West Chester University School of Music Bachelor of Music in Theory and Composition
About the major and its audition procedures

What is the course of study for Music Theory and Composition majors at WCU?

- **General education courses** in liberal arts and sciences
- **Courses common to all music majors**: Basic music theory and aural skills, music history, major instrument lessons, piano, conducting, ensembles, and electives
- **Composition study**: one semester of class and additional semesters of private lessons
- **Upper-level courses**: Orchestration, Form & Analysis, Counterpoint (Renaissance or Baroque), and Computer Music

What composition opportunities are available for Music Theory and Composition majors at WCU?

Opportunities for performance of student compositions include:

- **End-of-semester composition concerts**
- **Student recitals**
- **Interdepartmental collaborations**, including the annual *Danza Simbiotica* collaboration with dancers and choreographers and special collaborations with theater, poetry and art.
- **Recording sessions by professional guest performers**
- **Recording sessions by large ensembles** such as the WCU Orchestra and WCU Wind Ensemble
- **Concerts produced on and off-campus** by *The NOW Music Society*, WCU’s student-led organization for new music.
- A capstone **senior recital** devoted to the graduating student’s compositions

How do students learn to compose at WCU?

Students begin composition study in a class environment, studying works by master composers of the 20th and 21st centuries and creating their own music inspired by these pieces. Subsequent semesters of composition study are in one-on-one lessons, in which students build compositional techniques, creating a portfolio of compositions that demonstrates a range of approaches and instrumental or vocal settings. In the final year of study, each student presents a full recital of his or her original works.

In private lessons, students rotate to study with each composition faculty member in turn, learning a variety of technical and aesthetic approaches from each. At WCU, no single composition style is favored over another; the most important goal of the program is to help students develop advanced compositional skills while developing their own, personal compositional “voice.”

With WCU’s up-to-date recording facilities in Adler Theater and Gates Recital Hall, concerts are recorded on multi-camera video and digital audio, providing students with excellent recordings of their compositions.
What is the difference between concentrations in music theory and music composition?

The coursework is practically identical. Most MTC majors focus on composition, and these students conclude their studies with a full composition recital and a small written thesis. Students who focus on music theory conclude their studies with a large written thesis and a small composition recital.

What do graduates with this degree do after college?

Many students who earn the Bachelor of Music in Theory & Composition degree progress to graduate study. Recent graduates have been accepted to many of America’s finest graduate programs, including The Eastman School of Music, University of Pennsylvania, The Curtis Institute of Music, University of Southern California, New York University, University of North Texas, Cincinnati College-Conservatory and The Cleveland Institute of Music. Other students who graduate with this degree often progress directly to work in related musical fields, such as music production and recording, music instruction, advertising, radio and television and film, and arts administration.

What is the audition procedure for Music Theory and Composition?

In addition to audition components common to applicants for all music majors (instrument audition, piano placement, theory and aural skills placement), MTC applicants meet individually with one or more professors of music theory and composition, who will have examined the three compositions brought by the applicant on the day of audition. Compositions are preferably typeset and accompanied by recordings (“MIDI” renditions are acceptable) brought on compact disc or as mp3 files on a portable USB drive.

A professor will assess the applicant’s musicianship skills, including asking the applicant to:

- Perform a short, prepared excerpt on the piano.
- Sight-sing a melody using neutral (la-la) or solfeggio (do-re-mi) syllables.
- Demonstrate by-ear recognition of chord types (major, minor, seventh chords, etc.) and Roman numeral function (I, ii, V, etc.) in the context of a chord progression.

The professor who reviewed the applicant’s compositions will conduct an interview, asking the applicant to briefly discuss his or her musical background, approaches to composing music, special interests such as favorite composers, and so forth. Any questions that the applicant has about the MTC major and other activities at WCU are welcome at this time.

What are common pathways for entering the major in Music Theory and Composition?

Students with well-developed theory and musicianship skills and who show promise in music composition or analysis may enter the MTC major directly upon a successful audition.
Since theory and musicianship skills sufficient to enter this major are commonly built in early college-level courses, many students begin their college career in another major (Bachelor of Music with Elective Studies in an Outside Field, Applied Music Performance, Music Education, etc.) and then audition after their first year to enter the MTC major. Entering the MTC major this way does not extend college beyond four years since music and general education courses taken in the first year all fulfill requirements that are common to each of the music majors.

**Who are the faculty in Music Theory and Composition?**

**Robert Maggio** (Professor of Music Theory and Composition; department chair). B.A., Yale University; M.A., Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania. A composer especially active in creating new works for orchestra, dance and theater, Maggio has a special interest in musical theater and is a member of the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop.

**Mark Rimple** (Professor of Music Theory and Composition). B.M.C., The University of the Arts; M.M., Temple University; D.M.A., Temple University. A composer, countertenor and lutenist, Rimple performs music from the Medieval and Renaissance eras as a member of the ensemble Trefoil while maintaining an active career as composer and educator. At WCU, in addition to teaching music theory, aural skills and composition, Rimple directs the Collegium Musicum ensemble for early music and, with Alexander Rozin, is co-author of *A Perceptual Approach to Musical Analysis*, the music theory textbook used at WCU.

**Alexander Rozin** (Professor of Music Theory). B.A., University of California at Berkeley; Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania. Rozin’s research combines the methods of music theory and analysis with the tools of experimental psychology. He currently co-runs a lab dedicated to the study of the psychology of music at the University of Pennsylvania. Along with music perception and cognition and music theory pedagogy, he also has serious interest in the music of Brahms, jazz, the history of music theory, and North Indian classical music. With Mark Rimple, he is co-author of *A Perceptual Approach to Musical Analysis*, the music theory textbook used at WCU.

**Adam Silverman** (Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition). B. Mus.: University of Miami School of Music, Vienna Musikhochschule; D.M.A., M.M.A., M.M.: Yale School of Music. A composer especially active in creating works for percussion ensemble, wind ensemble, and opera, Silverman teaches orchestration, composition, and courses in music theory and aural skills. Silverman has a special interest in rock music theory, and has taught courses in Pop Music Analysis and Songwriting.

**Van Stiefel** (Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition). B.A. (Music), Yale University; M.M., Yale School of Music; M.A., Ph.D., Princeton University. Stiefel is a composer and electric guitarist with a special interest in applying cutting-edge interactive musical technology. At WCU, his teaching includes courses in Computer Music and directing the Center for Music Technology, in addition to music composition, theory and aural skills. His recent compositions include *Wyeth Songs* — a major cantata for baritone, electric guitar, children’s chorus and percussion, and *Cinema Castaneda* — a work composed for and recorded by the renowned Minneapolis Guitar Quartet.
What if I have more questions?

Please peruse the West Chester University School of Music web site at http://wcupa.edu/cypa/music, where you will find much information about the school, the Department of Music Theory, History and Composition, and its faculty. You may also contact MTC faculty by email with questions about the program.