

CERTIFICATION: IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A DEGREE IN MUSIC

Study Guide

©2005, Emily S. Jorgensen, NCTM
Used with Permission

Unless you completed substantial college coursework in music, you will need to take four tests: Music Theory, Music History & Literature, Pedagogy/Teacher Education, and the Certification Exam that everyone has to take, regardless of educational background. The following study guide is meant to help you prepare for the first three tests. These first three tests ask for factual information in the form of multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank from a list of possible answers. The fourth test is a practical examination in essay form that asks you questions such as “What would you do with a students with x-and-such issues or problems,” or “outline a curriculum for this-and-such level of student.” It truly tests your overall teaching experience, rather than memorized facts. Try to remember that a score of 75% is all that is required to pass any of the tests. You can do it!

The Proficiency Exam in Music Theory: What You Need to Know

Nearly all of the following can be found in this book: “Music Theory” by George Thaddeus Jones, pub. HarperCollins. Any comprehensive theory textbook or workbooks would also suffice. One person used the Keith Snell Theory workbooks levels 1-10 to prepare for the tests (and passed ☺).

You must be able to identify the following:

- ◆ Intervals—distance and quality (ex. Minor 2nd)
- ◆ Chords—roman numeral within a key, and quality (ex. V chord; Major triad)
- ◆ Key signatures—major and minor
- ◆ Scales—major and all three minors
- ◆ The correct amount of counts/notes within a given time signature

You must be able to analyze all the following from a given musical example:

- ◆ Key of the piece
- ◆ Chords used (by Roman numeral)
- ◆ Cadence types
- ◆ Non-chord tones
- ◆ Mode used (ex. Phrygian, etc.)

You must understand the following additional concepts:

- ◆ Inversion
- ◆ Stretto
- ◆ Diminution
- ◆ Sequence
- ◆ Modulation
- ◆ Augmentation
- ◆ Ostinato
- ◆ Scale degree names (ex. Tonic, supertonic, etc.)
- ◆ Planing

- ◆ Counterpoint
- ◆ Modes
- ◆ Retrograde
- ◆ Tone row
- ◆ Augmented 6th chords, Neapolitan 6th
- ◆ Tonal Harmony
- ◆ Rhythm
- ◆ Texture
- ◆ Picardy 3rd
- ◆ Form (ternary, binary, etc.)
- ◆ A wide variety of musical terms often found in music (ex. Allegretto)
- ◆ Alto and tenor clef
- ◆ Sonata-allegro form and its components
- ◆ Alberti bass
- ◆ Transpositions of orchestral instruments (ex. B-flat trumpet sounds at b-flat when it plays “C”)

The Proficiency Exam in Music History/Literature: What You Need to Know

You need NOT know a single date for this exam. Everything is organized around an understanding of the six main periods of music history. I would strongly advise organizing your studying into these six periods: Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, and 20th Century. Familiarize yourself with the following from each period:

- ◆ Major composers and their most famous/significant works, both for piano and otherwise
- ◆ Major stylistic characteristics (ex. The simple elegance of the Classic period with sparse texture)
- ◆ Names for compositional techniques of each period. (Ex. Twelve-tone row from 20th century, or counterpoint from Baroque)
- ◆ Names of sub-styles or artistic “movements” within the main periods (ex. Neo-Romantic in the 20th century)

Although you will likely have to do the most reading for this test than for any other, one Music History textbook should have more than enough information in it for you to pass this test. I would recommend “Listen” by Joseph Kerman. New, it costs about \$60.00, however you can find older editions (that the colleges no longer use) for as low as \$3.00 plus shipping. I found it on Amazon for \$6.00 including shipping. It is used for Music 101 classes across the nation. It is designed to give music minors and other interested college students a basic understanding of the major events and trends in music history. I have looked over the most recent edition’s content pages and I believe it would adequately prepare you. I would have my notes divided thus as I read it, and write down key information as I go: (then study just your notes as you near the test date)

- ◆ For each period, have pages dedicated to information about the major composers and each of their major contributions to the period (pieces, stylistic innovations, etc.)
- ◆ For each period, have pages dedicated the forms and compositional techniques and concepts. (ex. Sonata-allegro form in the Classical period) List here any “vocabulary” words that seem tied to this particular period.

- ◆ For your own mental categorization, have a page in each period dedicated to key historical happening during the period. Then, if you have to deduce an answer on the test, you will have a clear picture of each period. (Ex. Napoleon took over Europe during Beethoven's lifetime.)

The Proficiency Exam in Pedagogy/Teacher Education: What You Need to Know

Sadly, there is no one book that I could recommend to help you completely prepare for this test. I do recommend "Practical Piano Pedagogy: The Definitive Text for Piano Teachers and Pedagogy Students" by Martha Baker-Jordan, pub. Warner Brothers. You can get it on Amazon for \$30.00 plus shipping or from BYU Bookstore for \$40.00. The main reason no one book can do it, is because a great deal of this test is dedicated to questions about repertoire. Like, "Who composed this-and-such famous piece for piano." Or, "Which of these composers wrote pedagogical music," etc. Also, quite frankly, some of the questions are really questions of opinion, but they ask for True/False responses. **You will most likely rely on your own experiences as a piano teacher for this test.** However, here are some concepts you should know.

- ◆ All the different approaches to teaching beginning reading: landmark, middle C, etc.
- ◆ Other, less-traditional approaches: Suzuki, Alexander technique etc.
- ◆ Major American pedagogical composers (Kabalevsky, Vandall, etc.)
- ◆ Particular characteristics and concerns about non-traditional students (adult students, teenage beginners, very young beginners)
- ◆ Have in your mind (perhaps work it out in paper lists, first) the graded level of difficulty for pieces by a certain composer. (Ex. Which Bach pieces to teach first, then the next year, the next, up to the WTC) Only do this for the major piano composers that everyone should have as a part of a well-rounded classical training—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Bartok to start.