DMA/PRL COMPREHENSIVE ORAL EXAM
STUDY-GUIDE OUTLINE
PIANO DEPARTMENT

I. The Standard Piano Repertoire
A. Begin preparation for the exam by setting up a procedural mechanism to help you think through your general knowledge of the piano literature, in a way that will enable you to respond to questions designed to test your broad-range knowledge of the standard piano repertoire. Most questions of this type are likely to ask for a discussion of the piano works of a specific composer, or to ask for a discussion of the development of a specific genre (or both). Probably, the best way to study for these types of questions is to set up a spread-sheet or make a chart listing the major composers and the most important genres in the standard repertoire. Composers and genres considered should include but not be limited to the following:
1. Major composers listed chronologically in a vertical column
   a. Baroque (Bach, Handel, Scarlatti)
   b. Classical (Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, Beethoven, Schubert)
   c. Romantic (Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, Grieg)
   d. Late 19th-century National Schools (French, Russian, Spanish)
   e. Early 20th-century French (Debussy, Ravel)
   f. 20th-century Russian (Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev)
   g. 20th-century German (Schönberg, Berg, Webern)
   h. Early/Mid 20th-Century (Bartok, Hindemith, Shostakovich, Messiaen)
   i. 20th-century American (Ives, Copland, Cage Barber, Crumb)
2. Major genres listed horizontally
   a. Concertos
   b. Sonatas
   c. Variations
   d. Fantasias
   e. Dances (Suites and individual dances)
   f. Character Pieces (Suites, individual works, programmatic or formal titles)
   g. Concert Etudes
   h. Preludes or Preludes and Fugues
   i. Pieces for Children
   j. Transcriptions (Fantasies, Paraphrases, etc.)
B. The chart will provide a good mechanism for studying, as you "think-through" and "fill-in" the various categories, but perhaps more importantly, it will create a process of thinking, that will help you deal with unexpected questions. If you are asked about a specific composer, think "horizontally" through the various types of genres that are applicable; but if you are asked about the historical development of a genre, think "vertically" through the list of composers who wrote works in that genre.
C. Be sure that you have significant things to say about the works that you discuss. Focus on compositional style, historical context, new forms or evolution of forms, harmonic language, and how the composers write idiosyncratically for the instrument.
D. Be able to discuss the works that you have performed in recitals with depth and attention
to the details of structure, harmony, and pianistic challenges. Frequently, the detailed
understanding of your own repertory will provide valuable information with which to
illustrate some specific examples of the general points in your discussion.

E. Spend some time thinking about comparisons and contrasts between composers who are
grouped together chronologically. For example, how do Liszt and Chopin write
differently for the piano? What are some of the general differences between Haydn and
Mozart sonata structure? Even though Debussy and Ravel have similarities in language
and are grouped together as impressionists, how do their compositional styles differ?

F. Although it is not necessary, don't hesitate to demonstrate at the piano during the exam.
The committees like to see candidates who are able to synthesize academic and
performance skills.

G. Along with some general information and specific examples, try to put your discussion
into a broad context. Almost any question that is asked at an oral exam can be answered
in a variety of ways. Try to discuss the music in terms of historical and societal trends,
theoretical analysis, performance practice (both written and recorded), pianistic issues
like phrase shaping and structure, voicing, technical demands, expressive intentions, and
potential pedagogical concerns. This is an exam where you need to demonstrate what you
know. Use all of your skills to inform your discussion.

II. Keyboard Music Before 1700

A. Since you don't encounter this music as frequently as you encounter the standard
repertoire, it is likely that you won't know as many details about works written before
1700. However, it is important that you have a basic knowledge of important composers
and works written during this time, the development and evolution of genres and forms
that continue into the eighteenth-century and beyond, and a good sense of the musical
traditions that helped generate so much of the music that you do play on a daily basis.

1. Manuscripts, Treatises and Published Collections (know contents and composers)
   a. Robertsbridge Codex (ca. 1350)
   b. Faenza Codex (ca. 1400)
   c. Buxheim Organ Book (ca. 1460)
   d. Mulliner Book (ca. 1550)
   e. My Ladye Nevills Booke (1591)
   f. Parthenia (1611)
   g. Toccate e partite d'intavolature de cembalo (1615)
   h. Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (ca. 1620)
   i. Pièces de clavecin (1716-1717)
   j. L'Art de toucher le clavecin (1717)
   k. Pièces de clavecin avec une méthode pour la mècanique des doigts
   l. Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen

2. Transcriptions and arrangements of polyphonic vocal music and chansons
   a. Ricercare
   b. Canzona
   c. Intavolature
3. Early improvisational forms  
   a. Fantasia  
   b. Prelude  
4. Sectional Forms  
   a. Toccata  
   b. Variations (Cantus firmus, Chaconne, Chorale, Popular Melody)  
   c. Sonata (Sonata di Chiesa, Sonata di Camera)  
   d. Concerto (Concerto Grosso, Solo Concerto)  
5. Dance Forms  
   a. Paired dance forms (Pavane/Galliard or Passamezzo/Saltarello)  
   b. Binary Forms (Dance Suite: French/German versions)  
6. Renaissance Keyboard Composers  
   a. Italy (A. Gabrieli, G. Gabrieli, Merulo)  
   b. Spain (Cabezón)  
   c. France and Netherlands (Attaignant, Sweelinck)  
   d. England (Byrd, Bull, Gibbons)  
7. Early-Mid Baroque Keyboard Composers  
   a. Italy (Frescobaldi)  
   b. France (Chambonnières, L. Couperin)  
   c. England (Blow, Purcell)  
   d. Germany (Scheidt, Froberger, Buxtehude, Kuhnau)  
8. Composers of Galant and Empfindsamer Styles (Overlapping 18th-Century)  
   a. Italy (Galuppi)  
   b. France (F. Couperin, Rameau)  
   c. Spain and Portugal (Soler, Seixas)  
   d. Germany and Central Europe (Telemann, W.F., C.P.E., & J.C. Bach)  

III. Historical Development of the Instrument  
A. Be able to discuss various types of keyboard instruments that were ancestors of the modern piano. You should be able to address basic issues of operation and construction, number of octaves, innovations, the country of origin, and associations with specific composers and repertoire.  
1. Early organs  
   a. Positive  
   b. Portative  
   c. Church Organs  
2. Clavichord (C.P.E. Bach, tangents, bebung)  
3. Harpsichord (manuals, stops, plectra, jacks, dampers)  
   a. Clavicembalo, Gravicembalo, Klavicembal, Clavecin  
   b. Cembalo Verticale  
   c. Virginal  
   d. Spinnet  
   e. Italian, Belgian, and English manufacturers
4. Pianos/Forte pianos (hammers, dampers, escapement, single or double stringing)
   a. Cristofori
   b. Marius
   c. Schröter
   d. Silbermann
   e. Stein
   f. Broadwood
   g. Erard
   h. Pleyel
   i. Steinway
   j. Bösendorfer
   k. Fazioli
   l. Yamaha Disklavier

B. Any discussion of historical instruments should be informed by the way in which these instruments influence, inspire, challenge or restrain composers and/or performers intentions. How is historical style, expression, and notation linked to the instruments of the time. How does an encounter with a historical instrument help your understanding of the composer? When can interpretation of style be transferred to performances on modern instruments? When should all of the resources of the modern instrument be used, and when should you make adjustments? Think about specific works in terms of pedaling, articulation, phrasing, sound production, and other considerations.

IV. Contemporary Piano Repertoire
A. Survey some of the "new approaches" to composition that blossomed during the twentieth century, and identify a specific work to serve as an example of each category. Your list could include but not be limited to the following:
   1. Non-tonal music that does not use 12-tone technique
   2. 12-tone technique
   3. Scales with collections of pitches that are not diatonic or chromatic
   4. Asymmetrical meter
   5. Rhythm and pitch collections with new patterns (palindromes, non-combinatorial hexachords, additive rhythm, etc.)
   6. Serialization of rhythm, dynamics, and articulation
   7. Works based on non-western sources (Hindu ragas, African drumming, traditional Asian music and instruments, etc.)
   8. Works based on popular music culture or folk-music (Eastern-European folk music, American folk-music, jazz, political protest songs, hymn tunes, Russian folk music, Jewish folk-music, Spanish and Latin American dances, etc.)
   9. Works for piano and tape or other electronic devices
  10. Prepared piano and other techniques that use the inside of the piano
  11. Minimalism
  12. Aleatoric and chance music, improvisational sections
  13. Nature (birdsong, natural landscapes, astrology, etc.)
B. Using the list of genres from section IA of this study guide identify 20th and 21st-century composers who have continued to write in traditional styles.

C. Be prepared to discuss some of the new music that is currently being written in the country of your birth.

D. It is important to be able to discuss the compositional styles and keyboard works of a significant group of living composers. Create a list of composers including some who are well recognized for their work, some who's works you may have performed or premiered, and some who you have had the opportunity to meet. From this group compile a list of works that have captured your interest, or that demonstrate imaginative approaches to writing for the piano. Be able to discuss these works with some depth of understanding, using detailed examples to support your observations.

V: Score Identification

A. Most DMA Comprehensive Oral Examinations include questions both of a general nature designed to test your broad knowledge of the repertoire, and more specific questions designed to assess your critical thinking and analytical skills. Frequently, the questions requiring more specific answers involve score identification. Unlike the written exam, the Score Identification questions will be chosen from the piano repertoire. Hopefully, you might recognize the music and identify the work, but more importantly you should be able to discuss the score. You will have very little time to process information about the score: here are a few suggestions:

1. It is a good idea to play through at least part of the score at the piano (be sure to check key signature, meter, and tempo before you start sight reading).

2. Look for quick "tip-offs" that might help you identify the work.
   a. In what language are the tempo markings and other indications written?
   b. What does the overall texture look like (number of staves, contrapuntal, homophonic, flowing melody with broken-chord accompaniment, etc.)?
   c. Are there unusual markings (directions for playing inside the piano, asymmetrical meter, cadenza-like sections, fioritura, etc.)?
   d. In what style-period or century is it probably written?
   e. What are some possibilities that you can eliminate?

3. Look for a large-scale formal structure (Binary, Ternary, Sonata, etc.).

4. Look for phrase divisions and types of cadences.

5. Look at key signatures, harmonic language, modulations, and sequences.


7. Look for pedal indications.

VI. Academic Teaching and Pedagogy

A. Think about teaching a class in piano literature or music appreciation. Imagine what type of students you would be teaching, and how to engage their interest. How would you design a syllabus? What composers would you discuss, what would be on the listening list, what texts or special readings would you use? What projects would you assign?
B. Be able to discuss some of your core convictions about teaching piano.
   1. Approaches to developing technique.
   2. Choosing repertoire for various levels of students.
   3. Preparing students for performances.
   4. Be able to look at a score and discuss potential pianistic difficulties and problems that you might need to address with future students.

VII. General Tips
A. During the preparation process, practice your speaking skills. Make a list of questions, or have a friend ask you a series of questions, and give a ten-minute oral answer to each one (out loud - even if you are in a room by yourself!). When students encounter difficulties with oral exams it is frequently because of feeling uncomfortable with the situation, rather than because of the amount of information that they know. There are no other experiences or assignments in your Eastman degree that are similar to this event. The DMA Comprehensive Oral Exam is very different from giving a prepared presentation in class. It requires a different set of skills, including thinking on your feet, instantly organizing your thoughts, and expressing them in an articulate manner. This exam is a good preparatory experience for job interviews. It will also be very helpful for your future teaching to practice speaking about music, accessing your knowledge, and communicating your ideas without writing a speech, presentation, or paper in advance.
B. Remember that nobody knows everything. If you don't know an answer to a question, don't try to bluff. In that instance, say "I don't know." If committee members sense that you are having trouble answering a question, they will (with all good intentions) try to help you by re-structuring the question or giving you hints, thinking that it will trigger your memory. The end result of this is spending additional time on a question to which you don't know the answer. If you say "I don't know," they will move more quickly to another question that perhaps you do know. But, don't say "I don't know" too often!
C. Don't hesitate to either discuss small details or to expand the scope of a question. This is your chance to demonstrate your knowledge. If a committee member wants a more specific answer or a larger-scale view of your answer, they will let you know. These exams are at their very best when they turn into conversations among colleagues, rather than inquisitions between teachers and students.