

# Placement Exam Information—

## Classical Division

FALL 2009

Placement examinations are used to determine the level of each student's abilities in music history, music theory, and other subjects related to specific majors. A new student can place out of remedial courses and/or required courses. Placing out of a course will allow greater flexibility in his/her coursework. Poor performance on these tests can extend study and/or require more credits to graduate.

Please Note: Doctoral and Professional Studies students are not required to take any placement examinations except diction (singers and accompanists) and fretboard harmony (guitarists). **Failure to take these tests will result in your being automatically registered for remedial course work.** Students who have attended Manhattan School of Music for a previous Classical Division degree are required to take only the Music History exam.

**A photo ID is required (driver's license, passport, etc.) and must be presented at the door for each examination.**

### *MUSIC HISTORY*

*(required only of transfer and graduate students)*

The Music History placement examinations are designed to allow the student to show a basic understanding of the historic styles and traditions of Western art music. The test covers the period from Gregorian chant until the present and takes approximately 1-1/2 hours to complete. Students are not allowed to bring dictionaries or any other written materials to the test. The test is divided into four sections:

1. Medieval & Renaissance
2. Baroque & Pre-Classic
3. Classic & Romantic
4. Twentieth Century

Each portion of the exam has a section devoted to a general listening identification of recorded examples and a section of short-answer questions. There are no essay questions. Students who do not show sufficient mastery of the subject material must either take the necessary course (see catalogue) or pass the qualifying exam at a later date.

Students are advised not to wait until the last minute to review for the placement exams. The exams cover over a thousand years of musical evolution and revolution. General music history texts such as K. Marie Stolba's *The Development of Western Music: A History*, Schirmer's *History of Music*, and Grout's *History of Western Music* will be helpful in reviewing before the test. International students may wish to consult Hugh Miller's *History of Music*. For the listening section of the test, it may be useful to review the material, scores, and especially the recordings, for Stolba's *The Development of Western Music: An Anthology* or the *Norton Anthology of Western Music, volumes I & II*.

## **REQUIRED PIANO**

*(required of all students except keyboard and guitar majors)*

The required piano exam includes reading at sight and the demonstration of the following skills: major and minor scales, chord progressions, triads and inversions, harmonization, transposition, and sight-reading. The level of sight-reading is equivalent to repertoire from the text *Essential Keyboard Repertoire Vol. I*, ed. Lynn Olson. If you have never had piano training, you will be placed immediately into Required Piano I. More information is available upon request.

## **THEORETICAL STUDIES**

*(required of all students)*

Students must acquire a musical education that goes beyond the technical training needed for performance. Those enrolled in a degree or diploma program at Manhattan School of Music are required to gain fluency in analytical skills and understanding of the structural forces that underlie musical composition.

The theory curriculum at MSM stresses the interdependence of theoretical skills and performance. Based on this premise, placement examinations determine that student's levels of skill in harmony, counterpoint, form and analysis, dictation, and sight-singing. These examinations are to be taken only once.

Undergraduate students who do not meet college-level standards at Manhattan School of Music are placed in remedial classes. For graduate students whose placement exams indicate some deficiencies but a reasonable knowledge of undergraduate theory, the department offers various courses, which complete the theory requirements at MSM. These courses do not count toward the cumulative credit needed to graduate with the master's degree. The tests include:

### Harmony/Counterpoint/Form and Analysis:

Testing commences with rudiments – clefs, key signatures, intervals, accidentals, and rhythm. Sufficient knowledge allows the applicant to continue with the materials of diatonic harmony, chromatic harmony, modulations, figured bass, melody harmonization, and analysis of harmony, counterpoint, and form. Those who have indicated a working knowledge of this area proceed to principles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Dictation:

The instructor plays on the piano the musical material, which the students are expected to notate. Melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material will be played, beginning with simple diatonic material and progressing to more difficult chromatic and atonal material. To permit the student to complete each example, several repetitions will be played.

### Sight-Singing:

Students will be expected to sing melodies **and perform rhythms** at sight. This course of study parallels the contents of the harmony/counterpoint curriculum. Manhattan School of Music uses the "fixed do" and "movable numbers" methods.

### Fretboard harmony (guitar majors only):

This test is designed to determine the level of knowledge of the fretboard fingerings, harmony, sight-reading, transposition, and figured bass.

## **KEYBOARD SKILLS**

*(required of all keyboard students)*

***The keyboard skills exam includes sight-reading at the keyboard (see below) as well as demonstration of the following skills (undergraduate and graduate piano majors):***

major and minor scales, chord progressions, realization of a figured bass, sight-reading a string quartet excerpt from the classical period, sight-reading an orchestral score from the classical period, and transposition of a song the distance of a whole step from the original key. Departmental texts include *Figured Harmony at the Keyboard Part 1* by R.O. Morris, Oxford University Press, and *Preparatory Exercises in Score Reading* by R.O. Morris and Howard Ferguson, Oxford University Press.

***Sight-Reading at the Keyboard (undergraduate piano only):***

This test examines the student's ability to play piano literature at sight. Elements of tempo, accuracy, and interpretation will be taken into consideration. The level of reading is equivalent to easier sonatas by Haydn, waltzes and mazurkas by Chopin, and pieces from the Bartók *Mikrokosmos* through Volume 4.