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PIANO STUDIES
HANDBOOK

Piano Area Website:
www.vcu.edu/arts/music/dept/study/piano

Updated Fall 2010

Degree Requirements for B. Mus. in Piano Performance

Please refer to the appropriate University Bulletin for degree requirements.

[Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance](#)

[Bachelor of Arts in Music](#)

Piano Jury Requirements

1. Each Piano Performance Major has to perform a jury at the end of each semester. The program for the jury will include pieces from at least three different styles (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern and Contemporary). Additionally, each student will perform scales and arpeggios according to his/her semester of study (see below).
2. All Performance Majors are expected to have their programs memorized. All other students are expected to have at least one of the works memorized, but are highly encouraged to memorize the entire program.
3. The jury will not exceed eleven (levels 1-2) or fifteen (level 3-7) minutes in length; the performance may be interrupted at the discretion of the jurors.

Technique requirements - by semester

Semester 1	6 Major scales and arpeggios
Semester 2	The other 6 Major scales and arpeggios
Semester 3	6 Minor scales, harmonic and melodic 6 Minor, 6 Dominant 7 th and 6 diminished arpeggios
Semester 4	All Major scales and arpeggios The other 6 Minor scales, harmonic and melodic The other 6 Minor, Dominant 7 th and diminished arpeggios
Semester 5	All Major and Minor scales All Major and Minor arpeggios All Dominant 7 th and diminished arpeggios
Semester 6	Junior Recital – 30 minutes minimum (in lieu of a jury)
Semester 7	All scales and arpeggios Major and Minor scales in 3rds, 6ths and 10ths
Semester 8	Senior Recital – 60 minutes minimum (in lieu of a jury)

Applied and Supportive Course Descriptions

Please consult the course catalog for courses not described here

1. Applied Piano, APPM 333 (3 or 2 credits)

3-credit lessons for performance majors: APPM 333 sec. 003.

Performance majors have to achieve level 8 in order to graduate.

2-credit lessons for education majors: APPM 333 sec. 002.

Education majors have to achieve level 6 in order to graduate.

- 14 one-hour lessons per semester.
- Objectives: as determined between the instructor and the student.
- A jury is required to acquire a level. Poor jury performance may result in a level being withheld. Failing to achieve a level for two consecutive semesters will result in dismissal from the Music Program.
- If no level is desired, a jury may be played for comments only.
- A successfully earned level and average jury grade do not determine the semester grade.
- A Junior Recital is required to achieve level 6; a Senior Recital is required for level 8. The Piano Faculty reserves the right to request a pre-hearing of a recital to determine whether a student is adequately prepared for the recital.
- Any student has the right to request a change of major teacher by filling an appropriate form at the Music Office.

2. Piano Master Class, APPM 299 (0 credits)

- Each full-time piano faculty member conducts a weekly master class.
- Attendance and performance policies are determined by instructor.

3. Piano Literature, MHIS 303-304 (2+2 credits)

- 2-Semester course; 2 lecture hours each semester. Fall and spring of even-numbered years only. Cannot be taken during the freshmen year.
- A survey of stringed keyboard literature. Historical, formal and stylistic considerations of the various periods and composers of keyboard music. Listening and reading assignments included.
- 1st semester: Baroque and Classical periods (1600-1828)
- 2nd semester: Romantic, Modern and Contemporary periods (1828 to the present).

4. Piano Pedagogy, APPM 463-464 (2+2 credits)

- 1-Semester course; 2 lecture hours; fall and spring semesters of odd-numbered years only.
- Required prerequisite: Piano Literature MHIS 303 and 304.
- The class surveys general teaching methodologies practiced today around the world; the survey encompasses all instruction levels, from beginner to advanced.
- The class also aims to provide a hands-on experience of teaching and give tools to develop your teaching skills; includes weekly papers and presentations.
- During the spring semester, the students (“trainees”) are assigned one piano minor student each for a 30-minute lesson weekly. Every other lesson is observed by the class instructor. The course culminates in a performance of the trainees’ students.

5. Accompanying, APPM 390 & Piano Ensembles, APPM 370

(1 credit each)

- Each is a 1-Semester course; 1 ½ lecture hours; offered in alternate semesters.
- Both classes explore chamber ensemble playing in voice/piano instrument(s)/piano and piano/piano combinations.
- In-class performances are scheduled on a rotating basis. Each group performs three or four times during the semester. Additional private coachings are scheduled as well.
- Enrolled students become part of VCU Music Outreach Program, which presents concerts in the community.

6. Keyboard Skills for Piano Majors, APPM 274, 373 and 374

(1 credit each)

3 1-semester courses, which explore all aspects of keyboard harmony and four-part voice-leading, harmonization, transposition, figured bass and clef reading

7. Score Reading, APPM 375 (1 credit)

- 1-Semester course; 1 half-hour private lesson. Offered by arrangement with the instructor.
- The course aims to develop open score reading abilities by exploring clef reading and transposition as well as analytical approaches and techniques to reading multiple-part compositions from Haydn string quartets to Schubert symphonies (exact syllabus is developed between by the instructor for the student.)
- The course cannot be taken before the completion of Advanced Keyboard Skills APPM 374.

On-Campus Performances

The Piano Area makes the maximum effort to provide the students with adequate performance opportunities. The students are encouraged to be proactive and volunteer to perform whenever an opportunity arises, as it is presumed that no study of an instrument, however intensive, is complete unless it culminates in successful performances.

Each semester, at least five on-campus performances are available: Piano Area concert, Piano Ensembles concert (both usually held during the last four weeks of classes), and three convocations. Total time available for piano students at the convocations is approximately 20 minutes. In addition, the Piano Area schedules a number of guest master classes each year.

Off-Campus Performances

VCU piano students play an active role in the Community Outreach Program. Since 2005, solo and chamber performances by VCU piano students have take place both in the Greater Richmond area and beyond. The concerts are scheduled by the Area Coordinator, who also selects the performers, in consultation with applied faculty.

Competitions

VCU Concerto Competition is held every fall and is scheduled by the Director of Orchestral Studies. Students, who have a concerto or another major work for solo piano and orchestra ready, are encouraged to apply.

Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity holds annual competition for female students every spring. Two contrasting works are required. Exact dates for both competitions are announced well in advance.

VMTA and MTNA competitions are held annually and require either a 35-minute solo program or a concerto movement.

Practice facilities

Piano students share the practice rooms with other VCU students. Additionally, there are two rooms designated exclusively for piano practice. A sign-up sheet is posted on each room at the beginning of the semester. Students are asked not to sign for more than two hours at a time.

Music libraries and electronic resources

VCU library has an extensive collection of music scores and books, located on the third floor on the Cabell Library. Obtaining items available at other institutional libraries is possible through Interlibrary Loan.

The students are also encouraged to explore the Richmond Public Library, which has an outstanding collection of musical materials and is free. It is located on the corner of East Franklin St. and North 2nd St. Yet another excellent music library is housed at the University of Richmond. Consult your major teacher if you want to borrow a score from that library.

The Piano Area website provides links to online libraries, available on the “Resources” page. Any use of electronic and downloadable resources is done at the student’s own risk and must comply with applicable copyright laws.

VCU faculty uses Blackboard for many of the courses offered. The materials made available via the Blackboard are subject to the same copyright laws as materials obtained elsewhere.

Organ and harpsichord

There are two organs and two harpsichords in the possession of the Music Department. Students who desire to study or to independently practice the organ have to consult Dr. Ardyth Lohuis. Those who want to gain access to harpsichords should consult Dr. Shteinberg.

Piano performance majors are encouraged to pursue the study of organ as their secondary performance medium.

Off-campus job opportunities

All requests for pianists from local churches, music schools and choirs are posted on the appropriate announcement board on the main floor of the Performance Arts Center. The students are encouraged to consult their major teacher before applying for a position.

Treating professional and job-related injuries

If you believe you have sustained a professional or job-related physical injury, such as a strained muscle, tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome, consult your area coordinator immediately. A list of trusted professionals who specialize on treating performing artists is available.