

Music History Department  
The Hartt School  
University of Hartford

Graduate Music History Placement Examination

**SCOPE:**

Graduate course work in music includes a broad and comprehensive understanding of the history of Western music. This examination is used to assess a student's comprehension in Western Music History and to recommend appropriate course work for incoming students pursuing Master's, Doctor of Musical Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. The purpose of this exam is to evaluate the incoming student's knowledge of the principal events, ideas, genres, composers and styles important to the history of Western classical music. The exam is broad-based and includes many comprehensive questions as well as some specific ones. There is also a considerable amount of specific questions concerning individual works, treatises, composers, etc. The multi-section exam covers all periods and follows the common division into Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Modern periods. The student should be able to identify these periods chronologically and be able to define the features of music from each and can cite outstanding composers and works.

This examination tests some music terminology, but in other questions knowledge of it is assumed and is, in fact, required to interpret some of the questions, as it is indeed common to all graduate course work. The department would recommend a careful review of *A History of Western Music* by Grout / Palisca or similar text or to review the appropriate topics in any standard musical dictionary. (For a good sampling of such terms, see the description of Part III of this examination below).

**STRUCTURE**

Part I of the examination consists entirely of multiple-choice questions. The student is advised to review principles, forms, and major trends rather than to try to learn repertoire and isolated facts hurriedly. The questions in Part I all have this format:

- Which of the following is/was **NOT** concerned with the art of music criticism?  
(Choice e is the appropriate one.)
  - a. George Bernard Shaw
  - b. Virgil Thomson
  - c. Andrew Porter
  - d. Robert Schumann
  - e. Georg Solti
  - f. Hugo Wolf
- Joseph Haydn figures most prominently in the development of which of the following?  
(Choice c is the appropriate one.)
  - a. opera buffa
  - b. piano concerto
  - c. symphony
  - d. Singspiel
  - e. Lied
  - f. cantata

Part II is a listening identification section consisting of several excerpts. Some of these are taken from the standard concert repertory. You will not be asked to distinguish Haydn from early Beethoven or Ravel from Debussy, for example, but will be asked to suggest a possible composer and an approximate year of composition for each excerpt.

Part III of the exam includes excerpts for score analysis. For each you must estimate the date of composition and suggest a possible composer. More importantly, you must give reasons for your choices by commenting on the score and citing features which make your choice a logical one. Features of style might include such aspects as atonality, Sprechstimme, symmetrical phrase lengths, bitextuality, stretto, polymeter, chromaticism, modality, homophony, imitative counterpoint, thematic development, ostinato rhythm, whole-tone scales, word-painting, etc.

Any of several general histories would be appropriate for study in preparation for the examination. Among those recommended are Mark Evans Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture* (Prentice Hall, 2003), Donald Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Norton, 2001) and Douglas Seaton, *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition* (Mayfield Pub. Co., 1991).

Among anthologies of music recommended for score study are the most current editions of: Mark Evans Bonds, *Anthology of Scores to A History of Music in Western Culture*; Claude Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 4 CDs. 2 vols. [this is designed to accompany Donald Grout, *A History of Western Music*], and Sarah Fuller, *The European Musical Heritage 800-1750*. All of these contain scores, translations, commentary, and stylistic analysis. Companion sets of recordings are also available for each.

Given below in random order is a highly selective list of musical topics appropriate for review. This is not a comprehensive list of what will be on the exam.

program vs. absolute music	Lorenzo da Ponte
Aleatoric music	<i>Liber Usualis</i>
Schubert and the Lied	<i>stile brisé</i>
Nationalism in music	<i>The Beggar's Opera</i>
musical traits associated with impressionism	<i>A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke</i>
Mendelssohn revival of J.S. Bach	
Gregorian chant	<i>Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen</i>
Mass Ordinary	
Guido d'Arezzo	<i>Der Ring des Nibelungen</i>
Reformation	<i>Eroica</i>
chorale	<i>Das Lied von der Erde</i>
continuo practice	New Viennese School
Notre Dame de Paris	prepared piano
Trecento	character piece
mensuration canon	