

GUIDELINES FOR MUSIC HISTORY DIAGNOSTIC EXAMINATIONS

For students entering the MM Performance Programs in 2025

The purpose of this exam is to determine students' foundational knowledge of the broad historical periods in Western music history. The exam serves as a guide to identify gaps in students' knowledge of music history so that the faculty may advise students effectively in choosing courses. A deficiency established in any of the three areas may be removed by taking the appropriate segment of the undergraduate **Music 112** series, "History of Western Music and its Global Circulations."

The process consists of a four-hour take-home examination covering three historical periods, each of which corresponds to a course in the Music 112 series:

- A. Late Renaissance-Baroque-Preclassic (ca. 1545–1745)
- B. Classical-Early Romantic (1745–1848)
- C. Romantic-Early 20th century (1848–1945)

You can find a sample exam from previous years in this guidance packet. There will be two essay topics for each period on the exam. Students choose **one** of the questions and write a short essay, including specific information concerning composers, works and stylistic trends. Each essay should take about 30-45 minutes to write and should demonstrate the equivalent knowledge level to the end of an undergraduate survey course (such as the former Music 10 series taught at UCSB).

Books for Preparation

[*The Norton History of Western Music*](#) (10th ed., 2018, by Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca) and [*The Norton Anthology of Western Music*](#) (7th ed., 2019) are good sources to consult to prepare for the diagnostic exams. More detailed information can be found in six volumes of *The Oxford History of Western Music* by Richard Taruskin (2005), which is available online through the UCSB library. You can also check out volumes of Norton [*Western Music in Context*](#) series from the library (*Music in the Renaissance* by Richard Freedman, *Music in the Baroque* by Wendy Heller, *Music in the Eighteenth Century* by John Rice, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, by Walter Frisch, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries*, by Joseph Auner).

SAMPLE MUSIC HISTORY GUIDANCE EXAMINATION

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Purpose

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112A. Late Renaissance-Baroque-Pre-classic (1545-1745)

112B. Classical-Early Romantic (1745-1848)

112C. Romantic-Early 20th century (1848-1945)

Directions

For each period listed above, there are three essay topics; choose **two** and write a short essay on both of the selected topics. Each essay should take about 30-45 minutes to write, and should be at the level of detail typical of a final exam for an undergraduate survey course. They should include specific information concerning composers, works, and stylistic trends. **Students must pass all three areas.**

Essay Topics

A. Late Renaissance-Baroque-Pre-Classic

1. Discuss the major religious conflicts and the shifts in musical style that these conflicts triggered in sixteenth century Europe, including at least two examples of genres of music written for religious services.
2. Describe the development of opera in seventeenth-century Italy, including at least three musical examples.
3. Trace the rise of violin-centered instrumental music in the 17th and early 18th century, from the early canzona and sonata, through the trio sonata, and up to the concerto. Include at least three representative composers/musical examples in your answer.

B. Classical-Early Romantic

1. Trace the history of the 18th-century symphony from its early developments through the early career of Beethoven. Consider both stylistic developments (harmonic, melodic, and structural features) as well as the symphony's evolving social practice throughout the period (patrons and performance contexts). Include at least three musical examples in your answer.

2. Describe the various strains of 18th-century operatic development that predated and influenced Mozart's career as an opera composer. Demonstrate those traits in an overview of Mozart's operas and their contribution to opera's history.

3. Discuss the development of art song in the first half of the 19th century. Incorporate social as well as musical features in your answer. Include at least three musical examples.

C. Romantic-Early 20th century

1. Explain how nationalism influenced European musical culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, citing specific examples.

2. Discuss the 19th-century fate of the symphony after Beethoven. Consider a variety of symphonic examples that grappled with Beethoven's symphonic legacy written between 1830 and 1900.

3. Expressionism and Neoclassicism were two important modernist trends in the early twentieth century. Explain what these terms mean, their origins, and show how they manifest in the work of representative composers.