

# Studying for the Music History Graduate Admissions Test

## Guidelines for Graduate Students

### I. Introduction

The Graduate Admissions Test (GAT) is an extensive, two-hour exam that will ascertain your readiness to pursue the required graduate credits within the Department of Music History, Theory and Composition. Graduate students in music education, music theory/composition, or applied music must earn at least a 70 percent on the exam, and potential graduate students in music history must earn at least a 75 percent score. If these qualifications are not met, the student must register for a remedial course, MHL 501, "Style, Form, Genre," and obtain a passing grade before enrolling in higher-level music history courses. Remember that remedial course credits do not count toward the total for graduation.

### II. Format of the Exam

The first section of the exam consists of approximately 60 objective questions, most in multiple-choice format. These questions cover music history from the medieval period through the twentieth century. Most ask about formal types, genre, and general stylistic traits rather than detailed questions about a given composer, although some composer-specific and date-specific questions may also appear.

The second section concerns score analysis. For two short musical scores from different periods of music history, you will be asked to choose only one to answer questions about. Each component comprises approximately 12 questions, mostly in multiple-choice format, that cover such issues as form, genre, harmony, key relationships, compositional techniques, and so forth.

The final section is devoted to listening. You will hear two examples from different historical periods, and you should be able to identify both the stylistic period and a probable composer for each. You must then justify these answers by making at least three specific and historically-informed observations about the musical style of the selection.

### III. Studying for the Exam

Too few entering graduate students review adequately for this exam. Only a small percentage pass, and many earn scores in the 40 to 50 percent range. You should begin a detailed review of music history several weeks before taking the exam, ideally employing a respected textbook such as *A History of Western Music* by Donald Jay Grout and Claude Palisca or *Music in Western Civilization* by Craig Wright and Bryan R. Simms. If such reference texts are unavailable, basic outlines may be found online (try, for instance, David Papandrew's limited outline of Grout/Palisca, 4th Edition: <http://www.oocities.org/papandrew/>). Study some scores of various genres while listening to recordings, and listen to recordings for practice in identifying style periods (i.e., Medieval, Baroque, Romantic), genres (i.e., symphony, opera, Lied, concerto) and composers. Perhaps a partner might quiz you or present scores/recordings that you might not have selected.

As graduate students, you should be familiar with your most productive study habits and have developed the necessary responsibility to follow through in preparing for this exam. It would seem prudent to study for and pass this test rather than spend an entire semester enrolled in a remedial course.

If you have any general questions about the placement exam, please contact the music history coordinator, Prof. Julian Onderdonk ([jonderdonk@wcupa.edu](mailto:jonderdonk@wcupa.edu)).

**The following questions are examples of the types of questions you may encounter on the Music History and Literature portion of the WCU Graduate Placement Test:**

1. Which of the following was NOT a member of the group of French composers known as *Les Six*?
 

A. Gabriel Fauré	C. Darius Milhaud
B. Arthur Honegger	D. Germaine Tailleferre
2. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (the Magic Flute) is what type of dramatic stage piece?
 

A. opera seria	C. Singspiel
B. opera buffa	D. opera giacoso
3. Which of the following formal types is most commonly encountered in the opening movement of an eighteenth-century symphony?
 

A. rondo	C. sonata form
B. A B A	D. fugue
4. This type of stately Polish processional dance by Chopin and other composers is characterized by triple meter, and a rhythmic pattern that accents the second beat of the measure:
 

A. waltz	C. polonaise
B. etude	D. mazurka
5. The term "atonality" refers to compositions that:
 

A. use combinatoriality	C. include "12-tone rows"
B. employ "tonal" cadences	D. lack a tonal center
6. *Notes inégales* is a French Baroque performance practice that concerns which of the following elements of music:
 

A. counterpoint	C. dynamics
B. rhythm	D. instrumentation
7. Liszt's *Orpheus* and *Les Preludes* are examples of:
 

A. opera	C. symphonic poems
B. absolute music	D. oratorios
8. A contemporary composer using an intentionally limited musical vocabulary, often called "minimalism," is
 

A. John Cage.	C. Jean Sibelius.
B. Pierre Boulez.	D. Philip Glass.
9. The prayers of the Mass and Offices whose texts are invariable and do not change from day to day within the liturgical year are termed
 

A. Coptic.	C. Ordinary.
B. Byzantine.	D. Proper.

10. Of the following, which does NOT characterize a concerto cadenza in the Classical era?
- It was usually improvised.
  - A prominent orchestral 6/4 chord introduced the cadenza.
  - It was frequently based on the thematic material from the movement in which it appeared.
  - It was usually placed at the mid-point of the movement.
11. With whom did many American composers study with in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s:
- Igor Stravinsky
  - Claude Debussy
  - Pierre Boulez
  - Nadia Boulanger
12. Who was the 20<sup>th</sup> century English composer of the *Sea*, *London*, and *Pastoral* symphonies?
- Guastav Holst
  - Ralph Vaughan Williams
  - Benjamin Britten
  - Thomas Tallis
13. In addition to his work as a composer, Mahler was also a?
- professor at Harvard University.
  - music publisher.
  - conductor.
  - instrument maker.
14. Which of the following is characteristic of the instrumental music of Beethoven's late period?
- fugues
  - ostinatos
  - sonata-rondos
  - cantus-firmi
15. The terms "prima pratica" and "seconda pratica" were most associated with the style of
- Caccini
  - Monteverdi
  - Landini
  - Respighi
16. Schubert's first movement sonata forms are known for their:
- 3-key expositions.
  - long waiting passages.
  - bipolarity.
  - lack of development sections.
17. Which of the following is NOT part of a typical polyphonic setting of the Mass?
- Gloria
  - Alleluia
  - Sanctus
  - Agnus Dei
18. Which of the following is an anthology of madrigals by various English composers and associated with Queen Elizabeth I?
- Musica transalpina*
  - Magnus Liber*
  - Triumphs of Oriana*
  - Odhecaton A*
19. Which of the following musical developments is NOT associated with the Enlightenment?
- emergence of public concerts
  - publishers and piano builders market to the middle class
  - decline of the symphony
  - rise of comic opera
20. Which of the following is NOT true of a Baroque opera seria?
- has a *lieto fine* (happy ending)
  - both recitativo secco/semplce and recitativo accompagnato/obbligato were employed
  - plots characteristically dealt with contemporary social issues of the day
  - da capo arias were frequently employed