



MTSU Jazz Studies

Undergraduate Student Handbook

Bachelor of Music in Performance Concentration in Jazz Studies

The Jazz Studies Concentration is designed to prepare students for professional careers in jazz. The primary focus is thorough and demanding training in performance through private jazz lessons, ensemble participation, and improvisation classes. The degree also includes course work in jazz theory, jazz arranging, jazz history, jazz styles and analysis, and jazz pedagogy.

Besides the School of Music core curriculum, the following Jazz Courses are required for the degree:

- **Jazz Private Instruction**
- **Jazz Ensembles**
- **Jazz Improvisation Lab**
- **Improvisation**
- **Jazz Theory**
- **Jazz Arranging Private Instruction**
- **History of Jazz**
- **Styles and Analysis of Jazz**
- **Jazz Pedagogy**
- **Jazz Piano Private Instruction (for non pianists)**

Please consult the MTSU undergraduate course catalog and attached advising check- sheet for core curriculum and other specifics.

Some suggestions:

- a. Meet with your advisor each semester to insure you are on track for graduation.
- b. Use the advising check sheet to track your progress and bring it to all advising meetings. The B.M. Instrumental Performance – Jazz Studies degree outline can be found at <https://www.mtsu.edu/program/music-instrumental-performance-concentration-brass-orchestral-string-woodwinds-and-percussion-b-m/>
- c. Keep accurate records regarding which courses you have taken each semester.
- d. Make passing upper division juries a goal. Delaying this important step can delay your graduation!

General Expectations of Jazz Major

Jazz is a unique study and requires several components of study for success. Although this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, some key aspects of study are:

•Listening

Listening is arguably *the most important* key to beginning to absorb the jazz language and to develop a jazz style. MTSU's Music Library in Walker Library currently contains over 100 important jazz CDs, countless vinyl albums and scores, and online resources. All jazz majors should utilize these recordings. Also take advantage of jazz faculty and ask questions about recordings to buy and/or borrow! Finally, utilize the vast amount of music currently available on streaming services!

•Transcribing

The best way to begin to "absorb" oneself in the music of a jazz master is to *transcribe* (or put in writing) the actual solo as played by the artist. Although this is very time consuming, the benefits cannot be underestimated. Repeated listening to small phrases of music not only allows the transcriber to get the correct notes and rhythms as played by the artist, but also the equally important stylistic characteristics (tone quality & color, articulation, vibrato, expressive devices, etc.) that make up the artist's style. This is how jazz musicians develop their influences.

•Analyzing

After detailed work is spent being able to play the solo along with the artist, the next step is to *analyze* the solo for content melodically, harmonically and rhythmically. A great place to start is to choose some specific "moments" that interest you musically. Find out why they sound so good and then learn them in all keys!

•**Repertoire** Committing tunes to memory and being able to recall them is a key to success in the jazz field. (Ask the jazz faculty to explain how they have gone about memorizing tunes.)

•**Playing** There is no substitute for playing with other people! Try and get together and play with other players EVERY DAY!. Organize informal jam sessions, etc. You don't need to have a full rhythm section or band to get together and play! Jazz can be described as *learning by doing*!

Private Instruction Requirements

LOWER DIVISION

Jazz Study

Jazz studies majors must enroll in four semesters of 30 - minute (one credit) lower-division jazz lessons during their freshman and sophomore years and pass a lower division jury in jazz technique and literature on their instrument each semester.

Classical Study

Jazz Studies majors must enroll in four semesters of 30 - minute (one credit) lower-division classical lessons during their freshman and sophomore years and pass a lower division classical jury on their instrument each semester. Please consult with your classical private instructor for all jury requirements.

Ideally taken in the fourth semester of study, an upper division jury in classical technique and literature is required. Please consult with your classical private instructor for all upper division classical requirements on your particular instrument.

NOTE: The upper division JAZZ jury should be taken after the completion of the upper division CLASSICAL jury. If an upper division jury is not passed in either the jazz and/or classical area, the student must continue to take lower division lessons until the area is passed. Consult with your private instructor and advisor for more information.

Private Instruction is an important part of the jazz studies degree program.

Ensemble Requirements

Ten (10) hours of ensemble participation as approved by faculty are required, but only nine (9) of those hours may be counted toward degree requirements; the remaining hour may be taken for zero (0) credit. Ensembles may be based on audition and are selected with guidance from the faculty. As the Jazz Studies Emphasis is a performance intensive degree program, students are encouraged to participate in a large jazz ensemble and a small jazz combo each semester pending auditions.

Scholarship Ensemble Requirements

Students receiving a music department scholarship are required to be in a designated number of ensembles according to the MTSU scholarship contract. You may be assigned to specific ensembles, based on the need of the department. Students not meeting those requirements may have scholarships cancelled in coming semesters. Also, see the contract for other requirements, such as GPA and minimum course load.

Jazz Masterclass

All jazz students enrolled in private jazz lessons are required to attend the weekly Jazz Masterclass, Mondays, 4:30 – 5:30, SFA 101. This is a time for jazz students to perform with and for their peers and learn from jazz faculty members and visiting guest artists. Valuable insights on repertoire and important topics will be given that will help toward success as a musician.

Jazz Jury Requirements

Required Tune List

Jazz studies lower division students are responsible each semester for learning the tunes from the Required Tune List.

During a jury, students are required to demonstrate knowledge of the material by playing the melody and an improvised solo on each selected piece with a professional rhythm section. The student is responsible for rehearsing and paying the accompanists for their time. Several tunes will be chosen at random by the jazz faculty during the jury.

All tunes from the Required Tune List must be memorized. Continual review of the tunes from previous semesters is expected. The Required Tune List is cumulative, and students will be expected to know all tunes from previous semesters as well as tunes from the current semester. With the private instructor's input tunes may be substituted, reflecting the interests of the student.

Other requirements for Lower Division Jazz Juries are set by the private Instructor. Common components are prepared pieces, technical studies, jazz language and transcribed solos, designed to demonstrate the student's ability, musical growth, instrumental facility and mastery of jazz style. All students must email private lesson materials to assigned faculty members by a deadline. These will detail all the materials studied in the private lessons for the semester. The link to this form is

<https://www.mtsu.edu/music/studentutilities.php>

Classical Lower Division Jury Requirements

Please see your private instructor for specifics related to the jury requirements.

Reminder: *If an upper division jury is not passed in either the jazz and/or classical area, the student must continue to take lower division lessons until the area is passed. Consult with your private instructor and advisor for more information.*

MTSU Jazz Studies/ Required Tunes List

Trumpet, Trombone, Saxophone, Guitar, Piano

First Year

Semester I

Billie's Bounce
Beautiful Love
Blue Bossa
Impressions/So What
Oleo

Semester II

Au Privave
There Is No Greater Love
Footprints
Yardbird Suite
On Green Dolphin Street

Second Year

Semester I

Anthropology
Blues for Alice
Just Friends
Once I Loved
Stella By Starlight
Prepare Junior Recital

Semester II

Cheryl
Confirmation
What is this Thing Called Love
My Romance
Yesterdays
Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise

Third Year

Semester I

Airegin
Alone Together
Cherokee
Giant Steps
Groovin' High
Meditation

Semester II

All the Things You Are
Have You Met Miss Jones
Recorda-Me
Someday My Prince Will Come
You Don't Know What Love Is
Joy Spring

Fourth Year

Semester I

Body and Soul
Donna Lee
Invitation
There Will Never Be Another You
Nardis
Solar

Semester II

Prepare Senior Recital

Substitute tunes may be assigned by your private instructor or can be selected by approval of your private instructor

Jazz Upper Division Jury Requirements

For students to achieve Upper Division status they must pass Upper Division Jury Exams in both **Classical and Jazz**.

Jazz studies majors must enroll in four semesters of 60 minute (2 credits) upper division jazz lessons and pass an upper division jury in jazz technique and literature on their instrument.

The private instructor will determine the exact contents, but each upper division jazz jury **must** contain the following:

1. Prepared piece (NOT from Required Tunes List) A jazz piece should be chosen that is of special interest to the student. The piece must be arranged, rehearsed and performed with a rhythm section (to be organized by the student). The student will play the melody from memory and improvise a solo. Rhythm section players should be prepared to display their ability to function in their traditional roles (ie, bassists should improvise bass lines, drummer should play time, pianists/guitarists should comp for a soloist). *The student is responsible for organizing and rehearsing with his/her rhythm section!*

2. Tunes from the first two years' Required Tunes List The jury panel will select several tunes from the first four semesters. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge of the material by playing the melody and improvising logical, correlated choruses on each selected piece. All tunes from the Required Tunes List must be memorized.

3. Transcription The student is to play along with the recording an original transcription of an improvised solo from memory. Minimum length is three 32-bar choruses or the equivalent (three 12-bar blues choruses will equal one 32-bar chorus).

The student will demonstrate mastery of the material by playing with the appropriate tone, phrasing and expression present in the recording.

4. **Scales** The following jazz related scales need to be memorized in all 12 keys at least two octaves. (when appropriate) Minimum tempos and other specifications will be set by your private instructor.

- a. Altered (Diminished whole-tone)
- b. Symmetric Diminished (1/2 step, whole step diminished)
- c. Whole-tone
- d. Blues
- e. Dominant bebop
- f. Major Bebop

5. **Other requirements from your private instructor not covered above.** Your instructor may have special requirements not covered above (i.e. drummers playing vibes, comping requirements, departure from tune list, etc.)

The Junior and Senior Recital

- All Jazz Studies majors must present a one credit, Junior recital, lasting approximately 25 to 30 minutes in length.
- All Jazz Studies majors must present a one credit, Senior recital, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length

It is the student's responsibility for coordinating recital dates, times and dress rehearsals with the private instructor, Jamey Simmons, and Mr. Chris Click in the Concert Production office. See the recital request form in Student Utilities to book your recital space. <https://music.mtsu.edu/studentutilities/>

The contents of the Junior and Senior Recitals are generally decided by the private studio instructor in consultation with the student. The faculty encourages students to include both standard jazz repertoire and original compositions/arrangements. The faculty also encourages students to begin planning recitals early!

Senior Recital Hearing

Students receive permission to present recital by arranging and giving a **pre-recital hearing** before the jazz faculty at least two weeks prior to the scheduled rehearsal. Recital performances are graded by a faculty committee and must be passed with a grade of C or better. Student must present each committee member with a draft of the program of the recital selections at the pre-recital hearing.

MTSU Jazz Artist Series/MTSU Jazz Festival

The MTSU Jazz Artist Series brings internationally-recognized jazz artists to the region for performances and educational workshops.

Artist who have appeared as part of the MTSU Jazz Artist Series:

Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Bob Mintzer, Dick Oatts, David Liebman, Bennie Golson, Marvin Stamm, Carl Allen, Eddie Daniels, Snooky Young, Rufus Reid, Kenny Werner, Slide Hampton, Peter Erskine, Terrell Stafford, Eric Alexander, Bobby Shew, Scott Robinson, Jeff Coffin, Greg Osby, Brian Lynch, Tim Hagans, Tom Harrell, Randy Brecker, Steve Davis, Jim McNeely, Mike Longo, Ernestine Anderson, Debra Brown, Steve Wilson, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Miguel Zenon, Bill Holman, Tamir Hendelman, Jimmy Heath.

The final concert of the MTSU Jazz Artist Series operates in conjunction with the MTSU Jazz Festival. The festival is a non-competitive event that attracts middle school, high school students from throughout Tennessee for a full day of performances, educational workshops and clinic sessions with

jazz educators and our guest artists.

All jazz majors must attend these concerts and master classes!

NOTE: Jazz Studies majors are required to attend all MTSU jazz concerts and clinics. Students are responsible for checking the Jazz Studies bulletin board (across from SFA 101) to remain informed of upcoming events. Every effort will be made to provide at least two weeks' notice.

Jazz Association of MTSU

The Jazz Association of MTSU (JAM) was organized by MTSU jazz students in 2025 to enhance jazz activities on campus. This is a unique group that aims to bring in guest clinicians, offer performance and educational opportunities. You are encouraged to serve!

Scholarship Requirements and Expectations

All students receiving jazz scholarship funds must:

- Maintain satisfactory progress in the private studio(s) and required ensemble(s)
- Maintain an overall Grade Point Average of 2.5 and a GPA of 3.0 in music courses.
- Participate in ensembles as required by the student's curriculum and as recommended by the jazz and/or applied faculty.

Scholarship Renewal

Assuming satisfactory performance, the scholarship is renewable for four years (eight semesters). Each scholarship student must complete and submit a Scholarship Renewal Form, with the signature of the primary applied instructor, each semester to assure continuation of his/her scholarship for the following academic year.

At any time the A.S.E.M. committee becomes aware that a student is not meeting requirements as set forth in these guidelines, the student's scholarship is subject to withdrawal. In certain cases (such as low GPA), the committee may notify the student that he/she is on probation. The student will have one semester in which to rectify the deficiency.

Music Industry – Jazz Emphasis Majors

The Jazz Studies faculty are committed to providing success for all Music Industry – Jazz Studies students. As such, the requirements from the following categories may apply also to the music industry student:

- General Expectations
- Applied Instruction – Jazz
- Jazz Masterclass
- Ensemble participation
- Senior Recital
- Classical Applied Instruction
- Lower and Upper Division Jazz Juries
- Jazz concert attendance

For specific Music Industry advising, contact Dr. Chris Combest at Chris.Combest@mtsu.edu