

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
School of Music, Theatre & Dance

René L. Rusch, assistant professor of music, Department of Music Theory, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Music Theory, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

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| Ph.D. | 2007 | University of Michigan, Music Theory, with cognates in Jazz Piano and Performing Arts and Technology (film scoring) |
| M.A. | 2003 | University of Michigan, Music Theory |
| M.M. | 2001 | Mannes College of Music, Music Theory and Piano Performance, New York City, New York |
| B.M. | 2000 | Lawrence University, Piano Performance, Appleton, Wisconsin |
| | 1998 | Lawrence University, London Centre, London, England |

Professional Record:

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| 2015 – present | Assistant Professor, Department of Music Theory, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan |
| 2007 – 2015 | Assistant Professor of Music Theory, Department of Music Research, Schulich School of Music, McGill University |

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Rusch has taught all the classes in the core music theory curriculum in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance, upper-level electives, a graduate course for the general student, and graduate seminars for Ph.D. students in Music Theory. She was described by an internal reviewer as “one of our most gifted and versatile teachers.” She is able to inspire undergraduates through innovative active classroom experiences and at the graduate-level she guides discussions while providing helpful feedback. Moreover, her extensive piano training in both classical and jazz idioms allows students to identify more closely with her as a fellow performer. Student who have taken her classes observe in teaching evaluations that “Professor Rusch is a wonderful instructor who is very informed and articulate,” “she is so excited about theory and you can tell she really enjoys teaching,” “Dr. Rusch is probably the best teacher I have had at U of M thus far,” and “Professor Rusch led an essentially perfect seminar. I left the course with a nuanced understanding of a difficult field of music theory.”

Professional Activities: Through her research, Professor Rusch seeks to contribute to our understanding of the ways in which we analyze and theorize about music. Her forthcoming book, Schubert’s Instrumental Music and the Poetics of Interpretation, which is under contract with Indiana University Press, is an important publication that furthers our understanding of Franz Schubert’s music and that includes theoretical and aesthetic analyses of a selection of his musical works. This book is sure to solidify her reputation as the leading analyst of Schubert’s music. She is considered a leader in the fields of Schubert studies and the application of critical theory to music analysis, as well as being an important contributor to jazz studies, popular music studies,

and computational analysis. She has published her work in respected peer-reviewed journals including *Music Theory Online*, *Music Perception*, *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, *Journal of Music Theory*, and *Music Analysis*. She has also published significant work on the analysis of jazz and is currently working on a book about Brad Mehldau's approach to jazz improvisation. Her analysis and comparison of rock group Radiohead's "Paranoid Android" to jazz pianist Brad Mehldau's interpretation of the same song, published in *Music Theory Online*, has been lauded for its fine transcription and analytical work of this music.

Professor Rusch continues to find ways to collaborate on funded research projects. For example, she has contributed as a research team member on a \$75,000 grant awarded by the Michigan Institute for Data Science. She is also currently a collaborating member of a research project headed by a group of researchers from several universities in Montreal, Canada funded by the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture*, in addition to being a member of another collaborative research project based at McGill University and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Professor Rusch has an exceptionally strong record of scholarly achievement at this point in the career trajectory.

Service: Professor Rusch has been very engaged in service since coming to the University of Michigan. Professor Rusch has served on five different committees within the Department of Music Theory, acted as a co-advisor for the Music Research Graduate Conference, served as a member of the search committee for a tenure track position in jazz piano, and is in the midst of serving a three-year term on the SMTD Awards Committee. She further contributes to departmental business through careful reading of graduate applications and focused interviewing of applicants. Professor Rusch has displayed exemplary service to the profession of music theory through her service on the editorial boards of three reputable music theory journals *Intégral*, *Music Theory Online*, and *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, and has recently been appointed as the editor-in-chief of *Music Theory Online*.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "René Rusch seems destined to become a high profile force in the field of music theory. Her voice will surely stand out, and musical academia will continue to profit from the inclusive generosity of her enterprise."

Reviewer B: "...the University of Michigan is very fortunate to have such a motivated and knowledgeable professor. The nature of her research inquiries is successfully emerging in a highly engaged level of knowledge transfer. She takes her teaching very seriously, receives strong evaluations, and strives to respond to any suggestions for pedagogical development."

Reviewer C: "The quality of Prof. Rusch's research is superb... Prof. Rusch's scholar record equals or surpasses-both in quantity and quality-what is expected in the field of music theory for someone who is applying for promotion to associate professor with tenure at a top-tier university."

Reviewer D: "René Rusch is one of the two or three most prominent North American scholars of her generation currently engaged in close analysis of music from the nineteenth century."

Reviewer E: “Dr[.] Rusch continues to make an internationally significant contribution to Schubert scholarship, and all the evidence suggests that she is an outstanding, effective and innovative teacher.”

Reviewer F: “Professor Rusch has served on the editorial boards of three reputable music theory journals: *Integral*, *Engaging Music: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, and *Music Theory Online*. That she has been offered the position of Editor-in-Chief of *Music Theory Online*, the electronic journal of the Society for Music Theory, is clear indication of her good professional standing.”

Reviewer G: “Professor Rusch has a high standing in relation to others in her peer group. I would say that she is a leader in the fields of Schubert studies and the application of critical theory to music analysis, and an important contributor to jazz studies, popular music studies, and computational analysis.”

Reviewer H: “René’s scholarly writing is of superb quality, not just because it is lucidly written, but also because it engages with such important questions-and does so with such a clear-eyed approach.”

Reviewer I: “Rusch’s scholarly output presents an extraordinary picture of depth and breadth, sophistication and sensitivity, specificity and broad context, quality and quantity. By my estimation, this is among the strongest cases for tenure that I have seen.”

Reviewer J: “She is a consummate professional, with the unfailing capacity to gain an ineffably lovely sound, even on uninspiring uprights; her reputation as an equally well-trained jazz pianist...places her in a class all her own amongst music theorists who aspire to complete musicianship.”

Reviewer K: “Professor Rusch exhibits skill in laying bare the underlying ideologies within rival analytical approaches. The end result is not so much a synthesis as much as a metacritique on established and newer disciplinary assumptions.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Rusch is a significant figure in the field of music theory and a lauded teacher. It is with the enthusiastic support of the school’s Executive Committee that I strongly recommend and support René L. Rusch for promotion to the rank of associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Music Theory, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



David Gier
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music
and Dean, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

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