

Music Theory and Cognition PhD at Northwestern FAQ

1. I know what music theory is, but what is music cognition? Music cognition is the research field which studies the mental processes which underlie musical activities such as listening and comprehending, performing, and composing. Some researchers in the field are basically music theorists, most are experimental psychologists, some are neuroscientists, and a few are ethnomusicologists, music educators, music therapists, or physicians.

2. What would I study and learn in the program? NU's PhD program is rooted in the discipline of music theory. Students matriculating into our PhD program will receive thorough training in analysis of musical structure, systematic and historical aspects of music theory, and psychological aspects of musical structure. The areas of research in the program deal with style analysis in historically informed ways, expressive performance in music, psychological nature of musical styles and structure, and the psychophysiology of musical experience. The curriculum is shown below. There is a three-course cognate requirement, to be taken in a related department outside of music; typical departments to choose are linguistics, communication sciences and disorders (auditory neuroscience), psychology, and anthropology. Music cognition has a strong empirical dimension; most of the students run experiments or do field work, and we expect that students will learn the appropriate methods for their own research interests.

PhD in Music Theory and Cognition (27 units required)

5 units: Methods in Music Theory

321 Analytic Techniques

355 Atonal Analysis

316 16th-Century Counterpoint

318 18th-Century Counterpoint

405 Introduction to Research in Music Theory and Cognition

5 units: History and Literature of Theory and Cognition

420 Current Readings in Music Theory and Cognition(3x)

415-1 History of Music Theory

415-2 History of Music Cognition

3 units: Analytic Studies

331, 422, 335, 435

3 units: Music Cognition

351 Music Cognition

451 Topics in Music Cognition (2x)

3 units: Cognate outside the School of Music

8 units: Electives

3. Who are the faculty, graduate students, and others I'd be working with? The core faculty are those in the program in music theory and cognition. The current research faculty are Richard Ashley and Robert Gjerdingen. We have two faculty vacancies at this time and are proposing to hire two faculty in music theory to fill these vacancies. In these hires we intend to flesh out both music cognition and music theory, and strengthen our program's stance in the discipline of music theory. Other faculty in the School of Music who are fellow-travellers with

music cognition are Carlos Abril and Peter Webster (music education), Inna Naroditskaya (ethnomusicology), and Linda Austern and Tom Bauman (musicology).

Faculty from other departments with whom our students frequently work include Bryan Pardo (computer science); Ann Bradlow, Matt Goldrick, and Janet Pierrehumbert (linguistics); Nina Kraus, Patrick Wong, and Beverly Wright (communication sciences and disorders/auditory neuroscience); and Andrew Ortony, Kenneth Paller and Satoru Suzuki (psychology).

We admit one or two PhD students per year. Each student receives five years of full funding (tuition and stipend). Our current group of in-house PhD students are Ben Anderson; Ives Chor; Caroline Davis; Ben Duane; Ji Chul Kim; Jung Nyo Kim (the two Kims are husband and wife); Kyung Myun Lee; ; and Dana Strait. Joining us in Fall of 2008 are Karen Chan and Matt Gilmore. This is an outstanding and mutually supportive group.

4. Why focus on the PhD and not the Master's? Our opinion is that a Master's degree is basically just a stepping stone to the PhD. The MM degree by itself in academic areas (except for music education) has no "street value," in that you can't really get a job with just the MM. So, we've opted for the PhD as our focus.

5. What will I do with a PhD when I'm done? Usually a PhD in music leads to a career as a teacher in a college or university music department. If you see yourself as wanting to get a job in a psychology or neuroscience department, then a PhD in music won't help; you should get your degree inside the appropriate "guild," as it were. More and more theory jobs are listing cognition as a potential area of research emphasis, and our graduates will be strong contenders thereby.

6. What's the placement record of your graduates? Since the cognitive emphasis of this program is still pretty new, we can't tell you much about placement. Stacey Davis (PhD 2003) is Associate Professor at University of Texas-San Antonio, where she directs the Institute for Music Research. Janet Joichi (PhD 2006) is in San Luis Obispo, California, due to her husband's job there, and is teaching piano privately.

7. What should I do to prepare? You should have as strong an undergraduate background in music theory, music history, and music performance as possible. At least a semester of statistics--a year if you can get it--and an introductory course in experimental methods is advisable as well. Most of our accepted students have more like double majors or even two degrees, and many have publications or conference presentations on their record before they apply.

You apply online, via The Graduate School at Northwestern; you need transcripts, letters of reference, the general GRE (not the music test, though), TOEFL if appropriate, and research papers.

There is an enormous literature in music theory, too large to reference here. You should definitely be reading the **Journal of Music Theory** and **Music Theory Spectrum**, and should become a member of the Society for Music Theory if you are not a member already. There is also burgeoning literature in music cognition that you can read as you prepare. Typically, we would recommend:

John Sloboda, **The Musical Mind** (probably still the best introduction to the field)

(if you want, you can email William Forde Thompson at U. Toronto or Annabel Cohen at U. Price Edward Island, both of whom are writing textbooks in music cognition which are mostly complete but not yet published--they may be willing to share their drafts with you)

Leonard Meyer, **Emotion and Meaning in Music** (a classic from 1956)

Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, **A Generative Theory of Tonal Music** (long, hard, important)

Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook, **Empirical Musicology** (current overview of goals and methods)

Isabelle Peretz and Robert Zatorre, **Cognitive Neuroscience of Music** (excellent, detailed intro)

Patrik Juslin and John Sloboda, **Music and Emotion** (a collection of readings on the topic)

Diana Deutsch, **The Psychology of Music**, 2nd ed. (another collection, somewhat uneven in scope)

There are many journals in which music cognition people publish; the specialized ones that are easy to get are **Music Perception** (USA) and **Psychology of Music** (UK). The music cognition pages at <http://music-cog.ohio-state.edu/Resources/> are now quite out of date but have some good information on them.