Eastman School of Music
Undergraduate Placement Information
Music Theory and Aural Skills

All students beginning undergraduate degree study at the Eastman School of Music are expected to take a placement test in written and aural music theory before registering for classes. This test may be taken only once; the results are binding. The purpose of the test is for the faculty to determine the student's knowledge and mastery of previously learned materials, as they relate to the Eastman theory and aural skills curriculum. Music theory curricula differ widely from each other; extensive training in high school, or at another undergraduate institution, may not transfer well to the curriculum as offered at Eastman. All students take the same test from the beginning, and continue until they have reached the threshold of their previous knowledge/training. In other words, the testing process continues until we find out what the student does not know, and placement is determined accordingly.

The written test will first assess students' mastery of musical fundamentals (spelling/identification of scales, intervals, triads, seventh chords, basic figured bass, Roman numerals, and basic rhythmic notation). First semester students at the Eastman School of Music are expected to have these materials internalized thoroughly BEFORE they begin study at Eastman. Therefore we recommend that you spend some time over the summer reviewing for the exam. We have provided a few suggestions for your review. Remember that mastery of all music theory is certainly not required! What we are looking for instead is your mastery of basic fundamentals. These include:

I. WRITTEN SKILLS

The ability to:

a. Read bass and treble clefs fluently
b. Read alto and tenor clefs
c. Identify and write: Meter and time signatures & rhythmic note values; Keys and key signatures; Intervals & major and minor scales; Triads (Major, Minor, Diminished, Augmented) & Seventh chords (Dominant seventh (Mm7), Major seventh (MM7), Minor seventh (mm7), Half diminished seventh (dm7), Fully diminished seventh (dd7))

II. AURAL SKILLS

The ability to:

a. Match any pitch played on the piano in your register
b. Sing back melodic fragments (6-10 pitches) played on the piano
c. Sight sing simple tunes in major and minor modes, including rhythm
d. Write simple tunes in dictation (about the level of folk tunes)
e. Identify by ear: Diatonic intervals, Major and minor scales, Triad and seventh chord types

III. KEYBOARD SKILLS

The ability to:

a. Identify all notes on the piano keyboard
b. Play selected single notes from a score an the keyboard

Students will next be asked to demonstrate basic partwriting skills (realizing figured bass and harmonizing chorale-style melodies in four parts), and basic analytic skills (providing Roman numeral and formal analysis for musical excerpts and movements).

The aural portion of the exam is in two parts: a written dictation exam, and an individual appointment assessing sight-singing, rhythmic reading, and keyboard proficiency. The dictation exam assesses interval identification (melodic and harmonic), basic melodic dictation (treble and bass clefs, major and minor modes), two voice dictation, rhythmic dictation, and harmonic dictation (outer voices plus Roman numeral analysis). During the individual appointment, students will be asked to sing two or more melodies, using whatever system they are most comfortable with (movable do, fixed do, scale degree numbers, "la"); read a series of rhythmic exercises in one or two parts, speaking the rhythmic line on "ta" or tapping two lines at once; and play a graduated series of pianistic exercises.