

Placement Exam Information for the Jazz Arts Program

FALL 2009

GENERAL INFORMATION

Placement examinations are given to new students at the beginning of their first semester of study. These tests are used to determine the level of each student's abilities in music theory, music history, and other subjects related to specific majors.

A new student can qualify out of remedial courses and/or required courses. Qualifying out of a course or courses will allow greater flexibility in his/her course work. Poor performance on these tests can extend study and/or require more credits to graduate. Consequently, students are encouraged to prepare thoroughly for all applicable placement examinations. ***Failure to take these tests will result in your being automatically registered for remedial coursework.*** However, students who have attended Manhattan School of Music for a previous jazz/classical degree are not required to take placements.

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

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 Jazz Theory curriculum at Manhattan School of Music stresses the interdependence of theoretical skills and performance. Based on this premise, placement examinations determine the student's levels of skill in harmony, form and analysis, and ear-training. These examinations are given in August to all incoming students.

The various placement tests are listed below, along with suggestions for preparation.

- **Ear-Training**

On the piano, the instructor plays musical material that students are expected to notate. Both melodic and harmonic material will be played, beginning with simple "diatonic" material and progressing to more difficult "chromatic" material. To permit the student to complete each example, several repetitions will be played.

- **Harmony/Counterpoint/Analysis**

The testing begins with rudiments—clefs, key signatures, intervals, accidentals, rhythm. Sufficient knowledge allows the applicant to continue with the materials of basic harmony—knowledge of chord symbols and chord construction; analysis of triads, 7th, 9th, 11th and 13th chords; melodic analysis, including motivic analysis and phrase structure. Elements of counterpoint and traditional four part voice leading are included as well. Those who have indicated a good working knowledge of these areas may proceed to principles of chromatic harmony including substitute chords, complex scales, etc.

Suggested Text: **Music in Theory and Practice volumes 1 & 2** by Bruce Benward. Published by McGraw Hill.

- **Counterpoint/Analysis**

JAZZ MUSIC HISTORY

(required of all graduate jazz students)

The Jazz History placement examination is designed to test a student's knowledge of jazz history from pre–New Orleans to contemporary jazz. The test takes approximately two hours to complete. Students are not allowed to bring dictionaries or any other written materials to the test.

The test consists of two sections:

a) Identification of names, compositions, and technical terms. For example: Don Redman, Koko, Shout Chorus.

Suggested reference text: *A New History of Jazz*, Alyn Shipton

b) Identification of listening examples. Suggested recordings reference: *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*.

JAZZ IMPROVISATION

(required of all jazz students)

The test consists of both a written and a playing component as described below. Students are requested to bring their instruments for the playing section.

Written Component:

The information covered in this written test includes:

- Seven Greek modes based on major scales.
- Seven modes based on ascending melodic minor.
- Diminished whole-tone scales.
- Functions of a diminished chord (i.e., tonic diminished, passing diminished, common tone diminished).
- Regular harmony—tonic, dominant, sub-dominant, sub-dominant minor.
- Pentatonic scales.
- Hexatonic scales.
- Approach note to chords—chromatic below, scale note above, approach and

- lower passing tone.
- "I Got Rhythm" changes.
- Blues changes - major and minor.

Playing Component:

You should bring a list of ten (10) memorized standard songs and/or jazz classics and be prepared to perform any portion of them.

JAZZ PIANO MINOR

(required of all jazz students except piano majors)

The purpose of this exam is to place the student into the appropriate level of the jazz keyboard minor sequence. The student's playing proficiency as well as keyboard harmony skills will be taken into account. He/she may be asked to play a piece from chord symbols and/or a piece from the classical repertoire. Scales, technical studies, and sight reading (grand staff) will also be checked. In addition, students wishing to place out of the requirement should be prepared to play a piece from the jazz and/or classical repertoire from memory.