

How to Prepare for the Graduate History Placement Exam

The graduate history exam consists of multiple choice questions for the six historical periods (Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, Twentieth Century), along with a choice of essay questions for two of these historical periods (Baroque, Romantic). Study questions on pages 2- will help you to prepare for the multiple choice and matching portions of the exam. To prepare for the exam, you should do the following:

Multiple choice section:

Medieval: For the Medieval period, you should review the information on Western (Gregorian) chant, the development of organum from c. 850-1225, and the origins and development of the motet in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Renaissance: For the Renaissance, you should review the information on sacred vocal music (the Mass and Motet) during the four phases of the Renaissance (1400-1470, 1470-1520, 1520-1560, 1560-1600). This should include fifteenth-century English and Burgundian music (Dunstable, Dufay, etc.), the era of Josquin Desprez, the Gombert/Willaert generation, and the generation of Palestrina and Lassus. You should also review the information about the sixteenth-century Italian madrigal (Arcadelt, Verdelot, de Rore, Marenzio, etc.).

Baroque: For the Baroque era, you should review the information on early seventeenth century keyboard music in Italy (canzona, ricercar, etc.), and information for the two most significant late Baroque composers, Bach and Handel.

Classic: The questions for the Classic era will be limited to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (style periods, significant accomplishments, etc.).

Romantic: For the Romantic era, you should review the information regarding the following composers: Mendelssohn, Schumann, Berlioz, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, Verdi, Mussorgsky, Strauss, and Mahler.

Twentieth Century: For this period, you should review the chronology of major trends and who contributed to them the most (impressionism, neo-Classicism, atonality, serialism, texture music, electronic music, minimalism, etc.). You should also review the information regarding the following composers: Debussy, Bartok, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Copland, Schoenberg, Webern, Messiaen, Cage, Stockhausen, Ligeti, Penderecki, etc.

Study Questions for Multiple choice/matching section of the exam:

Medieval:

1. What do the terms Ordinary and Proper of the Mass mean, and which chants belong to each of these two categories? Also, identify the three prevailing chant styles (syllabic, neumatic, melismatic). List the five Proper of the Mass chants, the liturgical function each fulfills, and the prevailing melodic style (neumatic, melismatic, etc.). Also review the five Ordinary of the Mass chants, and mention whether each chant is basically syllabic or melismatic in style.
2. Later chant: What is the difference between the trope and the prosula? To what chants are they usually added? What are the melodic and formal characteristics of the sequence? Where in the Mass is the sequence heard?
3. Know the types of parallel organum in use from c. 850-1050 (strictly parallel and modified parallel). What intervals are used for the improvisation of strictly parallel (simple) organum, and how does modified (partially) parallel organum differ from strictly parallel organum? What are the other similarities and differences between strictly parallel and modified parallel organum?
4. How does free organum c. 1050-1100 differ from parallel organum, and how is it similar to it (both in terms of melodic and rhythmic features)? What intervals are allowed in this type of organum, and which of these intervals predominate most of the time? What types of melodic motion are allowed between the two voices?
5. Know the two basic repertoires of later organum (St. Martial/Santiago da Compostela c. 1100-1200, and Parisian c. 1150-1225). Describe the differences between the melismatic (or organal) style of late organum and discant style organum. Which of these two basic repertoires of late organum was the first to introduce the melismatic style of organum?
6. Parisian organum: Who are the two most significant composer/musicians of this school, and when were they active? Which one preferred the melismatic organum (organal or organum purum style), and which one was considered to be the greatest master of discant? Also, be able to give the patterns for the six rhythmic modes.
7. Discuss the origins of the thirteenth century motet. What are the three ways in which the polyphonic lines are differentiated from one another?
8. How does the fourteenth century motet differ from its predecessor (in terms of texture, rhythm, etc.)? Define the terms color, talea, and isorhythmic. Also, explain the rhythmic innovations found in Philippe de Vitry's *Ars nova* treatise.

Renaissance:

1. Be able to place composers and major stylistic developments in the appropriate phase of the Renaissance, according to the following sub-phases: 1400-1470, 1470-1520, 1520-1560, 1560-1600.
2. c. 1400-1470:
 - a. English polyphony from c. 1400-1450: What were the two new innovative harmonic developments made by English composers at this time that became standard features of the Renaissance? What was the main manuscript collection of early fifteenth-century English music? What genre of music is emphasized in this collection, and what is innovative about the way these pieces are organized? Who were the two most important English composers?
 - b. Burgundian music: Briefly describe Guillaume Dufay's career as a musician and composer. Describe Dufay's cyclic masses, and explain the contributions that he made to the development of polyphonic Mass music.
3. c. 1470-1520:
 - a. Josquin Desprez: What are the main genres that he composed in, and what are his most significant style traits? How does he compare with his Burgundian predecessors? Discuss his versatility as a composer, and the special devices he uses to vary his most typical textures.
4. c. 1520-1560:
 - a. Outline the career of Nicolas Gombert, and explain how his musical style compares with that of Josquin (in terms of texture, etc.). At what Italian church and in what Italian city did Adrian Willaert work? Compare his modifications of the Josquin style with those of Gombert (in terms of text treatment, texture, etc.).
 - b. Give the characteristics and major composers for the first phase in the development of the Italian madrigal (c. 1525-1545). How much of an influence was the frottola on the early Italian madrigal? What were the other influences that stimulated the creation of the early Renaissance madrigal? Discuss the most significant composer of second-phase ("mature" or "classical") madrigals. What changes took place in the madrigal at this time?
5. c. 1560-1600:
 - a. Composers of sacred music: Discuss the achievements of Palestrina, Lassus and Byrd. Where did each of them study and work? Compare the music of Palestrina and Lassus in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, treatment of the words, and other stylistic features. How does Byrd's music and explain compare stylistically with that of Palestrina and Lassus?
 - b. Give the dates, characteristics, and major composers for the last phase in the development of the Italian madrigal. Define mannerism, and explain how it applies to the serious late sixteenth-century madrigal.

Baroque:

1. Early Baroque Italian keyboard music (pp. 270-279): Discuss the characteristics of the prelude/toccat, ricercar/fantasia, canzona, and partite/variations. Which of these genres eventually developed into the sonata, and which one developed into the fugue? Who was the most significant composer of this type of music?

2. Handel:
 - a. Discuss his early activities in Germany, and the significance of his years in Italy. Also, outline some of his main activities in England.
 - b. When and where did he compose most of his operas? Compare and contrast his operas with those by Scarlatti and other composers.
 - c. Oratorios: When and where did he compose them, and what are the main differences between his oratorios and his operas (in terms of performance settings, performing forces, musical forms, etc.)?

3. Bach: For each stage of his career, you should be able to outline the cities that he worked in, his job responsibilities, and his activities as a composer.
 - a. Bach's first 2 jobs (from 1703-1708) were what towns, and involved what duties?
 - b. When was Bach in Weimar? What were his duties there?
 - c. When was Bach in Cöthen and what types of pieces did he write there?
 - d. What types of pieces did Bach focus on during the 1st phase of his Leipzig career (1723-1729)?
 - e. Discuss the instrumental and vocal works from the 2nd phase of his Leipzig career (1729-1739), any changes of emphasis and style that may have taken place at this time, and why these changes took place.
 - f. Discuss the major works from the final phase of Bach's Leipzig career (1739-1750).

Classic:

1. Haydn:
 - a. Discuss his activities during his first period (1750-1761), and explain the highly significant event that took place during his second style period (1761-1766). Explain the reasons for the increase in creative activity during his third style period (1766-1775), and discuss the characteristics of his third-period *sturm und drang* style works.
 - b. Briefly outline the developments that took place during his fourth (1775-1785) and fifth (1785-1790) periods.
 - c. What significant biographical events took place during his sixth period (1790-1795), and what genre did he concentrate on at this time? Discuss the changes that took place during his seventh period (1795-1809), and mention which genres he focused on the most.
2. Mozart:
 - a. What are the dates for Mozart's three style periods?
 - b. Discuss the main events of his first style period (including his background, the travels that he took and what he learned from them, and the main influences upon his early musical style).
 - c. Where did he live primarily during his second style period? What changes in style took place at this time, and what new genres did he begin to focus on? Where did he live during his third style period, and which composers was he influenced by the most at this time?
3. Beethoven:
 - a. Discuss Beethoven's beliefs and personality traits.
 - b. What are the dates of his three style periods, and what terms may be used to describe them? What types of pieces did he focus on in each period?
 - c. Describe the characteristics of his second period (melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, texture, and form).
 - d. Describe the characteristics of his third period (melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, texture, form).

Romantic:

1. Mendelssohn: In what other ways was he musically active, aside from composition? What were his most significant achievements in the areas of orchestral literature and choral music?
2. Schumann: Outline some of the main biographical information. Also, list the types of pieces that he was focusing on during his three style periods (1830-1839, 1840-1847, 1848-1856). List some of his stylistic traits (melody, rhythm, means of musical unification, etc.), and briefly discuss some of his most significant programmatic piano pieces (*Carnaval*, etc.). What do the characters Florestan & Eusebius signify in his music?
3. Berlioz: What were the three events of 1827-28 that greatly influenced him? In what other ways was he active musically, besides composition? Discuss his style (melody, use of *idée fixe*, harmony, form, etc.), and give examples of his tendency to write programmatic orchestral or orchestral/vocal works.
4. Liszt: Discuss his three style periods (approximate dates, his main activities and compositions during each of these phases, any differences in musical style between them, etc.). Also, discuss his symphonic poems (programmatic content, form, etc.) and his Faust Symphony.
5. Wagner: Discuss his theories of opera and when they were formulated. What were the problems and the goals that he had in creating music dramas, etc.? List his most significant operas from 1850 on, along with the traits of his mature operas (melody, harmony, texture, etc.).
6. Verdi: List some of his main operas, and his main style traits (melody, harmony, etc.). How is his sense of patriotism manifested in some of his operas?
7. Brahms: Discuss his musical style (melody, rhythm, texture, etc.), and explain how his music reflects the trend known as Absolutism.
8. Nationalism in Russia: Describe Mussorgsky's musical background, and list some of his main compositions.
9. Strauss: List the 2 genres that he is most significant for. Discuss form, texture, and pictorialism in his symphonic poems.
10. Mahler: List the composers that he was influenced by, and outline his main activities as a musician. Discuss the genres that he focused on, and his synthesis of these genres.

Twentieth Century:

1. Outline some of the main trends found in the twentieth-century, along with the approximate dates when they became a significant factor (impressionism, neo-classicism, atonality, twelve-tone technique, serialism, texture music, electronic music, minimalism).
2. Music in France: Debussy: List and describe both Western and non-Western influences upon his style (musical & non-musical). What are some of the new and novel features of his music?
3. Stravinsky: Know his three style periods (c. 1908-1918, 1918-1951, 1951-1971). You should be able to give representative works, list the main places of residence, know any significant changes in style, etc.. Also, list the features common to all of his style periods.
4. Bartok: List some of his main style characteristics, focusing particularly on ones that were derived primarily from his study of folk music. Outline his development as a composer, along with some of his most important compositions. In what ways did he contribute to music besides composition?
5. Hindemith: Discuss melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and texture in his music.
6. Aaron Copland: Which style period was his most nationalistic one, and what were some of his main compositions from this era? What were some of the main influences upon his style?
7. The Second Viennese School:
 - a. Schoenberg: What two crucial steps did he take which separated him from the past, and in approximately what years did he take them? Also, list five stylistic features that are common to all of his periods (melody, rhythm, texture, form, etc.).
 - b. List five features of Webern's style. Also, discuss his historical importance and his influence upon other composers.
8. Olivier Messiaen: Discuss his style (melody, rhythm, color, etc.), and some of the main foreign influences upon his music.
9. Composers influenced by serialism and/or electronic composers:
 - a. Who did Stockhausen derive his initial inspiration from, and how did his music change from the early 1950s to the late 1950s? Discuss his musical style, etc.
 - b. Be familiar with John Cage's philosophy of music and achievements (formlessness, use of chance operations, interest in redefining music, etc.).
10. Composers working outside electronics: Discuss the music of Penderecki and Ligeti, focusing on their contributions to the world of "texture music" (music focusing more on tone colors than on traditional melodies/rhythms).
11. Minimalism: Briefly define minimalism, and list the three main American minimalists who best represent the development of this trend beginning with the 1960s.

Essay section of the exam:

There will be two essays on the exam, one for the Baroque era and one for the Romantic era. You will be required to do only one of these essays, depending on your preference. To prepare for these essays, you should review the following:

Baroque:

For the Baroque era, review everything concerning the origins and development of opera in Italy, France, and other countries from c. 1580 to c. 1740. This should include the beginnings of opera in Florence (Peri, etc.) and Monteverdi's operas, mid-Baroque Venetian opera, late Baroque Italian-style opera (A. Scarlatti, Handel, etc.), and French opera (Lully, Rameau).

Romantic:

For the Romantic era, review the information on programmatic instrumental music of the nineteenth century. This should include both keyboard music and orchestral music by such programmatic composers as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Berlioz, Liszt, Mussorgsky, Smetana, and Strauss. For this essay, you should be able to discuss specific representative examples of programmatic keyboard and orchestral music by these composers.

For these essays, there may be representative score excerpts that you will need to discuss and place in the appropriate historical context. For this reason, it would be a good idea to make sure that you examine some representative scores or score excerpts for both topics.

The best books to use for reviewing for this exam are:

Donald Grout, *A History of Western Music*.

K. Marie Stolba, *The Development of Western Music*.

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