France has long had a major presence on the world musical scene. In 1669, Louis XIV founded the Royal Academy of Music, and, since the 19th century, Paris has been a major concert venue for the greatest piano virtuosi of Europe (Liszt, Chopin, others). In the second half of the century, France was the world’s leading venue for lyric opera. In 1966, seven years after André Malraux became France’s first minister of culture, an office of music was created under the leadership of Marcel Landowski, whose support for the popularization of music bore fruit (in June 1982) in the form of the first Fête de la Musique, which has since spread to 120 countries and 350 cities.

Musicians are trained in conservatories at the regional, departmental, and communal levels. Only two conservatories are national: the national conservatories of music and dance in Paris and Lyon. Arts Education Clusters are also accredited by the Ministry of Culture to confer degrees. The clusters operate in partnership with conservatories, universities, centers for the training of music and dance teachers, and centers for higher education in music and dance. The programs offered by the clusters are harmonized with the European degree system (bachelor, master, doctorate). Admission decisions are made by individual institutions. Certain private schools grant credentials that are listed in the French national registry of occupational certifications (RNCP).

Countless foreign musicians have lived in France while pursuing an international career. Examples include Frederick Chopin (Poland), Jacques Offenbach (Germany), Yuri Boukoff (Bulgaria), Joel Cohen (United States), Ayo (Nigeria), Feist (Canada), Stromae (Belgium), and Ibrahim Maalouf (Lebanon).

Rebecca Tong (China) won the first prize of the Maestro, Competition International Conductors, organized by the Philharmonie de Paris and the Paris Mozart Orchestra for the first edition in September 2020.

Music festivals, supported by the national Ministry of Culture and local governments, have gained national and international recognition. They illustrate France’s musical diversity: classical, baroque, jazz, rock, electronic, metal, and so on. Examples include the International opera festival in Aix-en-Provence, the Musica creative festival in Strasbourg, Folle Journée (crazy day) in Nantes, the Ambronay and Beaune festivals, the Chorégies d’Orange, and, for contemporary music, the Printemps de Bourges, the Francofolies in La Rochelle, the HellFest in Clisson, the Transmusicales in Rennes, and the Printemps de Bourges, the Chorégies d’Orange, and, for contemporary music, the Printemps de Bourges, the Francofolies in La Rochelle, the HellFest in Clisson, the Transmusicales in Rennes.

International

Claude Debussy, Hector Berlioz, Pierre Boulez, Pierre Henry, Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie - these are just a few of the French musicians who have set rather than followed trends. Many French musicians and composers are recognized abroad for their unique musical mark, among them Michel Petrucciani, Pierre Boulez, Daft Punk, Christine and the Queens, Indila, Woodkid, Matthieu Chédid and Clovis Nicolas ...

Over the past 20 years, France’s Export Bureau has launched and supported the international careers of more than 300 French artists and professionals.

Useful links

- Bureau Export-CNMI: www.lebureauexport.fr
- Campusart, art, design, music, architecture, ... degrees online application: www.campusart.org
- CDMC, Contemporary music documentation center: www.cdmc.asso.fr
- CFPM, Centers for professional training in music: www.cfpmfrance.com
- CNM, national center for music: www.cnm.fr
- CNM-IRMA, center for information and resources on contemporary music: www.irma.asso.fr
- Culturethèque - Institut Français: www.culturetheque.com
- IRCAM, Acoustic research and coordination institute/mu-sic: www.ircam.fr
- La Maestra: www.lamaestra-paris.com
- Music Festival: https://fetedelamusique.culture.gouv.fr
- Ministry of culture: www.culture.gouv.fr
- RNCP, national register of professional certifications: www.francecompetences.fr
Diplôme national d’orientation professionnelle de musique (DNOP)
(Baccalauréat) – L3
> The DNOP, offered in about 40 conservatories, requires 2–4 years of study. It prepares students for the first year of postsecondary education.

Diplôme des métiers d’art (DMA)
(Baccalauréat + 2 years of higher education) – L2
> DMA programs in fabrication of musical instruments train future artisans.

Diplôme d’université (DU) in music education
(Baccalauréat + 2 years of higher education) – L2
> Some 10 centers and institutes offer a 2-year DU in music education. The degree recognizes the competence of graduates to teach and perform at the elementary and pre-school levels.

Diplôme d’état (DE) in music education
(Baccalauréat + 3 years of higher education) – L3
> Students are qualified as music instructors after 3 years of study at one of 15 centers for instrumental and vocal training (classical, ancient, traditional, jazz), music education, accompaniment, and direction of instrumental and vocal ensembles.

Institution-specific diplomas/master
(Baccalauréat + 5 years of higher education) – M2
> Some 20 universities offer music-related masters in the broad fields of arts, letters, and languages; humanities and social sciences; and science and technology. Specializations include music and musicology; musical heritage; music and the visual arts; history and analysis of music; acoustics and sound arts; orchestral performance; musical presentation; performance of ancient music; choir direction; theory and practice of the language and arts of music; sound engineering; and music therapy. The MEEF master in music education is offered at five institutions.

To apply online:
- Université de Lille: www.campusart.org/artsearch/#/program/447
- Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne: www.campusart.org/artsearch/#/program/809
- Université de Versailles (UVSQ): www.campusart.org/artsearch/#/program/649

Institution-specific master’s
(M2 + 1, 2, or 3 years of higher education)
> 1-year programs in contemporary repertory performance and composing/arranging are offered by the CNSMD in Paris and Lyon. Admission is competitive. Applicants must hold a master or equivalent in song, instrument, chamber music, or similar specialization and seek to pursue a career of high-level performance coupled with creation of an original artistic project in performance, composition, arranging, or distribution.
> 1- and 2-year programs in composing film scores are open by competitive selection to holders of a master’s or equivalent degree in composition, writing, jazz, or sound design. Applicants must write music at an advanced level and seek to specialize in composing film scores. The career-focused curriculum enables students to focus on specific aspects (constraints, project ergonomics, and techniques) and encourages direct collaboration between directors and composers.

See also Campus France’s “Audiovisual” information sheet for details on programs in sound engineering.

To apply online:
www.campusart.org > Find your program