

RCM Certificate Program - Level 5 Theory Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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SAMPLE

Questions

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- 1. What is indicated by notes that are moving by skip?**
 - A. A step is the difference in pitch between consecutive notes**
 - B. A skip refers to the repetition of the same note**
 - C. Any larger difference in pitch between notes**
 - D. The inability to reach the next note in a scale**
- 2. What is an upbeat (anacrusis) in musical terms?**
 - A. A note that signals the end of a piece**
 - B. A measure that indicates a time signature**
 - C. A note or series of notes before the first complete measure**
 - D. A repeat of a musical phrase**
- 3. How is "down bow" executed on a bowed string instrument?**
 - A. By playing the note while drawing the string downward**
 - B. By plucking the string**
 - C. By playing the note while pushing the string upward**
 - D. By tapping the instrument**
- 4. In identifying the key of a passage, which two tonalities are typically focused on?**
 - A. Major and diminished**
 - B. Minor and augmented**
 - C. Major and minor**
 - D. Major and pentatonic**
- 5. How does the song "Over the Rainbow" reflect a universal longing?**
 - A. By expressing a desire for adventure**
 - B. By articulating a search for belonging**
 - C. By highlighting the value of companionship**
 - D. By showcasing resilience in adversity**
- 6. Which minor scale has 1 sharp in its natural form?**
 - A. E Minor**
 - B. B Minor**
 - C. F# Minor**
 - D. D Minor**

- 7. What does a time signature of 2/8 indicate?**
- A. 2 quarter note beats per bar**
 - B. 2 eighth note beats per bar**
 - C. 2 half note beats per bar**
 - D. 2 whole note beats per bar**
- 8. In the context of functional chord symbols, what does a lowercase 'i' indicate?**
- A. Major tonic**
 - B. Minor tonic**
 - C. Major subdominant**
 - D. Minor dominant**
- 9. What does "Dal Segno" (D.S.) mean in music?**
- A. To slow down the tempo**
 - B. To play a new section of the piece**
 - C. To return to a specific sign**
 - D. To end the performance**
- 10. Which terminology would you associate with a very quiet dynamic in music?**
- A. Pianissimo**
 - B. Fortissimo**
 - C. Rallentando**
 - D. Poco**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is indicated by notes that are moving by skip?

- A. A step is the difference in pitch between consecutive notes
- B. A skip refers to the repetition of the same note
- C. Any larger difference in pitch between notes**
- D. The inability to reach the next note in a scale

Notes that are moving by skip indicate a larger difference in pitch between the notes, typically spanning an interval greater than a step. In music theory, a step is defined as the movement between two consecutive notes in a scale, while a skip involves jumping over at least one note. This can mean moving from a note to one that is one full step above, or beyond, depending on the specific interval. For example, if you are in the C major scale and you move from C to E, that is considered a skip because you are jumping over the note D. Skips are common in melodies and harmonizations, creating a more varied and interesting musical line compared to movements solely by steps. Understanding this concept is essential for recognizing how different musical phrases are structured and how they can evoke different emotions and dynamics within a piece.

2. What is an upbeat (anacrusis) in musical terms?

- A. A note that signals the end of a piece
- B. A measure that indicates a time signature
- C. A note or series of notes before the first complete measure**
- D. A repeat of a musical phrase

The term "upbeat" or "anacrusis" refers specifically to one or more notes that occur before the first strong beat of a musical measure, effectively leading into the main thematic material. This introduction creates a sense of anticipation and rhythm that is integral to how a piece begins. It is common in various musical styles and helps establish the tempo and energy right from the start. The other options provided do not accurately represent the concept of an upbeat. The first choice describes a function that is contrary to the role of an upbeat, which is about initiating rather than concluding a piece. The second choice relates to the structural aspect of a time signature but does not encompass the specific idea of notes introducing a measure. The fourth option describes a repetition of material, which is a different musical concept entirely, focusing on the reiteration of phrases rather than the introductory nature of an upbeat.

3. How is "down bow" executed on a bowed string instrument?

- A. By playing the note while drawing the string downward**
- B. By plucking the string**
- C. By playing the note while pushing the string upward**
- D. By tapping the instrument**

Executing a "down bow" on a bowed string instrument, such as a violin or cello, involves drawing the bow downward across the strings. This technique means that the bow moves from the frog (the part of the bow held by the player) toward the tip. When a musician performs a down bow, they apply pressure and control to produce a clear and resonant sound from the instrument while maintaining proper bowing technique. By executing the down bow in this manner, the player can achieve a dynamic and rich tone, effectively utilizing the bow's weight and the string's vibrations. The method of drawing the bow downward is fundamental to string playing and contributes to the overall expressiveness and fluidity of the music. The other techniques like plucking the string, pushing the string upward, or tapping the instrument are distinct actions that serve different purposes in string performance and do not align with the definition or execution of a down bow. Plucking refers to using the fingers, pushing upward would describe an up bow, and tapping is an entirely different technique often used for effects or specific musical styles.

4. In identifying the key of a passage, which two tonalities are typically focused on?

- A. Major and diminished**
- B. Minor and augmented**
- C. Major and minor**
- D. Major and pentatonic**

In the context of identifying the key of a musical passage, the focus is primarily on major and minor tonalities. These two tonal systems form the foundation of Western music theory, where most compositions are categorized within these frameworks. The major tonality is characterized by its bright, happy sound, while the minor tonality tends to evoke a more somber or melancholic feel. Understanding the relationship between these two tonalities is essential for analyzing harmonic progressions and melody structures within a piece. They provide the basis for most scales, chords, and tonal relationships that are prevalent in a wide array of musical genres. Focusing on major and minor allows musicians and theorists to identify the overall mood and harmonic context of the passage, making it crucial for both performance and theoretical analysis. In contrast, the other options include tonalities that do not serve as foundational as major and minor. Diminished and augmented often refer to specific chord types rather than key centers, while pentatonic scales, while important in various musical traditions, are subsets that derive from the major or minor scales rather than standing as primary keys themselves.

5. How does the song "Over the Rainbow" reflect a universal longing?

- A. By expressing a desire for adventure**
- B. By articulating a search for belonging**
- C. By highlighting the value of companionship**
- D. By showcasing resilience in adversity**

The song "Over the Rainbow" is deeply rooted in the theme of longing for a place where one's dreams and desires can be fulfilled, which aligns closely with the concept of searching for belonging. The lyrics convey a sense of yearning for an idealized place that represents safety, acceptance, and a longing for happiness that transcends the challenges of reality. This universal longing resonates with listeners as it taps into the deep human desire to find a place or state where one feels they truly belong, free from turmoil and filled with hope. The notion of belonging is especially poignant as it encapsulates the experiences of individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and situations, thereby connecting with a wide audience. This emotional depth is a central aspect of the song that captures the essence of what it means to seek comfort and a sense of identity. Other themes, while present in the song, do not encompass the broad, fundamental human experience of searching for a place where one feels at home and accepted.

6. Which minor scale has 1 sharp in its natural form?

- A. E Minor**
- B. B Minor**
- C. F# Minor**
- D. D Minor**

The minor scale that has one sharp in its natural form is E Minor. In music theory, the harmonic and melodic forms of minor scales can contain different accidentals, but the natural minor scale is defined by its specific pattern of whole and half steps. In the case of E Minor, its notes are E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The presence of F# as the only sharp is crucial here. The scale follows the natural minor pattern of whole and half steps: whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole, whole. When determining which scales contain sharps in their natural forms, it is important to examine the key signature based on the circle of fifths. E Minor is the relative minor of G Major, which has one sharp (F#). This relationship reinforces the connection and classification of E Minor as a minor scale with one sharp in its natural form. Other minor scales mentioned do not fit this criteria based on their respective key signatures. Thus, identifying E Minor as the correct answer is rooted in both scale structure and the established conventions of key signatures in music theory.

7. What does a time signature of 2/8 indicate?

- A. 2 quarter note beats per bar
- B. 2 eighth note beats per bar**
- C. 2 half note beats per bar
- D. 2 whole note beats per bar

A time signature of 2/8 indicates that there are 2 beats in each measure (or bar) and that the unit of measurement is the eighth note. This means each measure consists of two eighth notes. In this case, the upper number (2) signifies the number of beats in a measure, while the lower number (8) indicates that the eighth note gets one beat. Understanding time signatures is essential as it affects the rhythm and feel of the music being played. In the context of a 2/8 time signature, music typically has a quick, lively feel, often found in certain styles like folk or dance music, where energy and movement are paramount.

8. In the context of functional chord symbols, what does a lowercase 'i' indicate?

- A. Major tonic
- B. Minor tonic**
- C. Major subdominant
- D. Minor dominant

In functional chord symbols, a lowercase 'i' indicates a minor tonic. This notation is used to represent the root of a minor tonic chord within the context of music theory. In a minor key, the tonic chord serves as the home base or central chord around which a piece of music is organized. The use of lowercase letters signifies that the chord is minor, distinguishing it from uppercase letters, which denote major chords. In this system, the minor tonic is typically built on the first scale degree of the minor scale and forms the foundation for the harmonic structure. Understanding this concept is crucial for interpreting and analyzing music in a minor key since the tonic chord plays a significant role in establishing tonality and guiding harmonic progressions.

9. What does "Dal Segno" (D.S.) mean in music?

- A. To slow down the tempo
- B. To play a new section of the piece
- C. To return to a specific sign**
- D. To end the performance

"Dal Segno" (D.S.) is an instruction used in sheet music that directs the performer to return to a specific sign, which is often marked with the symbol "S" or "D.S." This allows for certain sections of a piece to be repeated, creating a musical structure that enhances the overall composition. The importance of this instruction lies in its ability to facilitate varying repetitions without needing to write out entire passages again, which can simplify the notation and encourage more fluid performance. By allowing musicians to transition back to designated points marked by a "D.S.," composers can create richer musical experiences and maintain thematic coherence throughout their works. This aspect of musical notation is fundamental in helping performers navigate complex scores efficiently.

10. Which terminology would you associate with a very quiet dynamic in music?

A. Pianissimo

B. Fortissimo

C. Rallentando

D. Poco

The correct terminology associated with a very quiet dynamic in music is "pianissimo." This term indicates that a passage should be played very softly, creating a delicate and subtle sound. It derives from the Italian word "piano," which means soft. When used in musical notation, pianissimo is often indicated with the symbol "pp." In contrast, the other terms have different meanings. "Fortissimo" signifies a very loud dynamic, contrasting sharply with pianissimo. "Rallentando" refers to a gradual slowing down of the tempo, which does not pertain to loudness or softness. Meanwhile, "poco" means "a little" and can modify dynamics or tempo but does not specify a very quiet dynamic on its own. Therefore, the association of "pianissimo" with a very quiet dynamic is clear and consistent with its definition in musical terminology.