

First Year Theory Diagnostic Exam
UPDATED DECEMBER 2, 2024

Complete anytime between November 25, 2024, and January 26, 2025

Maximum time allowed: a total of **15 hours, 3 for background literature reading for Part 3 and 12 for the balance of the exam.**

The purpose of this exam is to help us to determine, based on your research interests and the general requirements of the musicology graduate program, whether you would benefit from doing further theory work on your own or as part of a lecture course and/or seminar.

This exam is in three parts. Part 1 assesses your literacy in chord labeling and harmonic reduction in the Austro-Germanic idiom—techniques that remain common currency among musicologists. Part 2 assesses your proficiency in articulating technical, music analytical observations on repertoire representative of your current research interests or previous training. Part 3 evaluates your ability to navigate a globalizing academic terrain in which musicologists are increasingly expected to engage musics from outside the scope of their formal musical training. This part of the exam asks you to write a descriptive essay, applying newly acquired music theoretical vocabulary collected through preliminary research.

Caveat: Part 1 is a closed book assessment. Please do not consult any notes, books, articles or Internet sources during this portion of the exam. Students can prepare by reviewing materials from undergraduate theory curricula such as:

- <http://openmusictheory.com/>
- Clendinning & Marvin's A Musician Guide series
- Laitz & Bartlette's Graduate Review of Tonal Theory: A Recasting of Common-Practice Harmony, Form and Counterpoint
- Burstein & Straus's Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony

Please submit your exam to margulis@princeton.edu by 11:59pm on January 26, 2025.

Part 1. (Closed Book)

1. Chord labeling. Using Roman numerals, label the chords in this chorale by J. S. Bach.
 - a. View the score here:
https://www.cpd.org/wiki/images/4/4b/005_An_Wasserfl%C3%BCssen_Babylon.pdf
 - b. Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqg84QF_3NE

2. Reduction. Provide a harmonic reduction of Chopin's opus 28, no. 20, Prelude.
 - a. This article references several analyses of another Chopin Prelude, which might be helpful as a model:
<https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.07.13.1/mto.07.13.1.urista.html>
 - b. Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsKwtXgFo24>

Part 2. Analysis. Choose any movement or piece of music (or excerpt of at most 7 minutes) from a repertoire that represents your current research interests or prior training. The theoretical/analytical approach you use should be appropriate for the chosen repertoire.

If the music you select is notated, please complete the analysis directly on the score (annotations may be neatly handwritten on a paper copy or digitally inputted on a PDF or image file). The annotated score should be accompanied by one or two paragraphs of explanatory prose. If the music you have selected is primarily circulated orally (i.e. is not conventionally notated), your analysis should amount to approximately five paragraphs of prose **with time stamps** that tie your analytical observations to specific moments in a reference recording. You may opt to include a transcription, though this is not required.

Regardless of the repertoire chosen, **a copy of a reference recording must be included in your submission.** The only exception to this requirement is if a recording does not exist.

Part 3. Descriptive essay using newly acquired music theoretical insights

To assess your ability to navigate global music theoretical traditions, please write a 750 to 1200 word descriptive or analytical essay on a piece of music (or excerpt of at most 7 minutes) that A) stems from a musical tradition to which you have not been enculturated, and B) seems to adhere to a musical syntax that has not made its way into your training.

To write this essay, please research and apply appropriate music theoretical categories and concepts to describe the music. Appropriateness is judged by the **degree of discursive proximity** (i.e., occurs within channels of discussion likely to intersect with those of the music's performers or listeners—often shaped by geography, culture, and time) that the theoretical/analytical concepts hold with your chosen music. The essay should begin with a paragraph that assesses the appropriateness of the theoretical/analytical terms used, noting any limitations. In cases where you are unsuccessful at finding anything remotely resembling an appropriate paradigm, please opt for a different piece of music for which this prerequisite literature exists. The essay should clearly cite supporting resources in Chicago author-date style.

You are encouraged to include historical and other contextual information when they directly strengthen your music theoretical and analytical decisions. For a passing grade, this essay must focus describing the music's sonic organization.

As in Part 2, **please include a copy of a reference recording in your submission. Please use time stamps to tie descriptive details to specific moments in the reference recording.** If a score is available, you may append one to your submission.

An Wasserflüssen Babylon

Transcribed from *Vierstimmige Choralgesänge*, 1784.

Matthias Greitter, 1525

Wolfgang Dachstein, 1525

87. 87. 887. 887.

G Major

Arranged by Johann Sebastian Bach, ca. 1730

The image shows a four-part vocal setting of the hymn 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon'. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are in German. The first system includes a first and second ending. The second system has a measure number '10' above the staff. The third system has a measure number '15' above the staff. The fourth system concludes the piece with a double bar line.

An Was-ser-flüs-sen Ba-by-lon, da sa-ßen mir mit Schmer-sen, als
wir de-dach-ten an Zi-on, da wein-ten wir von Her-zen. Wir
hin-gen auf mit schwe-rem Mut die Har-fen und die Or-geln gut an ih-re Bäum-der
Wei--den, die drin-nen sind in ih-rem Land; da mus-sen wir viel
Schmach und Schand täg-lich von ih--nen lei--den.

Originally without lyrics; lyrics inferred from title.

BWV 267.

Bach also used other words with this tune: *Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld*
(Paul Gerhardt, 1657).