

## **Thesis Proposal Guidelines (PhD in Composition)**

### **Purpose of the Thesis Proposal for the PhD in Music (Composition)**

The purpose of a thesis proposal is to demonstrate: 1) that you have identified a significant compositional project; and 2) that you have sufficient background to equip you to complete the project. Your proposal should persuade your readers of two things:

- The composition that you propose to complete is substantial and significant, and that it will make an original artistic contribution to the field.
- You have described your methodology and theoretical framework in sufficient detail that your committee can tell what you plan to do and can judge whether the resulting composition and written discussion are expected to meet the standards of a doctoral degree.

Remember that the purpose of the proposal is to persuade your committee that you are ready to embark on the thesis. You are not expected to know exactly what you will produce or discover. It is almost inevitable that there will be changes in your research design as the project evolves. The proposal is a stepping-stone on the path to completion.

Discuss with your supervisor the relationship between the proposal and the final thesis and a timeline for completing the thesis by the appropriate deadline.

### **Format and Length of a Thesis Proposal**

The thesis proposal for the PhD in Music (Composition) should consist of an essay in which you include:

- A discussion of the background to and inspiration behind the composition
- A list of the instrumental forces required
- An organizational plan for the composition, including its duration
- An explanation of the theoretical approach to elements such as pitch, rhythm, and form
- Musical examples that elaborate on aspects of the pitch or rhythmic organization, possibly excerpts from the work in progress
- References to musical works by other composers who have influenced or shaped your plans for the thesis composition
- A discussion of the content of the Discussion Document
- A bibliography

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Your proposal should be as succinct as possible while satisfying the requirements above. In most cases, the proposal need be no longer than about 20-25 double-spaced pages.

There is no set pattern for a PhD in Music (Composition) Thesis Proposal. The structure, style, content, and length will appropriately vary depending on the background to the composition and its complexity. Discuss with your supervisor the question of appropriate format for your proposal.