MUS 439 Composition

Course Description:

Open only to students demonstrating sufficient aptitude and capacity for original work. May be repeated.

Course Work and Requirements:

MUS 439 provides individualized composition lessons for students ready to do sustained, original compositional work. In most cases, the student should have taken at least semester year of MUS 339 (Beginning Composition), the permission of the MUS 439 instructor, and a approval of a composition portfolio by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

You should plan to have 14 lessons this semester. If there is a conflict with your lesson time, we need to arrange another time to meet. This implies a certain steadiness in your composition work habits, which is a good thing to cultivate – and will be our first order of business.

Our main discussion will be, of course, about the music you are writing. I am not interested in promoting a particular style, but am interested in getting you to more perfectly realize what you wish to do. I will insist that you really “hear” what you are writing. I will also push you to expand the boundaries of what you are comfortable doing: good art is rarely accomplished from a position of comfort.

These discussions can wander pretty far afield, and that is OK – creative work is a complex activity which involves the whole person. We will undoubtedly also talk about:

1. Composition work habits
2. Notation and clarity
3. Getting performances
4. Composer’s obligations to performers and the audience
5. Professional development
6. Career paths
7. The meaning of “success” for a composer
8. The composer and society
9. “Art” and “Popular” music
10. Artist Entrepreneurship

You will be expected to work diligently on composition. In general, you should plan to complete one medium-sized work, or a good fraction of a larger work, as a minimum in the semester.

There are no texts per se for the course. However, you should purchase one of the following:

1. A professional notation program
2. A standard text regarding music copying. The first one to own is Gardner Reed’s *Musical Notation*. Past that, I have further suggestions, depending on your interests.
Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, student should:
- Refined their “inner ear”—their ability to hear the music they are writing
- Developed consistent writing habits
- Refined their ability put their ideas into accurately and expressive professional music notation
- Made progress towards developing an individual compositional voice

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, student should have:
- Refined their “inner ear”—their ability to hear the music they are writing
- Developed consistent writing habits
- Refined their ability put their ideas into accurate and expressive music notation
- Made progress towards developing an individual compositional voice as demonstrated by an original musical work, or a substantial portion of thereof.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS) STATEMENT
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.