

# LONGY

School of Music of Bard College

## ***Undergraduate Diploma students (Aural & Written Theory)***

All Longy Undergraduate Diploma (UD) students are required to demonstrate proficiency in Music Theory (Aural and Written) and Piano Skills before graduation. (Please see “Piano Evaluation” on website for more information regarding this). All UD students are **required to take the Music Theory (Aural and Written) Exam** during New Student Orientation, regardless of previous history and theory coursework or lack thereof.

## **Master of Music Core Skills Placement Examinations for Music Theory and Music History.**

### **General Guidelines:**

All Longy Master of Music (MM) students are required to demonstrate proficiency in Music Theory (Aural and Written), Music History, and Piano Skills before graduation. (Please see “Piano Evaluation” on website for more information regarding this). All MM students are **required to take the Music History Exam and Music Theory (Aural and Written) Exam** during New Student Orientation, unless you opt-ed into the Core Skills Class during early registration.

### **Aural Music Theory**

The Longy School of Music of Bard College enjoys a strong reputation in the teaching of theory and musicianship, founded on the principle that a complete musician should have as many tools as possible for understanding musical style and analyzing scores. The Music Theory examination consists of an aural skills test and a written theory test.

The aural skills test covers the following areas:

- Recognition of intervals, harmonic and melodic, up to a tenth
- Recognition of scales and modes
- Melodic dictation in one and two voices
- Recognition of chord quality of triads and seventh chords
- Recognition of progressions by Roman numerals and figured bass symbols
- Rhythmic dictation

**A set of sample questions for the graduate written and aural skills test is below.**

### **Written Music Theory**

The written test will include testing of a range of knowledge and skills and will include at least some of the following categories:

For Vocal Studies, Strings, Brass, Woodwind and Brass, Historical Performance, Composition, Piano & Collaborative Piano Majors:

- Intervals, scales, key signatures, and chord spelling
- Harmonization of a chorale melody in four parts
- Realization of a figured bass in four parts
- Formal and harmonic analysis of a short piece

For Jazz and Contemporary Music Majors:

- Major and minor scales, modes and diminished scales
- Spell chords from chord symbols, including chords up to a 13<sup>th</sup>
- Transpose a melody for a C instrument to B flat & E flat instruments
- Analyze a lead sheet

Even if your theory background is strong, you are encouraged to spend time reviewing these subjects so you can best demonstrate your abilities. A concise and inexpensive guide to the Longy theory department's criteria for good four-part writing can be found in Marjorie Merryman's *Music Theory Handbook* (Harcourt-Brace, 1997).

## **Music History**

The Music History proficiency examination tests your broad knowledge of the history of Western music, including major composers, stylistic developments, genres, and repertoire. It is in four parts and must be completed in its entirety in order for the examination to be passed.

Part I consists of a series of listening identifications, score identifications, and listening identifications accompanied by score excerpts. Each listening example will be played twice. You will be asked to place each excerpt in its correct historical context and make a logical argument for a probable composer, genre, and style period/era. You should support your answers by discussing the stylistic characteristics of the excerpt. The questions for Part I will be answered in a blue examination book.

Part II consists of multiple-choice questions.

Part III consists of name and term categorization.

In Part IV, you will have two sets of short-essay writing prompts. From the first set you will choose from questions that address topics from the Medieval through Baroque, while the questions for Set 2 will cover music from c. 1750 to the present. The topics may ask you to

describe a particular work or group of works in some detail, demonstrate your knowledge of important historical trends and genres, or discuss a particular composer's musical legacy. The questions for Part IV will be answered in a blue examination book.

*Sample Short Essay Questions:*

- Compare the careers of Chopin and Liszt with respect to how they interacted with the music-loving public. How did they earn their livings, and how did this influence the music they composed? Discuss specific musical works by both composers in this context.
- Describe typical musical features found in a Renaissance madrigal. Provide specific examples from pieces by at least two composers in the course of your discussion.
- Discuss the term "neo-classicism" and its manifestations in music of the twentieth century. Give at least three specific examples.

### **Recommendations for Study and Preparation**

We recommend reviewing one of the major music history textbooks, preferably Burkholder/Grout, *A History of Western Music* or Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. It would also be prudent to familiarize yourself with the accompanying score anthologies. It is not necessary to purchase a CD set for exam preparation, but CD anthologies from Norton or those that accompany the Mark Evan Bonds text may be useful to you.

Pick several *representative* and major works from each style period that you can identify by ear, by looking at the score, and can contextualize historically (composer's style, genre development, historical style period).

For each of the six style periods (Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries), be familiar with the major composers, genres, and works of the period. For example, you would identify Robert Schumann with the Romantic Era and associate him with symphonies, lieder (e.g., *Dichterliebe*), and piano music (e.g., *Carnaval*, op. 9). It would also be prudent to understand the historical development of major genres: motet, Mass, madrigal, symphony, etc.

## **Theory and History Review Courses for Master of Music**

### **Students**

MM students who do not pass the Music History and Music Theory examinations during New Student Orientation will be required to enroll in one or more of the following structured review courses beginning with their first semester at Longy: One semester or a full year of a Music Theory Intensive class (separate sections for aural and written skills offered each semester) and Music History from the Ground Up (a one semester course). Review courses are one credit.