

The Advisory Exam in Music History

1. Format of the exam

The Advisory exam is intended to assess the incoming Master's student's understanding of undergraduate-level material, in preparation for applying the skills of detailed listening and stylistic description at a graduate level. Students will not be expected to identify specific pieces or memorize historical facts and dates: rather, the goal is to apply a working knowledge of stylistic characteristics in each era to a broad selection of musical repertoire.

The exam has a timed, web-based format, consisting of eight questions, each representing an era of music history: students will receive musical examples from the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Early Romantic, Late Romantic, Early 20th Century, and Late 20th/Early 21st Century periods. Each example will consist of a score and recording with composer and title removed. Students will have two hours to complete the exam.

Each question has a similar format:

- a) Identify the historical era in which this piece was written and describe its use of at least five stylistic characteristics to support your choice.
- b) A more detailed question relating to the specific attributes of the piece will follow, which students will be able to answer upon listening.

Stylistic characteristics may be drawn from any aspect of compositional style: melodic construction, rhythmic character, harmonic language, orchestration or voicing, timbre, phrasing and articulation, texture, genre, or any other appropriate characteristic. Since scores are provided, measure-specific descriptions are recommended.

2. Grading of the exam

The student's level of preparation will be assessed on an individual basis, but each should reflect a thorough command of musical vocabulary and stylistic description appropriate to each era. A student who demonstrates a solid command of music history will be allowed to register for the required Master's-level core course in Music History directly. Students who show deficiencies in specific eras will be required to register for a single credit of MUS 500, Independent Study, prior to registering for a graduate Music History course.

3. Preparation for the exam

Students should be able to describe multiple stylistic characteristics from each of the eras listed above. As such, practicing with a wide variety of listening/score examples is highly recommended. Appropriate resources include the anthologies of undergraduate-level textbooks (i.e., scores and short commentaries), for example: *The Norton Anthology of Western Music*, *The Oxford Anthology of Western Music*, or Mark Evan Bonds' anthology for *A History of Music in Western Culture* (any edition).