



aces ECA

Educational Center for the Arts
MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Course Descriptions

Ensembles

Prerequisite: None

Grade Level: 9-12

In these performance-based courses, music students work together in studying, rehearsing, and performing specialized repertoire appropriate to the skills of the participants and type of ensemble. All ensemble courses are designed to elevate and refine students' skills in technique, rehearsal, analysis, interpretation, and performance. Class time is devoted to listening and inter-ensemble communication, establishing and controlling tempo, interpretation, style, and leading/following. Students learn to appropriately adjust pitch, articulation, timbre/tone, and dynamics, analyze (and annotate a notated score) to inform performance, and learn to play/sing in the foreground as well as accompany. This daily study, practice, and analysis culminates in ensemble performances for department, school, and larger communities. Coursework focuses on technical and musical skill development through the study and performance of ensemble works. This includes musical feel, terminology, theory, compositional approaches, and historical context specific to the style and genre of music being studied, which spans culture and time periods. Considerable class time is devoted to sight-reading, both to improve skills in this area and to expose students to the widest possible variety of literature. Students study in 1-2 ensembles per year, and every effort is made to ensure that students have access to a variety of ensemble experiences as they progress through the program. See specific course syllabi for course objectives related to specific style/genre.

Examples of ensembles include: Jazz Collective, Studio Singers, Chamber Jazz Ensemble, String Quartet, ECA Voices, Saxophone Quartet, Woodwind Quintet, Brass Ensemble, Guitar Ensemble, New Music Ensemble, Musical Theater ensemble, Little Big Band, Piano Trio, Contemporary Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble, and Rock Band



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Studio Classes

Prerequisite: None

Grade Level: 9-12

Studio Classes are designed to help students improve their vocal or instrumental technique in small group settings. All students work with an instrument/voice specific coach to create an individualized learning plan that helps students become more proficient in areas including tone, embouchure, bowing technique, proper posture, articulation, breath support, diction, dynamics, phrasing, expression, and technical skill. Coursework includes technical exercises, scales and arpeggios, etudes, and solo repertoire, as well as the development of practice strategies. Students demonstrate growth through the SDA (Skill Development Assessment) process, which includes several solo performances per year for a jury of faculty and an audience of peers. Growth is also achieved through the development of problem-solving skills, effective study-habits & practice strategies, and personal responsibility toward time management and goal-setting.

Foundations in Music Theory

Prerequisite: Theory Placement Exams

Grade Level: 9-12

This course focuses on the development of foundational music literacy skills. Students learn how to read Western musical notation, interpret and accurately use music terminology, and aurally discern meter, pitch, intervals, and basic harmonic progressions. Topics includes basic pitch and rhythmic note values, Treble & Bass clefs, semi-tones & whole-tones, Tetrachords, Key Signatures, Major Scale construction, basic form, Simple & Compound Meter, Time Signatures, & musical score markings (terminology for dynamics, articulation, form, & tempo). Students engage in sight-reading, notation, listening, discussion, and analysis exercises. Through this coursework students develop fluency with the identification, analysis, and application of basic musical signs, symbols, processes, and concepts which supports the development of independent musicianship skills applicable to performance, composition, and listening experiences.

Students may place out of this pre-requisite class through successful completion of the Theory Placement Exam, administered to all in-coming students.



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Tonal Harmony

Prerequisite: Theory Placement Exams

Grade Level: 9-12

In this course students deepen their understanding of the elements of music (pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, meter, form, texture, and timbre) and how they are used, juxtaposed, and manipulated to compose and perform music of diverse styles and genres. Students develop greater fluency with basic theoretical concepts through the identification, analysis, and application of these concepts in creative and performance exercises. Specific topics include major and minor keys, scales, meter, intervals, triads and seventh chords, chord inversions, modes, cadences, form, transposition, and texture. Class activities include regular ear training and sight-reading exercises, listening lessons, discussion, and analysis.

Advanced Musicianship

Prerequisite: Foundations & Tonal Harmony (or placement out of these through the Theory Placement Exam)

Grade Level: 9-12

This course is designed to strengthen students' ability to create, perform, and respond to music with understanding through the development of sight-reading and aural skills. Daily exercises include improvisation, sight reading (melody & rhythm), aural identification of intervals & chords, the notation of melodic and rhythmic patterns & phrases, aural analysis of harmonic progressions, phrase structure, and form, and composition exercises to develop fluency with musical processes (for example, sequencing, theme & variation, inversion, retrograde). Students will learn to interpret a score with understanding of phrase structure, cadence points, harmonic relationships, and motivic devices, and consider how these inform performance.



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Advanced Placement Music Theory (AP)

Prerequisite: Foundations & Tonal Harmony (or placement out of these through the Theory Placement Exam)

Grade Level: 9-12

AP Music Theory introduces students to voice-leading, four-part chorale style writing, and harmonic practices in Western music of the Common Practice Period. Topics include seventh chords, cadences, melodic phrase structure, first species two-voice counterpoint, and figured bass analysis. Students will delve into the principles of voice leading in four-part chorale texture, dissecting the art of linear structure and development. This will include approaching and resolving dissonance, non-chord tones, and the treatment of seventh chords, as well as melodic and rhythmic figuration. More advanced topics in harmony will include applied dominants and leading-tone seventh chords, tonicization and modulation, as well as mode mixture, Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords. Regular ear training will be stressed; students are expected to aurally identify and internalize concepts covered in class through keyboard exercises, sight singing, and complex dictations.

Listening in Cultural Context

Prerequisite: Foundations & Tonal Harmony (or placement out of these through the Theory Placement Exam)

Grade Level: 9-12

In this course students consider music through its societal context, across culture and historical time period. Focusing on one of four specific intersections between music and society the course will introduce music of various styles & genres and ask students to analyze, discuss, and explore essential questions about music and its role in the human experience (There are four one-semester topics which comprise a 2-year sequence of classes; music & politics, music & spirituality, music & movement, and music for the stage/screen). Students will consider music's ability to entertain, soothe, energize, upset, explore, and challenge people and ideas. Class activities include listening, viewing, reading, and discussion. *Topics: Music & Politics; Music & Spirituality; Music and Movement; Music for the Stage & Screen*



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Composition

Prerequisite: None

Grade: 9-12

In this course students build basic compositional skills with the aim of discovering their individual compositional voices. Students learn about fundamental musical parameters—the basic building blocks of any composition—and how to manipulate these parameters to create engaging musical ideas. Through the study and in-class discussion of musical works across a variety of genres and time periods, students discern musical and conceptual innovations that they may incorporate into their own pieces. Students frequently use class time as a workshop, where they work on new compositions individually in a safe, supportive, and creative space. Specific topics covered in this course include motive, melody, texture, extra-musical associations, modes and scales, and basic formal devices. Coursework includes daily improvisation, short composition exercises, longer projects, musical analysis, class discussions, and the rehearsal and performance of student compositions. The class is designed to serve as a forum for students to practice discussing and critiquing their own work and the work of their colleagues, placing an emphasis on developing the linguistic skills necessary to talk about music at a sophisticated level.

Audio Production

Prerequisite: None

Grade: 9-12

This course introduces students to the basics of electronic sound design, recording, and editing using DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) software Garage Band & Logic Pro. Through listening lessons, experimentation, analysis, and discussion students consider the elements of sound and how they can be manipulated through the use of technology. Students develop fluency with MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) technology through tutorials and creative projects, gaining hands-on experience in audio sampling, recording, editing, and mixing. Students will use piano keyboards to input MIDI information, create virtual instruments in a DAW, create electronic tracks with looping and audio samples, record live performances, learn to mix and edit, and learn to operate a control room.



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Acting

Prerequisite: None

Grade: 9-12

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of acting. Students develop skills which strengthen a performer's presence, poise, and ability to communicate through voice, gesture, and movement. Skills include body awareness and spatial relationships, characterization and relationship development, interpreting text, translating words into action, and developing the use of the voice. Students will engage in physical and vocal warm-ups, theatre games, exercises, and improvisations. Class projects include the study, analysis, and performance of monologues and scenes. Through this work students develop a deep knowledge of self, as well as ensemble, analytical, and communication skills which transfer to roles in theatre, music, musical theatre, and public speaking.

Jazz Improvisation/Jazz Composition

Prerequisite: Foundations & Tonal Harmony

Grade: 9-12

In this course students engage in regular improvisation exercises to develop aural, improvisation, and ensemble skills. Rooted in the jazz tradition, students begin with an intensive study of the blues to develop a firm grasp of the form, function, and history of the genre. Moving beyond this students develop familiarity with a series of jazz standards which they study and perform as a class ensemble in both informal (classroom & jam sessions) and formal settings (recitals and gigs). This work is extended through composition exercises designed to explore and deconstruct the melodic and harmonic language of jazz styles and forms. Through listening, performance, analysis, & discussion students develop their creative voice, rooted in an understanding of style and function. Composition project phases include: composition and harmonization of melody; notation of rhythm section parts; creation of solo choruses, background parts; score and part extraction; rehearsal and performance.



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Percussion Ensemble

Prerequisite: None

Grade: 9-12

This performance-based ensemble class introduces students to a wide variety of percussion instruments and provides training in instrument-specific techniques, including drum set, djembe, marimba, vibraphone, timpani, bongo, conga, and various auxiliary percussion instruments. Students develop rhythm, reading, and ensemble skills through the study, rehearsal, and performance of percussion ensemble repertoire. Students engage in daily exercises to identify rhythmic note names, understand the duration of notes, identify rhythmic patterns by sight and sound, and perform rhythms, culminating in the study and performance of percussion ensemble pieces.

Live Audio-Visual Coding & Synthesis

Prerequisite: None

Grade: 9-12

In this course students develop computer programming skills through open-source, collaborative musical coding platforms Sonic Pi & Estuary. Students learn how to read and write in code to indicate the pitch, duration, timbre, and volume of sound so that they can use computers as instruments and engage in individual and collaborative musical performances. Performances include pre-determined structural components (key area, meter, atmosphere) as well as improvised, collaborative interaction. Other programs are introduced throughout the year, including Hydra and Punctual to add visual components of performance.