Part I of the DMA comprehensive exam consists of 50 free response, short answer, or multiple choice questions. Topics included in the exam include Fundamentals of Music Theory, Diatonic Harmony and Voice Leading, Chromatic Harmony and Voice Leading, Tonal Forms, Modal and Tonal Counterpoint, Instrumentation and Orchestration, and Twentieth-Century Music Theory.

Below are suggestions for study for each section of the examination. These suggestions include a list of topics and concepts, as well as resources for study. These are not exhaustive lists – students will be expected to demonstrate mastery of these and other topics and concepts.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC THEORY**

This section of the exam covers topics considered to be the fundamentals of music theory. These questions are typically free-response or multiple-choice questions. Below is a list of skills you may be required to demonstrate on this portion of the exam.

- clefs, octave (register) designation, pitch and rhythm notation, key signatures, rhythm and meter, intervals, scales (major, minor [natural, harmonic, melodic]), modes, enharmonicism, figured bass, triads and seventh chords.

Suggested texts for review:


The above texts are highly recommended, but just about any fundamentals of music theory or undergraduate music theory text should provide a review of fundamentals topics.
DIATONIC HARMONY AND VOICE LEADING

This section of the exam covers topics typically covered in a music theory course that focuses on diatonic harmony. These questions are typically free-response or multiple-choice questions, and may require you to demonstrate a mastery of voiceleading. Below is a list of skills you may be required to demonstrate on this portion of the exam.

harmonic function, voice leading and partwriting, tonic and dominant prolongation/expansion patterns and idioms, diatonic modulation techniques, non-chord tones, suspensions, diatonic sequences, cadence types.

Suggested texts for review:


The above texts are highly recommended. Other texts may be useful, but be aware that they may have conflicting terminology or may not place the same emphasis on tonic and dominant prolongation/expansion patterns and idioms.
Note to Students: This document provides a list of skills that you may be required to demonstrate on the portion of the comprehensive exam in music theory that pertains to Chromatic Harmony and Voice Leading. It is intended to focus your individual preparation on the topics that are most relevant to the exam, all of which are covered by the standard undergraduate music theory textbooks and in the second year of most undergraduate theory curricula. You are urged to practice doing these activities rather than simply learning terminology. Do not assume that this is an exhaustive checklist; rather, review the following text to fill in any gaps in your knowledge:

Laitz, Steven and Christopher Bartlette. *Graduate Review of Tonal Theory.* Oxford University Press.

Format: The questions on Chromatic Harmony and Voice Leading fall into the following categories.

1. Free-Response Writing: notating pitches and rhythms on staves
2. Multiple-Choice (Terminology): given either a term, its definition, or one or more instances of it, choosing the corresponding answer
3. Multiple-Choice (Exclusion): identifying the instance that does not meet the given criteria
4. Multiple-Choice (Identification): given a passage of music, choosing the term that best identifies what takes place in it

Skills.

1. Answer questions pertaining to diatonic modulation: closely related keys given a starting key, diatonic pivot chords, common modulations from major and from minor keys, etc.
2. Write, describe, and identify errors pertaining to the spellings, functions, and resolutions (in 4 voices) of the following harmonies: applied dominants, applied leading-tone chords, chords that incorporate modal mixture (also known as "borrowed chords"), Neapolitan-sixth chords, augmented-sixth chords, enharmonically reinterpreted chords (e.g., diminished-seventh chords).
**TONAL FORMS**

You will be asked to apply terms and ideas to common features, tendencies, and processes associated with tonal musical forms.

Terminology: Usage varies somewhat across different pedagogical approaches and traditions. While the exam employs widely recognized terminology and offers alternate terms where possible in an attempt to limit such problems, it would be wise for you to consult sources we use in the MSU College of Music. You may already understand the concepts involved, but this will ensure a familiarity with the terminology. Below is a partial list of terms and concepts with which you should be fluent.

- transition, retransition, digression, refrain, episode, exposition,
- development, recapitulation, simple vs rounded vs balanced binary forms, continuous vs sectional forms, FTA (first tonal area), STA (second tonal area), compound form

Sources: Full citations are given below. Laitz 2012 is the text that we use in the undergraduate sequence in the College of Music. Its ideas also inform the graduate course 872: Tonal Forms. It covers most of the material on the exam thoroughly. For example, its treatment of sonata form, in addition to the usual features one finds, addresses the monothematic sonata, and touches on works with slow introduction, false recapitulations, and three-key expositions. Formal types that he does not address include slow-movement form and concerto form. For these, we recommend Caplin 1998 or Green 1979. Caplin is also very thorough and uses a terminology that, while not identical to Laitz, is quite intuitively related. Green’s text first appeared in 1965, and was the chief resource on musical form relied upon in university music schools in North America for a full generation. Musical examples are chosen from many genres. Explanations are concise. Analytical apparatus is clear and simple; terminology is minimal: those used are fully compatible with Laitz.


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1 The discussion of sonata-rondo form is new to the third edition. Earlier editions of Laitz do not cover sonata-rondo form.
Modal and Tonal Counterpoint

Note to Students: This document provides a list of skills that you may be required to demonstrate on the counterpoint portion of Part I of the comprehensive exam in music theory. It is intended to focus your individual preparation on the topics that are most relevant to the exam. Do not assume, however, that it is an exhaustive checklist.

Organization: This document is organized according to topical sub-headings and individual skills pertaining to each of them. You are urged to practice doing these activities rather than simply learning terminology.

Format: The counterpoint questions on Part One of the exam fall into the following categories.

1. Free-Response Writing: notating pitches and rhythms on a staff
2. Multiple-Choice (Terminology): given either a term or its definition, choosing the other one
3. Multiple-Choice (Simulated Writing): given a partially notated score, choosing the option that best describes what should or would usually happen before or after it
4. Multiple-Choice (Identification): given a passage of music, choosing the term that best identifies what takes place in it

Sixteenth-Century (i.e., Modal) Counterpoint. The questions in this section ask about techniques and stylistic features of music of the sixteenth-century Renaissance, especially works of Palestrina and Lassus. In addition to the music itself, there are two very good textbooks on the subject. The best is Peter Schubert's Modal Counterpoint: Renaissance Style (Oxford, second ed. 2008), which includes theoretical explanations, examples from pieces and treatises, and a wealth of practical exercises. A more concise, but less practically oriented text is Robert Gauldin's Sixteenth-Century Counterpoint, published by Waveland Press. You are urged to review one or both of these texts; do not assume that a unit on species counterpoint is sufficient to prepare you for this section of the exam.

Cadences.

1. Given a final and a mode (e.g., D Dorian), construct and/or define any of the following cadence types in two voices: soprano cadence, tenor cadence, bass cadence. Note that each cadence type is defined by the direction and interval by which each of the two voices approaches the final.
2. Given a final and a mode (e.g., G Mixolydian), construct and/or define a proper Renaissance cadence in three voices.
3. Given a passage of music in two or three voices, locate and identify the following: cadence (including type and final), evaded cadence, fauxbourdon, imitation, double (or invertible) counterpoint.

Dissonance Treatment.
1. Write, identify, and/or detect errors pertaining to the following dissonance types: passing tone (taught by second species), neighboring tone (taught by third species), cambiata (third species), suspension in either upper or lower voice (fourth species).

Mode Identification.

1. Given a monophonic passage, identify its mode. There are twelve Renaissance modes: Dorian, Hypodorian, Phrygian, Hypophrygian, Lydian, Hypolydian, Mixolydian, Hypomixolydian, Aeolian, Hypoaeolian, Ionian, and Hypoionian. To identify the mode correctly, you must consider the final pitch, the ambitus (i.e., melodic range), and the characteristic skips and leaps.

Eighteenth-Century (i.e., Tonal or Baroque) Counterpoint. The questions in this section pertain to contrapuntal practice in the time of J. S. Bach, but also more generally to techniques of dissonance treatment in common-practice tonal music. In addition to the music itself, there are several textbooks that could help your study. Robert Gauldin’s Eighteenth-Century Counterpoint, published by Waveland Press, is thorough, although it does not have very many exercises. Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhofer’s Baroque Counterpoint, published by Pearson / Prentice Hall, has an idiosyncratic ordering of topics and deals extensively with theoretical treatises and composition manuals from the Baroque, but has one of the most musical and practical presentations available. Other textbooks by Thomas Benjamin and Kent Kennan are also very useful.

Fugue.

1. Define the following terms and identify each of them in a fugue from the Well-Tempered Clavier of J. S. Bach (or similar work): subject, link, answer, real answer, tonal answer, countersubject, bridge, episode, stretto, augmentation, pedal point.

2. Given a fugue subject, notate an appropriate answer. You must determine whether the answer needs to be tonal or real. Study the adjustments that must be made to the answer given the presence of ^5 at or near the beginning, and given a subject that modulates to the dominant key.
Instrumentation and Orchestration

Note: this compilation of materials is only a guide to assist students studying for the comprehensive exam. It should not be considered all-inclusive or exhaustive, but simply a reference to some important aspects of this topic.

Suggested Textbooks
Most orchestration books cover all of the following material. One recommended text is:

*The Study of Orchestration* by Samuel Adler
Published by W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., Third edition

Another fairly recent textbook is:

*The Technique of Orchestration* by Kent Kennan and Donald Grantham
Prentice-Hall, Sixth edition

There are “classic” older textbooks, but many of these, while covering many aspects in detail, do not contain any information about contemporary techniques and are often very conservative regarding instrument ranges and technical possibilities. One textbook that falls into this category is:

*Orchestration* by Walter Piston, published by W.W.Norton & Company, Inc.

Specific instrumental characteristics

Ranges – know the common ranges, with careful attention to “absolute” range parameters. For instance, for most clarinets the lowest written pitch is D\(_4\) (the “D” a m7th below middle “C”).

Transposition – know the transposition for each instrument, including the effect of the transposition on the key signature. Remember that “sounding pitch” is the non-transposed pitch and “written pitch” is the transposed pitch.

Performance considerations – know what is “easy” to do on an instrument, and also what is “hard” to do. Be sure to consider range, dynamics, articulations, technique, etc.

Foreign names – know the common names for each instrument in English, German, Italian and French.

Instrument specific notations – for instance, the use of the circle (·) to represent a harmonic, the use of the plus (+) to represent the “stopped horn,” etc.

Harmonics – primarily for the strings, but harmonics are also regularly used by flutes and harp. The harmonic series, up to the 8\(^{th}\) partial, should be known, not only for determining string performance harmonics, but also as it is the basis for all brass overtones. Also know the proper notation for all natural harmonics on string instruments, up to the 8\(^{th}\) partial, as well as the notation of artificial harmonics.

Note: for the above, all of the common instruments found in the orchestra/band should be considered, including alto flute, English horn, soprano clarinet, alto clarinet, bass and contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, piccolo trumpet, bass trombone, and harp. For the
percussion section, timpani, snare drum, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, and the common auxiliary instruments should be studied.

Score/part preparation
   Placement of instruments in a full score
   Transposed key signatures in a transposed score
   Formatting of first page
   Formatting of following pages
   Items to include in score
   Items to include in parts
   Proper notation and placement of stems, beams, accidentals, dynamics, articulations, key signature, time signature, repeats, internal time signature changes, internal key signature changes, etc.

Instrumental Combinations
   Know the factors that result in a successful (or unsuccessful) blending of instruments, including instrument timbres (and the effect of range on timbre), relative dynamic ranges, effect of tessitura, number of instruments, etc.
Twentieth-Century Music Theory

Terminology — A number of technical terms and phrases (most of which are widely employed in scholarly writing in the fields of composition, musicology, and music theory) are used in this part of the comprehensive exam. Some of these terms and phrases may be found in this guide (see the italicized words below). Note that many, if not most, of these terms are defined and used somewhat differently by various authors; therefore, it would be wise, when preparing to take this part of the comprehensive exam, to consult the recommended books and other sources listed at the end of this guide for definitions and explanations of these terms.

To answer the questions on twentieth-century music in this part of the comprehensive exam, you must:

a) understand and be able to use basic terminology and analytical tools associated with the study of early- and mid-twentieth-century music;

b) analyze short musical examples using a variety of analytical tools and techniques, including:

identification of nontraditional chords using ad-hoc labels like those described in Kostka’s Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music (for example, quartal chord, meaning a vertical pitch structure constructed, essentially, in stacked perfect fourths);

identification of pitch-class sets, using prime forms to label set classes; for example, you must know how to find the prime form, (0,1,2,4), of pitches Bb, B, C#, and A, and you must know the meaning of such terms as trichord, tetrachord, etc.;

construction and use of 12-tone matrixes (a 12-tone matrix also may be referred to as a magic square or, simply, matrix) for simple composition and analysis of serial (also called dodecaphonic or twelve-tone serial) music, and knowledge of basic serial terminology (e.g., aggregate, prime or P form, inverted or I form (etc.), hexachord, derived series, etc.);

identification and construction of traditional modes (Dorian, Phrygian, etc.), and such scales or large pitch “collections” as the octatonic scale (also called the diminished scale), the pentatonic scale (the so-called black-key or anhemitonic five-tone scales), the whole-tone scale, and other scales and collections;

identification and construction of all traditional triads and seventh chords, augmented sixth chords, and such nontraditional chords as added-note chords, tone clusters and whole-tone “dominants” (i.e., seventh, ninth, an other chords that in root position have a major 3rd and minor 7th above the root and in which all chord tones belong to the same whole-tone scale, whether or not these chords function as traditional tonal dominants); and,

identification and description of pitch and/or rhythmic palindromes and symmetrical structures, and pitch axes;
c) be familiar with innovative aspects and distinctive elements of the styles and compositional techniques of such prominent twentieth-century composers of Western art music (“modern classical music”) as Debussy, Ives, Ravel, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, Webern, Berg, Prokofiev, Milhaud, Carter, and others who were active ca. 1900-1970; you should know (among many other things about the music of these composers) that:

hallmark features of Debussy’s music include the composer’s use of extended tertian (also called “tall” chords constructed in thirds) and/or other chord types as more or less “autonomous” vertical sonorities or as components in complex and subtle textures composed of various combinations of pedal point, ostinatos, and planed linear successions (i.e., doubled-lines and/or streams of chords in parallel motion);

some of Ravel’s music incorporates elements of Russian music (especially octatonicism), Spanish music (in the composer’s use of titles and programs, dance rhythms and meters, and the Phrygian mode), and/or jazz (for example, blue notes and blues chords, sometimes called split-member chords);

Schoenberg’s “harmonic” idiom evolved from very chromatic late-19th-century tonality, to “free” atonality, to twelve-tone serialism;

much of Stravinsky’s music, throughout his long career, makes prominent use of sophisticated ostinato techniques, polyrhythms (cross rhythms), and registral displacements (that often create very disjunct lines that have large tessituras);

most of Webern’s mature works were composed using twelve-tone serial techniques, including various types of hexachordal combinatoriality;

Bartók did not use serialism, but aspects of his music, especially rhythm, meter (including asymmetric meters—i.e., meter with beats of different durations, such as 7/8 organized into three beats of 3+2+2 eighth-note pulses), and texture, reflect his lifelong study of Eastern European and Middle Eastern ethnic music; and,

some of Carter’s music makes extensive use of metric modulation and complex polymetric textures in which, for example, each of the four parts of a string quartet may have a different written or different sounding meter.
Recommended Sources of Information on Twentieth-Century Music
(Covering Analysis, Compositional Techniques, Styles, Terminology, Theories, etc.)

Generally, it is best to use the most recent edition of the books listed below. Although there are many useful online sources of information and analytical tools for the study of twentieth-century music, because web pages and websites frequently change, are abandoned, or simply disappear, they are not included below. Within each category, the items (mostly books) are listed in prioritized order (i.e., the most highly recommended books are listed first).

For definitions and short summaries of topics:

- Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Online [Oxford Music Online]

For historical perspective, brief descriptions of composer’s styles, and definitions of widely used basic technical terminology:

- Morgan: Twentieth-Century Music
- Salzman: Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction
- Simms: Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure

For a good introduction to some of the more recent theories and analytical techniques currently being used to understand twentieth-century music:

- Straus: Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory [The chapters, of Edition 3, that are most relevant to part one of the MSU comprehensive exam in music theory are: 1, 2, 4, and 5. This text is a good source of information on musical set theory and serialism.]

For useful, if somewhat idiosyncratic, college-level texts on twentieth-century music that include some analysis and coverage of rhythm, meter, texture, and timbre:

- Lester: Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music
- Antokoletz: Twentieth-Century Music

For “ad-hoc” definitions and examples of chord types and scales commonly used in twentieth-century music:

- Kostka: Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music [to the 3rd edition]; later editions are titled: Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music [Refer especially to Chapters 2 and 3.]
- Persichetti: Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice [This is an older text that still is valued by some students and teachers of composition; it may be found in many college and university libraries.]
For older but useful texts on twentieth-century music, with good coverage of such topics as rhythm, meter, texture, timbre, and borrowings from jazz, older European classical music, non-Western music, etc.:

- DeLone: *Aspects of 20th Century Music*
- Vinton: *Dictionary of Contemporary Music*
- Austin: *Music of the 20th Century: From Debussy through Stravinsky*