IOWA

School of Music

D.M.A. Thesis—Recording Project Manual

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General Description

The **DMA Thesis: *Recording Project*** will consist of a high quality, professionally produced audio recording of significant repertoire and an accompanying paper.

Developments in the production and distribution of digital recordings have increasingly led music departments and schools of music in academic institutions to include studio recordings as evidence of research and scholarly work in considering faculty productivity. Professional recordings and videos produced by performing faculty are considered analogous to the publication of books or articles by academic faculty.

In light of these trends in the academic and professional performance marketplace, the School of Music has implemented the **DMA Thesis: *Recording Project.***

The completed project will consist of a 50-75-minute master recording and accompanying paper that includes a description and justification of the project, program/liner notes, and the formal and public abstracts required by the Graduate College.

Although repertoire for the DMA Recording Project may be performed on degree recitals, live recordings of recitals may not be used for the project. All tracks must be professionally produced studio recordings that would meet generally accepted technical standards for a commercial release. In choosing music, students and advisors should look beyond frequently performed and recorded standard repertoire and seek out high quality works that are new, commissioned, or lesser known. Students should take this opportunity to explore repertoire and illuminate latent musical, stylistic, or historical relationships among the recorded pieces. Within this guiding philosophy, each performance area may create strategies for repertoire selection.

A proposal for the recording and paper will be written by the candidate in consultation with the faculty advisor and vetted and approved by the candidate's final examination committee. The proposal defense consists of an oral presentation, given by the candidate, describing the original contribution(s) of the project and the artistic significance of the repertoire, the composer(s), and the musical genre(s), to the profession and to the candidate.
The candidate will prepare, record, and produce the studio recording, then defend it and its accompanying paper at the final oral examination.

Course Requirements

All D.M.A. students are required to enroll in MUS:7140 Seminar in Music Research, a course devoted to thesis preparation and professional development. The goal of MUS:7140 is to supplement the thesis advisor's work with the student, culminating in a complete draft (introduction, statement of purpose, literature/recording review, methodology, proposed recording schedule, bibliography) of the thesis proposal. Students wishing to complete a **Recording Project** should enroll in MUS:7140, section 0002.

MUS:7140 cannot be taken prior to the 3rd semester of coursework in the DMA and passage of the Qualifying Recital.

Over the course of thesis work, students must successfully complete 2-6 credit hours of MUS:7970 D.M.A. Essay. These hours should be spread out over the anticipated number of semesters it will take to complete the Recording Project and successfully defend it. If the student enrolls in the full six hours prior to completing the Recording Project, they must continue to enroll in MUS:7970 or GRAD:6002 Doctoral Continuous Registration until completion. The Graduate College requires registration in every semester after Comprehensive Exams are passed, and GRAD:6002 should be used only if the student will not be engaging with the thesis advisor in a given semester.

Timeline, Deadlines, and Associated Costs

Timeline & Deadlines
- DMA candidates who plan to pursue the **DMA Thesis: *Recording Project*** option must first consult their major professor to determine the feasibility of the proposed project. Once the student and professor have agreed on a potential topic, the candidate must prepare a detailed and specific proposal of the music to be recorded.
- The thesis committee must receive the complete proposal *no less than two weeks* prior to the scheduled Proposal Defense.
- The Proposal Defense and Final Defense cannot occur in the same semester. If a student wishes to graduate in Semester 2, the Proposal Defense must be successfully passed and Topic Approval form completed *by week 12* of Semester 1.
- Once the Proposal Defense is successfully passed, the student completes the Topic Approval form found on this page: https://music.uiowa.edu/current-students/graduate-information-graduate-policies-and-procedures/approval-graduate-thesis-and. On the form, there is a place to indicate whether or not the Recording Project will involve UI Recording Studios or an outside person(s). *Non-UI Recording Studio staff cannot use Voxman Music Building facilities.*
- Prior to the Proposal Defense, the student may consult with the Recording Studios about potential recording dates in Voxman Music Building. However, recording session

dates and times <u>cannot</u> be reserved until the Topic Approval form has collected all committee signatures and is received by the Recording Studios and Scheduling Office.

- The student records the Project repertoire and works with the recording engineer to create the final, mastered audio recording. *Total recording session time is limited to twenty-four hours and total post-production time is limited to twenty-four hours, for a maximum of forty-eight hours of billable time for the Project, plus any recording studio setup/teardown time.*

- Once the <u>mastered</u> recording and accompanying paper are finished, they are submitted to the thesis committee in advance of the final defense. The complete, <u>mastered</u> recording and accompanying paper must be made available to the thesis committee *no less than two weeks* before the Final Defense Date. The candidate will upload CD-quality .wav audio files (16bit at 44.1kHz) to their Office 365 Onedrive and share the folder with committee members.

- Following the successful Final Defense of the project, and *no less than one week before* the Graduate College's Thesis Deposit deadline (see Graduate College website for exact date), the candidate will submit final edited, mixed, and mastered CD-quality .wav audio files (16bit at 44.1kHz) to the University of Iowa Libraries for archiving and uploading to the streaming server. The Libraries will email the student all streaming audio permalinks for inclusion in the accompanying paper no later than three days prior to Graduate College's Thesis Deposit deadline. Consult with the music librarian for more information on this process.

- Once the permalinks are added to the post-defense revisions of the accompanying paper, the project may be submitted to the Graduate College by its Thesis Deposit deadline.

Associated Costs

1. The student will pay the standard hourly rate for recording services as established annually for the School of Music's Recording Studios and published on the website https://music.uiowa.edu/current-students/recording-studios. Total amounts are charged to the student's U-Bill. The student is responsible for this expense, which includes recording, editing/mastering, and setup/teardown for recording sessions.

The Proposal and Proposal Defense

A successful Recording Project proposal provides important information to the committee that convinces its members of the project's appropriate scope and worthiness of research/recording. There is no required page length for the proposal. Just as the body of music is large and richly varied, proposals will, likewise, vary somewhat in length and content.

Proposal Components and Expectations:
I.   *The working title of the project*
II.   *Introduction*
   a.   The clear statement of purpose and brief description of the project, and its value to the field.   Why will the project be significant to others inside and/or outside the research area?
   b.   Why was this project chosen? Provide a cursory overview of the music and/or composers featured in the project.
III.   *Literature Review*: This section can take many forms and vary in length, dependent on the nature of the Project. What recordings of this material or related material already exist and what is their relationship to the proposed Project? How do they influence your project? What scholarly sources informed the nature and/or scope of the proposed Project? Composers and musicians, even contemporary ones, seldom work in isolation, removed from cultural, historical, or interpersonal influences.
IV.   *Methodology & Limitations*: Explain the criteria employed to arrive at the Project's proposed repertoire. Explain how the recording, as a program, provides new artistic, stylistic, technical, or other perspectives on relationships among the chosen works.
V.   *Repertoire*
   a.   Describe each of the works to be recorded and how it fits into the context of your recording. Some introductory analysis of key works may be appropriate here, if that analysis strengthens the Project's significance.
   b.   Provide information on the availability of scores, editions, and any other performance-related sources.
VI.   *Technical Information and Timeline*
   a.   Provide a detailed timeline for completion of the project that includes estimates of the time needed to acquire, learn, and rehearse music, complete recording sessions, edit recordings, and prepare the final accompanying paper.
   b.   Technical information about the recording, including names of any potential collaborators, proposed location of recording studio(s), and names of individuals providing technical services (recording engineers, piano technicians, session producers).
VII.   *Bibliography*: Provide a detailed bibliography of consulted sources including existing recordings of proposed works, written resources, and other sources that inform your project.

The Proposal Defense:

The proposal defense consists of an oral presentation, given by the candidate, describing the original contribution(s) of the project and the artistic significance of the repertoire, the composer(s), and the musical genre(s), to the profession and to the candidate.

The committee will suggest modifications regarding repertoire or the production process, and make observations and recommendations on the viability and significance of the project as well as the practicability of the process and timeline.

Scheduling Recording Sessions

The Recording Studios are available for DMA Recording Project recording sessions during the following times of the year:
- Finals Week of the Fall semester, during Winter Break, and the first three weeks of the Spring semester.
- Finals Week of the Spring semester, during Summer Break, and the first three weeks of the Fall semester.

NOTE: If a Project uses non-UI recording personnel for recording sessions, but uses the UI Recording Studio for post-production, sound files ready for post-production must be submitted to the UI Recording Studio by the end of the third week of the semester. Total post-production time is limited to twenty-four billed hours. Non-UI recording engineers should communicate with the Recording Studio concerning requirements.

DMA Recording Project Recording Sessions typically take place in the School of Music Recital Hall. The Concert Hall may also be used, subject to approval from the Recording Studio and Scheduling Office.

Recording Sessions in Voxman Music Building for the DMA Recording Project are reserved using the DMA Recording Project Scheduling Form found in the scheduling section of the School of Music website. The maximum allowable Recording Session time available per project is *24 total hours*.

The Recording Session & Post-Production: Definitions and Best Practices
James Edel, Recording Engineer

Record - The recording sessions can be thought of similarly to a live performance, but it's a different experience that is more forgiving because the performer can start over and the audience is imaginary. But the session is also less forgiving; mistakes are permanent. The recording session is definitely NOT the practice room. Artistic/interpretive decisions cannot be made in front of the microphones; those must be made in the practice room or in rehearsal.

Edit - After all the recording sessions are done, the musician(s) pick best takes that they have available, and the studio stitches those takes together with crossfades. The studio cannot change the pitch, the tempo, or the musical phrasing without making an artificial sounding product. However, if, for example, mm.1-8 is great in take 5 and mm.9-16 lovely in take 9, then the studio can edit those takes together with a crossfade assuming that there is a logical/musical separation like rest or dynamic change at that point. The studio cannot change vibrato, separate instruments from one another, change the left vs right hand of piano, etc.

Mix - Once the musician is happy with their edited compilations, the studio will do some mixing to improve the dynamic clarity, timbral color, and hall sound. This is subtle and will just make something that sounds good sound better. Generally, this requires no input from or interaction with the musician, just the permission to do so, and then, once finished, say if it is acceptable. Reverberant hall-sound or treble/bass is not so important in the editing choices and can be adjusted in Mixing.

Master - After the recording, editing, and mixing is all done, and everyone is satisfied with the results, the studio will then master the CD/Album/Project. This is also a subtle process and will not dramatically change the character of the recording. It can, however, make the dynamics between pieces more consistent, reduce some background noises, and finalize some fussy but important little details like spacing between tracks and spell-checking. The most important issue with this process is that most of the work is rendered to the files, making it very difficult and time-consuming to go backwards. This makes it very important that people sign off on their edits <u>before mixing</u> and sign off on their mixed and edited recordings <u>before mastering</u>. If the studio masters the project but is later asked to change one of the take choices because there was a wrong note that was not noticed before, it creates significant issues. It can add 5 or 6 hours of work to fix it at this point when it would have taken 10 minutes if it had been requested earlier before mastering. Therefore, no changes can be requested for mastered recordings.

Deliver - After the CD/Album/Project has been mastered, it's ready to be delivered to the Library Archive, Record Label, whatever/wherever it is destined. At that point, the studio's work is done and there are no more changes to be made. Mastering in music production is the final step before the project is done and goes into the world.

The Accompanying Paper

The Recording Project is an artistic endeavor supported by a level of academic research. The Accompanying Paper, in the suggested range of 35-60 pages, should include these basic components:

I. Introduction: This can draw upon the initial proposal. Expansion and further discussion of statement of purpose and literature review.

II. A chapter that provides discussion of research that informs and contextualizes the project. It includes presentation and analysis of supporting evidence (musical, historical, cultural, aesthetic, etc.) pertinent to statement of purpose. It should conclude with a reflection on outcomes and future opportunities.

III. Liner Notes (4-8 pages): Effective liner/program notes should distill the essence of the accompanying paper in a prose style aimed at an educated or concert-going audience. It should also provide technical information about the recording itself such as recording dates, engineers, producers, collaborators, and other common technical information.

IV. Bibliography

The Final Defense

The final defense features an oral presentation, given by the candidate, of project outcomes and a discussion/evaluation of the completed, <u>mastered</u> recording and accompanying paper by the candidate's committee. The thesis committee may recommend revisions of the paper and only minor adjustments in the recording (track sequencing, for example).