Music Theory Qualifying Exam

Study Guide

This exam is used for two purposes: as part of

  (1) admission to the master’s and doctoral primary graduate theory programs, and

  (2) application for a theory Graduate Teaching Fellowship.

It has three main components: aural skills, written skills, and keyboard skills. Below is a description of the activities you will be expected to do on each part of the exam.

AURAL SKILLS

Sightsinging
Sing an 8- to 10-measure melody at sight. The melody will feature some chromatic pitches (suggesting any or all of the following harmonies: secondary dominants, borrowed chords, Neapolitans, augmented sixths). It may also modulate to a closely related key.


Harmonic dictation
Notate the outer voices of a chorale containing approximately 16 chords. The chorale will feature several chromatic harmonies (including any or all of the following: secondary dominants, borrowed chords, Neapolitan chords, augmented-sixth chords). It may also modulate to a closely related key.


WRITTEN SKILLS

Chorale completion
Part-write a chorale containing approximately 25–30 chords, with a soprano melody provided for one half and a figured bass line provided for the other half. The chorale will feature several chromatic harmonies (including any or all of the following: secondary dominants, borrowed chords, Neapolitans, augmented sixths, common-tone diminished sevenths).


Analysis
Supply Roman numerals to a passage of approximately 16 measures. The passage will feature several chromatic harmonies (including any or all of the following: secondary dominants,
borrowed chords, Neapolitans, augmented sixths). It may also modulate to a closely related key. Be prepared as well to discuss the phrase structure of the excerpt.


**KEYBOARD SKILLS**

**Realizing a figured bass**
Realize a figured bass line containing approximately 10–12 chords. The bass line will feature some chromatic harmonies (including any or all of the following: secondary dominants, borrowed chords, Neapolitans, augmented sixths).


**Harmonizing a melody**
Harmonize an 8- to 10-measure melody.

For practice, try harmonizing melodies from Robert Ottman and Nancy Rogers, *Music for Sight Singing*.

**Realizing a Roman-numeral string**
Realize a Roman-numeral string containing approximately 8–10 chords. The string will feature some chromatic harmonies (including any or all of the following: secondary dominants, borrowed chords, Neapolitans, augmented sixths). It may also modulate to a closely related key.