I. Purpose:

The purpose of the Graduate Music History Entrance Examination is to measure your knowledge of the history and representative repertories of European Art Music, African-American folk music, and Jazz. These constitute areas of study that undergraduates in the School of Music address as part of their coursework, thus we expect entering graduate students to demonstrate a satisfactory level of understanding of these subjects as well.

Based upon an assessment of each student's test, recommendations will be made to the Director of Graduate Studies concerning the most appropriate course or courses which the student should take as part of her/his graduate program either to address areas of weakness, to raise the student's level of engagement with music history, or, if deemed necessary, both.

II. Organization:

The first part of the Examination consists of 150 multiple-choice items. The first 61 pose questions concerning a total of 20 recorded excerpts of music, each played twice. Fifteen pertain to a series of printed scores for which no music is provided. The remaining 24 deal with various historical facts and ideas without reference to specific compositions.

The second part of the Examination asks each student to write a brief essay on a topic pertaining to music history of her/his own choosing. You might wish to write a synopsis of a research paper you prepared as an undergraduate, for example, or take up a question that was posed to you on an undergraduate exam. We will provide a sheet of paper for this writing sample that is captioned with some suggested topics, but it is not required that one of these be addressed in the writing sample.

The entire Examination lasts about two and a half hours.

III. Suggestions for Preparation:

What we wish to determine is the extent of your knowledge of the principal composers, genres, and style characteristics of the successive historical periods of Western Art Music and American Vernacular Music as revealed by your responses both to questions concerning specific representative compositions and questions of more general character. Thus, preparation for test would probably be most efficient if it were to follow these steps.

1. Begin by reviewing the approximate dates marking the approximate beginning and end of the historical periods of Art Music and the comparable boundaries of style in African-American music. Once those are in mind, identify the characteristics of style that distinguish one period from another. Third, review the defining characteristics of the most representative genres of each period (e.g. motet, madrigal, mass, and chanson for the Renaissance; blues and 32-bar song form for Jazz of the Swing Era).
2. Review the principal composers of each period (composer-performers in the case of African-American music) and at the same time identify representative compositions by each. Wherever possible, listen to those works and practice identifying those style characteristics that make them typical examples of the historical period in which they were created. Sources of recordings in addition to your own personal collection could include the local public library and/or public radio.

3. Note that such preparation presupposes you have access to a textbook devoted to music history; however, it does not imply that you should try to prepare by reading it straight through. Rather, use it as a reference tool: reviewing the preliminary discussions of each successive period and tradition first to address the initial issues outlined in Point 1 above. Then skim each chapter to review genres and style characteristics. Only after that would a close reading of discussions of principal figures be called for. What you want to avoid is devoting so much time to the preliminary chapters that the later history gets treated only superficially.

4. Implicit in such a review strategy is that you develop a series of notes, perhaps a time-line of your own in which you list important dates associated with particular styles periods, lives of important individuals, and the most representative compositions. Equally important is to the extent possible, you spread your review over a number of weeks to allow yourself enough time to assimilate the information.