

University of Miami Frost School of Music
Doctor of Musical Arts
Jazz Performance (Instrumental and Vocal)

**Qualifying Examinations and
Doctoral Candidacy Procedures**

Introduction

In order to be accepted into candidacy and to defend the DMA essay proposal, all MSJ DMA students in instrumental performance must satisfactorily complete all portions of the **DMA Qualifying Examinations in Jazz Performance**. Students who fail any exam or section of any exam are allowed one retake of that exam/section in the following semester (or earlier at the discretion of the jazz faculty). The faculty may also recommend a remediation project in lieu of an exam retake. **Students who fail any portion of either exam for the second time or fail to complete the remediation project in an accurate and timely manner will be dismissed from the program.**

Students will be notified by the jazz department of the exam dates a minimum of two months ahead of the exam time. Exact times and locations will be provided in a timely manner. The MSJ qualifying exam may be taken no sooner than the third semester of study. Remediation assignments will be given a strict deadline for completion.

DMA Qualifying Examinations in Jazz Performance

The exams are administered by the Department of Studio Music and Jazz. The purpose of the MSJ qualifying examinations is to measure the student's ability to: (a) apply fundamental knowledge in teaching a wide variety of courses in their discipline, (b) function at a high professional level as a jazz performer with ancillary skills in composition/arranging/theory/history. (c) synthesize existing knowledge and generate new understandings that contribute to the jazz discipline as a performer, composer, arranger, and/or educator. The exam process includes written tests in jazz theory/analysis/aural skills, jazz arranging, and jazz history and styles. Performance tests are given in keyboard harmony and drum set proficiency. The process will culminate with a repertoire exam geared specially to the student's primary instrument.

Tests will cover the following subject matter:

I. General jazz harmony and theory:

1. Knowledge and recognition of the basic asymmetric and symmetric scale systems typically utilized in jazz improvisation and composition, including modes and related chords of major, melodic minor, select modes of harmonic minor and harmonic major, and chords derived from whole tone, diminished, and augmented, and other symmetric scales.
2. Knowledge and recognition of typical harmonic movements within functional (cycle of fifth

based) harmonic progressions typical of standard songs and the blues.

3. Knowledge and recognition of the chord voicings and harmonic principles based on modal (non-functional) progressions typical of post 1960's (non-standard song) jazz harmony.
4. Knowledge and recognition of basic melodic techniques (voice-leading) typical of bebop and hard bop improvisations such as passing tones, approach tones, neighbor tones, enclosures, etc., including the ability to compose a melodic line that sonically outlines a typical functional chord progression along with a functional bass line.

II. Basic keyboard proficiency:

1. A preassigned II V I sequence covering twelve keys in major and minor, with left hand bass notes and standard four voice right hand voicings (aka grips, shell voicings, upper structures) using appropriate inversions/positions to produce good register. Must be played at a minimum tempo of quarter note = 60. A lead sheet will be provided for practice and to read at the exam.

Optional: drop two voicings, quartal voicings (with and w/o roots), and two hand rootless voicings (e.g. quartal and triad upper structures). Walking bass optional.

2. Preparation of 2 arrangements/accompaniments of standard songs and/or jazz compositions, demonstrating commonly practiced functional and modal chord voicings supporting the melody. Student should also be able to demonstrate/explain the scale chord relationships within the arrangement. Student may choose from arrangements provided or prepare their own. The arrangements must be played from memory and demonstrate harmonic clarity, good register and effective voice leading.
3. Comp three choruses of blues in major and minor (your key of choice). Must be in time using representative swing comping rhythms and voicings. Vary the progression and voicings to maintain interest across three choruses. At least one chorus performed with walking bass line.
4. Demonstrate the ability to formulate a chord accompaniment to a standard song and/or classic jazz composition or similar harmonic progression applying commonly practiced chord voicings on sight, including modal voicings, slash chords, and polychords.

III. Basic aural proficiency:

1. Demonstrate recognition of common functional and modal chord/scale qualities.
2. Demonstrate the ability to accurately transcribe a series of intervals with correct pitches and/or a series of rhythms and common rhythmic patterns.
3. Demonstrate recognition of typical functional harmonic progressions.

IV. Basic rhythmic knowledge and drum set proficiency:

1. Demonstrate preassigned fundamental rhythmic "beats" and polyrhythmic patterns typical of jazz (swing), Latin, and Fusion (jazz rock) on the drum set.

V. Basic jazz arranging:

1. Demonstrate the ability to notate correctly for instruments in the standard big band (ranges, transpositions, etc.), including rhythm section notation.
2. Demonstrate the ability to voice a melody utilizing 4-way close and drop 2, drop 3, drop 2 and 4, and double lead voicing techniques, as well as the proper use of approach techniques for harmonizing non-chord tones. It is also expected that the student will use approach techniques to avoid excessive repeated notes and improve voice leading. Use of substitute tensions is expected, as well as familiarity with the standard chord scales.

VI. Jazz history and styles:

This exam is administered by the Department of Studio Music and Jazz. The purpose of this exam is to measure the student's broad knowledge of jazz history with emphasis on the development of the improvised line. The exam will cover the following topics (a study guide will be provided):

1. The contributions of the musical elements from West Africa to the jazz language.
2. The musical environment of 19th Century North America that contributed to the development of jazz.
3. The contributions to the jazz language of influential jazz musicians from Buddy Bolden through John Coltrane.

The exam will be divided into four sections as follows:

- I. Pre-jazz contributions of West Africa and 19th Century North America
- II. Early Jazz
- III. The Swing Era
- IV. Bop through avant-garde

Test questions will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and short essay.

VII. Comprehensive repertoire examination:

The student will prepare a selected repertoire of a minimum of 50 compositions (limited to one contrafact on any given harmonic progression), to be selected from a comprehensive repertoire

list provided. This should be done in consultation with the private instructor/advisor. From this list the student should be prepared to demonstrate and discuss the following, without aid of printed music:

1. Melody
2. Comprehensive knowledge of the harmonic progression and related chord scales
3. Ability to improvise fluently on the progression and discuss aspects of solo construction and development including scale choices, harmonic substitutions, melodic devices, and rhythmic devices.

Demonstrate knowledge of the historic precedents and lineage of various techniques related to jazz history on the major instrument.

DMA Qualifying Examination - individual tests and procedures:

The exam will be divided into written and performance tests and a comprehensive oral exam. The faculty of the Department of Studio Music and Jazz will approve the following written and performance exams and oversee the exam process. The exams will be administered separately on the designated exam day.

I. Written test in jazz theory/analysis/aural skills:

The exam will be administered as group exam by a member of the MSJ faculty. Students will be given 90 - 120 minutes to complete the exam. The exam will be graded by a member of the MSJ faculty. Students must score 80% or above on the exam to pass.

II. Performance based test in keyboard skills:

Exams in keyboard harmony will be given individually, each approximately 15-20 minutes duration. Three members of the MSJ faculty will administer the exam and will vote to pass or fail.

III. Performance based test in jazz drum set/rhythm skills:

Exams in rhythmic skills will be given individually, each approximately 15-20 minutes duration. Three members of the MSJ faculty will administer the exam and will vote to pass or fail.

IV. Written test in jazz arranging:

Students will be given 90 minutes to complete the exam. Students must score 80% or above on the exam to pass.

V. Written test in Jazz History and Styles

The exam will be administered as group exam by a member of the MSJ faculty. Students will be given 90 - 120 minutes to complete the exam. The exam will be graded by a member of the MSJ faculty. Students must score 80% or above on the exam to pass.

VI. Comprehensive repertoire/oral exam

An app one-hour oral examination before a minimum of three members of the jazz faculty, including the principal teacher/advisor. The oral examination occurs by appointment before the end of the semester all written and performance exams are completed.

During the oral exam, committee members will ask the student to demonstrate select pieces form the students prepared repertoire list and ask questions to test the depth of students' knowledge and understanding of the material, especially related to the student's specific instrument and or/discipline.

The oral exam may include further questions regarding the previous exam material and further performance-based evaluation (aural, rhythmic, keyboard). At the end of the oral exam, students will wait outside the room while the committee reaches a decision. Two outcomes are possible, pass or fail.

MSJ DMA Qualifying Exam Timeline:

The MSJ Qualifying exam will be given at a prescribed time and place in the fall semester. Students should plan on taking the exam near the end of the third semester of doctoral study.

- Students will be notified of the exact exam dates no less than two months (60 days) before the exam date. Written exams may not be postponed or given at individual times without written permission from the jazz faculty.
- All parts of the qualifying examination (written tests, performance based tests, and the oral exam) must be successfully completed **BEFORE** the DMA essay proposal defense can occur.
- If a student fails any portion of the qualifying exam, the student may be asked to revise or retake that portion, including the oral portion or any of the written or performance components. Retakes will be scheduled according to the availability of the necessary faculty and the student's schedule. In lieu of a retake the faculty may recommend a remediation project. **A student who fails any portion of either the MSJ qualifying the exam twice or fails to complete a remediation project to the faculty's satisfaction by the assigned due date will be dismissed from the program.**

- Upon completion of all DMA qualifying examination, the DMA essay proposal defense will be scheduled while classes are in session in the fall or spring semesters, in consultation with the DMA essay advisor. Students must submit the essay proposal to the essay committee two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.
- Qualifying exams and retakes will only be given **while classes are in session**.
- Exemptions:

DMA instrumental performance majors whose major instrument is jazz piano may petition to be exempted from the basic keyboard proficiency exam.

DMA instrumental performance majors whose major instrument is jazz percussion may petition to be exempted from the basic rhythmic proficiency exam.