Western Connecticut State University

Degree Proposal: Master of Music in Jazz Pedagogy

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Jimmy Greene, Assistant Professor of Music

Coordinator of Jazz Studies

Department of Music; School of Visual and Performing Arts
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PROPOSAL

It is herein proposed to establish a Master of Music in Jazz Pedagogy degree program at the School of Visual and Performing Arts’ Department of Music. The program would provide an option to masters level students who desire a jazz specific experience and would work alongside WCSU’s current Master of Science in Music Education degree. The new degree will utilize existing resources and incorporate two courses currently required of M.S. Music Education majors.

RATIONALE

The demand for jazz education has increased steadily in the United States over the past half-century. At the middle school, high school and collegiate levels, there are tens of thousands of jazz ensembles in existence. To respond to this demand, it is imperative that institutions of higher learning produce artist-teachers who are highly competent in jazz music performance and pedagogy.

Undergraduate jazz studies programs are well established in many colleges and universities nationwide. Although many undergraduate jazz studies programs, like the one housed at WCSU, offer courses in jazz pedagogy, the Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies degree program is meant to present students with a broad range of musical experiences. Graduate level specialization in jazz pedagogy prepares
professionals to step to the forefront of the booming jazz education field, whether working in private instruction, as a clinician, as a public, private or performing arts magnet school educator, or serving as a professor at the collegiate level. At present, the state of Connecticut boasts two universities granting the Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies degree: Western Connecticut State University and The Hartt School at the University of Hartford. There are, however, no graduate programs in jazz studies statewide – the program proposed herein would be the first of its kind in Connecticut.

Outside of Connecticut, many leading conservatories and universities in New England and greater New York City offer graduate programs in jazz studies – including the New England Conservatory, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, Manhattan School of Music, CUNY City College, SUNY at Purchase, New York University, Juilliard School, CUNY Queens College, William Paterson University and Rutgers University. The jazz masters degree programs housed at these schools offer concentrations in performance, composition, or history and research – at present, none offer a concentration in pedagogy. In fact, only 8 institutions of higher education nationwide and just 3 schools east of the Mississippi River offer a graduate jazz studies experience whose concentration is pedagogy: West Virginia University, Capital University (OH) and the University of Miami (FL). The program proposed herein would also be the first of its kind in the northeastern United States.
Of the graduate jazz pedagogy program directors surveyed (Dr. Arthur White of the University of Missouri, Paul Scea of West Virginia University, Christopher Merz of the University of Northern Iowa, Dr. John Gunther of the University of Colorado at Boulder and Dr. John Murphy of the University of North Texas), several cited distance from a major urban center as a challenge in cultivating a rich jazz learning environment. WCSU’s proximity to the epicenter of jazz music, New York City, makes it an ideal location for a graduate degree program in jazz. WCSU will continue to draw upon New York’s vast talent pool for the benefit of its students.

With the opening of the new Visual and Performing Arts Instructional Center on the Westside campus, WCSU has emerged as a regional hub for the arts. The development of the only graduate degree in jazz pedagogy in the northeastern United States at WCSU would potentially attract students statewide and nationwide, establishing WCSU as a destination for advanced jazz scholarship.

Lastly, the presence of graduate level jazz performers enrolled in the program would raise the level of the WCSU jazz performing groups, bolstering the school’s profile regionally and nationally while setting a high standard of artistic achievement to be enjoyed the entire WCSU community.

During the summer of 2015, our department conducted a survey of current WCSU music majors, WCSU music department alumni and other music educators throughout Connecticut (121 total respondents).
Of the respondents who had no masters degree, were not enrolled as masters students and submitted a completed survey (55 respondents – this degree program’s targeted demographic), nearly 35% responded they had “strong interest” in pursuing a masters degree in jazz pedagogy should WCSU begin offering the degree. 38% responded they would have “some interest” in the proposed degree program.

![Pie chart showing interest levels]

- **Strong Interest**: 34.5%
- **Some Interest**: 38.2%
- **No Interest**: 27.3%
When asked if graduate training in jazz studies would be beneficial to their current music teaching and performing situation, an overwhelming majority (78%) responded that such training would be “significantly beneficial” or “somewhat beneficial.”

How beneficial would graduate training in jazz studies (pedagogy, improvisation, styles and analysis, applied lessons, rhythm section instrument studies, composition and arranging, ensembles) be to your current teaching / performing situation?

- Significantly Beneficial: 42%
- Somewhat Beneficial: 36%
- Not Beneficial at all: 22%
We anticipate that this proposed degree could exist successfully alongside the extant Master of Science program in Music Education and there would not be a significant number of students who would switch degree programs. When respondents who held a masters degree were asked how likely they would have majored in this proposed degree program instead of the one they had completed, only 23% responded “Likely” or “Very Likely.”

If WCSU offered a master of music degree in jazz pedagogy, how likely is it that you would have majored in that program instead of the degree program you completed?
Most respondents (54%) would prefer to attend classes and rehearsals in the late afternoons and early evenings, but a significant number (40%) could attend classes and rehearsals at any time of day.
NASM GUIDELINES

The proposed degree program would utilize the guidelines established by the National Association of Schools of Music. There will necessarily be overlap between the two sets of guidelines listed below.

**NASM Guidelines (reprinted from NASM Handbook 2013-2014, p. 129):**

**The Master’s Degree in Jazz Studies**

Students demonstrate advanced competencies in jazz studies including areas such as jazz performance, improvisation, composition, and arranging. Studies in these areas comprise as much as two-thirds or at least one-third of the total curriculum.

Students gain knowledge and skills in one or more fields of music outside the major such as history and literature, theory and analysis, musicology and ethnomusicology, and recording and studio techniques. Such supportive studies in music that broaden and deepen musical competence comprise at least one-third of the total curriculum.

As a culminating demonstration of professional capability in the major field, the student must present either a public performance or submit at least one original composition as a thesis.

**The Master’s Degree in Pedagogy**

Students demonstrate advanced competencies in pedagogy of a specific performance area and its repertory. Studies in these areas comprise as much as two-thirds or at least one-third of the curriculum.

Students gain knowledge and skills in one or more fields of music outside the major such as theory, history, musicology, ethnomusicology, and performance. Such supportive studies in music that broaden and deepen musical competence comprise at least one-third of the curriculum.

As a culminating demonstration of professional capability in the major field, the student must present a final project, research paper, and/or recital.
**Suggested Degree Sequence**

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<th>and Credit Distribution by Semester</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Jazz Ensemble</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Jazz Ensemble</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied Jazz Instrument</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED 501: Intro to Ed. Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUS 530: Music Supervision and Admin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Elective</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Jazz Piano (for non-pianists)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz Rhythm Section Lab</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jazz Improvisation Pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repertoire and Arranging for the Jazz Educator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jazz Styles &amp; Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jazz Lecture Recital</td>
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**Total Credit Hours: 37/38**

**Required Jazz Studies courses: 16 credits = 42%**

**Required Jazz Pedagogy courses: 14 credits = 37%**

**Required Graduate Music and Education Courses: 6 credits = 16%**

**Graduate Elective: 2 credits = 5%**
New Course Descriptions

Required Courses

MUS 5xx Jazz Rhythm Section Lab

All students, regardless of instrument, will gain valuable experience performing on the primary rhythm section instruments of the jazz ensemble: piano, bass and drums. The first half of the semester will consist primarily of rotating group lessons on each instrument, given by each instrument’s applied jazz instructor. During this lesson phase, rudimentary instrumental technique, tone production, jazz vocabulary and equipment issues will be emphasized. The second half of the semester will consist primarily of students performing together in-class on the rhythm section instruments. Areas of focus during this phase will include rhythm section cohesion, functioning as accompanist vs. soloist, group interplay and the study of the contributions by great rhythm sections in jazz history. By the close of the semester, students will be able to provide accompaniment on all the rhythm section instruments over the blues and “I Got Rhythm” changes, as well as selected jazz standards and modal jazz repertoire. 2 credits

MUS 5xx Jazz Improvisation Pedagogy

Theoretical and practical applications of the jazz vocabulary will be presented in this course. Application of the course material will bolster each student’s competence as a jazz improviser and as a teacher of jazz improvisation. Methods for teaching the bebop vocabulary through chromaticism, improvisation over non-
functional harmony, advanced solo transcription and analysis and the various types and uses of the pentatonic and octatonic scales will be presented. 3 credits

**MUS 5xx Jazz Styles and Analysis**

The improvisational and compositional language of jazz’s greatest innovators from 1900 to the present day will comprise the subject matter for this course. The music of Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and many others will be explored through listening, research and analysis. Students will select a topic in consultation with the instructor and produce a research document at the conclusion of the course. **Prerequisite: ED 501: Intro to Educational Research.** 3 credits

**MUS 5xx Special Topics in Jazz Pedagogy**

The skills and insight necessary for effectiveness in jazz education are varied: the hands-on interaction between teacher and student is informed by, and often transformed by, larger philosophical, sociological and psychological frameworks. This course explores the intersection between the practical and the theoretical aspects of jazz pedagogy. Topics will include the history of jazz music in American schools, conducting a large jazz ensemble, coaching a small jazz ensemble, private jazz instruction, philosophy of jazz pedagogy, sociological and psychological aspects of music teaching and learning, and presentation of an effective master class/clinic. Students will interface with the immediate community of jazz learners and
performers and will participate in the annual WCSU Jazz Festival as performers and junior clinicians. 4 credits

**MUS 5xx Graduate Jazz Lecture Recital**

The lecture recital serves as the capstone experience of the Master of Music in Jazz Pedagogy degree program. In consultation with the applied instructor and the coordinator of jazz studies, students will research a topic pertinent to jazz teaching and learning. Students will present a one-hour program that includes performance and lecture accompanied by extensive notes and/or supplementary materials.

**Prerequisite:** ED 501 Intro to Educational Research. 2 credits

**MUS 5xx Repertoire and Arranging for the Jazz Educator**

In this course, a broad repertoire for small and large jazz ensemble will be presented. Students will engage with the repertoire in several ways: through copious listening, transcription and memorization of seminal small group arrangements, study and analysis of important large ensemble compositions and arrangements, through producing original arrangements for large and jazz ensembles in various styles, and coaching and conducting student groups in performance of those arrangements. 3 credits
Elective Course

MUS 5xx The Blues: Musical, Cultural and Historical Contexts

Within the blues there remains a rich and singular legacy of African-American folk music and poetry. It has flourished and served as a foundational element in jazz, in addition to gospel, rock and roll, funk, R+B, and hip-hop. In this course, key elements and innovations of the blues style will be identified and traced from Africa through America to the rest of the world. Parallels will be drawn between the blues and the plight of the African in America, from slavery and reconstruction through Jim Crow and the civil rights movement. Lastly elements of the blues language will be applied to composition projects. 2 credits