

Music Major (BA)

A Bachelor of Arts degree (120 credits) consists of [Core Curriculum](#) (30 credits) and at least one [major](#) (36–60 credits), as well as [minors](#) and/or elective courses of the student's choosing.

In this 36-credit major, students are free to make the music that is most meaningful to them, without restrictions on genre or style. The program is focused on creativity and the creative process, developed through the practice of improvisation—making music in the moment—and the craft of composition, recording, and innovative uses of music technology.

Students develop their musical knowledge during three semesters of musicianship courses, including training in theory, sight-singing, and aural and rhythmic acuity. Each semester, Music students connect as a community in the Music Program Retreat, exploring the relationship between contemplative practice and music; this includes one-on-one meetings between students and faculty to clarify student goals and development. Performance skills are fostered through private music lessons, ensembles, and public and private concerts offered throughout the academic year. To further deepen their musical understanding, students explore multicultural perspectives on music-making, music history, and audio recording and production.

Departmental Policies

Students can declare their major at any time and are invited to join the Music Program Retreat in the semester of their declaration. While students engage in private music lessons, they must perform in at least one Works in Progress Concert or Final Music Concert, as stated in the syllabus. Recommended foundational courses include MUS140 and MUS230.

Capstone

As the culminating graduation requirement of the BA degree, students design and execute a Senior Project in their final semester. This is a performance, recording, or other creative project that incorporates vital elements of musicianship and creativity acquired in their training at Naropa. Students develop marketing strategies and publicity materials for the presentation of their work.

Special Opportunities

In addition to regular music program events and recording opportunities, students are encouraged to collaborate with other disciplines at Naropa: dance, theater, visual art, writing, film, etc. In addition, an Independent Study may be designed to support specific projects, collaborations, or particular areas of musical study.

Music Major Requirements

Required Courses

Gateway

- MUS200 [Musicianship I: Musical Beginnings](#) (3)

- MUS250 [Music Cultures of the World](#) (3)

Community Retreat

Take four times for 2 credits

- MUS248 [Music Program Retreat](#) (0.5)

Milestone

- MUS210 [Musicianship II: The Practice of Notation](#) (3)
- MUS360 [Musicianship III: The Art of the Chart](#) (3)
- MUS397 [Private Music Lessons](#) (4)

Music Technology

Choose 3 credits

- MUS275 [Producing Music with Ableton Live](#) (3)
- MUS280 [Technical Skills for Contemporary Creativity](#) (3)

Music in Context

Choose 3 credits

- MUS263 [History of Rock n' Roll](#) (3)
- MUS260 [Listening to Jazz](#) (3)

Advanced Skills

Choose 3 credits

- MUS230 [Improvisation](#) (3)
- MUS380 [Advanced Audio Recording and Production](#) (3)
- MUS490 [Special Topics in Music](#) (3)

Choose 3 credits

- MUS370 [Musicianship IV: Arranging and Orchestrating](#) (3)
- MUS400 [Composition](#) (3)

Ensembles and Performance

Choose 3 Credits

- MUS215 [Rhythm Hemispheres: World Percussion Traditions](#) (3)
- MUS270 [Naropa Ensemble](#) (3)
- TRA114 [Indian Devotional and Raga Singing](#) (3)

Capstone

- MUS485 [Senior Project](#) (3)

Total Credits: 36

Additional Recommended Music Electives

- COL450 [Internship](#) (3)
- MUS140 [Keyboard Studio](#) (3)
- MUS150 [Solo Singing in Style](#) (3)
- MUS499 [Independent Study: Music](#) (0.5–4.0)

Music Course Listings (MUS)

MUS140

Keyboard Studio (3.0)

This course teaches basic piano skills to the aspiring singer, pianist, keyboardist, or music producer in a class setting. During class time, each student is provided with their own keyboard and headphones; students are expected to practice outside of class using Naropa's practice rooms. Students learn chords, keys, riffs, and improvisational techniques specific to modern genres: pop; rock; jazz; soul; Latin; and so forth. In turn, students learn to read basic piano music and how to play from chord charts and "fake" books. Throughout the course, MIDI is utilized to record tracks to the computer for both music production and notational purposes. By the end of the course, students will know how to play in a variety of basic musical genres and how to use the keyboard to create music with a computer.

MUS150

Solo Singing in Style (3.0)

Students explore voice technique through specific musical styles and the voice qualities attributed to them. The semester breaks into seven units organized by genre: folk; jazz; pop/rock; R&B/blues; theater; opera; and student's choice. Students pick literature for each style and prepare a performance every two weeks. The class is focused on group learning, with private coaching available throughout the semester. Using voice and body awareness exercises, students learn to breathe and move freely, locate and master the use of specific vocal tract structures, and perform with confidence and clarity of expression. By the end of the class, students will know how to care for their voices, how to use their voices expressively in multiple styles, and how to discover their own authentic vocal instrument.

MUS160

Creative Music Workshop (2.0)

Creative Music Workshop is a nine-day intensive that places non-stylistic improvisation at the center of musical learning. Students discover their confidence, discernment, and wakefulness through classes in creative process, ensemble, like instruments, meditation, and body-mind practices. Throughout the intensive, students and faculty present public concerts featuring "spontaneous compositions" and works devised during the workshop. To satisfy the Artistic Process Core Area Requirement, this course must be taken for a letter grade. Upon request, this course can be taken for a pass/fail grade.

MUS200

Musicianship I: Musical Beginnings (3.0)

An introduction to the creative path of the musician. Students sharpen their perception of pitch and rhythm, expand their understanding of music theory (including its limitations), and explore awareness practice as the foundation of musical creativity. Open to beginners and others interested in brushing up on basic skills while deepening their creative agency.

MUS208

Naropa Chorus (3.0)

In an atmosphere of discovery and experimentation, students explore the fundamental human experience of singing in a group. The class will determine what music to perform, generating arrangements and pieces through collaboration and improvisation. In addition, music from different periods of history and vocal styles will be introduced. Naropa Chorus has an emphasis on the deep listening of one's intuition and expressing it through the voice in the greater context of a group; we will pay close attention to what is going on both internally and externally and respond to both. Participants must be able to carry a tune. The ability to read music is helpful, but not essential.

MUS210

Musicianship II: The Practice of Notation (3.0)

The discipline and practice of Western music notation. Through games, exercises, improvisation, and composition, students develop sight-reading, aural skills, and an understanding of the basic principles of music theory. Topics include intervals, key signatures, major and minor scales, triads, and simple and compound meter. Prerequisite: MUS200 or equivalent.

MUS215

Rhythm Hemispheres: World Percussion Traditions (3.0)

Introduction to a wide scope of musical traditions as embodied in the study of percussion. The course covers world percussive traditions, including African, Asian, Indian, South American, North American, and European traditions from a variety of periods of music history. Different traditions and periods are covered from year to year. The ability to read music is helpful, but not essential.

MUS230

Improvisation (3.0)

Improvisation is the disciplined practice of awareness, precision, and generosity. Through open playing, exercises, and simple composition, students explore various means of individual and group creativity. In this class, we learn by doing!

MUS245

The Evolution of Western Music (3.0)

A media-rich course that traces the evolution of contemporary Western music. Beginning with current trends, we reach into two thousand years of history, uncovering Western music's roots and the cultural and historical contexts in which it evolved. The first half of the semester focuses on the divergent musical landscape of the twenty-first and twentieth centuries and the co-development of the recording industry, while the second half begins in the Romantic period and digs down to the Renaissance and Middle Ages, predominantly covering Europe's "classical" tradition and some discussion of its "folk" traditions. Special attention is paid to focused listening. By the end of the course, students have a deep understanding of the reasons why Western music sounds as it does today.

MUS248

Music Program Retreat (0.5)

The Music Program Retreat is a one-day gathering of Music majors, minors, and faculty in the Music suite of Nalanda. Occurring every semester, majors must attend the retreat at least four times during their program. The retreat acts as an orientation for new students and a "check-in" for ongoing majors. Throughout the day, we explore the connections between mindfulness, music, and community through sitting practice, solo performance, group collaboration, and improvisation. Students and faculty discuss the business of music as well as best practices for the equipment and rooms in the Music suite. Finally, students are provided with the skills necessary to set realistic goals and intentions for their musical journey, through several one-on-one meetings with faculty. Open to Music majors and minors only.

MUS250

Music Cultures of the World (3.0)

An introduction to the sound of the world through the music of many cultures. Students gain a basic understanding of ethnomusicology, and an appreciation of the wisdom and beauty of music from a multicultural perspective. This includes a comparative introduction to basic musical principles including rhythm, melody, harmony, and instrumentation from different cultures and traditions. We explore multifaceted contexts for music: work and play, ceremony and ritual. This course offers students insight into our human heritage through a broad overview of human music-making. Open to all students.

MUS260

Listening to Jazz (3.0)

Open to all students, this class examines the multifaceted traditions of jazz, arguably the most significant musical development of the twentieth century. Through readings and by listening to recorded examples and to live music, students explore the cultural and artistic elements of this richly expressive musical form.

MUS263

History of Rock n' Roll (3.0)

This course explores the earliest origins of Rock n' Roll: the places, people, and politics that gave rise to the tide that brought dynamic changes to the cultural fabric of the United States beyond anything previously imagined. We will explore the basic meanings of "Rock" and "Roll" and the necessities that drive this music forward. We will hear from the people who created it, played it, stole it, sold it, owned it, and dominated it. We will investigate the context in which Rock n' Roll was born and flourished, the ways it has moved forward into the twenty-first century, and the changes it has wrought in our everyday lives.

MUS270

Naropa Ensemble (3.0)

The Naropa Ensemble is the Music program's core ensemble, performing at concerts and events throughout the semester. At the beginning of the course, faculty and students determine repertoire to broaden ensemble members' musical interests and further develop their instrumental skills. Students engage with rehearsal technique,

sight-reading, improvisation, and "part" creation specific to their instrument. Prerequisite: MUS210. Others considered by audition.

MUS275

Producing Music with Ableton Live (3.0)

Using Ableton Live's audio and MIDI sequencing software, students learn the basics of musical production for the studio and live performance. Through the software's intuitive design, students explore digital synthesis, sampling, sequencing, beat-matching, MIDI recording and editing, and an extensive array of audio effects: compression; limiting; distortion; EQ; reverb; delay; etc. In turn, students learn to recognize and utilize the production and compositional techniques used in the musical styles of their choosing. By the end of the course, students will have a broad range of understanding and skills applicable to any number of musical worlds: EDM; ambient electronica; R&B; DJ'ing; pop; film scoring; sound design; sound installation; and more.

MUS280

Technical Skills for Contemporary Creativity (3.0)

This course provides students with a baseline of technical knowledge as it applies to the production of creative work on the stage and in the recording studio. Areas of study include audio/video recording, live sound, and stagecraft. Through hands-on experience in Naropa's Recording Studio and event spaces, students explore the weaving together of technology and creativity in service of art-making.

MUS360

Musicianship III: The Art of the Chart (3.0)

Students read, write, and perform musical charts with a special emphasis on sight-reading techniques and improvisation. Topics include seventh chords and cord-extensions, chord progressions, mixed meter, non-harmonic tones, tonicization, and chord/scale theory. Prerequisite: MUS210 or equivalent.

MUS370

Musicianship IV: Arranging and Orchestrating (3.0)

Students create written arrangements for larger ensembles, exploring contemporary uses of instrumentation and reharmonization. Topics include altered extensions, modal borrowing, chord substitution, conducting, large-scale form, polymeter, and score/part preparation. Prerequisite MUS360 or equivalent.

MUS380

Advanced Audio Recording and Production (3.0)

Students explore and experiment with the tools of the recording studio and their role in the creative process. Advanced recording and studio techniques are applied. Particular emphasis is given to the use of signal processing (equalization and effects) and digital editing, and the creative opportunities provided by these technologies. Group and individual projects are the means through which we foster creativity and its evolution. Prerequisite: MUS280.

MUS397

Private Music Lessons (1.0)

Restrictions apply as to who may take Private Music Lessons for credit. See Private Music Lesson Application for further details. Music majors must participate in Works In Progress concerts while taking Private Music Lessons.

MUS400

Composition (3.0)

The content and direction of this course are determined largely by the interests of those enrolled. Alone and together, we explore a variety of unconventional approaches to composition, helping each other diversify as we go. Possible avenues include multitrack recording techniques, alternative intonation systems, and composing for dance, theater, and film. Prerequisite: MUS360.

MUS420

Naropa Composers and Improvisers Orchestra (3.0)

An advanced level of performance ensemble that generates and performs students' original music and interdisciplinary work. The orchestra develops compositions and improvisational structures based on the contemplative principles and awareness practices offered in the Music program, and prepares these pieces for performance at the Works in Progress concert, the Student Arts Concert, and other venues of our choosing. Prerequisite: MUS230 or MUS400. Others considered by audition.

MUS485

Senior Project (3.0)

Senior Project represents the fruition of a student's work at Naropa and affords students the opportunity to successfully demonstrate the learning objectives of the Music program. Students independently design and execute a performance, recording, or other creative project that incorporates vital elements of musicianship and creativity acquired in their training at Naropa. Elements include selecting, arranging, or composing the works to be presented; assembling and rehearsing a performance ensemble; lighting and sound design; publicity and other aspects of performance; recording; and/or scholarship. This course is geared specifically toward offering students an opportunity to present their creative vision and providing students with a benchmark in their development as musicians in the world beyond the university. Open to Music majors only.

MUS490

Special Topics in Music (3.0)

The Special Topics Seminar investigates specific applications of theories and methods of music not offered in other courses. Specific topics are announced the semester this course is offered. The seminar is open to advanced undergraduate students.

MUS499

Independent Study: Music (0.5-4.0)

This course offering is an opportunity for students to engage in in-depth, concentrated study with a particular faculty member for a semester. The design of study and course work are decided

upon by the student and faculty member. Independent Studies will count for a standard 3 credits. If a variable credit (0.5 - 4 credits) Independent Study is desired, a student must receive additional approval. See the Independent Study Application for further details.