

# Carnegie Mellon University

School of Music

## Major Instrumental Ensembles

### Syllabus and Policies

Undergraduate course #: 57418

Graduate course #: 57818

- **Philharmonic**

Daniel Nesta Curtis, Director of Orchestral Studies; [dcurtis@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:dcurtis@andrew.cmu.edu)

- **Wind Ensemble**

George Vosburgh, Music Director; [vos@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:vos@andrew.cmu.edu)

Stephen Story, Associate Director; [story@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:story@andrew.cmu.edu)

- **Contemporary Ensemble**

Guest/interim CE director TBA

- **Opera Orchestra**

TBA

## Overview and Purpose

*Major Instrumental Ensembles* is a central, required component of the instrumental performance curricula within the CMU School of Music. The purpose of the major ensembles' activities is to prepare students for careers as dynamic leaders in professional orchestras, wind ensembles, contemporary ensembles, and other professional music groups. By collaborating with a variety of different conductors and soloists on programs that cover a wide variety of styles of music, students will develop the many skills necessary to win auditions and hold jobs in professional ensembles. *Major Instrumental Ensembles* also offers students the extraordinary experience of shaping the future of the large ensemble art form by premiering new works, highlighting underappreciated music, and engaging in exciting new collaborations.

The success of any large instrumental ensemble depends on high-level intricate collaboration, impeccable organization, and dedication from each and every individual involved. The following protocols and policies have been crafted in order to facilitate incredible musical collaboration

and experiences that prepare students to be leaders in the profession. These policies pertain to the 4 ensembles included under the umbrella of *Major Instrumental Ensembles*-- philharmonic, wind ensemble, contemporary ensemble, and opera orchestra-- and should be referred to throughout the year. Any issues or questions not addressed in this document should be brought directly to the ensemble directors.

## Rehearsals

The complete schedule of rehearsals and concerts of all major ensembles are posted before the beginning of the school year. Rehearsal dates will change only due to an emergency or an unforeseen and unavoidable issue. Any changes will be thoroughly communicated.

Nearly all major ensemble rehearsals occur within the scheduled rehearsal period of Tuesday-Friday, 4-6:30p. Occasionally, a Monday rehearsal is necessary due to lack of availability on other days in a rehearsal cycle. In opera orchestras, dress rehearsals occur during performance hours (7-10p) rather than during the afternoon rehearsal period. Each rehearsal's venue, specific timing, and repertoire will be listed in the detailed online rehearsal schedule.

Students are required to be at all assigned rehearsals and to be completely prepared to play their individual parts at the first rehearsal. Proper protocol is for students to arrive at least 10 minutes early in order to be warmed up and ready for the start of rehearsal. Any necessary announcements will take place just before the start of rehearsal.

Tuning occurs at the exact time a rehearsal begins. The concertmaster (or conductor depending on the ensemble) will indicate the number of tuning 'A's' and clarify the precise protocol. During tuning protocol, it is essential that there are no distractions, conversations, or noise, so that the entire ensemble may tune effectively.

Rehearsals will include 1 10 or 15 minute break, occurring near the mid-point of rehearsal. Tuning protocol is repeated after the break. Rehearsals will start and end exactly on time. Conductors will make themselves available 10 minutes before and after each rehearsal, to answer any questions musicians might have.

As much as possible, conductors will include details of rehearsal timing on the online ensemble Google schedule. For musicians who may be joining rehearsal for a particular work or works, specific start times will be listed on the calendar, however musicians must be ready at least 15-minutes before the posted time. While conductors try to be as specific as possible, a certain amount of flexibility is necessary to allow a rehearsal to proceed early.

Food and drinks are not permitted in any ensemble rehearsal or performance space, except bottled water.

Cell phones are a huge distraction and have no place at a rehearsal or concert. Cell phones should be turned off or silenced and left in a musician's case or bag. Texting or use of any electronics during rehearsal will result in a drop of 2 letter grades. Texting or use of any electronics on stage before, during, or immediately following concerts will result in an immediate failing grade.

Musicians are responsible for bringing their music to every rehearsal as well as a sharpened pencil and eraser to record markings, changes, or any other requests from a conductor.

## Concerts

Students are required to arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of all concerts, though certain instruments like harp and percussion should arrive as early as necessary to prepare their instruments. Warming up onstage and reviewing details of the music to be performed is welcomed and encouraged. Musicians should not warm up by playing concertos or showing off before a concert. Consummate professionalism is expected and required at all times when one is onstage and in view of the public.

Before each concert, conductors will clarify the precise protocols for entering and exiting the stage. Conductors will typically ask the full ensemble to stand when the conductor enters for the first work of a program. Ensemble musicians should watch the concertmaster, or other designated principal musician, for cues to stand and sit during a concert.

After a performance, conductors may acknowledge individual solos or sections of the ensemble. Musicians must remain alert, watch the conductor, and be prepared to stand and accept the recognition. Individuals should not remain standing while other solos are being recognized.

A performance ends when the last applause concludes. Congratulations, hugs, exchanges, and photo-ops are all appropriate after a concert, however a professional demeanor is still called for.

## Casting

To facilitate casting and scheduling, string students should assume they will be cast in all ensemble cycles except wind ensemble, and wind/brass/percussion students should assume they may be cast in any of the 4 major ensembles' activities. Please see the protocol below for requesting an excused absence.

For all woodwind, brass, percussion, harp, and keyboard instruments, all instrumental part assignments for major ensembles will be determined by the studio instructor or instructors on a per-concert basis. In many cases, specific auditions will be organized for a particular part assignment. In this way, studio instructors may monitor the part assignments and involvement in different ensembles of each individual student and determine the best trajectory and timing for those ensemble experiences.

All string players will participate in the philharmonic's principal strings' audition, which will occur after the first philharmonic concert in September. Seating and leadership of the first concert cycle will be determined by the strings faculty based on their assessment of seniority, experience, and capacity to lead.

The casting process begins 1 month prior to the start of a rehearsal cycle and will be completed and finalized no later than 2 weeks before the start of rehearsals.

## Concert Dress and Stage Presence

The concert dress for all CMU major ensembles is "elegant concert black." This includes black suits and dress shirts, long black skirts and elegant black tops, formal slacks, gowns, jumpsuits, blouses, formal shirts, black socks, and black closed-toed shoes.

With respect to the concert dress outlined above, students are encouraged to dress in a way that makes them feel comfortable and empowered to make music. It is the aim of this policy to support all students in rehearsal and concert spaces. We support trans and gender nonconforming students in choosing concert attire that empowers them and we support students who dress in alignment with their culture or religion.

## Music

The music for major instrumental ensembles is prepared, edited, and distributed with great care by ensemble directors in collaboration with Ensemble Librarian and SoM Events Coordinator Taylor Boyle. Any requests or questions related to ensemble music that is not covered in these policies should be directed toward Taylor Boyle at [taylorbo@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:taylorbo@andrew.cmu.edu).

Music for all standard repertoire works to be performed by the CMU Philharmonic is available at the beginning of the school year via the online file sharing box. The online music box can be accessed using the password **CMUmusic2025!**

Rental music for the Philharmonic, Wind Ensemble, Contemporary Ensemble, and Opera will be scanned and uploaded to the online box as soon as it is received by publishers and reviewed by conductors, typically 2 months before a concert.

All original parts for all ensemble concerts will be available for pick-up no later than 2 weeks prior to the first rehearsal of a concert cycle. Folders with original parts are distributed using a large metal filing cabinet located in the basement level of the CFA building, in the instrument locker/storage area behind the stairs leading up to the Zebra Cafe. Once assignments are finalized and music is in the cabinet, students may pick up their folders at any time.

In addition to materials from CMU's ensemble music library and materials rented from publishers, the materials used in major ensembles may be from conductors' personal libraries or borrowed from other organizations such as the Pittsburgh Symphony. This music contains important annotations, edits, bowings, and corrections and therefore must be respected and cared for. Any student who defaces or loses a part will be charged a replacement fee of \$100 per part.

All music should be returned immediately after a concert. Music not received 7 days after a concert will be deemed lost and fines will be assessed.

## Preparation for rehearsals and concerts

Studio teachers are a vital resource for students' preparation of ensemble music. Students are encouraged to bring ensemble repertoire to lessons for discussion and guidance. Studio instructors are aware of the planned repertoire and schedule and very frequently include excerpts from the ensemble repertoire in their studio classes to assist in preparation of parts.

Students are encouraged to listen to several different recordings of a particular work, study the full score, play through parts with colleagues in advance of rehearsal, consult trusted outside sources for advice, and go to concerts to hear the repertoire performed live. Studying the composer's biography, the history around a particular work, and the musical influences that may be present are also components of thorough preparation.

Different subsections of the major ensembles are encouraged to organize their own sectional rehearsals. This may occur before the first tutti rehearsal, or in the midst of a rehearsal cycle as necessary. String section leaders may call a sectional rehearsal to address particular challenges that arise in rehearsal, or if a conductor expresses that a section is not adequately prepared for a rehearsal or concert.

# Grading

Grading is based on the following criteria:

- Attendance - The presence and dedication of each and every musician in an ensemble is essential to the ensemble's success. Students are expected to organize class work, gigs and other performance opportunities around the ensembles' schedule. Please carefully read the excused absence policy below, which details the very specific circumstances that allow for an excused absence request. Unexcused absences from ensemble rehearsals are the primary issue that leads to poor ensemble grades.
- Participation - Musicians should be engaged throughout the rehearsal process and approach the work with a positive, collaborative attitude. Participation involves caring for physical materials, avoiding distractions such as cell phones, and remaining focused on the task at hand even in moments of rehearsal that may be focused on another part of the ensemble. Participation also means quickly implementing suggestions from the podium, following section leaders, and being coordinated with their sections in terms of bowings, breathing, phrasing, and intonation.
- Preparation - Students are expected to have their individual parts learned, fingered, up to tempo, and in tune for the first rehearsal of every cycle. Please consult the components that contribute to thorough preparation outlined above.

Attendance is required at every rehearsal and concert. An unexcused tardiness or absence will lower a student's grade significantly.

tardy to 1 rehearsal =  $\frac{1}{2}$  unexcused absence

tardy to 1 dress rehearsal = 1 unexcused absence

tardy to 1 concert = 4 unexcused absences

absent from 1 rehearsal = 1 unexcused absence

absent from 1 dress rehearsal = 2 unexcused absences

absent from 1 concert = 4 unexcused absences

Each unexcused absence will lower your grade by one letter. For example, one unexcused absence would lower an "A" to a "B." Four unexcused absences will result in an "R" or failing grade. An unsatisfactory grade (D or lower for undergraduate students, C or lower for graduate and AMS students) may result in loss of good standing in the School of Music or being dropped from the School of Music.

Students do not receive a grade for each ensemble they participate in; instead, all students receive a grade reflecting the totality of their ensemble activities in a given semester. Importantly, this attendance policy and the effect it has on a student's ensemble grade, is cumulative across ensembles. For example, a student who has 1 unexcused absence from philharmonic, is late to a contemporary ensemble dress rehearsal, and is tardy to 2 opera orchestra rehearsals will result in a 'D' grade for that semester.

# Excused Absence Policy

Participation in *Major Instrumental Ensembles* is a curricular requirement of all undergraduate and graduate strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion instrumentalists and must be treated as a top priority.

The major ensembles' concert and rehearsal schedules are published on the school of music website well before the start of the school year and this schedule is set in stone for the entire year. Therefore, there is no excuse for not knowing what the schedule is. The alternation of ensembles in the major ensembles schedule allows for weeks where certain instruments will not be involved. Special performance projects, gigs, and musical work outside of the school of music should be scheduled around the major ensembles' dates. For these reasons, excused absences from ensembles for reasons other than illness or a family emergency will be granted only in very rare circumstances.

Although assignments are published on a per-cycle basis (at least two weeks before the first rehearsal) all eligible instrumentalists in the School of Music should assume that they will be assigned to every philharmonic cycle and all wind/brass/percussion students should assume they will be assigned to every wind ensemble cycle. If a potential conflict with an ensemble's schedule arises, students should submit their petitions for an excused absence or tardiness according to the protocols and deadlines detailed below.

An excused absence may be granted in the following circumstances:

1. A professional opportunity that has the potential to significantly advance a student's career. This includes gigs with ensembles that hold a very high profile in the industry, auditions for major ensemble positions, and auditions for major competitions or festivals.
2. Auditions for graduate school or doctorate programs when an alternate, non-conflicting date is not available.
3. Illness or a medical emergency.
4. A family emergency/death in the family.

An excused absence will likely NOT be granted in the following circumstances:

1. If the request is submitted after the deadline (see below).
2. If alternate audition dates/times or travel options are available that would prevent there being a conflict.
3. If the gig, even a paid gig, is with an orchestra/ensemble that does meet a certain level of artistic excellence to justify the student's absence from CMU ensembles.

# Excused Absence Process

Students should submit a request for an excused absence as soon as the potential conflict is known; students should not wait until they are assigned to a cycle to submit a petition for an excused absence or release from a cycle. The earlier a petition for an excused absence is received, the greater the likelihood that it may be approved.

The approval or disapproval of an excused absence request is the decision of ensemble directors only.

To request that a tardiness or absence be considered for an excuse, the following steps must be taken:

1. Send an email to Taylor Boyle (tboyle@andrew.cmu.edu) and the director of the ensemble to which the conflict applies.
2. Copy your studio teacher on the email. As most assignments to instrumental ensembles come from studio teachers, it is important that they are aware of any potential conflicts and scheduling issues within their studio, ideally before assignments are made.
3. State the following in your email petition:
  - a. your name
  - b. your instrument
  - c. date(s) in conflict
  - d. detailed explanation of the reason for the conflict
4. In the same or in a subsequent email, provide official documentation that clearly details the nature of the conflict. Depending on the type of conflict, this documentation may take the form of a doctor's note, an email invite to an audition or competition, or a hiring letter/contract for a professional performance opportunity.
5. If you are a wind player, percussionist, harpist, keyboard or principal string player, you must find a substitute for your part/s and name them on the petition. No petition will be approved without this information.

## Deadlines for an Excused Absence Petition

**Illness or Emergency:** Email within three days of the date of the tardiness or absence.

**Professional Opportunity or Audition:** Email at least two weeks before the first rehearsal of the cycle in which the tardiness or absence is requested.

A request to be released from a rehearsal or concert for a professional opportunity that is not submitted before the two-week deadline will be denied.

# Principal String Auditions

Auditions for principal strings in the philharmonic, opera orchestra, and contemporary ensemble will occur on September 20th, 23rd, and 24th. All string players are required to participate in this audition, which will be evaluated by Professor Curtis, string faculty, and invited guests from the Pittsburgh Symphony.

The principal string audition may result in multiple co-principals who will rotate in and out of leadership positions. All decisions are based solely on the audition, are final, and will remain in place for the entirety of the academic year.

String players who are not selected to lead will rotate seating throughout their sections, having opportunities to play from different positions in the section and in collaboration with different stand partners.

## Audition Repertoire:

### **Violin:**

Exposition of a concerto

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique, Movement 1 [beginning to Reh. C (m. 24)]

Mozart: Symphony No. 39, Movement 4 [beginning to Reh. B]

### **Viola:**

Exposition of a concerto

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique, Movement 4 [m. 135 to Reh. R (m. 165)]

Mozart: Symphony No. 35, Movement 4 [mm. 134-181]

### **Cello:**

Exposition of a concerto

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique, Movement III [Reh. J (m. 87) to bar after Reh. L (m. 107)]

Rossini: William Tell Overture opening solo

### **Double-bass:**

Exposition of a concerto

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique, Movement 2 [beginning to Reh. B (m. 36)]

Mozart: Symphony No. 40, Movement 1 [mm. 114-138]

# Health and Well-Being

Emerging from a global pandemic and living in a time of intense polarization and international conflict poses unique challenges for artists. It is important to acknowledge the stresses this reality places on us. At the same time, the expectations for excellence, the pressure to be your best musical self, has, perhaps, never been greater due to the very competitive nature of our industry. We all share some of the responsibility for making our artform relevant in 2024 and beyond. This is both exciting and incredibly daunting.

Our new reality of spending so much time alone, indoors, and seated in front of a screen can certainly take its toll on our mental and physical well-being. You are encouraged to take breaks, move frequently throughout the day, meditate, eat well, stay hydrated, and get plenty of sleep. These acts of care toward oneself are more important now than ever.

It is crucial that we be a supportive community for each other and recognize all of the resources available from the university. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle and there are many helpful resources available through the university's Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS). Anyone experiencing academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety and depression, should not hesitate to ask for support.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with mental health, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

CaPS: 412-268-2922

Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

If the situation is life threatening, call the police:

On campus: CMU Police: 412-268-2323

Off campus: 911

# Engagement and Belonging

“‘A university is a place where the universality of the human experience manifests itself.’ -Albert Einstein

In keeping with the spirit of Einstein's viewpoint, the School of Music at the College of Fine Arts

is committed to providing an atmosphere of learning that is inclusive of a variety of perspectives.

**Names and Pronouns:** All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. Please feel encouraged to share your pronouns to address you accordingly, and the phonetic spelling of your name for correct pronunciation.

**Diverse Inclusivity:** Students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives will be well served by this course. Diversity that students bring to this class are viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. Materials and activities within this course are to be respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. With acknowledgment that implicit bias may still be present, your suggestions and feedback are encouraged and appreciated.

**Accessibility Accommodations:** For accommodations, please obtain a letter from the Office of Disability Resources. Students are encouraged to discuss accommodation needs with ensemble directors as early in the semester as possible to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, you are encouraged to contact them at [access@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:access@andrew.cmu.edu).

**Wellness:** Diminished mental health and overall wellness can interfere with life balance, including academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please speak with your instructor. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) offers free, confidential services to help you manage personal challenges.

Information and resources are located at <https://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>.

Immediate support is always available (24/7): 412-268-2922.

\* CaPS: 412-268-2922

Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

**Religious Observations:** Please let instructors know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for student groups. If any class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let instructors know within the first two weeks of the semester so that arrangements can be made for you.

**Bias Related Incidents:** Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment. Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Students are encouraged to use the following resources:

The Office of Engagement and Belonging for the College of Fine Arts serves as the centralized resource for programming, professional development, consultation and resources that foster wellbeing, belonging, continuous learning and creative collaboration across the CFA community.

We offer a variety of services grounded in identity development and support of expanding understanding of what it means to live and work in a pluralistic society.

- Programming support for student events and engagement opportunities,
- Mentoring and coaching for students, faculty and staff,
- Continuous learning opportunities for our CFA community
- Oversight and management of the Concern Navigation Pathway

For questions or more information, email [cfa-oeb@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:cfa-oeb@andrew.cmu.edu).

Dr. Angelica Perez-Johnston, Associate Dean for Engagement & Belonging for the College of Fine Arts; [angelicaperez@cmu.edu](mailto:angelicaperez@cmu.edu)

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion  
[csdi@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:csdi@andrew.cmu.edu), (412) 268-2150

DNC, GV, SS  
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