

Macalester College Music Department Honors Projects in Music

While the Honors program at Macalester College is administered in general from the office of Academic Programs (<http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/>), each department tends to conceptualize and administer its own version of the Honors Project differently. This document provides basic information about Honors Projects undertaken in the Music Department. It is not meant to serve as a substitute for regular consultation with Music Department faculty, who serve as advisers and committee members for projects. It also does not contain the various stages and deadlines outlined in the documentation from the Academic Programs office, which have mainly to do with the final stages of projects and required paperwork for departments and advisors.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible to complete an Honors Project, you must have a 3.5 or higher GPA in the courses that will count towards your Music major, and an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher.

Students wishing to be considered for an Honors Project to be completed in their senior year must submit a 1-2 page proposal for the project, to be due at the end of the second (spring) semester of their junior year (usually the Monday after Commencement weekend). This assumes that the student has consulted about the project at least once during their junior year with a member of the tenure-track Music faculty who would be a likely adviser. Proposals should state the intended result of the project, describe its procedures and methodology, state a working thesis or line of argumentation, provide a preliminary bibliography, summarize completed coursework that is relevant to the project, provide a timeline for completion, and identify a potential faculty adviser. The Music Department faculty will circulate and discuss the proposals, at which time any projects moving forward will be assigned a formal adviser, who will then make arrangements to meet (or communicate electronically with) the student to discuss first steps.

FORMAT

Honors Projects in the Music Department may take several forms:

1. An academic paper on an ethno/musicological and/or music-theoretical subject. Academic Honors Theses are typically around 100 pages in length and consist of several chapters, often including a substantial literature review. (This sort of project in Music is comparable to similar projects in the humanities, such as English, History, and languages.)
2. A recital focused around a particular theme, composer, or genre, comprising music that is *not* going to be performed on your senior capstone recital. Honors

Recitals are typically around an hour in length, though this can vary, and students should consult in depth with their project adviser on appropriate repertoire. (Again, Honors recitals are completely independent of the senior capstone recital; repertoire may not be duplicated.)

3. A lecture-recital that combines elements of nos. 1 and 2 above. In such cases, the written component may be significantly shorter (ranging from 30-50 pages), and the lecture-recital may also range from a half-hour to an hour in length. Students interested in this option should consult with a Music faculty member about the nature of a formal lecture-recital; rather than conceiving of this option as “half a recital plus half a paper,” students should be aware that the lecture-recital is an entity of its own, often one required for various graduate music degrees.

4. A musical composition project that results in a piece of music of approximately 10-15 minutes in length. Previous honors compositions have taken the form of pieces for Music Department ensembles (such as Mac Jazz Band and Macalester Concert Choir) or smaller performing forces, such as voice and chamber ensemble. Again, consultation with composition faculty is essential from the start in envisioning an appropriate composition project.

Honors Projects completed in past years are available on the Digital Commons via the Macalester Library website (<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/>). Prospective honors students are advised to take a look at past projects (in the Music Department as well as in other comparable departments, if relevant) in preparing proposals and in finalizing their own projects for submission to the Digital Commons.

PROCESS

It is expected that students approved to undertake an honors project (after submission of a proposal after their junior year) will spend the summer before their senior year working on some aspect of the project -- studying scores, learning music, reading, refining the topic. Some contact during the summer with the project's faculty adviser is advisable. Work becomes more focused during the fall semester of the senior year, and students and advisers should meet early in the semester to set deadlines for the project's various stages. Many students use the January break to do the bulk of their most focused writing and/or rehearsing, and in general we advise a deadline for a complete draft of the project (or, in the case of a performance, a solid run-through of all repertoire) around February 1 of the senior year. The majority of spring semester should be spent revising and refining the project, and *not* writing a first draft or rehearsing for the first time. It is expected that projects will develop substantively (and not only superficially or editorially) during the spring semester, and that the final version will represent a deepening and refining of the initial draft. This applies to academic papers, compositions, and performances equally; music must be learned and rehearsed at least to a workable level by the beginning of spring semester if a final performance is meant to represent an Honors-level achievement. The College Honors Program asks the Department Chair for a list of students who are likely to complete projects, and who are approved by the Department to continue. Students who fall behind on the internal deadlines set by

their advisers run the risk of having their projects called off by the department.

Each Honors Project will have a committee made up of three people: one formal academic adviser from the Macalester Music Department, one additional Macalester music faculty member, and one person from outside Macalester (another college, an area arts organization, etc.). These committees will be formed in the fall semester, with input from students and advisers. The project adviser will regularly review its progress throughout the year; the other two committee members are expected to read and comment substantially upon the completed draft early in spring semester, providing feedback to be used during the revision stage.

COMPLETION

Final Honors Projects must be presented publicly, either alone or in pairs/groups, depending on the number of projects in a given year. The nature of the public performance will vary according to the type of project (as described above). Immediately following the presentation, the student and committee will meet privately for a defense of the project, which will entail a question-and-answer session with each reader providing feedback on the project.

Once the project has been presented and successfully defended, students are required by the College to submit a final clean version for publication on the Macalester Library's Digital Commons. Details on this aspect of the project will come from the Academic Programs Office.