

Music History and Literature Diagnostic Examination

Study Guide

The Graduate Diagnostic Exam in Music History is designed to test competency with the history of Western art music. Students are expected to demonstrate a working knowledge of music history and style from the Middle Ages to the present.

The Exam will consist of analytical listening, a chronology, and short answers.

I. Analytical Listening

Familiarity with the sound of the music is essential to understanding historical developments of musical style and ideas. The Listening portion of the Exam will consist of approximately 12 short musical examples representing each of the historical time periods (Middle Ages to the present). Each example will be played once.

Students will be asked to describe style traits and defining compositional techniques. Students will be expected to apply their observations to determine the most likely genre (type of composition), historical period, date range (within early, mid, late century), and probable composer.

II. Chronology

In the chronology, students will be asked to demonstrate a knowledge of the historical eras and their contexts. Students should be prepared to create a timeline for all of the historical periods of Western Music. The timeline should include names of the historical periods and dates, important stylistic traits and prominent musical techniques, significant genres and major composers, and historical context (noteworthy events or philosophical ideas outside of music).

III. Short Answers

Short answers will include contextualization of composers, musical terms, and compositional techniques.

- For composers, students will be asked to give the historical period and representative types of composition (characteristic genres & forms) associated with each composer.
- For musical terminology, students will be expected to define each term, and give the primary historical period and representative composer(s) associated with each term.
- To demonstrate an understanding of compositional techniques, students will be asked to describe the technique and give an example of a representative composer and composition.

As you prepare for the test, please focus on the following topics for each of the music historical periods:

- Characteristic genres and forms
- Defining features of the various genres and forms
- Predominant instruments and ensembles (vocal & instrumental)
- Representative works
- Representative composers and their approximate dates (early, mid, late century)

- Major lines of stylistic development
- Characteristic traits and styles of individual composers
- Chronology of events, composers, important works of the period
- Historical context and philosophical outlook of the period
- Definitions of terms & compositional techniques specific to the period

To prepare for these examinations, the following books would be helpful:

Burkholder, J. Peter; Grout, Donald Jay; and Palisca, Claude V. *A History of Western Music*.
[Preferably 8th or 9th edition]

Morgan, Robert. *Twentieth-Century Music*.

Bonds, Mark Evans. *A History of Music in Western Culture*.