

Vermont  
College of  
Fine Arts  
MFA in  
Music  
Composition



**Vermont College of Fine Arts** is a national center for education in the arts. Our programs encourage emerging and established artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers and designers to deepen their personal work while contributing to the larger culture.

We are a young college with a long history. VCFA offers low-residency Master of Fine Arts programs in music composition, writing, writing for children & young adults, visual art, film and graphic design. We take our cue from John Dewey—a distinguished Vermonter—who believed that all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning.



# MFA

in **MUSIC COMPOSITION**

RICK BAITZ

*music composition*

*faculty chair*

VCFA's Music Composition program is unique in that it incorporates the gamut of music-creating—continuing the ever-evolving

tradition of concert music while offering rigorous mentorship in music for media, jazz, songwriting and electronic music. I teach at VCFA because it is a program conceived after my own heart: I totally share its values of creative diversity, individuality and personal connection.



*The model has been remarkably consistent because it really works.*

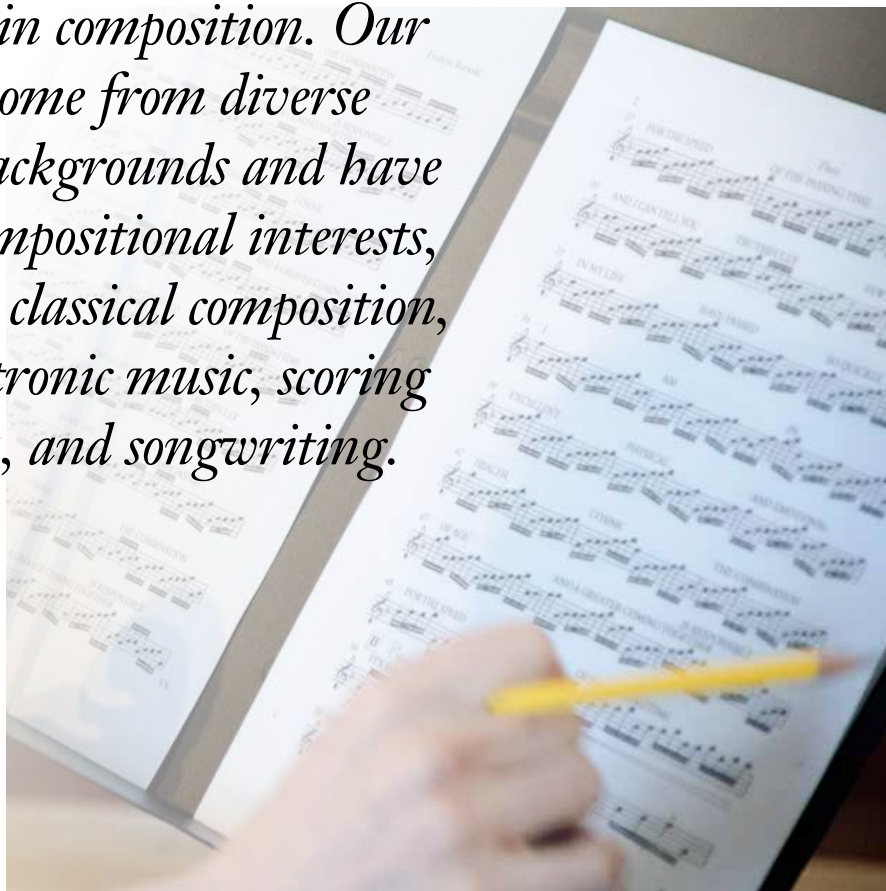
Every semester, each student is paired with a faculty advisor. Together, they build the student's plan of study, a plan designed to fulfill the unique interests of the student. During the semester, the student works closely with the faculty advisor communicating regularly using means of their choosing, producing a body of work for review and critique at the next on-campus residency in Montpelier.

VCFA's model makes it possible for students to earn the MFA without leaving current jobs or uprooting families. With two residencies a year and monthly faculty conferences with deadlines for creative work, students earn the degree in four semesters.

# the program



*The MFA in Music Composition at VCFA is the nation's first low-residency program in composition. Our students come from diverse stylistic backgrounds and have varied compositional interests, including classical composition, jazz, electronic music, scoring for media, and songwriting.*



Vermont College of Fine Arts offers musicians a chance to define their own creative paths, while growing more vital as artists and composers. Our MFA in Music Composition has five areas of focus: Classical Composition (i.e. concert music), Electronic Music, Music for Media (Film, TV & Game Scoring), Songwriting, and Jazz. Our diverse and highly accomplished faculty work across multiple genres; students can focus in one area or work across areas, exploring and blending several. VCFA's immersive model brings students and faculty together, joined by topnotch ensembles who perform student music, for a week of focused residency once every six months on

our historic Montpelier, Vermont campus. The deep relationship between student and faculty mentor that begins during the residency is a catalyst for the creative work of the semester where each student works from home on an individualized, self-designed composition project. In the words of Faculty Chair Rick Baitz, "The Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA in Music Composition is a place where the ancient practice of creating music is renewed, celebrated, and given the highest honor."

## FACULTY: MFA IN MUSIC COMPOSITION

➤ Faculty Chair **Rick Baitz**, has an accomplished career in film scoring. Works widely performed for dance, theater, and the concert stage.

➤ **Jonathan Bailey Holland**, Associate Professor of Composition at Berklee College of Music. His work draws from a broad spectrum of stylistic influences including classical, jazz, and hip-hop.

➤ **Don DiNicola** is an Emmy-nominated composer, record producer, and music supervisor who has written music for PBS, A&E, HBO, TLC, Discovery Channel, and Sundance.

➤ **Michael Early** earned his Ph.D. in music from Princeton University and is the recipient of multiple awards. His current

interests include the intersections between Western concert music, Rock, acoustic and electronic instruments.

➤ **Andy Jaffe** directs the Jazz Program at Williams College and has served as Artistic Director of the Williamstown Jazz Festival. Best known for his contributions to

DIANE MOSER  
*music composition*  
*faculty*

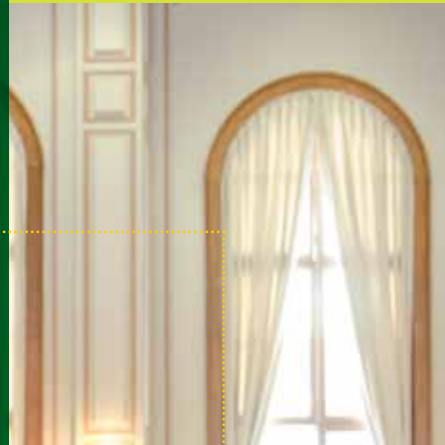
I am astounded by the commitment the faculty and staff have for each student and for constantly evolving the program to fulfill the needs of the students and

to take them beyond those needs. I am equally astounded by the commitment that each student has for their work, and for being open to new ideas. Together, we move forward to the highest level of educational and artistic excellence, and that is extremely satisfying.

## *the faculty*

These days, “composing” covers a broad spectrum of skills and education. Our faculty is chosen from a wide range of composers, performers and producers working today. They compose for symphonies, ensembles, bands, soloists and laptops. They work in concert halls, film, television, dance, theater and advertising. They perform and teach internationally, lead their own production and publishing companies, and direct music festivals and concert series. Their workshops explore a wide aesthetic range, offering students the opportunity to study a variety of compositional approaches, and incorporate them in their own work.

Experienced practitioners, our faculty is also acclaimed academically. Members of the faculty write and publish educational texts, journals, and articles, and design and direct composition programs.



## *the residency*

Students gather at our Montpelier campus for a one-week residency at the beginning of the six month semester. At each residency, students, faculty and guest artists work intensively with each other as students present the music they have written over the last semester. Master classes, with their feedback and intensity, help to hone students' compositions. Peer, faculty, and guest critique and interaction spur their work.

Every residency features ensembles-in-residence that rehearse with student composers and then perform and record student music written during the previous semester. Residencies are filled with rehearsals of student works, performances, master classes, demonstrations, lectures and electronic music expos. And no residency is complete without a performance of the VCFA Collaborative Rock Band, which showcases current students' songwriting.

M



MUSIC

jazz pedagogy and seminal sextet recording, he has also written for a variety of ensembles, including orchestral works, big band, chamber, and a cappella groups.

➔ **Ravi Krishnaswami** is a guitarist, songwriter, sound designer, producer, and engineer who weaves traditional music with western scoring techniques, reflecting his study of ethnomusicology. At

COPILOT Music in New York, he composes and records in a wide array of media and forms including commercials, scores for documentary films, and recordings with his own indie-pop band.

➔ **Diane Moser**, core faculty member at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, works with a wide variety of ensembles and genres,

including her 17-piece Diane Moser's Composers Big Band, which is dedicated to developing and presenting new music.

➔ **John Mallia**, faculty member and director of the Electronic Music Studio at the New England Conservatory, infuses

## *the semester*

Students work one-on-one with faculty to create their own curricula, designed to broaden and deepen the compositional practices and skills they use every day. They stay in close contact with faculty and fellow students during the semester, learning and writing, challenging themselves with projects and problems of their own design.

At the center of our pedagogy is the firm belief that education is a process of living. The MFA in Music Composition serves students by helping them to create lifetime practices and strategies enabling them to keep growing as artists. Our highest priority is for the student to find and develop her own creative voice.



# COMPOS

his work with concepts of physical space. His compositions have been performed throughout the U.S. and abroad.

▶ Visiting Faculty **John Fitz Rogers** teaches composition at the University of South Carolina School of Music, and is founder of the

Southern Exposure New Music Series, acclaimed as one of the most dynamic, innovative concert series in the southeast.

▶ **Roger Zahab**, teacher, violinist/violist, conductor, composer, and writer is Senior Lecturer and Director of the University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Music on the Edge Chamber Orchestra.

He has championed music by a wide range of composers and his work has been performed and recorded throughout the world by eminent soloists and ensembles.

BRUCE SKLAR  
*music composition*  
'13

The challenges that come from this type of study, where you are constantly stretching your own boundaries, are powerful learning experiences. I have found that I am better able, in a directly

measurable way, to bring new challenges to my own students. As a jazz band director, in using my own arrangements and compositions, I am able to speak in depth to every aspect of the kids' experience rehearsing and performing the music.

JONATHAN  
BAILEY HOLLAND  
*music composition*  
*faculty*

The residency celebrates the fact that we are all striving to create music at the core of what we do, and everyone wants and receives guidance, support and advice from the

many different perspectives that the faculty (and students) have to offer. The rest of the semester provides an unparalleled focus on each student's individual course of study. This is the ideal, and perhaps only, program for anyone looking to focus intensely on improving their compositional skills, regardless of style.

# *the work*



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*Students learn theory and history related to their personal and academic objectives, but their primary goal is composing music – developing a body of professional work that reflects their unique compositional artistry.*



# admission

Admission to The MFA in Music Composition at Vermont College of Fine Arts is highly selective. We seek candidates with distinctive voices and abilities, applicants who believe that a model of student-centered music education is one in which they can thrive.

## Candidate Requirements:

- An undergraduate degree in music or its equivalent;
- A vision for the kind of music the candidate would like to create;
- A portfolio of compositions that supports this creative vision;
- A grounding in theory appropriate to the music the student plans to compose.

Contact the admissions office or visit the VCFA website for more information

MFA in Music Composition  
Vermont College of Fine Arts  
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Montpelier, VT 05602  
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[www.vcfa.edu](http://www.vcfa.edu)

WHIT  
VAN METER  
*music composition*  
'13

With most of my semester work and collaboration with my faculty advisor done from home, I can dive in to my studies and develop my craft while continuing

to work and provide for my family. I couldn't have done it any other way. I receive sophisticated feedback from my advisor amazingly quickly on everything that I write. The whole VCFA experience has been great for my soul!

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