

TTU MASTER'S ORAL EXAM IN MUSIC THEORY

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION

In combination with the history committee members, your Theory representative (hereafter "I") will give you 2-3 anonymous scores, from which several types of question will be drawn, as listed below in no particular order. In addition, I may ask you well in advance of the exam date to provide me with a score that you've recently worked on, and draw questions from it as well. These questions will in general be more detailed, given your presumed intimate familiarity with the work.

- The Big Picture: I will ask you to identify the genre and historical period, and suggest possible composers. Support your answer with information from the score (i.e., "It's a big orchestra—there are tubas—so I know it's not Mozart. The harmony is really chromatic, so it's probably a late Romantic symphony. It's marked 'allegro' which means it's likely the first movement.").

- Form and Analysis: I will ask you a mixture of questions on harmony, melody and form. I might ask for a Roman numeral analysis, realization of figured bass, phrase structure and cadences, melodic embellishment, large-scale form (i.e., sonata-allegro; rondo) form, analysis of modulations, identification of interesting chords, etc. I will not ask you anything that you wouldn't have learned in standard undergraduate- and Master's-level theory courses (no Schenker or heavy-duty post-tonal analysis unless you've taken such classes).

- Instrumentation: One of the scores will be a work featuring a large orchestra. I will ask you to translate the names of the instruments (you are responsible for German, French, and Italian). I may also ask you to translate instrument-specific foreign terms and phrases (e.g. if you're a string player, you should know what *am Steg* means).

- Score Transposition: I will ask you to give me the sounding pitches of some transposing instruments in the large score. I'll only be interested in the most common transposing instruments: clarinets in B-flat and A; English horn; French horn; Trumpet in B-flat. No need to worry, for instance, about the alto flute in G (unless you're an alto flute player).

I will also likely ask you one or two broad questions relating to specific theory courses you have taken during your Master's degree at TTU, particularly if that coursework was done with me. Typically I will ask about something related to your final project in that class. If your project was cooperative learning in the aural skills classroom, be prepared for a question about cooperative learning in the aural skills classroom.

The best way to prepare is to look at scores. Anthologies work best (Burkhart, Bonds, Stolba, NAWM, etc.); the library should have some if you don't. Open the page to a piece of music and start talking about it. I also suggest reviewing any theory class notes that you have, and/or going back through a few theory textbooks (again, the library has plenty if you don't).

Finally, I envision this exam as your chance to demonstrate to your committee that you have the theory skills necessary for someone in your chosen degree path. Different musicians use theory in different ways; this is your chance to show me that you know how to apply that which is most relevant to your day-to-day life as a musician.