

**A Guide to the M.M. Comprehensive Examination**  
**Department of Music and Dance**

*Revised 8/27/20*

**I. History**

**A. Suggested resources for study:**

- New Grove Music Online
- *Norton Anthology of Music*
- Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 vols.

**B. Basic historical and stylistic knowledge**

Below is a list of broad issues that might be discussed. This list is not comprehensive but provides you with ideas of general areas that might be discussed. Students are expected to master the sections that are relevant to their repertoire rather than the entire list.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Composers</b>	<b>Forms &amp; Trends</b>	<b>Issues</b>
To ca. 1100	Early Middle Ages	Gregory the Great	Gregorian Chant Secular Song	Modality Vocal Improvisation
1100–1300	Middle Ages (Ars Antiqua)	Leonin Perotin	Organum Conductus Motet	Modality Early Polyphony Cantus Firmus Vocal Improvisation Rhythmic Modes Role of Music in the Church
1300–1430	Late Middle Ages (Ars Nova)	Machaut Landini	Isorhythmic Motet Secular Fixed Forms	Modality Rhythmic Organization and Complexity Differing treatments of vocal lines Development of instruments
1430–1600	Renaissance	Dufay Ockeghem Obrecht Josquin Palestrina Victoria Lassus Monteverdi Byrd	Mass Motet Madrigal Chanson Canons	Origins of instrumental music Control of Dissonance Use of Rhythm Word Painting Academies Modality Music and the Reformation
1600–1750	Baroque	Monteverdi Schütz Purcell Lully Rameau Vivaldi J. S. Bach Handel Scarlatti Gabrieli Couperin	Opera Seria Cantata Fugue Concerto Oratorio Passion Suite Trio Sonata	Basso Continuo Virtuosity Ostinato Counterpoint Doctrine of Affects Emergence of Tonality Conceptions of Ancient Greece
1750–1800	Classical	Haydn Mozart Gluck Rameau C. P. E. Bach	Comic Opera Symphony Sonata String Quartet Classical Concerto Variation	Periodic Phrase Structure Homophonic Texture Sonata-Form Simplicity Naturalness of Expression Tonality Music as Drama

1800–1900	Nineteenth Century	Beethoven Schubert Schumann Berlioz Mendelssohn Wagner Verdi Brahms Bruckner Mahler Liszt Chopin Strauss Sibelius	Lied Sonata Character Piece Chamber Music Symphony Tone Poem Music Drama Tragic opera Melodie	New German School Chromatic Harmony Obscuring of formal clarity Third relationships Gesamtkunstwerk Historicism Nationalism Virtuosity “Absolute Music” Program Music
1900–1950	Early Twentieth Century	Debussy Varese Stravinsky Schoenberg Satie Berg Webern Satie Milhaud Casella Busoni Xenakis Copland Gershwin W. C. Handy Bessie Smith Louis Armstrong Jolivet Britten Barber	Expressionism Neoclassicism Serialism Impressionism Surrealism Futurism Blues Swing New Orleans Style Jazz Textural Music	Experimentation Microtones Electronic Instruments New Acoustic Instruments Rise of Popular Music and Jazz Realism Pluralism Rhythmic Complexity Emphasis on Color and Timbre Noise Music Musique Concrète
1950–present	Late Twentieth Century	Cage Feldman Babbitt Golijov Saariaho Schnittke Crumb Pärt Ligeti Reich Adams Anderson Ferneyhough Penderecki Stockhausen Carter Messiaen	Bebop Third Stream Cool Jazz Rock and Roll Country Rhythm and Blues Progressive Rock Globalism Minimalism Postmodernism Graphic Notation New Simplicity Total Serialism New Complexity Chance Music Aleatoricism Crossover	Multimedia Blending of Genres and Styles Repetition Music and Technology

## II. Music Theory

### A. Suggested resources for study:

William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Steven Laitz and Christopher Bartlette, *Graduate Review of Tonal Theory: A Recasting of Common-Practice Harmony, Form, and Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Miguel Roig-Francolí, *Understanding Post-Tonal Music* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

Joseph Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016).

### B. Basic Theoretical Knowledge

- Cadence: Imperfect vs. perfect authentic, half, plagal, and deceptive;
- Theme types: Sentences, periods, and their hybrids;
- Non-chord tones: All types, including their expected resolutions;
- Harmonic syntax: Awareness of functional chord progressions and knowledge of syntactical differences among musical styles and time periods;
- Rhythm and meter: Hypermeter, syncopation, hemiola, metric modulation, etc.

### C. Analytical Skills

#### 1. For tonal works

- Roman-numeral analysis;
- Identification of non-chord tones (all types);
- Applied chords (secondary dominant and leading-tone chords);
- Chords involving modal mixture;
- Modulation techniques (pivot-chord modulation, enharmonic reinterpretation, direct modulation, etc.);
- Identification of harmonic sequences;
- Extended chromaticism (augmented sixth chords, Neapolitan chord, common-tone diminished seventh chords, tritone substitution, etc.);
- Melodic and harmonic reduction, including outer-voice frameworks based on species counterpoint.

#### 2. For post-tonal works

- Fluency with mod-12 numerical note names (C = 0);
- Pitch-class set theory, including prime forms for all twelve trichords;
- Pitch-class transposition and inversion;
- Diatonic modes
- Other scale-types, including octatonic, whole tone, hexatonic, and acoustic;
- General knowledge of the post-tonal language for the composers on recital.

3. For all works (tonal, post-tonal, or otherwise)

Explain what form a piece is in based on its thematic and harmonic content by comparing it to the following models:

- Binary form (distinguish between types);
- Ternary form;
- Rondo form;
- Sonata form;
- Concerto form;
- Theme and variations;
- Arch form;
- Any nonstandard form appearing on a recital piece.

For all forms, special attention should be given to non-standard harmonic or thematic events, transitional passages, codas, etc.