
The Jazz Program Licence to Maîtrise

An innovative curriculum rooted in the traditions of jazz while integrating elements of Lebanon's rich musical heritage.

Thomas Hornig · Henri Selmer Paris Artist · The Whole Horn

Mission

Mission statement

Our mission is to cultivate a new generation of musicians who possess a deep understanding of jazz and its associated traditions, emphasizing the transformative power of ensemble performance. By fostering innovation alongside a solid foundation in the jazz language, students will be equipped to contribute to and evolve the art form in Lebanon and beyond.

Ensemble at the heart

At the Lebanese Higher National Conservatory of Music, ensemble experience is the cornerstone of both the learning and teaching philosophy. It is our belief that no student can truly acquire the skills necessary for professional success without regular, immersive participation in ensemble settings.

Collective performance

“The primary aspirational driving force for musicians at every level, and across the globe, lies in the incalculable joy and wonder of collective performance.”

Through ensemble participation, students learn to express the full gamut of human emotions.

Two higher cycles

Watch the video · 22 s

FIRST HIGHER CYCLE · LICENCE

Focus: Establishing foundational skills in jazz performance and theory.

Jazz Theory I & II

Ear Training I & II

Instrumental Proficiency (weekly private lessons)

Jazz Improvisation I

Ensemble Performance (small group)

History of Jazz

Introduction to Composition and Arranging

Introduction to Piano (non-pianists)

SECOND HIGHER CYCLE · MAÎTRISE

Focus: Advanced performance, composition, and professional readiness.

Advanced Jazz Theory and Harmony

Advanced Ear Training

Jazz Composition and Arranging

Improvisation Techniques II

Ensemble Performance (large ensemble and small group)

Contemporary Jazz Styles

Capstone Recital

Music Pedagogy and Professional Practices

Two higher cycles

What defines the cycles

“We have to define what those cycles are. I think they can be largely defined by the demonstration of advanced technique and the demonstration of the ability to learn and being [in] command on a stage with their peers ... playing whatever repertoire is being called, no matter what the repertoire is.”

“All students in the second cycle should be very, very capable of playing ... difficult repertoire, like Inner Urge or Countdown or Giant Steps or any of those difficult tunes, and they shouldn’t be seen as difficult but rather a job that has to be done. You work on these things very carefully, meticulously, with a ... greater amount of repetition, and you’re fine ... It’s really more about the work methodology and the work ethic when it comes to preparing for gigs. That would be a successful outcome as far as I’m concerned in any musical discipline in the conservatory.”

Certificate and diploma

“The [jazz] program is in its infancy at the National Conservatory, so [the] determination on exactly what [the] final syllabus will be ... will be the result of a lot of consultations, but my sense of things [is that a] certificate can be offered at the end of the first year, and [a] diploma for specialization [in] jazz can be offered at the end of the third year, but these are all very preliminary assessments. So I think that the degree in jazz is going to be a sort of qualifier to their degree in their principal instrument, and depending on the kind of expertise that is brought into the Conservatory to teach the different aspects of the jazz curriculum, students can benefit from more refined specializations.”

Length of each cycle

First Higher Cycle: 3 years. Second Higher Cycle: 2 years. These are the lengths of the jazz department of the Paris Conservatoire (CNSMD de Paris): a 3-year first cycle (180 ECTS) and a 2-year second cycle (120 ECTS) conferring the grade of master.

The academic year is divided into two semesters: Fall Semester: September to mid-February. Spring Semester: March to July. Orientation for new students: Early September. Examination periods: February and July. Recital evaluations: End of each semester.

Lebanese Higher National Conservatory of Music · Jazz Curriculum

Core areas of study

The program follows a European-style higher education structure with two primary cycles.

Watch the video · 25 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Instrumental Proficiency

Development of technical and expressive skills.

Open

Music Theory and Harmony

Comprehensive study of jazz harmony and advanced theoretical concepts.

Ear Training

Mastery of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic recognition.

Ensemble Playing

Small group dynamics and performance practice.

Core areas of study

The program follows a European-style higher education structure with two primary cycles.

Improvisation

Exploration of improvisational techniques and strategies.

Arranging and Composition

Techniques for arranging and composing within jazz idioms.

Music History

Historical study of jazz and its cultural contexts.

Jazz Performance Syllabus

The class as taught today

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Practice Instrumental Proficiency in The Whole Horn

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Jazz Theory I & II

Two semesters · LHNCM Jazz Theory 101

How it is taught

“[Jazz Theory] I and II, that’s going to be taught pretty much in class. [It] is gonna be one class ... opportunities to experiment and perform as jazz players, and a lot of emphasis will be put on scales and chords and [chord-scale] relationships. But a formal jazz theory class, I think that[’s] something that we have to wait [for] until [we have a] professor that can develop a very specific syllabus for that.”

The course

Theory of Jazz Music is divided into two credit courses to be taught in the span of two academic semesters: MUJ 342 and MUJ 352. This course provides in addition to the classical theory of music, the specific foundations of Jazz Theory and harmony. MUJ 342 begins with basic Jazz Theory, the Major Scale and the II–V–I Progression, Chord, Major Scale Harmony, Melodic Minor Scale Harmony, Diminished Scale Harmony, Whole Tone Scale Harmony, to how to practice Scales and Slash Chords.

Major scales · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

ii–V–I arpeggios (ii7–V7–Imaj7, the major-key progression) · every key · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Diatonic 7th chords of the major scale · all 12 keys · ABCD · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Jazz Theory I & II

Two semesters · LHNCM Jazz Theory 101

Diatonic 7th chords of melodic minor · all 12 keys · ABCD · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

7th chords of the diminished scale (half-whole, then whole-half) · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

Triads of the whole-tone scale (augmented triads) · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

Outcomes and content

The primary goal of any aspiring jazz musician is to learn to improvise. To that end this course will look at the fundamental concepts of jazz harmony, chord/scale relationships, chord voicings and commonly used substitutions. Practical application of this material will be a main focus and students will be tested on their use of this knowledge in a live performance setting.

The students develop an ability to map out chord scale relationships in standard jazz repertoire. They will also be asked to study chord voicings, alternate chord progressions for common forms. Emphasis will be put on developing basic knowledge of jazz harmony and then immediately applying those skills in classroom performances of modern, standard jazz repertoire.

Texts: Modern Reading Text in 4/4 time – Louis Bellson/ Gil Breines; Essential Rhythms For Jazz Ensemble – Doug Beach & George Shutack; Improvisation The Jazz Language – Dan Haerle; Jazz/Rock voicings for the contemporary keyboard player – Dan Haerle.

Ear Training I & II

Jazz Sight Singing, Rhythmic Chanting and Ear Training

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Course requirements

The student will sing and identify intervals, basic rhythms, melodies in major and minor keys, triads, chord progressions, and seventh chords. Emphasis will be put on learning how to transcribe melodic lines, jazz improvisation, and bass lines as a way to profoundly internalize jazz phrasing and rhythmic concepts.

Ear games: Echo level 1 (sing the interval back) + Name It level 1 (identify the interval) · 1 hour each

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Ear game: Chord Colors level 2 (major, minor, diminished, augmented triads) · 1 hour

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Ear game: Chord Colors level 5 (dominant 7, minor 7, major 7, half-diminished, diminished 7) · 1 hour

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Keyboard and grading

The student will also demonstrate basic keyboard skills for intervals, scales and be able to play chord progressions of selected repertoire. The student's grade will be determined by short periodic exams in singing, aural recognition, easy transcription, memorization of selected Jazz standards and keyboard skills.

Improvisation

Jazz Improvisation I (First Higher Cycle) · Improvisation Techniques II (Second Higher Cycle)

Watch the video · 22 s

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Improvisation techniques

Using guide tones and chord tones as a basis for melodic lines.
Applying scale-based improvisation to navigate harmonic changes.
Developing rhythmic motifs and phrasing for expressive solos.
Practicing transcriptions of jazz solos to internalize vocabulary.

ii–V–I arpeggios: the chord tones of ii7–V7–Imaj7 · every key · quarters · ♩ =60 (guide-tone lines are not in the app)

Open in the app

Improvisation

Jazz Improvisation I (First Higher Cycle) · Improvisation Techniques II (Second Higher Cycle)

Chord-scale relationships and vocabulary

Understanding chord-scale relationships, such as using Dorian and Mixolydian modes for minor and dominant chords.

Building a vocabulary of licks and phrases through transcription and practice.

Exploring timing and pacing to create cohesive musical statements.

Practicing solo construction by writing and memorizing ideal solos over standard progressions.

Using tools like Miles Davis's recordings, especially 'Kind of Blue,' for practical examples of lyrical and accessible improvisation.

Dorian, then Mixolydian · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

[Open in the app](#)

Ensembles

Students at LHNCM participate in a wide range of ensembles, including small combos, big bands, and cross-cultural fusion groups.

Objectives

Perform a diverse repertoire with stylistic accuracy and expression.
Develop ensemble cohesion through active listening and communication.
Explore improvisation within ensemble contexts, applying theoretical principles.
Participate in regular performances, fostering stage presence and professionalism.

Performance opportunities

Weekly ensemble rehearsals and performances in small and large groups.
Regular student recitals showcasing solo and ensemble work.
Participation in jazz festivals, concerts, and community events throughout Lebanon.
Collaborative performances with other departments and external institutions.
Opportunities to perform original compositions in professional settings.

Composition and Arranging

Jazz Composition and Arranging

Course topics

Writing for small and large ensembles.

Techniques in melodic coupling, counterpoint, and reharmonization.

Exploring non-functional harmony and advanced voicing techniques.

Creating compositions that blend traditional jazz forms with modern innovations.

Composition techniques

Students will learn techniques such as melodic development, reharmonization, and the use of modal and chromatic language in original works. Compositions should integrate theoretical knowledge with creative expression.

History of Jazz

Understanding the historical development of jazz is essential to appreciating its cultural and artistic significance.

Watch the video · 26 s

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

The eras

Origins of Jazz (1900–1914): Jazz emerged from a blend of African, European, and American musical traditions, with roots in blues, spirituals, and ragtime.

Swing Era (1929–1945): Characterized by large ensembles and highly danceable rhythms, the Swing Era made jazz America's popular music.

Bebop (1940s): A response to the commercialism of swing, bebop introduced complex harmonies, fast tempos, and virtuosic improvisation.

The eras (continued)

Cool Jazz and Hard Bop (1950s): Cool jazz emphasized smooth, lyrical lines, while hard bop incorporated elements of gospel and blues.

Free Jazz and Fusion (1960s–1970s): Free jazz broke traditional harmonic and rhythmic conventions, while fusion combined jazz with rock and world music influences.

Rhythm Studies

Rhythm Studies and Jazz Drumming · Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

When it is offered

An elective, offered when a specialist teacher is available. The syllabus for Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345) is ready to run.

Course outline

History and fundamentals of jazz drumming.

Triplet interpretations and cymbal line patterns.

Advanced coordination and reading jazz charts.

Afro-Cuban and Afro-Latin rhythm integration.

Courses for rhythm section instruments (piano, bass, drums) emphasize foundational responsibilities such as timekeeping, groove establishment, and harmonic support. Advanced studies include comping techniques, rhythmic independence, and interaction with soloists.

Rhythm Studies

Rhythm Studies and Jazz Drumming · Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion

The course explores from a historical perspective the various styles of Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion along its dual relationship to the Jazz language. The percussion instruments are all studied and explored in-group setting.

The syllabus · MUJ 345 · 15 weeks · 2 credits

Afro-Cuban religious ceremonial rhythms, in addition to drum set applications, are also covered. The course also focuses in depth upon the analysis and knowledge of the inner workings of clave and basic techniques on the major battery of Afro-Cuban percussion (congas, bongo, timbales) in addition to [the] minor battery (maracas, guiro, shakers, cowbells, etc.).

Weeks 1–8 · Brazil. The Brazilian percussion instruments (surdo, agogô, triangle, caixeta, ganzá, afoxé, reco-reco, tamborim, pandeiro, cuíca, repinique, berimbau...); bossa nova and samba bass lines and comping; the drummer's role. Students play the rhythms while singing the standards ("Corcovado", "Só Danço Samba") and rehearse four bossa novas and three sambas in a small group.

Weeks 9–13 · Cuba. Five clave rhythms, the cascara, traditional son clave styles, rumba clave styles, contemporary Cuban styles; a history of Afro-Cuban music and ten Afro-Cuban musicians, such as Paquito D'Rivera and Tito Puente.

Weeks 14–15. A public performance with a small jazz group.

Texts. Essential Rhythms for Jazz Ensemble (Kendor); The Essence of Brazilian Percussion and Drum Set and Cuba: Passport to a New World of Music (Alfred).

Recommended: Rebeca Mauleón's 101 Montunos and Salsa Guidebook; Aebersold volumes 31, 64, 69, 77 and 98.

Grading. Participation and practice 20%, class work and quizzes 20%, midterm 20%, final 40%.

Rhythm studies and Afro-Cuban studies

"... The likelihood that we would add in a rhythm studies or ... Afro-Cuban studies component to the jazz program ... depends on the human capital [that] comes in, and many of the courses that will be offered are gonna depend on the expertise that comes into the Conservatory."

Scales and harmony

Jazz harmony is built on chord progressions that create tension and resolution.

Watch the video · 22 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Scales and modes

Major Scale: The fundamental scale in Western music, consisting of seven notes arranged in whole and half-step intervals: W-W-H-W-W-W-H.

Modes of the Major Scale: Derived by starting the major scale on each successive note, these modes include: Ionian (Major), Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian (Natural Minor), and Locrian.

Pentatonic Scales: Five-note scales commonly used in blues and jazz improvisation.

Blues Scale: A six-note scale used extensively in blues and jazz, adding a b5 to the minor pentatonic scale: 1-b3-4-b5-5-b7.

Melodic Minor Scale: A scale with a minor third and raised sixth and seventh degrees ascending.

Harmonic Minor Scale: A minor scale with a raised seventh degree, creating a distinctive interval structure.

Major scales · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

The seven modes of C major, each from its own degree: C Ionian, D Dorian, E Phrygian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian, A Aeolian, B Locrian · written keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Major pentatonic, then minor pentatonic · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Scales and harmony

Jazz harmony is built on chord progressions that create tension and resolution.

Melodic minor · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Harmonic minor · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Chord progressions

ii–V–I Progression: A cornerstone of jazz harmony, the ii–V–I resolves tension through a sequence of chords based on the second, fifth, and first degrees of the scale.

Minor ii–V–I: A variation used in minor keys, typically involving a half-diminished ii chord (e.g., Dm7b5), a dominant V chord (e.g., G7), and a minor I chord (e.g., Cm7).

Voice Leading: The smooth transition of notes between chords, emphasizing stepwise motion and minimizing leaps.

Extended Chords: Chords that include notes beyond the seventh, such as ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths, adding richness and complexity.

ii–V–I arpeggios (ii7–V7–Imaj7) · every key · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Diatonic 9th chords of the major scale · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 (the app stops at the ninth)

Open in the app

Performance

Performance is where theoretical knowledge and technical skills come to life.

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Performance practices

Preparing for live performances through rigorous rehearsals.
Adhering to professional standards for attire, punctuality, and stage conduct.
Interpreting charts and lead sheets accurately and expressively.
Engaging with audiences through dynamic performances.

Program features

Masterclasses: Regular sessions with internationally recognized jazz artists.
Workshops: Practical training in studio recording and live sound engineering.
Collaborative Opportunities: Projects with other departments in the conservatory.
Electives: Courses in world music, jazz technology, and interdisciplinary studies.

Performance

Performance is where theoretical knowledge and technical skills come to life.

Open the Jazz Performance syllabus in The Whole Horn

Open the page

Jazz standards, every year

“They should learn at least 10 jazz standards every single year, if not many, many more. That would be the bare minimum, I think, of the first year ...”

Elsewhere: the Paris Conservatoire’s first cycle has a required course, “Repertoire and oral tradition” (20 ECTS), with no published tune count. At North Texas, each upper-division jazz saxophone jury draws on a list of about 20 tunes from one era, and students play three transcriptions a semester (2021 saxophone handbook).

Capstone Recital

Second Higher Cycle · Maîtrise

Watch the video · 19 s

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

The recital

A culminating performance project that allows students to synthesize and showcase their technical, creative, and performance skills. Students present a curated program of jazz standards, original compositions, and stylistic explorations that reflect their journey through the program.

Student performances are evaluated on fluency, technical facility, and interpretive communication. These criteria are designed to provide specific feedback and foster continuous improvement.

Assessment criteria

Preparation and participation in ensemble rehearsals and performances.

Mastery of scales, improvisational techniques, and theoretical knowledge.

Original compositions and arrangements for diverse ensemble configurations.

Proficiency in rhythm studies and coordination exercises.

Major, harmonic minor, melodic minor, major and minor pentatonic · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app

Open in the app

Graduation

First Higher Cycle

Licence

Foundational studies in jazz performance, theory, and history.

Second Higher Cycle

Maîtrise

Advanced studies focusing on specialization, composition, and professional performance.

Beyond

After the Maîtrise

Upon completion of the Maîtrise, students may pursue further specialization in specific areas such as jazz composition, performance, or pedagogy.

The standard for graduation

“[As for] graduation, what the standard should be for graduation is, I think, ... from my perspective, ... gonna be more based on their work, their work ethic, their attitude, and the extent to which they are willing to make themselves available to be in [support] of others. Some young musicians crave the limelight. They really want to have their name on the billing, and that [circumstance trumps] ... any incentive, I think, to initiate discussions on the formation of various groups, to hopefully get together [and] rehearse material that maybe can be located ... through someone like me, or through websites where you can get some of this repertoire, and/or write original compositions for these things.”

The whole program

The class as taught today is the Jazz Performance Syllabus.

Jazz is all about individual accountability.

thewholehorn.com/jazz-syllabus