Doctoral Programme Overview
Music History Performance Practice and Technology

42nd cycle – Academic Year 2026/2027

Institution and administrative headquarters	"Nicola Sala" State Conservatory of Music, Benevento
Field	Doctoral programme in Higher Education in the Arts, Music and Dance (AFAM)
Duration	Three years
Qualification awarded	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.; Italian qualification: Dottore di ricerca / Dott. Ric.)
Admission	Public selection procedure under the call for applications for the 42nd cycle, academic year 2026/2027

Programme profile and aims

The doctoral programme in "Music History, Performance Practice and Technology" trains researchers and musicians to undertake original investigations into the relationship between musical sources, historical contexts, performance practices and sound technologies. The programme combines musicological research, artistic research and technological experimentation, addressing both early musical heritage and contemporary repertoires and musical languages.

The three research pathways share a focus on the relationship between the musical text, its realisation in sound, and the conditions of musical production and reception. Performance spaces, instruments, recording and sound processing are examined as factors that may influence the interpretation, creation and transmission of music.

General learning objectives

- Formulate relevant research questions and develop original, feasible and methodologically sound projects.
- Critically analyse written, audio, audiovisual and digital sources, distinguishing between data, interpretations and findings.
- Connect historical and theoretical study with musical practice and experimentation, documenting the choices made and procedures adopted.
- Use digital tools, recording techniques and documentary resources in accordance with the aims of the research.
- Communicate findings in academic and artistic settings, including international contexts, with independent critical judgement and responsibility.

Interdisciplinary approach

Each doctoral candidate develops their project within a research pathway, under supervision assigned by the Doctoral Board. Participation in shared activities and seminars offered by the other pathways encourages dialogue between historical, philological, analytical, performance-based and technological methodologies. Artistic practice is accompanied by critical documentation that makes its contribution to knowledge and its assessment criteria explicit.

Research pathways

The programme comprises the following three research pathways, linked by a shared educational framework. The activities and outputs of each pathway are set out in the individual study plan approved by the Doctoral Board.

History philology context liturgy analysis and performance practice of Beneventan manuscripts

This pathway focuses on manuscripts in Beneventan script and musical notation, produced and transmitted in central and southern Italy and Dalmatia. The study of sources in the institutions where they are held combines musical philology, palaeography and the analysis of notation with history, liturgy and performance practice, including the use of digital humanities tools.

The research explores Roman, Byzantine, Campanian-Beneventan, Frankish and Norman cultural influences; the relationship between written and oral transmission; the functions of repertoires within their respective contexts; the contribution of women; and exchanges with non-Christian communities in southern Italy. The comparison of sources and performance practices supports informed and verifiable interpretations.

Outputs may include historical and critical studies, catalogues and descriptive tools, source editions, digital resources and projects to recreate music in sound, accompanied by scholarly apparatus documenting interpretative choices.

Jazz and pop rock performance practice

This pathway encompasses jazz, pop-rock and musical theatre. Research investigates contemporary repertoires, musical languages and practices, with reference to composition, improvisation, arranging, interpretation and production. Areas of study include the definition and transmission of the musical text, comparisons between versions, and the interaction between acoustic instruments, electronics, vocal processing and recording.

Within musical theatre, particular attention is given to musical dramaturgy and the relationships between music, singing, acting, stage movement and choreography. Research may address scores, librettos, texts, recordings and audiovisual documentation, as well as vocal, interpretative, performance and staging practices. Historical, critical and comparative analysis may be combined with artistic experimentation and performance projects, accompanied by methodological documentation that makes their contribution to research explicit.

Analysis explores the formation and transformation of the musical text, differences between versions, the role of live and studio performance, and the interaction between acoustic instruments, electronics and vocal processing. Exchanges with musicians and professionals may complement the investigation through documented activities consistent with the project.

Outputs may take the form of analytical and comparative studies, annotated transcriptions, research into performance practices, musical productions or performance projects accompanied by a discussion of methods and findings.

Sound manipulation recording and mixing technologies

This pathway develops research into sound capture, recording, processing, spatialisation and mixing in analogue and digital environments. It examines the relationship between the characteristics of the repertoire, performers' gestures, the acoustic environment and technical choices, including experimentation using the Conservatory's available facilities.

Central areas of study include sound as a dynamic and spatial phenomenon, the interaction between technology and musical creation, and comparisons between different approaches to sound reproduction and presentation. Research may address both the documentation and recreation of early repertoires and contemporary productions, using listening, analysis and comparison protocols consistent with the project's objectives.

Outputs may include experimental studies, documented procedures for recording and sound processing, sound productions, tools or working environments, and archives of materials, accompanied by a critical evaluation of the results.

Programme structure and expected outcomes

Training activities and individual research project

The three-year programme comprises a total of 180 academic credits, in accordance with the Programme Regulations. The Doctoral Board establishes the programme's annual study framework and approves the annual plan prepared by each doctoral candidate with their Supervisor. Activities include shared methodological training, seminars, workshops, individual research and the final work, with credits allocated in accordance with the academic provisions in force.

Training takes place at locations relevant to the project, including archives, libraries, laboratories and recording studios, under the agreements in force. The programme includes defining the research problem and identifying sources, testing methods and discussing findings.

Supervision and progress assessment

The Doctoral Board and the Coordinator are responsible for planning and monitoring; the Supervisor oversees the project and supports the doctoral candidate's independence. Reports, presentations and annual assessments document the fulfilment of training requirements and provide the basis for decisions on progression to the following year and admission to the final examination.

Mobility and international exchange

The programme promotes international exchange through seminars, conferences and activities at recognised institutions. Mobility is planned with the Supervisor and authorised in accordance with internal procedures. The Regulations require at least three months of study and research abroad during the three-year programme, subject to legally protected exceptions, with activities consistent with the individual project.

Final work and dissemination of results

The final work makes an original contribution to knowledge or methodologies. It may consist of an artistic output or project accompanied by a methodological and scholarly text with a bibliography, or a scholarly output in an artistic or project-based field. External assessment and the public defence are conducted in accordance with Article 7 of Ministerial Decree No. 470/2024 and the Conservatory's regulations.

Research adheres to the principles of research integrity, source attribution, data protection and rights in the materials used. Results are disseminated through publications, digital resources, recordings and public presentations, subject to the necessary permissions.

Skills and professional fields

Skills encompass musicological, artistic and technological research, musical heritage, publishing, documentation and sound production. They may be applied in AFAM institutions, universities, cultural organisations and public or private bodies, subject to the requirements for the respective roles.

References and information

References: Ministerial Decree No. 470 of 21 February 2024; Ministerial Decree No. 778 of 12 June 2024; General Academic Regulations and Programme Regulations. Places, scholarships, eligibility requirements and the timetable are governed by the call for applications for the 42nd cycle and Annex A. Information and official documents: www.conservatorio.bn.it/dottorati/.