
MUS 159/259	Seminar in Musical Performance, Composition, and Improvisation	
MUS 161	Sound Techniques of Recording	
MUS 163	The World of Opera	
MUS 180		
MUS 259	Seminar in Musical Performance, Composition, and Improvisation	

<sup>1</sup> MUS 250 Thesis for the Master's Degree consists of the preparation and performance of a major work during the Signal Flow Graduate Thesis Festival and a written thesis. Students meet regularly during their final semester with their faculty thesis director, and also consult with a faculty thesis reader on the development of their thesis.

<sup>2</sup> MUS 291 Composition Seminar may be taken a second time to fulfill an elective credit.

## First-Year Review: All Candidates

Students in all graduate music programs must demonstrate professional standards of achievement in their chosen field. At the end of the first year of residence (two semesters of full-time enrollment

or its equivalent), students must submit a portfolio representing the work accomplished during the period of enrollment. Only after completion of a successful faculty review will the student be permitted to proceed with the second year of study. Inquiries concerning any of these requirements should be addressed to the Music Department at 510.430.2171.