

Guidelines: Comprehensive Examination in Music Theory

General Goals

Demonstrate theoretical and analytical competence required to:

1. Understand tonal and post-tonal musical structures and organization
2. Provide the foundation to fulfill a productive role on a college or university faculty
3. Foster continuous development of musicianship skills
4. Promote intellectual curiosity and life-long learning

Doctoral Preliminary Examination Goals in Music Theory

- I. Tonal Theory
 - A. Harmony and Form
Demonstrate thorough understanding of traditional tonal harmony and form
 - B. Schenker
Demonstrate basic understanding of Schenkerian theory/analysis
- II. Post-tonal Theory and Analysis
Demonstrate basic understanding of post-tonal theory/analysis
- III. Other Dimensions of Music Theory
Demonstrate familiarity with one or more additional approaches to music theory/analysis, such as:
 1. Analysis and performance
 2. Theories of pedagogy
 3. Theories of rhythm/meter/time
 4. Theories of drama and narrative
 5. Theories of influence
 6. Implication/Realization
 7. Transformational grammars
 8. Semiotics
 9. Grundgestalt theories (basic shape)
- IV. Implications for performance (if applicable)

**FOR STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO DO TWO PAPERS
AND ENTERED THE PROGRAM BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2008**

Assessment through Projects

1. Students will complete two projects, one post-tonal and the other either tonal or pre-tonal, usually centered on literature from the students primary area of study.
2. A proposal for each project will be negotiated between the student, a member of the theory faculty, and the major professor from the student's graduate committee. The final proposal will serve as a contract for the project. The final product will be measured, in part, against this proposal.
3. Within the two projects, form, linear approaches, post-tonal analytical techniques, and at least one item from the list of "other dimensions" are required.
4. Each project should culminate in a formal analytical paper that articulates insights gained through the process of studying the work. The paper should be of typical term paper length (not to exceed 25 pages excluding examples),
5. The project may not be a term paper presented for a class but may be related to or a substantial extension of such a paper as agreed to by the theory professor and major professor.
6. The student will make a brief presentation (c. 20 minutes) based on the paper in a public forum. The presentations may be scheduled on a graduate student colloquium or in some other venture.
7. Students may begin the projects any time after their first theory course. When the second project has been finished, the project director will notify the Director of Graduate Studies that the theory comprehensive examination has been successfully completed.

Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations in Music Theory: Writing Expectations

Proposal

1. Prepare a brief formal proposal, outline of the paper and working bibliography (3 pages max.).
2. The proposal should define the scope of the project; explain why the topic is of interest; frame a specific question or set of questions to be answered by the project; and cite specific, if preliminary, evidence from the music to support your argument.

Music Analytical/Theoretical Writing

1. Explain and synthesize your observations about the music. Avoid simply describing the music, unless such description is necessary to your argument. For example, telling your readers that the song “Im wunderschönen Monat mai,” from Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*, begins with a $bm6$ chord followed by a $C\#Mm7$ is of little interest unless you can explain why it is important: “The harmonies open the song lead us to believe it will be in F# minor. Thus the unexpected move to E major m.5 and the subsequent cadence on A major in m.6 not only bring welcome relief from the unstable harmonic oscillations of mm. 1-5, but also reveal the brighter key area in conjunction with the opening text about ‘the beautiful month of May’.”
2. You cannot possibly say everything there is to say about a given piece. Focus your project on one or two key questions or issues. By doing this, you will also avoid the trap of “blow-by-blow” analysis, which typically makes for excruciatingly dull reading. Thus, if your project is on “Musical Ambiguity in the First Movement of Brahms’s Horn Trio, Op. 40,” you might organize your paper around manifestations of (1) rhythmic and (2) harmonic ambiguity, rather than going through the movement measure by measure. Similarly, for a project on “Musical Humor in the Second Movement of Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano and Violin in G Major,” you might focus on how (1) melodic and (2) rhythmic jests play out in identifiable patterns throughout the movement, rather than going through the movement chronologically. Does the coda of a Mozart symphony neatly encapsulate all of the features you feel are important in the rest of the movement? Consider beginning your discussion with the coda and referring back to other relevant points in the work.
3. Rather than glossing over a multitude of issues, strengthen your arguments by going into as much detail as possible on just a few well-chosen issues.
4. Scholarly research involves dialog with others, whether in person or through written responses to published work. Students are therefore expected to compile a bibliography of published literature relating to their project, and to incorporate and discuss relevant portions. All sources paraphrased or quoted directly must be appropriately cited in notes as well as in the bibliography.
5. Musical examples are not self-explanatory. You must explain them in your written text. What should the reader observe about them specifically? What point(s) in your argument do they illustrate or support? All musical examples, tables, etc. should include an example number, referred to in the text, and a brief identifying caption. In addition, they should only include relevant portions of the score. Tables, charts, graphs, etc. can be useful for conveying a large amount of information in a concise form; they also require explanation in your written text.
6. Use good judgment if you provide a historical background or other context for the compositions you discuss. Debussy may have won the Prix de Rome in 1884, but is that really relevant to your discussion of his *Prelude a l’Après-midi d’un faune*? On the other hand, you will probably want to include Benjamin Britten’s relationship with Peter Pears in your project on “Musical Encodings of Homosexuality in *Peter Grimes*.”

Resources

For additional information on writing about music, refer to D. Kern Holoman, *Writing About Music: A Style Sheet from the Editors of 19th-century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). For bibliographic information, see Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Course Recommendations

Analytical Techniques for Post-Tonal Music

- **MTHC 732 Intro. Analysis of Contemporary Music (3) fall; OR
- **MTHC 733 Advanced Analysis of Contemporary Music (3) spring

Tonal: Forms and Linear Techniques

- **MTHC 801 Analytical Techniques: OR
- **MTHC 820 Schenkerian Analysis (3) spring

Other Graduate-Level Courses

- MTHC 778 History of Music Theory (3) spring
- MTHC 789 Seminar in: Special Topics (recent topics have included Rhythm, Meter, Form; Gender and Theory; Bartok; Stravinsky; Modern French Masters; Shostakovich; Analysis and Performance) (3) spring
- MTHC 830 Pedagogy of Music Theory

** Recommended for students with little or no experience in the subject matter.

Evaluation Procedures

1. Students may not begin the evaluation process until the first graduate theory course has been completed.
2. Students may not begin the second project until the first one has been completed. Major professor involvement is necessary for proposal (contract) negotiation. MTHC strongly encourages and welcomes the major professor's participation throughout the projects.
3. Exceptions will be considered by petition to the division of Music Theory and Composition.

General Timelines for Completing Projects

Fall Semester

1. Proposal to be completed and approved by October 15.
2. Project to be completed by the end of finals week.

Spring Semester

1. Proposal to be completed and approved by March 15.
2. Project to be completed by the end of finals week.

Summer Session

1. Students wishing to conduct a project over the summer must enroll for at least 1 credit with the project director.
2. Proposal to be completed by June 15.
3. Project to be completed by the last day of summer session.

Doctoral Comprehensive Exams in Music Theory: Reading List

Form

- Caplin, William. *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [MT 58 .C37 1998]
- Spencer, Peter and Peter Tempko. 1988. *A Practical Approach to the Study of Form in Music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Reprinted by Waveland Press, 1992.

Schenker

- Cadwallader and Gagné. 1998. *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Neumeyer, David and Susan Tepping. 1992. *A Guide to Schenkerian Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. [MT6 N248 G8 1992]

Set Theory And Post-Tonal Analysis

- Forte, Allen. 1978. *Introduction to The Harmonic Organization of the Rite of Spring*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [MT 100 .S968 F7]
- Straus, Joseph. 1990. *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. [MT 40 .S96 1990]

Analysis And Performance

- Berry, Wallace. 1989. *Musical Structure and Musical Performance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [MT 6 .B465 M9 1989]
- Cone, Edward. 1968. *Musical Form and Musical Performance*. New York: Norton. [MT 58 .C65]

Implication-Realization Model

- Meyer, Leonard B. 1973. *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [ML 60 .M616 E95]

Rhythm, Meter, and Time

- Epstein, David. 1995. *Shaping Time*. New York: Schirmer. [ML437 .E67 1995]
- Hasty, Christopher. 1997. *Meter as Rhythm*. New York: Oxford University Press. [ML 3850 .H37 1997]

- Kramer, Jonathan. 1988. *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*. New York: Schirmer Books. [ML 3800 .K695 1988]
 Rothstein, Joseph. 1989. *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music*. New York: Schirmer.

General Linguistics

- Lerdhal, Fred and Ray Jackendoff. 1983. *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [MT 6 .L36 G4 1983]

Semiotics

- Agawu, V. Kofi. 1991. *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [ML 3838 .A317 1991]
 Cumming, Naomi. 1997. "The Subjectivities of 'Ebarne Dich.'" *Music Analysis* 16/1: 5-44. [MT 6 .M96155]
 Monelle, Raymond. 1992. *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*. Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Gender

- McClary, Susan. 1991. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [ML 82 .M38 1991]
 Solie, Ruth, ed. 1993. *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*. Berkely: University of California press. [ML 3838.M96 1993]

Drama and Narratology

- Abbate, Carolyn. 1991. *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [ML 3858.A2 1991]
 Maus, Fred Everett. 1991. "Music as a Narrative." *Indiana Theory Review* 12: 1-34. [ML 1. I62]
 Newcomb, Anthony. 1987. "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies." *19th-Century Music* 11/2: 164-74. [ML 1 .N55]

Philosophy and Music

- Clifton, Thomas. 1983. *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [ML 3877 .C6 1983]
 Kivy, Peter. 1991. *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation*, rev. ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Influence

- Straus, Joseph. 1990. *Remaking the Past*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
 Korsyn, Kevin. 1991. "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence." *Musical Analysis* 10/1-2: 3-72.

History of Theory

- Lester, Joel. 1992. *Compositional Theory in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
 Harrison, Daniel. 1994. *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of its Precedents*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.