

Studyguide Composition

Academic year
2025-2026

**Koninklijk Conservatorium
Antwerpen**

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1 Foreword

Composing is creating, exploring and developing your own musical language. Central to this creative process is your unique personality, which, through knowledge, craftsmanship, insight and an open, (under)investigating mind, is able to shape your creativity and originality into new music. In doing so, attention is paid to constantly changing social structures, diversity and inclusion.

The composition class is led by a team of experienced composers and teachers (Bram Van Camp, Steven Prengels and Mathias Coppens) who work in the spirit of Wim Henderickx. As a student you will have two teachers who will each guide you from their expertise in the search for your musical identity and provide you with the necessary compositional tools: on the one hand with respect for tradition, but on the other hand also with a drive for innovation.

The composition class is the beating heart of the Conservatoire through its intense collaboration with all departments. Students' music is performed within projects with the vocal department, the saxophone ensemble, piano, trombone, harp and the symphony orchestra. In addition, interdisciplinary projects provide opportunities to collaborate with dancers and the Academy of Fine Arts. The Ensemble XXI creates new compositions on final exams.

The department also collaborates with external partners for specific projects: HERMESensemble (Times Academy), Antwerp Symphony Orchestra (Soundmine) and Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen (SOV Composers Academy).

Bachelor

Bachelor students are intensively guided in the development of a strong analytical insight and inquisitive attitude. General musical knowledge and professional skills support your quest for your own creative personality. In addition to Composition, the program also provides Musical Writing and Instrumental Theory/Orchestration, so that creativity is founded by a strong basic knowledge. Artistic research, general cultural education and thorough analysis are also important components of your curriculum. Electronic Music Composition, Instrument, Practical Harmony and Improvisation or Interdisciplinary Project may be included as electives.

Master

The two-year master's program focuses specifically on refining and expanding your personal musical language and offers a range of (interdisciplinary) projects, concerts, collaborations and master classes. In addition to a limited number of fixed course units, the program contains much room for personal interpretation. This broad and open approach, combined with coaching by several composition teachers, forms an ideal breeding ground for developing your own language and writing style. Each new idea is treated with great respect in an open environment from different points of view and always guided in consultation.

Profiles within the master program

Because there is a great diversity of styles, genres and formats in which composers are active, you can orient yourself within one of the four profiles:

- Composer - Composer
- Composer - Performer
- Composer - Educator
- Composer - Composer for Media

These profiles are not always strictly defined and are rather meant to be exploratory. In consultation with your teachers you put together your own curriculum based on an elective package of 18 credits, which you fill in with a selection from specific course components.

Composer - Composer

A 'composer-composer' is a composer who works more autonomously. This profile builds on the traditional training of a contemporary composer: writing for ensemble, orchestra and choir. The teachers of Principal Subject Composition guide you in your search for your own style and develop your craftsmanship.

A composer-composer may choose Musical Writing/Contrapunt, Orchestration or Interdisciplinary Project. The music may be purely acoustic, but may also include (live) electronics. Programs such as Max MSP, Ableton and SuperCollidor are expertly discussed in detail within the "Electronic Music Composition" and "Audiovisual Design with Max MSP" is offered in "Creative Programming" by Umut Eldem.

Composer - performer

Many composers are also performers. There are also performers who deal creatively with their musical subject matter. They are true "composer performers. These composers also want to actively participate on a stage. In addition to instrumental and/or vocal coaching, a composer-performer needs professional feedback when composing (main subject Composition), a basic knowledge of instrumentation (Orchestration) and electronics (Electronic Music Composition).

A composer-performer may also choose practical subjects from the jazz department (Introduction to Digital Skills, Electronic Improvisation, Recording Technique, Live Electronics).

Composer - educator

As a creative artist or composer, you want to share your passion with the field: with young people, within part-time art education or in community art. You want to work with people. If you opt for composer-educator, the Educational Master of Music, you will continue the master's program in composition (in Music) and combine it with subjects such as professional didactics, internships, project work and supporting course components. The educational master is concluded with a master's thesis that consists of 2 parts: a master's thesis in your discipline and an art-educational project that you create yourself.

Composer for media

Many musicians feel the need to work with new technologies. In the course 'Composition for audiovisual media' Mathias Coppens offers a training where you can actively participate in audiovisual projects. Virtual orchestration, working with samples, being able to creatively manipulate one's own recordings and sound production are contemporary ways of composing. Those ways of composing that combine acoustic and electronic elements are current within the pop, film, game and promo worlds. From these new developments within music grew the need for the profile "Composer for media.

Additional electives in this profile: programs such as Max MSP, Ableton and Super Collidor are professionally discussed in detail within the electronic music composition. Audiovisual Design with Max MSP is also offered in Creative Programming by Umut Eldem.

2 Organigram

Section Leader: Bram Van Camp

Teachers

Composition: Bram Van Camp, Steven Prengels, Mathias Coppens

Orchestration: Steven Prengels

3 Composition

3.1 Teaching data

Basic Programme:	Music
Option:	Composition
Course:	Composition (principal course)
Main teachers:	Bram Van Camp, Steven Prengels, Mathias Coppens
Year:	B1, B2, B3, M1, M2, PG
Credit load:	B1: 30 contact hours
(contact hours)	B2: 30 contact hours
	B3: 30 contact hours
	M1: 45 contact hours
	M2: 45 contact hours
	PG: 45 contact hours
Credits (ECTS):	B1: 21
	B2: 21
	B3: 24
	M1: 21
	M2: 18
	PG: 30

3.2 Relevant initial knowledge

Initial level:
- Clearly demonstrable composition skills
- Basic knowledge of compositional techniques
- Knowledge of music literature
Entrance exam level:
As above

3.3 Learning outcomes

B3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Knowledge of contemporary music- Independent development of the student's own idiom- Knowledge of orchestration (in relation to music history)- Basic research skills
M2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Knowledge of contemporary music- Independent development of the student's own idiom- In-depth study of orchestration- Research skills in relation to the student's own artistic activity

3.4 Course contents

Composition:

The composition course focuses on personal expression and brings together all other main subjects (music notation, analysis, orchestration, etc.) in the creation of new compositions.

Composition lessons consist of both individual coaching and reflection in small groups, where students' sketches and compositions are discussed and analyzed on a weekly basis. Students are encouraged to adopt an inquiring attitude in order to further develop their personal language. In composition lessons, the focus is on what the young composer wishes to express, and they are given the tools to achieve these personal goals in a professional manner.

Students are expected to actively participate in various projects (within and/or outside the school) where their music can be rehearsed and performed.

Forums and literature study:

Classroom lessons (literature study) are organized at regular intervals, where students are introduced to the most important music literature from the twentieth century, the most important composers, and their compositional techniques within a historical context.

In forums, students meet guest speakers: composers, performers, musicologists, researchers, etc. These activities encourage students to engage in (self-)reflection.

- Discussion of the student's works
- References to music literature
- Study of contemporary composition techniques
- Study of orchestration
- Development of research skills
- Preparation of a complete final exam programme (B3, M2)

3.5 Teaching methods

- Individual lessons
- Group-oriented lessons
- Group lessons Literature study
- Forums with guest lectures
- Organisation of small concerts: Workgroup for Contemporary and Current Music (WHAM), dance-composition collaborations

3.6 Teaching materials

- Scores
- Books
- Internet
- Recordings

3.7 Assessment

Assessment format:

Portfolio Composition: 70%

Portfolio Forums: 15%

Portfolio Literature Study: 15%

Each portfolio is assessed by an examination board. Students must achieve a minimum of 50% on all tests in order to pass the course.

Assessment standards:

Portfolio Composition: originality, craftsmanship, musical erudition, inventiveness, self-reflection, and research competence

Portfolio Forums: number of activities attended and guest lectures, self-reflection

Portfolio Literature Study: number of activities attended and guest lectures (+ 2 additional performances), self-reflection

Master's exam composition:

Presentation of the student's Portfolio for an internal and external jury.

Master's exam Research and lecture performance:

Defence of the master's dissertation (see the Study Guide Master's exam Research and lecture performance)

Assessment format:

Internal assessments of the study course will take place during contact sessions and during the discussions with the relevant teachers about the reflective portion of the master's exam. The public master's exam will take place during the scheduled exam period and before an internal and external jury.

The programme of the master's exam consists of the following components:

Final assignment worth 100% of the overall score, consisting of:

- (a) The creation of one or several compositions, preferably with a performance of the composition(s) in a concert or in a performance during the scheduled exam period.
- (b) The student must develop a critical reflection centred on one or more components of the programme performed in the master's exam. This reflection may be presented in various manners.

Assessment standards:

The jury will assess if, and the extent to which, the student has achieved the specified general final competencies.

Course components may be evaluated separately. Students must pass each component in order to pass the master's exam. Students will receive more detailed information about the master's exam at the start of the academic year.

4 Orchestration

4.1 Teaching data

Basic programme:	Music
Option:	Music Theory and Harmony and Counterpoint: Composition major, and Wind and Brass Band Conducting major
Course:	Orchestration
Heads teachers:	Steven Prengels
Year:	B1, B2, B3 M1, M2, PG (elective course)
Credit load: (contact hours and study loads)	B1, B2, B3: 30 contact hours, 45 hours' study load M1, M2, PG: 30 contact hours, 45 hours' study load
Study points (ECTS):	B1, B2, B3: 3 M1, M2, PG: 6 (elective course)

4.2 Relevant initial knowledge

Initial level: Knowledge that is equivalent to the entrance exam of Composition Main Course Knowledge that is equivalent to the entrance exam of Harmony & Counterpoint (Main Course).
Entrance exam level: For students that don't follow Composition (Main Course), the basic knowledge of Harmony & Counterpoint that is equivalent to the entrance exam of Composition Main Course is required (B1).

4.3 Learning outcomes

- B1 & B2	To orchestrate existing piano literature for strings and winds
- B3	To orchestrate existing piano literature for chamber and symphony orchestra
- M1, M2, PG	Elective course: To orchestrate existing piano literature for chamber and symphony orchestra. To compose a work for symphony orchestra (for composition students)

4.4 Course contents

- In-depth knowledge of individual instruments
- An awareness of the major orchestral literature

4.5 Teaching methods

- Group lessons
- Self study of 'The Study of Orchestration' (S. Adler)
- Orchestral literature
- Concert attendance

4.6 Teaching materials

- Scores
- Books: 'The Study of Orchestration' (S. Adler)
- Recordings

4.7 Assessment

Assessment format:

Portfolio

Assessment standards:

Sense of style, technically competent choices, inspired orchestration and professional, digitally finished scores. Process evaluation based on the corrections of exercises.

5 Supporting Instrument (see studyguide optional courses)

6 Creative Project (see studyguide Creative Project)

7 Part-time study

Part-time study may be permitted for various reasons. It is possible for working students and for people who are combining different courses within the same school. In some cases, part-time study may also be recommended by the lecturer if more time is needed to prepare for the master's thesis. Part-time study must always be approved by the lecturer.

Assessment

Both in M1 (part 1 of 2) and M1 (part 2 of 2), students are required to take a complete end-of-year exam, as described for full-time students of M1 Composition under "Assessment". Students that study part-time cannot obtain all learning outcomes in one year.