

General Examination in Historical Musicology

Monday, August 10, 2009

- (9-11 a.m.) **Topic 1: Medieval:** Troubadors and Trouvères
(12-2 p.m.) **Topic 2: Renaissance:** Music Under Elizabeth I
(3-5 p.m.) **Topic 3: Baroque:** Handel's Oratorios

Wednesday, August 12, 2009

- (9-11 a.m.) **Topic 4: Classical:** Beethoven, Politics, and Enlightenment Ideals
(12-2 p.m.) **Topic 5: 19th Century:** Exoticism on Stage from French Grand Opera to *Madama Butterfly*
(3-5 p.m.) **Topic 6: 20th Century:** American Musical Theatre from *Oklahoma* to *Bye Bye Birdie*

Instructions:

For long essays, it is best to organize your answers around a thesis statement, primary question, or core idea. Please be specific, mentioning pieces of music, dates, names, and historical movements (as applicable). Try to think as well about the implications of the points you raise and their significance within a larger context. Since it is impossible to cover every aspect of these topics in the limited time, try to focus on what you believe to be the most important features and to write a clear, well-organized essay. It is often useful to take a few minutes before writing to jot down some main points.

For short answers, please write the main portion of your answer in complete sentences, but you may add keywords and sketch brief outlines if you run out of time.

Time allocation: please use the suggested times shown in parentheses as a guide to pace yourself.

Good luck!

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Monday, August 10, 2009, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Topic 1:

Medieval: Troubadors and Trouvères

Long essay: Please choose **one** (1) of the two essay topics below (1 hour, 15 minutes):

1. Discuss the relationship of poetry to music in the troubadour and trouvère repertory in general, using specific examples.
2. Please discuss ways in which recent scholarly attention to the *trobairitz* has affected current views of *fin' amors*.

Short answers: Please choose **one** (1) from each pair of topics below, for a total of **two** responses (45 minutes):

A.

1. Sources of troubadour and trouvère music
2. Major works of scholarship on troubadours and trouvères

B.

1. Refrains
2. Musical transmission of trouvère melodies

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Monday, August 10, 12:00-2:00p.m.

Topic 2:

Renaissance: Music Under Elizabeth I

Please choose **one** (1) of the two essay topics below (2 hours):

1. Discuss the impact of cultural and political forces on music at Elizabeth's court.
2. Discuss the career and music of William Byrd in relation to broader developments in music in Elizabethan England.

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Monday, August 10, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Topic 3:

Baroque: Handel's Oratorios

Long essay: Please choose **one** (1) of the two essay topics below (1 hour):

1. Handel's oratorios: The opera connection
2. Handel and the oratorio tradition

Short answers: Please choose **two** (2) of the topics below (30 minutes each):

1. Handel's oratorio librettos
2. Issues of borrowing
3. *Saul*
4. Ode and oratorio

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Wednesday, August 12, 9:00-11:00a.m.

Topic 4:

Classical: Beethoven, Politics, and Enlightenment Ideals

Long essay: Please choose **one** (1) of the three topics below (2 hours):

1. Beethoven's late string quartets as political or apolitical (or both).
2. Lewis Lockwood writes about the "Eroica" Symphony: "Though various sequential and metaphorical narratives for the whole symphony have been proposed, none truly satisfy. The most grotesque is Paul Bekker's idea [1912] that since Beethoven in effect mourned the dead hero in the slow movement and then brought him back into action in the third, performers might reverse the order of the two inner movements." (*Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, 2003)

Take issue with this statement or defend it, leading to a broader discussion of the different interpretive possibilities for a larger narrative for the symphony.

3. The Ninth Symphony's "finale problem": please review some of the literature on this controversy, and also describe your position.

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Wednesday, August 12, 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Topic 5:

19th Century: Exoticism on Stage from French Grand Opera to *Madama Butterfly*

First, please define “exoticism” in terms of your repertory (**suggested time: 45 min.**). What is included, what does not belong? (For example, should works with Biblical plots, such as Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*, be included?) Describe the different dimensions of exoticism: libretti/ plots, décor and costumes, musical representations, and other factors including audience expectations. Are some of these dimensions more essential in creating an “exotic” flavor than others?

Now, please choose one of the questions below (**suggested time: one hour and 15 min.**)

1. Is exoticism represented differently in less formal genres such as operettas or minstrelsy than in opera and ballet? If so, how?
2. Describe and discuss the connections between exotic plots in theatrical music and external political contexts (colonialism): choose some specific examples.

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Wednesday, August 12, 3:00-5:00p.m.

Topic 6:

20th-Century: American Musical Theatre from *Oklahoma* to *Bye Bye Birdie*

Write **two** (2) long essays, choosing one from each pair below. Devote equal time (1 hour) to each.

A.

1. Film and stage versions of American musicals have mostly gotten chronicled in separate histories; in essence, they are treated as separate species. Make an argument for an integrated history of these two manifestations of the musical. Focus on either the 1940s or 1950s. Cite specific stage shows and films. Show an awareness of the historiography of the musical.
2. Use “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” from *South Pacific* as a springboard for discussing the complex ways in which race and difference are addressed in the shows of Rodgers and Hammerstein. Position your essay within relevant cultural contexts as you go. Choose relevant musical numbers.

B.

1. Discuss how *My Fair Lady*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *West Side Story* grapple with historic texts. Do so in terms of books and lyrics, overall scenario, musical settings—or any other aspects of the shows that seem pertinent.
2. Construct a vision of American musical theater (for the stage) with *West Side Story* at the core. What works and trends led up to it, and what were some of its most significant successors? Develop a few binding themes.