INTRODUCTION:

When one contemplates the potentially vast and varied repertoire of the collaborative pianist, it becomes patently obvious that no one person could possibly be versed and experienced in all areas of the repertoire. While Eastman’s doctoral program in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music does not require candidates to choose a specialization either in vocal or in instrumental collaboration, it is possible that the candidate’s own interests will, in effect, do so via coursework in the minor field or in the electives.

Therefore, for the purposes of this DMA Collaborative Piano (Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music) Oral Exam Study Guide, preparations ideally should be more narrowly focused to reflect the candidate’s particular interest and expertise in either vocal collaboration or instrumental collaboration - if that can be determined from the transcript or the sum of the degree recital repertoire. Additionally, if the candidate has specifically chosen a minor field, then they reasonably can be expected to have experience and knowledge in that area and to be asked questions about it.

This Study Guide intends to assist you in your preparations for the DMA ACM oral exams. MOST IMPORTANTLY: Do not worry or panic! The purpose is to help you to focus your thinking and to synthesize. Part I of this Study Guide is informational. Parts II through IV include some topics to review in the specific field of Collaborative Piano. Part V makes suggestions regarding (some of the potential) minor fields. Part VI addresses what to expect at the exam itself.
I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The oral exams are intended to focus on the candidate's area(s) of expertise. DMA ACM majors should prepare by studying collaborative piano repertoire and techniques (some of which are suggested under section IV below.) Whenever possible and applicable, connect your review of collaborative piano repertoire to what you already know and have experienced in solo piano repertoire by the same composer.

Be sure to review ALL of the music performed on your four degree recitals. Be able to recognize not only the piece but also the structural characteristics (see item I-A-b immediately below.)

A. If your interests have been more in vocal collaboration:
   a.) You might be given a copy of a song and asked to talk about it. Your discussion should be sure to include aspects of form, harmony, text painting, etc.
   b.) If asked to discuss a piece of music, begin by discussing general traits in order to place the work in a style period and provide a possible composer and date (what in the music gives you hints?)
   c.) Also be sure to include the following in your observations:
      1.) Harmonic progressions and relationships - using correct theory terminology
      2.) Modes and keys; notice if they change and why
      3.) Sudden changes in articulations
      4.) Accompaniment patterns
      5.) The translation of the text and how it influences all of the above
   d.) You always may go to the piano if it would help you to hear things or to better explain what you are observing.

B. If your interests have been more in instrumental collaboration:
   a.) You might be given a copy of a small piece such as the Scherzo movement from a Beethoven violin/piano sonata and asked to talk about it. Your discussion should be sure to include aspects of form, harmony, etc.
   b.) If asked to discuss a piece of music, begin by discussing general traits in order to place the work in a style period and provide a possible composer and date (what in the music gives you hints?)
   c.) Also be sure to include the following in your observations:
      1.) harmonic progressions and relationships -using correct theory terminology
      2.) modes and keys; notice if they change and why
      3.) sudden changes in articulations
      4.) accompaniment patterns
   d.) You always may go to the piano if it would help you to hear things or to better explain what you are observing.
II. COLLABORATIVE PIANO - some sample questions/topics for candidates with a strong interest in vocal collaboration:

1.) Discuss the development of the song cycle as a genre.
   a.) Be able to explain the difference between a song cycle and a set.
   b.) Be sure to give examples:
      1.) I would recommend starting with Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, then continue your discussion with 1 or 2 additional cycles from later stylistic periods.
      2.) Include different styles and languages (for example, Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Barber's *Hermit Songs.*
   3.) Be sure to discuss the changing role of the piano/pianist.

2.) Know something about the genre of art song.
   a.) Know the difference between *mélodie, Lieder, art song.*
   b.) Name some good reference books and discuss how they are helpful.
   c.) Talk about some of the important composers.
      You might include any of the following: Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Strauss, Wolf, Faure, Debussy, Poulenc, Ravel, Barber, Copland, Argento, Britten, possibly Mahler or Berg. Feel free to use others if you know them well.
   d.) Discuss the changing role of the piano as accompaniment.

3.) Transposition
   a.) Why is it important? Under what circumstances would you use it?
   b.) How do you do it? Be able to demonstrate should you be asked to do so.

4.) Figured Bass
   a.) Why is it important? Under what circumstances would you likely need to know how to read from it?
   b.) How do you do it? Be able to demonstrate should you be asked to do so.
III. COLLABORATIVE PIANO - some sample questions/topics for candidates with a strong interest in instrumental collaboration:

1.) Discuss the development of sonata form, using examples from the solo piano, violin/piano, and/or cello/piano repertoire.

2.) Concerto reductions
   a.) How should the pianist prepare?
   b.) What are the considerations and techniques? Be specific when giving examples, and if possible, go to the piano to demonstrate.

3.) Figured Bass
   a.) Why is it important? Under what circumstances would you likely need to know how to read from it?
   b.) How do you do it? Be able to demonstrate should you be asked to do so.

IV. COLLABORATIVE PIANO - some sample questions/topics for everyone:

1.) The field of "accompanying" or "collaborative piano"
Do you know some of the historically important collaborative pianists? What can you tell us about them? Who is your collaborative "great grandmother" and why is she renowned? What can you tell us about the development of courses/degrees in accompanying? How recent is this field? When did it start in the USA? What are some of the important schools offering degrees in it? Does the discipline exist in other countries? Can you mention some important books by accompanists or about accompanying?

2.) Pedagogy (also see questions under item III-c below ...)
   a.) Do you have a teaching philosophy? Please tell us about it.
   b.) What are some of the challenges of teaching undergraduates? Graduate students?
   c.) Should there be classes in sight-reading for the undergraduate piano major?
   d.) How would you structure such a class?
   e.) If you were given the opportunity to develop an accompanying class for undergraduates, what would it include and why?

3.) Contemporary Music
   a.) Be able to give some pointers on how to learn a "new music" score.
   b.) Discuss the difficulties of dealing with challenging or unusual notation.
   c.) Comment on ensemble techniques, how to rehearse, etc.

4.) Transcriptions
   a.) How do you deal with orchestral reductions that are impossible to play?
   b.) What do you add? What do you leave out? Why?
V. Some Examples of Minor Field(s)

Reflect on your MINOR FIELD and be prepared to answer questions about it.

a.) Opera Coaching:
1.) Be able to talk about the development of various operatic styles, about operatic composers, about recitative accompanying, about orchestration etc.

2.) What are the practical considerations when coaching a solo aria; an ensemble piece?

3.) What are the skills every opera coach needs to acquire?

b.) Baroque Performance Practices:
1.) Be able to discuss the differences in playing harpsichord vs. piano (technique, articulations, how to make artistic differences given the absence of sustaining pedals, style, and repertoire.)

2.) Reflect on the difficulties of switching between the 2 instruments and the different techniques required for each.

3.) Try comparing what you would do when playing the same piece on the harpsichord and also on the piano.

4.) Refer to "Figured Bass" section in either II-4 or III-3 above

c.) Pedagogy: (also see questions under item II-6 above)
1.) Be able to discuss any pedagogy courses you have taken.

2.) Be able to name useful reference materials.

3.) Talk about teaching techniques.

4.) How would you develop a new course (for example, an accompanying class)?
   - Why you would offer a new course?
   - For which level of student would it be designed, and why?
   - What should it accomplish? What would be the goals?
   - What would it cover, and why?
   - What materials/references would you require or put on reserve, and why?
   - What repertoire would you ideally include?
   - How would you test competency?
   - Discuss issues of class pacing and organization.
   - How would you integrate the course into the existing curriculum?

5.) Be able to include observations from your own teaching if applicable.
d.) **Solo Piano:**
Think about the solo repertoire you've played throughout your college career. Start from a basis of what you already know. Be able to link your knowledge of those composers and their style to decisions you will make in your collaborative repertoire by those same - or related – composers. The most important thing is to make connections between the two.

1.) Some suggested topics to review:
   - The Beethoven solo piano sonatas, and any connections to his sonatas for violin/piano.)
   - Schumann as a composer of piano music, and any influences on - or connections to - his songs.
   - Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, Shostakovich or other Russian composers.
   - Debussy's Preludes, and his *Ariettes oubliées* or *Fêtes Galantes*.

2.) Be able to talk about some major piano concertos from each stylistic period.

3.) Discuss the various "schools" of piano playing and historically important pianists.

e.) **Chamber Music:**
1.) Know some important repertoire from each stylistic period.

2.) Be able to talk about programming considerations.

3.) Name some important chamber groups (current or historical), or pianists particularly known for playing chamber music.
   - Be able to discuss why they are well-known.
   - For what repertoire are they especially known?
   - Discuss any contributions have they made to the genre.
VI.  ACM DMA ORAL EXAM DAY PROCEDURES

I thought it would be helpful to tell you about the procedures for your upcoming DMA oral exam.

You may choose to arrive in my office earlier than the scheduled time of your exam. I will be there 30 minutes before the official start time. Be sure to dress professionally, and bring a bottle of water just in case your throat gets dry with all the talking!

The committee assembles in my office just a few minutes before the exam starts. I introduce them to you and you to them. I invite you to tell us something about yourself (you might include your previous education, how you ultimately chose ACM, past jobs/summer activities, hopes for the future ... those sorts of things.) The intent of this is to put you at ease before beginning with our questions.

Then, acting as committee chair, I invite 1 of the professors to start with questions for you. You can anticipate approximately 30 minutes of questioning from each professor, although frequently everyone jumps into the conversation. You can expect that the exam will last approximately 2 hours, although it is possible that it might be slightly longer. Be sure to arrange your schedule for that day to accommodate that possibility.

Every oral committee that I've been on has been gracious, even helpful when necessary. If you are struggling for an answer, one of us likely will give you a hint and help get you started. Just listen carefully, and take time to think! View the orals as having a conversation about music (not an exercise in "Grilling 101"!)

You know that the oral is intended to focus primarily on the candidate's major and minor fields. The academic faculty members make an extraordinary effort to ask theory and history questions using examples from the candidate's instrument and repertoire. The committee will have seen your recital programs and your transcript as well as your written exams. You should be sure to refresh your mind about the repertoire from your degree recitals. It is quite possible that a member of the committee will choose something from those programs and have you discuss a portion of it theoretically and/or historically. Similarly, any MHS 590 classes or even your lecture recital might give someone material for a question...so be prepared!

When the committee no longer has any questions and the conversation seems to have ended, I will ask you to step outside the office while the committee discusses your exam. Once a decision has been reached, I'll invite you back in so that we can inform you of it.

I hope that this helps you to prepare thoughtfully and wisely!