

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

CHAMBER MUSIC SYLLABUS  
(2024-25)

**Course number: 57670, 57671, 57672**

**Units: 3**

Before reading the syllabus make sure to check the SoM Chamber Music website for a program overview and other important details, including registration info and specific requests.

(music.cmu.edu → Current Students → Ensembles → Chamber Music)

**Course Description:** Expose students to the art of chamber music through weekly coachings that focus on enhancing collaboration, mastering interpretation and refining their listening skills.

**Course Objectives:**

- Collaborative Skills: Develop essential ensemble skills, including active listening, effective communication, balancing and blending, and productive teamwork.
- Musical Flexibility: Learn how to take ownership of your part, how to be proactive and reactive, and how to lead or support peers effectively while playing.
- Deepen Musical Understanding: Explore complex repertoire, refine interpretive abilities, and cultivate an appreciation for the nuances of musical expression.
- Personal Growth: Create a strong sense of community among fellow musicians and build lifelong friendships and professional connections.
- Performance Opportunities: Perform at least once per semester (more details below).

**Course requirements**

1. Each group must receive a total of 600 minutes of coaching each semester
2. Each group should rehearse for at least two hours each week
3. Each group is required to perform at least once during the semester (see Performance Opportunities below). You may choose to perform one or multiple movements from the work you have been studying, or, if time permits, the entire piece.

**Assessment and Grading**

Please be aware that you will be continuously assessed throughout the course. Your final grade will be based on several factors, including: attendance, reliability, preparation, artistic quality / interpretation, musical progress, and performance.

While each coach may have a unique grading approach, the following rubric is provided as a template:

- 30% Attendance & Reliability
- 30% Preparation
- 15% Musical Progress
- 15% Artistic Quality / Interpretation
- 10% Performance

Grades are shaped by both individual and group performance, so it is possible for ensemble members to receive different grades based on their contributions.

### **Group responsibilities:**

Many of the goals for your ensemble are self-driven, so it's essential to take initiative and be proactive to ensure a smooth semester. With 10 hours of coaching to complete over 14 weeks, starting early is highly recommended. Most groups are finalized / assigned before the beginning of the semester and therefore you should aim to have your first coaching during the first week of classes. This approach helps accommodate potential interruptions such as recitals, illnesses, engagements, and auditions that may arise during the semester.

The following are some steps to help you stay on track as a group:

- Once you receive your group assignment make sure to meet with your fellow members as soon as possible, ideally before the beginning of the semester. If the group is not formed early enough, the meeting should happen during the first day of classes. The purpose of the meeting will be to:
  - o align your goals as a group: discuss any recitals, performances, competitions, masterclasses and/or festivals you would like to do
  - o appoint a group representative: this person will be responsible for booking rehearsal/coaching space and will act as liaison between the coach and/or the coordinator / GA
  - o exchange schedules: you should aim to have **at least five possible one-hour slots** to interchange between rehearsals and coachings.
- Get in touch with your coach ideally before the beginning of the semester, and most certainly before the end of Week One **at the latest**, to setup the first coaching
- If the ensemble does not receive a coaching for two consecutive weeks, the group representative must email the appropriate coordinator to relay the circumstances
- Groups are encouraged to have at least half their total coaching time (300 minutes) by midterm

### **OTHER GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES**

Rehearsals: You are expected to rehearse as a group at least twice a week, with each session lasting one hour, while also dedicating significant time to practicing your individual part on your own. When preparing for a coaching session, it is important that you can perform any new

material fluently without interruptions. For material you have previously worked on, make sure to incorporate and build upon the coach's suggestions to showcase your musical growth. This ensures that each rehearsal and coaching session is productive and reflects your progress.

Reserving a space: reserving a space for coachings / rehearsals is the group's responsibility. To reserve, contact Jesse Montgomery, Director of Operations (see below for contact details), and start by asking the availability for the two dedicated coaching / rehearsal rooms: HOA 226 and HOA 227. Due to high demand, it's important to make your reservations promptly; last-minute requests may jeopardize your coaching sessions.

Score / Parts: Make sure everyone in the group is playing from the same edition of the score, and that your parts have measure or rehearsal numbers, as this will save a lot of time during rehearsals and coachings. The Hunt Library offers a great selection of scores, and other resources like IMSLP and various online platforms can also be helpful. If you have difficulty locating the desired repertoire, don't hesitate to reach out to your coach for assistance.

**NEW - Coaching Report**: For the new Coaching Report procedure, right before the mid-semester break, send an email to the appropriate GA (contact details provided below) detailing the dates and durations of your coaching sessions so far. Be sure to also copy your coach on this email. The coach will review and flag any discrepancies at that time. Follow the same process at the end of the semester, building on the mid-semester email to show a total of 10 hours of coaching. If a group is unable to fulfill the 600-minute coaching requirement, a detailed explanation of the circumstances should be provided in the email. Please note that the old paper version of the chamber log is no longer in use.

Finally, any extended illnesses or extenuating circumstances that prevent groups from meeting must be brought to the attention of the appropriate coordinator **IMMEDIATELY**.

### **Repertoire & Ensemble choices**

During your chamber music studies, it is recommended that you engage with a diverse range of works spanning different periods and styles. This includes performing canonical pieces, exploring new and lesser-known works, particularly from composers of underrepresented backgrounds, and familiarizing yourself with ensembles of various instrumentations. This approach will help broaden your musical experience and understanding.

### **Rescheduling / Attendance / Absence Policies**

In the event that the group needs to reschedule, a 24h notice is required; shorter notice periods may be accommodated at the coach's discretion. If the group reschedules two coaching sessions consecutively, it is at the coach's discretion whether to make up the missed session. Similarly, if a group member does not attend the coaching, or arrives more than 10 minutes late, it is at the coach's discretion whether to make up the coaching.

## **Performance Opportunities**

### School of Music:

- *Chamber Convo (12/5 & 4/17)*: A total of 4-6 groups will be selected. Coaches must submit nominations via email to Sarah Steranka for consideration. Suggested pieces / movements should be between 5 and 8 minutes in length. Final group selections will be determined collaboratively by the Chamber Music Coordinators
- *Honors Convo (4/24)*: One group will be selected to play. Coaches must submit nominations via email to Sarah Steranka for consideration. Suggested pieces / movements should be between 8 and 10 minutes in length. Final group selection will be determined collaboratively by the Chair of the Division and Chamber Music Coordinators
- *SoM Commencement (5/11)*: Two groups (non-piano only) will be selected to play. Coaches must submit nominations via email to Sarah Steranka for consideration. Suggested pieces / movements should be between 4 and 6 minutes in length. Final group selections will be determined collaboratively by the Chair of the Division and Chamber Music Coordinators
- *Kresge Chamber Extravaganza (12/6 at 4pm & 4/17 at 7:30pm)*: to participate, email Sarah Steranka with repertoire details to express interest

### Pittsburgh Community (link to Google Doc)

We are continually seeking for new performance opportunities, and this list is regularly updated. To participate to any community event email Sarah Steranka.

### Masterclasses (link to Google Doc)

There will be announcements about the various masterclasses that the SoM will be hosting. To participate in a chamber music masterclass, email the appropriate Chamber Music Coordinator to express interest.

### Competition:

- *Honors Quartet Audition (mid-end of September)*: Each selected member will receive \$2,500. Look for an email from Chris Wu (or the relevant GA) with details about group formation (pre-formed or assembled on-site), the exact audition date, required repertoire, and judges. Any violinist, violist, or cellist interested in participating should reply to that email.
- *SoM Annual Competition (3/29)*: each member from the winning group receives \$500. You must submit an application to Jesse Montgomery, Director of Operations, to be eligible to participate.
- *Pittsburgh Concert Society (April 2025)*: <https://pittsburghconcertsociety.org/>

## Key Contacts

*Sarah Steranka: Coordinator for Woodwind & Mixed Ensembles* | [ssterank@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:ssterank@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(for all matters related to woodwind and mixed ensembles, non-music major auditions, and various performance opportunities)

*Chris Wu: Coordinator for String Ensembles* | [cwu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:cwu@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(for all matters related to string ensembles and Honors Quartet Audition)

*Neal Berntsen: Coordinator for Brass Ensembles* | [nrb@nealberntsen.com](mailto:nrb@nealberntsen.com)  
(for all matters related to brass ensembles)

GAs:

- Josephine Lee | [josephil@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:josephil@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(for Woodwind and Mixed Ensembles Coaching Report)
- Jorge Aquino | [jveraagu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:jveraagu@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(for String Ensembles Coaching Report)

*Jesse Montgomery: Director of Operations* | [jrmontgo@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:jrmontgo@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(to reserve a rehearsal / coaching space and to apply to the SoM Annual Chamber Music Competition)

*Dimitri Papadimitriou: Chair of Chamber Music Division* | [dpapadim@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:dpapadim@andrew.cmu.edu)  
(for general inquiries)

*Chamber Music Website:* [music.cmu.edu/ChamberMusic](https://music.cmu.edu/ChamberMusic)  
(for program overview, registration info, request form etc.)

---

## COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

The chamber music program at the Carnegie Mellon School of Music dynamically embraces diversity and inclusion as core values. We strive to conceive of diversity in the broadest terms possible, including gender identity and expression, sexuality, race, age, culture, and nationality. As such, coaches and students are encouraged to seek out and program music that is similarly wide-ranging, so that we may work together to create more inclusive programming and foster an environment where all feel welcomed, respected, and heard.

## UNIVERSITY DIVERSITY STATEMENT

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue

justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

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. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

- Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: [csdi@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:csdi@andrew.cmu.edu), (412) 268- 2150
- Report-It online anonymous reporting platform: [reportit.net](https://reportit.net) // username: tartans // password: plaid

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.