General Preliminary Examination in Music Theory
Basic Information Sheet

This is a closed-book examination testing knowledge and skills in music theory and analysis. The theory department gives the exam once in October and once in March. It lasts from 12:30 to 5:00 with a 30-minute lunch break. The second week of each semester Kelsey Sieverding will send an e-mail to precandidates providing the exam date and forms to be completed for sign-up. Eligible students should sign up for the exam several weeks in advance with Kelsey Sieverding. Sign-up forms are available at:

http://music.umich.edu/current_students/student_resources/theory_prelim_exam.htm

The exam consists of two parts:

Part One (12:30-2:30) requires the student to analyze and write about a single piece or movement of music. Typical works chosen in the past have been movements from classical piano or chamber works, 19th-century Lieder and 19th-century character pieces for piano, but the piece can be in any style or idiom. Kelsey Sieverding will e-mail a score and an mp3 recording of this piece by noon of the day before the exam so that students can familiarize themselves with the piece and study it. At the exam, students will get a new copy of the score (you cannot use the score from the previous day) and a set of questions to answer.

Part Two (3:00-5:00) has three shorter problems. The pieces are handed out at the exam and there are no recordings provided.

1. A craft problem involving such skills as realizing a figured or unfigured bass, chorale harmonization, motivic manipulation, completing a section of a piece in a particular style, and the like.
2. A short tonal piece or excerpt to analyze.
3. A post-tonal piece or excerpt to analyze.

The best way for students to prepare for the exam is to review the past exams. The last five years of exams are available online at:

http://music.umich.edu/current_students/student_resources/theory_prelim_exam.htm

The exam is written and evaluated by a committee of three members of the Music Theory faculty. The committee does not know anyone's identity when evaluating the tests because a number will identify each exam. Possible grades are High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, and Fail. The evaluation is based on the committee's consensus on the student's performance on the exam as a whole. After the committee decides the grades, they are reported to the Associate Dean, who reports them to the student. Results are usually reported in two to three weeks.

Students who feel less than fully prepared for this exam have often benefited from working through past exams with the help of a tutor. Other resources that some students have found helpful are listed below, but it should be stressed that the evaluation committee is aware of, and accepts a diversity of theoretical systems. It often is sufficient to review what you have already learned as well as review the online exams, rather than adapting to the theory and labels of a book you have not yet encountered.

Douglass Green's *Form in Tonal Music*
Steven Laitz and Christopher Bartlette’s *Graduate Review of Tonal Theory* (includes chapters on form)
Wayne Petty's *Basic Tonal Analysis*
Joseph Straus’s *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*

There is no course in the Music Theory curriculum specifically designed to help students prepare for the exam, although some have found the following courses beneficial: MT 334 (sophomore theory review); MT 461 (tonal analysis review); MT 533 (analysis of 20th-century music), MT 537 (proseminar in the analysis of music).

WCP and AG 9/13