

A.1 Checklist of Theory Knowledge

DISCLAIMER: This list is not exhaustive. However, it is certainly a good start toward the level of achievement expected at a graduate-level comprehensive exam. Review sheets for many of these topics are available at *LearnMusicTheory.net*.

TONAL MUSIC:

- What is meant by “Common Practice Period” tonality? How about chromatic harmony?
- Diatonic harmony: standard progressions, circle-of-fifths, all other theory fundamentals
- You should be able to identify the key of any section in a tonal score -- quickly and without a recording
- Tendency tones (LTs, chord 7ths, flat 2, +6 notes, V+, etc.) and usual resolutions
- Modulation (the 6 types: common chord, common tone, altered chord as common chord, sequential, monophonic, direct)
- Secondary functions (or applied functions)
- Neapolitan chords (including spelling, analysis, and understanding how they resolve)
- Augmented sixth chords (standard types, standard and non-standard resolutions)
- Enharmonic reinterpretation (esp. Ger+6/V7, fully-diminished seventh chords)
- Misc. chromatic harmonies (V+, Vsub6, ct^o7)
- Advanced chromatic harmony (weakened dominant functions, omnibus, etc.)
- Mediant relationships (diatonic, chromatic, doubly chromatic)
- Importance of motive -- ability to analyze/discuss motivic relationships
- Basic linear analysis and associated terminology; what is “Schenkerian” analysis?

FORM:

- Cadences (know all types, be able to spot cadences in actual scores)
- Basic formal units (phrase, period, phrase group/3-phrase period, double period, parallel/contrasting/seq.)
- Simple part forms (rounded binary versus balanced or “regular” binary, ternary, five-part form, one-part form)
- Compound ternary vs. Song and trio; Da Capo aria
- Rondo (including usual key scheme and where retransitions occur)
- Sonata form (key scheme, Classical version, innovations introduced by Beethoven, later sonata forms)
- Fugue versus invention and associated terminology
- Canon, passacaglia, chaconne
- Theme and variation; Strophic form
- Twentieth-century innovations: Minimalism, moment form, mobile form, arch form
- Basic jazz/pop forms: Blues, thirty-two bar form (AABA), rhythm changes
- Note: some form topics (esp. early music, the Mass, etc.) are covered primarily as musicological topics

A.1 Checklist of Theory Knowledge, cont.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC:

- Compare/contrast atonality, serialism, and twelve-tone technique
- Second Viennese School (vs. First Viennese School?)
- Set theory and basic applications
- Dodecaphonic terminology and basic applications
- Total serialism
- “Isms” and associated composers: Expressionism, Impressionism, Primitivism, Modernism, Experimentalism, Neoclassicism, Minimalism, Neoromanticism, Polystylism
- Non-traditional scales, including modal scales, octatonic/diminished, pentatonic
- Collage technique
- Basic jazz/pop symbol notation
- Bitonality/polytonality
- Polyrhythm, polymeter, mixed meter, asymmetric meter
- New complexity
- Music based on timbre: cluster music, spectral music
- Know composers that wrote treatises in the twentieth-century. Titles would be impressive, but composer names are a good start. A basic list is available on Blackboard.
- Composers that defy categorization: Ives, Messiaen, Bartók, Cage
- This list is by no means complete. Explore further in areas of interest to you.

OTHER:

- Basic acoustic principles, esp. the overtone series and applications
- Basics of digital music
- What is species counterpoint?