

## Graduate 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Theory Exam

The graduate 20<sup>th</sup>-century theory diagnostic examination includes a short multiple choice written exam (taking ninety minutes). The exam focuses on the basic material used in post-tonal music: pitch class set nomenclature and manipulation, basic twelve-tone theory, post-tonal scales/modes, and rhythmic techniques.

### Sample Questions

Example 1:

The musical score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system has a treble clef and a bass clef. A long slur covers the first two measures of the first system and the first two measures of the second system. Four pitch-class sets are indicated by brackets and letters: A (bass clef, first measure), B (treble clef, second measure), C (treble clef, third measure), and D (bass clef, fourth measure). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

1. Consider the pitches bracketed above the letters A, B, C, and D to belong to unordered pitch-class sets. How does D relate to A?
  - a. D is a transposition of A.
  - b. D is a transposed inversion of A.
  - c. D is the complement of A.
  - d. D is a subset of A.
  - e. None of the above.
2. Consider the pitches bracketed above the letters A, B, C, and D to belong to unordered pitch-class sets. How does C relate to B?
  - a. C is a transposition of B.
  - b. C is a transposed inversion of B.
  - c. C is the complement of B.
  - d. C is a subset of B.
  - e. None of the above.

Example 2:

The musical score for Example 2 consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, starting with a fermata on a whole note, followed by a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lyrics are: A leopard went a-round his cage. The piano accompaniment is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The right hand starts with a whole note chord (G4, B4, D5) and then moves to a half note chord (G4, B4, D5) and another half note chord (G4, B4, D5). The left hand starts with a whole note chord (G2, B2, D3) and then moves to a half note chord (G2, B2, D3) and another half note chord (G2, B2, D3).

3. The melodic pitches in the voice part of Example 2 belong to which of the following scales?
  - a. Dorian mode
  - b. Octatonic scale
  - c. Pentatonic scales
  - d. Phrygian mode
  - e. Whole tone scale.
4. Which term below best describes the harmonic structures in the piano part of Example 2?
  - a. Tone clusters
  - b. Tertian harmony
  - c. Quartal harmony
  - d. Polytonal harmony
  - e. Aleatoric harmony

### Sample Resources

#### Sample Resources for the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Theory Exam

Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music*

Kostka/Payne, *Tonal Harmony: With and Introduction to Twentieth Century Music*

Lester, *Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music*

Roig-Francoli, *Understanding Post-Tonal Music*

**N.B.:** All sample resources listed are typical texts that are commonly used in undergraduate post-tonal music theory courses. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive of the exam content. Any textbooks or notes from your undergraduate post-tonal music theory courses would also be excellent review sources.