

## Study Guide for the Graduate Placement Exam in Music Theory

This exam is designed to evaluate your skills and knowledge of music theory in several areas. All candidates must complete the

### Ear training and Musicianship Exam

All candidates must complete the first four parts of the Written Theory Exam:

#### Part I Harmonization

#### Part II: Bach-style Counterpoint

#### Part III: Formal and Harmonic Analysis

#### Part IV: Post-Tonal and Other Contemporary Musical Materials

Only incoming composition and music theory candidates must complete, in addition, **Part V: Orchestration**.

### Ear training and Musicianship Exam (about 1 hour)

This exam is an aural dictation with five sections:

1. Identification of the size and quality of melodic and harmonic intervals of any size. Each interval is played twice.

2. Transcription of a moderately chromatic two-phrase tonal melody, and detection of errors in the performance of a moderately chromatic tonal melody. Each phrase is played 4 times.

3. Identification of four-part triads and seventh chords in any inversion and spacing, and detection of errors in the performance of four-part triads and seventh chords in any inversion and spacing. Each chord is played twice.

4. Transcription of a two-phrase chromatic harmonic progression. You will be asked to write down the bassline, identify keys, chord functions, figures and cadences. Each phrase is played 4 times.

5. Transcription of an atonal phrase. The example is played 4 times.

Preparation for this exam is best accomplished by practicing on a PC or Mac computer with MacGamut by Anne Blombach (MacGamut Music Software International).

### Part I: Harmonization (about 1 hour)

Part I of the exam is a writing exercise in four-part harmonization.

There are different given parts in the exercise. These given parts include:

1. A diatonic figured bass
2. A chromatic figured bass
3. An unfigured bass
4. A soprano melody
5. An inner voice

In order to successfully complete this exercise, you will need solid voice-leading skills and understanding of chromatic harmony, including the functions of Neapolitan sixth chords and augmented sixth chords, and the ability to successfully modulate to a remote key.

Preparation for this part of the exam is best accomplished by studying *Harmony and Voice Leading*, third edition, by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, or *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*, by Robert Gauldin. The *Workbooks* for both of these textbooks include many helpful exercises.

## **Part II: Bach-style Counterpoint (about 30 minutes)**

Part II of the exam consists of an analysis of a fugue exposition. You will be asked to identify the end of the exposition, the subject, the answer, the countersubject, and the keys and the basic harmonies of the exposition. Questions may include why a real answer or a tonal answer is used, and what type of invertible counterpoint (if any) is used in the exposition.

Counterpoint texts to review include those by Benjamin, Gauldin, and Kennan.

## **Part III: Formal and Harmonic Analysis (about 1 hour)**

Part III of the exam deals with the formal analysis of a movement from common-practice literature. Questions may include the identification and description of the overall formal plan and tonal structure of the movement, the identification of larger sections and keys within the movement, the description of the harmonic motion of phrases, and comments on phrase structure, organic unity, and other interesting analytical questions specific to the movement.

A good text to review is *Form in Tonal Music* by Douglass Green.

You will also be asked to do a detailed harmonic analysis of a short segment of this work, for which you will need a solid understanding of chromatic harmony.

A good text to review for this is *Harmony and Voice Leading*, third edition, by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, especially pp. 355-578. Gauldin's *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music* is also a very good text.

## **Part IV: Post-Tonal and Other Contemporary Musical Materials (about 30 minutes)**

Part IV of the exam tests your knowledge of classic twelve-tone operations (such as transposition, inversion, etc.), as well as your ability to write modal and symmetrical scales, and to describe melodies and harmonies in a post-tonal harmonic context.

Texts to review for this portion include *Post-Tonal Theory*, by Joseph Straus, and those by Lester, and Kostka/Payne.

## **For Composition and Theory candidates, only:**

### **Part V: Orchestration (about 30 minutes)**

Part V of the exam tests composition and music theory candidates' knowledge of the characteristics, ranges, and transpositions of musical instruments. Some common-practice stylistic scoring is also included, as well as basic full-score layout issues.

A good text to review for this portion is *The Study of Orchestration*, by Samuel Adler.