

# Graduate Music History Placement Practice Exam (Sample)

## Study Guide



**Everything you need from our exam experts!**

**Copyright © 2025 by Examzify - A Kaluba Technologies Inc. product.**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.**

**No part of this book may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, web distribution, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.**

**Notice: Examzify makes every reasonable effort to obtain from reliable sources accurate, complete, and timely information about this product.**

**SAMPLE**

## Questions

SAMPLE

- 1. What aspect of music was greatly emphasized by composers in the second half of the Renaissance?**
  - A. Modal harmony**
  - B. Improvisational elements**
  - C. Development of major/minor tonalities**
  - D. Static drone accompaniments**
  
- 2. Where did Vivaldi work for most of his life?**
  - A. Saint Mark's Basilica**
  - B. Pio Ospedale della Pieta**
  - C. Royal Conservatory of Music**
  - D. Vienna Court**
  
- 3. Who is the author of the opera "Carmen"?**
  - A. Giuseppe Verdi**
  - B. Giacomo Puccini**
  - C. Georges Bizet**
  - D. Richard Wagner**
  
- 4. Which of the following terms refers to the speed of a piece of music?**
  - A. Pitch**
  - B. Tempo**
  - C. Dynamics**
  - D. Meter**
  
- 5. What is the name of the first complete opera and who composed it?**
  - A. La Traviata by Verdi**
  - B. Orfeo ed Euridice by Gluck**
  - C. L'Orfeo by Monteverdi**
  - D. Don Giovanni by Mozart**

- 6. Who were the key composers associated with the "second Viennese school"?**
- A. Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**
  - B. Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern**
  - C. Pablo Casals, Benjamin Britten**
  - D. Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel**
- 7. During which musical period were troubadours most popular?**
- A. Renaissance**
  - B. Medieval**
  - C. Baroque**
  - D. Classical**
- 8. What defines a "symphony" in musical terms?**
- A. A short vocal-based composition**
  - B. An extended orchestral composition typically in four movements**
  - C. An ensemble of solo instruments**
  - D. A collection of symphonic poems**
- 9. What does "episodes" refer to in the analysis of a fugue?**
- A. Repeated sections of the subject**
  - B. Fragments of the subject manipulated and modulated**
  - C. Movements within the piece**
  - D. Improvised sections by the performer**
- 10. Which genre of music emerged from African American communities in the early 20th century?**
- A. Jazz**
  - B. Blues**
  - C. Rock**
  - D. Classical**

## **Answers**

SAMPLE

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. B
7. B
8. B
9. B
10. B

SAMPLE

## **Explanations**

SAMPLE



**1. What aspect of music was greatly emphasized by composers in the second half of the Renaissance?**

- A. Modal harmony**
- B. Improvisational elements**
- C. Development of major/minor tonalities**
- D. Static drone accompaniments**

In the second half of the Renaissance, the development of major and minor tonalities was a crucial aspect of musical evolution. Composers began to transition from modal systems, which had been predominant in earlier periods, towards a clearer structure based on major and minor scales. This shift allowed for greater expressiveness and guided harmonic progression, resulting in a music framework that would significantly influence the Baroque period and beyond. During this time, composers were exploring more complex arrangements and harmonies, expanding their musical language to create works that could evoke a richer range of emotions. The focus on tonality also facilitated the emergence of functional harmony, where chords were centered around a tonality and established a sense of resolution that was appealing to audiences. This foundational shift laid the groundwork for the harmonic practices of later Western music, distinguishing this period as one of significant transformational change in music history.

**2. Where did Vivaldi work for most of his life?**

- A. Saint Mark's Basilica**
- B. Pio Ospedale della Pietà**
- C. Royal Conservatory of Music**
- D. Vienna Court**

Vivaldi is most known for his extensive work at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, where he spent a significant portion of his career. The Ospedale was a home for orphaned and abandoned girls, and it was here that Vivaldi composed much of his music, particularly for the all-female ensembles that performed there. His connection to the Ospedale allowed him to nurture his talents and experiment with different musical forms, notably those found in his concertos and sacred works. The institution not only provided a supportive environment for Vivaldi's compositions but also positioned him within a vibrant musical community that influenced his style. The opportunities afforded by the Ospedale enabled him to produce some of his most famous works, including "The Four Seasons." This association with a place dedicated to education and performance significantly shaped his career and legacy in the world of music.

### 3. Who is the author of the opera "Carmen"?

- A. Giuseppe Verdi
- B. Giacomo Puccini
- C. Georges Bizet**
- D. Richard Wagner

The opera "Carmen" was composed by Georges Bizet, who was a French composer known for his significant contributions to the operatic repertoire. Premiered in 1875, "Carmen" is often regarded as one of the most important operas of the 19th century due to its innovative structure, memorable melodies, and dramatic depth. The work is set in Spain and portrays the story of the strong-willed Carmen, her relationship with the soldier Don José, and themes of love, freedom, and fate. Bizet's music combines elements of French opera with influences from Spanish folk tradition, showcasing his skill in orchestration and character development. The opera was initially met with mixed reactions but has since become a staple in the opera repertoire, celebrated for its richness and emotional intensity. In contrast, the other composers listed—Verdi, Puccini, and Wagner—are associated with other notable operas but did not compose "Carmen." Verdi is renowned for works like "La Traviata" and "Aida," Puccini for "La Bohème" and "Tosca," and Wagner for his complex operas such as "The Ring Cycle." Each of these composers has made a substantial impact on the

### 4. Which of the following terms refers to the speed of a piece of music?

- A. Pitch
- B. Tempo**
- C. Dynamics
- D. Meter

The term that refers to the speed of a piece of music is tempo. Tempo indicates how fast or slow a piece should be played and is typically measured in beats per minute (BPM). It serves as a crucial element in conveying the overall feel and energy of a musical composition. Composers specify tempo markings using Italian terms such as "Allegro" (fast) or "Andante" (walking pace) to guide performers in interpreting the music as intended. Pitch concerns the perceived frequency of a sound, determining how high or low a note is. Dynamics involves the volume of the music, such as how loudly or softly passages should be played. Meter pertains to the organization of beats in music, establishing a rhythmic structure through time signatures. Each of these terms plays a significant role in music, but only tempo specifically addresses the speed at which music is performed, making it the correct answer to the question.

**5. What is the name of the first complete opera and who composed it?**

**A. La Traviata by Verdi**

**B. Orfeo ed Euridice by Gluck**

**C. L'Orfeo by Monteverdi**

**D. Don Giovanni by Mozart**

The first complete opera is widely recognized as "L'Orfeo," composed by Claudio Monteverdi in 1607. This opera is significant not only for its historical importance but also for how it exemplifies the early Baroque style. Monteverdi's work integrated music with drama in a cohesive and innovative way, setting a foundational template for the operatic genre that would evolve over the centuries. "L'Orfeo" tells the mythological story of Orpheus, who descends into the Underworld to reclaim his beloved Eurydice. The opera showcases a range of musical techniques that highlighted the emotional capabilities of human voice and orchestration, paving the way for future developments in opera. Monteverdi's incorporation of recitative, arias, and ensemble pieces represents an early exploration of operatic form, establishing a new artistic expression that had a profound influence on subsequent composers. While the other options are notable operas, they were composed later and do not hold the distinction of being the first complete opera. "La Traviata" by Verdi and "Don Giovanni" by Mozart, for instance, are masterpieces of the operatic repertoire but were created in the 19th century. "Orfeo ed Euridice" by Gluck also

**6. Who were the key composers associated with the "second Viennese school"?**

**A. Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**B. Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern**

**C. Pablo Casals, Benjamin Britten**

**D. Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel**

The key composers associated with the "second Viennese school" are Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern. This group is known for their contributions to the development of atonal music and the twelve-tone technique, which was a revolutionary compositional method developed by Schoenberg. This approach moved away from traditional tonal structures and allowed for a new way of organizing musical materials, emphasizing equality among all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale. Schoenberg is often regarded as the founder of this school, and his students, Berg and Webern, further expanded its ideas and innovative techniques in their own works. The second Viennese school emerged in the early 20th century and became pivotal in shaping modern classical music, providing a contrast to the earlier Viennese school's tonal composers like Haydn and Mozart. The other groups mentioned do not align with the same historical and stylistic context. Haydn and Mozart were part of the Classical era, while Casals and Britten, as well as Debussy and Ravel, represent other significant movements in music history but are not connected to the specific innovations and philosophies of the second Viennese school.

## 7. During which musical period were troubadours most popular?

- A. Renaissance
- B. Medieval**
- C. Baroque
- D. Classical

The troubadours were most prominent during the Medieval period, specifically between the late 11th century and the 13th century. This group of poet-musicians primarily flourished in the southern regions of what is now France, where they composed and performed songs in the Occitan language. Their work often focused on themes of courtly love, chivalry, and the beauty of nature, reflecting the socio-cultural context of the time. The Medieval period is characterized by its distinct musical forms, such as Gregorian chant and the early development of polyphony, making it a fertile ground for the emergence of the troubadour tradition. This era saw the intersection of music, poetry, and social practices, with troubadours often performing in courts and festivals. Their contributions significantly influenced the evolution of Western music and poetry, leading to the gradual shift towards more complex musical structures in later periods. In contrast, the Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical periods each introduced different musical styles and innovations. The Renaissance period focused more on humanism and polyphony, leading to greater emphasis on instrumental music and secular themes. The Baroque period was marked by the development of opera and complex forms like the concerto and suite. The Classical period emphasized clarity and balance, with the

## 8. What defines a "symphony" in musical terms?

- A. A short vocal-based composition
- B. An extended orchestral composition typically in four movements**
- C. An ensemble of solo instruments
- D. A collection of symphonic poems

A symphony is defined as an extended orchestral composition, typically structured in four movements. This form of music originated in the classical period and serves as a significant genre for symphonic orchestras. The usual four-movement structure includes an opening fast movement, a slow movement, a minuet or scherzo, and a concluding fast movement. This framework allows for a broad exploration of themes, contrasting moods, and diverse orchestral textures, reflecting both the emotional depth and technical capabilities of an orchestra. The essence of a symphony lies in its orchestration, combining various musical instruments to create a rich and layered sound. This also distinguishes it from shorter vocal compositions, which focus primarily on vocal lines and their lyrics rather than the instrumental color and complexity found in symphonic works. Additionally, an ensemble of solo instruments or a collection of symphonic poems does not encapsulate the defined structured approach and specific orchestral forces that characterize a symphony.

**9. What does "episodes" refer to in the analysis of a fugue?**

- A. Repeated sections of the subject**
- B. Fragments of the subject manipulated and modulated**
- C. Movements within the piece**
- D. Improvised sections by the performer**

In the analysis of a fugue, the term "episodes" refers specifically to passages that serve as transitions between statements of the subject or answers. These sections typically consist of fragments of the subject or new material that is based on the subject, and they may involve manipulation and modulation to different keys. The essence of an episode is that it does not present the main thematic material (the subject) in its complete form; instead, it often explores variations or developments of it, creating contrast and helping to maintain the flow of the composition. This concept is crucial for understanding how a fugue is structured, as episodes help to create tension and variety in the piece while adhering to the polyphonic texture that is characteristic of fugal writing. They allow the composer to explore different harmonic ideas and motifs derived from the main theme, thus contributing to the overall unity and complexity of the work.

**10. Which genre of music emerged from African American communities in the early 20th century?**

- A. Jazz**
- B. Blues**
- C. Rock**
- D. Classical**

The genre of music that emerged from African American communities in the early 20th century is the Blues. This style developed in the Deep South, particularly in areas such as the Mississippi Delta, and is characterized by its expressive use of lyrics, specific chord progressions, and the incorporation of elements like call-and-response patterns, which have deep roots in African musical traditions. Blues music often speaks to the struggles, hardships, and emotional experiences of African Americans during this period, reflecting social, personal, and cultural narratives. Its impact has been profound, influencing various other genres, including jazz, rock, and rhythm and blues. Jazz did indeed also develop in African American communities, but it came about slightly later and is a distinct genre, incorporating improvisation and a broader range of influences. Rock music emerged as a result of the synthesis of various styles, including blues and jazz, but it was not predominantly an early 20th-century development within African American communities. Classical music has European roots and does not pertain to the origins of the genre being asked about in the question.