Music Major (BA)

A Bachelor of Arts Degree consists of 30 credits of Core Curriculum and at least one Major (36–60 credits), for a total of 120 credits.

In this 40-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 extending to the craft of composition, recording, and innovative uses of music technology.

Students develop their musical knowledge during four 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 Keyboard Studio and Improvisation.

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)
- MUS370 Musicianship IV: Arranging and Orchestrating (3)
- MUS397 Private Music Lessons (8)

Music Technology

Choose 3 credits

- MUS275 Producing Music with Ableton Live (3)
- MUS280 Recording Studio I: Introduction to Music Technology (3)

Music in Context

Choose 3 credits

- MUS245 Evolution of Western Music (3)
- MUS260 Listening to Jazz (3)

Advanced Skills

Choose 3 credits

- MUS230 Improvisation (3)
- MUS380 Recording Studio II: Technology and Creativity (3)
- MUS400 Composition (3)
- MUS490 Special Topics in Music (3)

Ensembles and Performance

Choose 3 credits

- MUS103 Afro-Pop Ensemble (3)
- MUS208 Naropa Chorus (3)
- MUS215 Rhythm Hemispheres: World Percussion Traditions (3)
- MUS225 Balinese Gamelan Orchestra (3)
- MUS265 Jazz Ensemble (3)
- MUS270 Jam Band (3)
- MUS420 Naropa Composers and Improvisers Orchestra (3)
- TRA114 Indian Devotional and Raga Singing (3)

Capstone

- MUS485 Senior Project (3)

Total Credits 40

Additional Recommended Music Electives

- COR450 Internship (3)
- MUS140 Keyboard Studio (3)
- MUS150 Solo Singing in Style (3)
- MUS499 Independent Study: Music (0.5–4.0)
- PAR400 Building a Career in the Arts for the 21st Century (3)
Course Listings

MUS103
Afro Pop Ensemble (3.0)
From Jiti to Jitjive, this ensemble learns and performs contemporary popular music of Africa. Precise rhythms and lively singing are the backbone of the ensemble. All instruments are welcome, and there’s plenty of room for those who don’t play a standard Western instrument. Be prepared to sing!

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.

MUS225
Balinese Gamelan Orchestra (3.0)
This class provides an introduction to the traditional music of Bali using Naropa University’s Gamelan Orchestra. Gamelan is a musical form dominated by percussion instruments similar to the xylophone, as well as drums, gongs, cymbals, Gamelan flutes, and voice. Gamelan is often used to accompany dance, theater, or puppetry. The Gamelan Orchestra appears in concert at the end of each semester. No previous experience is required.

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 diggs 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.

**MUS265**

**Jazz Ensemble (3.0)**

Jazz performance ranges from the complex compositions and arrangements of Duke Ellington to the colorfully expressive “free jazz” of Ornette Coleman. The Naropa Jazz Ensemble explores many aspects of jazz, including improvisation and student composition, with emphasis on the arrangement and rehearsal of music for a performance at the end of the term. Students audition with the instructor on the first day of class.

**MUS270**

**Jam Band (3.0)**

This traditional rock outfit explores charts and arrangements from well-known bands across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While engaging deeply in ensemble dynamics and collaboration, students learn the fundamentals of performing rock, soul, and funk. Though improvisation is inherent to this music, the focus will be on mastering existing literature and song forms, much like a cover band. Instruments and some instrumental skill are required.

**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**

**Recording Studio I: Introduction to Music Technology (3.0)**

In this class we develop an understanding of the basic principles of acoustics and electronics as they pertain to sound transmission and recording. Of particular concern is the hands-on use of microphones, signal and dynamic processors, and multitrack recording equipment both as creative and archival tools. We also gain practical experience through group and individual recording projects that explore the technical differences between analog and digital recording and their respective techniques. Prior recording or music experience, though helpful, is not required.

**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 chord-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  
Recording Studio II: Technology and Creativity (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 (0.5-3.0)  
Private Music Lessons are available for variable credit (0.5-3), based on the number of contact hours per arrangement with the instructor. Restrictions apply as to who may take Private Music Lessons for credit. See Private Music Lesson Application for further details.

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 diversity as we go. Possible avenues include multitrack recording techniques, alternative intonation systems, and composing for dance, theatre, and film. Knowledge of conventional music theory and notation and skill on particular instruments is welcome, but not required.

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 to provide 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. Fall 2017 This course explores the 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 our country beyond anything previously imagined. We will explore the basic meanings of “Rock” and “Roll” and the necessities that drove 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 21st century and the changes it has wrought in our everyday lives.

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.