Syllabus for Organ Lessons

MU310 - Fall 2007

Instructor: Lou Carol Fix
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Course description: Private organ lessons. Curriculum will be determined for each student individually based on their previous experience and current ability. Most students study a variety of repertoire from different historical eras (pre-Bach early Baroque to Contemporary 21st century music) and different styles (North and Central German early Baroque, French Classical, Italian Baroque, Bach and his contemporaries, 18th-century English voluntaries, 19th-century German, French and Belgian repertoire, 20th-century German Neo-Baroque, French Romantic and contemporary American organ music). Lessons also include instruction in hymn playing, improvisation, pedal technique, accompanying and conducting from the console.

Texts: L. Nilson, Pedal Technique (Schirmer: 1904), a hymnal from a mainline denomination. Specific organ music to be determined at first lesson.

Lesson policy: Each student receives 13 lessons (12 for majors - the final jury is the 13th lesson) during the school term, with each lesson lasting 45 minutes. Please be on time for your lesson and ready to play, with organ shoes on. Habitual lateness will lower your grade, as will unexcused absences. If you arrive early and the organ studio is unoccupied, feel free to warm up on the instrument before your lesson. The organ in Room 227 is also available for practice before a lesson or any other time. If you must miss a lesson kindly give 24 hours notice for an excused absence. You may call me on my cell phone or leave a message with the music secretary 610.861-1650. Any lesson that I must cancel will be rescheduled for later in the term. For commuter students who miss lessons due to bad weather, these lessons will be made up if the National Weather Service has issued a Winter Storm Warning, Heavy Snow Warning, or Traveler's Advisory.

Grading: Your grade will be based primarily on how well prepared you come to each lesson and how well you have applied the instruction of previous lessons to new musical problems. Students will be graded weekly on a rubrics sheet which they will sign each time. You are also expected to perform for each of the three Master Classes scheduled during the term. Organ majors in their second term (or later) of instruction with me must perform once in Performance Class on Tuesday mornings at 11:30am. This performance must include at least three minutes of musical material. All organ majors must also play a jury during Final Exam week, and their performance will include 1-2 selections from a variety of styles and composers, not to exceed 8 minutes in length.

Attendance: 25% (3 late arrivals reduces this part by 1/3 letter grade; each unexcused absence also reduces this part by 1/3 letter grade)
Performance in three master classes: 15%
Lesson preparation: 40% (60% for non-majors)
Performance in Performance class and final Jury: 20%

Organ Master Class: In order to expand your knowledge of organ literature and provide you with necessary performing experience, three organ master classes have been scheduled this term for October 4, November 8 and December 6, all on Wednesday evenings at 7:00pm in the Organ Studio or at a church with a larger instrument. Every student studying organ must play a selection at each class. You may include previously learned pieces, pedal scales, hymns, new pieces, etc. The purpose is to gain confidence and experience while performing at the organ and to hear and listen to music other students are working on. These classes also have the added benefit of building a certain "esprit du corps" among all the organ students.

Practicing: Students should spend the majority of their practice time on the Hartman-Beaty tracker organ in the Organ Studio next to the Music Library. This instrument offers the most sensitive response and full-bodied sound for your performance. An electro-pneumatic Moller organ is also available for practice in Room 227, and various electronic organs with full pedalboard are located on the first floor of the Music building. Sign up sheets for practice time will be posted outside the Organ Studio and students should reserve time on the organs as soon as possible. Recommended daily practice time for students includes the following: Organ Performance major: 3-4 hours; Music Education major with Organ as the primary instrument: 2-3 hours; B.A. degree with Music major and organ as the primary instrument, 2 hours; all degrees with organ as the secondary instrument, 1-2 hours.

All organ students are strongly encouraged to secure a part-time job playing the organ at a local church to gain experience in performing and accompanying.