



Shepherd University School of Music

Piano Proficiency Exam Packet



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Updated Fall 2025

Shepherd University • School of Music
Piano Proficiency Exam
Exam Requirements

The Piano Proficiency Exam

All music majors must begin the Piano Proficiency Exam by the end of the second semester of study. All music majors must pass the Piano Proficiency Exam by the end of their fourth semester. Completion requirements for transfer students will be determined on an individual basis taking into account number of semesters transferred, prior piano study, and impact on degree requirements such as Juncture or recital presentations. Music education majors must pass the Piano Proficiency Exam prior to applying for Juncture 2.

1. Exam Content: A PDF file of the exam content, requirements, and sample repertoire may be found at: <https://www.shepherd.edu/music/current-music-students>.
2. Course Options: Students should register for the class piano sequence early in the program to prepare for successful completion of the Piano Proficiency Exam. Depending on prior experience, students wishing to take a class piano course will be placed in one of the following course levels:
 - MUSC 138 Basic Keyboarding Skills
 - MUSC 140 Intermediate Keyboarding Skills
 - MUSC 141 Advanced Keyboarding Skills
 - MUSC 141 is required of all music degree programs.
 - For all sections of class piano, students must receive a grade of C or above in order to be qualified to take the exam.
3. First Year Evaluation: At the end of their second semester of study, all music majors are required to take the Piano Proficiency Exam.
4. Transfer Students: Transfer students will receive their PPE plan from the Coordinator of Keyboard Studies and the Director of the School of Music based on courses transferring, an initial piano evaluation, and projected timeline for graduation.
5. Exam Scheduling: Exams will be scheduled during the final exam week of each semester with the Coordinator of Keyboard Studies. Students must pass ALL components of the exam. If a student does not pass one of the components, he/she may retake that portion of the exam at a later time.
 - a. Students who fail to sign up for the exam will be put on probation within the School of Music.
 - b. Students who do not show up to assigned times will be put on probation within the School of Music.
6. Failure to Complete: Students who fail to complete the PPE in the proscribed timeframe may request one additional chance. Any/All of the following may be required:
 - a. Additional parts of the PPE may be required.
 - b. The student will be required to perform the remaining sections of the PPE in front of the full-time faculty.

Students **must** receive a passing score on the MCE exam and pass **all** portions of the PPE in order to progress through or remain in their program.

Recommended practice supplement: The Piano Proficiency Exam Review Book (ISBN: 9780190933937)

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-piano-proficiency-exam-review-book-9780190933937?q=Piano%20proficiency&lang=en&cc=us#>

For all music majors::

Primary Chords (Cadences)- Prepare the chord progression of I, IV 6/4, I, V 6/5, I in all major and minor keys, playing the same notes in both hands. Correct voice leading and a steady pulse must be observed. Students will perform 1 Major and 1 minor key during the exam, as selected by the examiner.

Here is the sample of C Major Cadence.

Apply the same pattern (chord progression) to all the other major and minor. Both hands together.

5	5	5	5	5
3	3	3	4	3
1	1	1	1	1

1	1	1	1	1
3	2	3	2	3
5	5	5	5	5

I — IV6/4 — I — V6/5 — I

Five-Finger Pattern Vocal Warm-Up: all 12 keys. See Appendix for score.

Prepare harmonization of a melody from the PPE packet. Add the appropriate I, IV, V primary chords to the examples. See Appendix for score.

Sight-Reading: Harmonize a melody at sight. Add the appropriate I, IV, V cadential chords.

Sight-Reading: Transpose a melody (example of No. 4) with accompaniment at sight.

Sightread a short composition of two-parts at sight.

Choral score-reading. Students will play any two parts together. See Appendix for score.

Band score-reading. Students will play two parts together. See Appendix for score.

Demonstrate mastery of a prepared piece from the PPE packet. See Appendix for score.

Demonstrate mastery of another prepared piece from the PPE packet. See Appendix for score.

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Piano Proficiency Exam

Tasks Rating Form: updated Fall 2025

Date _____

Name _____

Total Score _____

Pass _____

Fail _____

Signature of Juror _____

1. Demonstrate specific technical skills: Select major and minor close-position cadence. Students will perform 1 major and 1 minor key to be selected by the adjudicator.

_____ Used traditional fingerings.
 _____ Cadences were performed with no restarts or hesitations.
 _____ Cadences were performed with correct notes.
 _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
 _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task.

Keys selected: _____

2. Five-Finger Pattern Vocal Warm-Up: all 12 keys.

_____ Warm-up was performed at a singable tempo.
 _____ Warm-up was accurately performed.
 _____ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
 _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
 _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

3. Prepare harmonization of a melody from the PPE packet. Name of Melody: _____.

_____ Melody was accurately prepared.
 _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
 _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
 _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
 _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

4. Sight-Reading: Harmonize a melody at sight.

_____ Melody was accurately performed.
 _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
 _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
 _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
 _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

5. Sight-Reading: Transpose a melody (example of No. 4) with accompaniment at sight.

_____ Melody was transposed correctly.
 _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
 _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
 _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
 _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

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6. Sightread a short composition of two-parts at sight.

- ☐ Melody was accurately performed.
- ☐ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
- ☐ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
- ☐ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
- ☐ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

7. Choral score-reading. Students will play any two parts together.

- ☐ Rhythms were performed accurately.
- ☐ Parts were performed accurately.
- ☐ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
- ☐ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
- ☐ Demonstrated mastery of the task.

8. Band score-reading. Students will play two parts together.

- ☐ Rhythms were performed accurately.
- ☐ Parts were performed accurately.
- ☐ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
- ☐ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
- ☐ Demonstrated mastery of the task.

9. Demonstrate mastery of a prepared piece from the PPE packet.

Selection: _____

- ☐ Tempo was consistent and appropriate.
- ☐ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
- ☐ Harmonies were performed accurately.
- ☐ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
- ☐ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

10. Demonstrate mastery of another prepared piece from the PPE packet.

Selection: _____

- ☐ Tempo was consistent and appropriate.
- ☐ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
- ☐ Harmonies were performed accurately.
- ☐ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
- ☐ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

TOTAL _____

*** Requirement for passing the exam: no less than three points in any one section**

Shepherd University • School of Music**Piano Proficiency Exam***Appendix*

- A. Five-Finger Pattern Vocal Warm-Up: all 12 keys.
- B. Prepare harmonization of a melody from the PPE packet. Add the appropriate I, IV, V primary chords to the examples. Nos. 1-3.
- C. Choral score-reading. Students will play any two parts together.
- D. Band score-reading. Students will play two parts together.
- E. Demonstrate mastery of prepared pieces from the PPE packet. Nos. 1-3.

A. Five-Finger Pattern Vocal Warm-Up: all 12 keys.



This warm-up may begin or end with any key. It may also descend.

B. Prepare harmonization of a melody from the PPE packet. Add the appropriate I, IV, V primary chords to the examples. Nos. 1-3.

1. NEW RIVER TRAIN

Allegretto

American

168



Musical notation for "New River Train" (Example 1). The melody is written on a treble clef staff in C major. It consists of two lines of music. The first line starts with a *mf* dynamic marking. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 4, 2, 4, 1. The second line starts with a box containing the number 9. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 3, 4, 3, 4, 5. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

2. LAVENDER'S BLUE

Allegretto

Old English Folk Song

169



Musical notation for "Lavender's Blue" (Example 2). The melody is written on a treble clef staff in D major (two sharps). It consists of four lines of music. The first line starts with a *mf* dynamic marking and includes the lyrics "La - ven - der's blue, Dil - ly, Dil - ly, La - ven - der's green,". The second line includes the lyrics "When I am King, Dil - ly, Dil - ly, you shall be Queen." The third line includes the lyrics "Who told you so, Dil - ly, Dil - ly, Who told you so?" The fourth line includes the lyrics "'Twas my own heart, Dil - ly, Dil - ly, that told me so." Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 1, 5, 1, 5, 1, 5. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

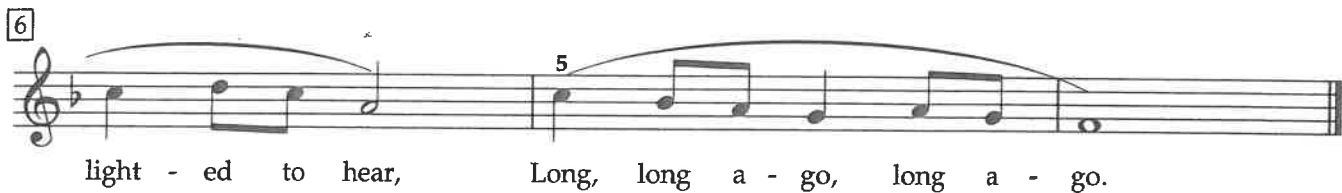
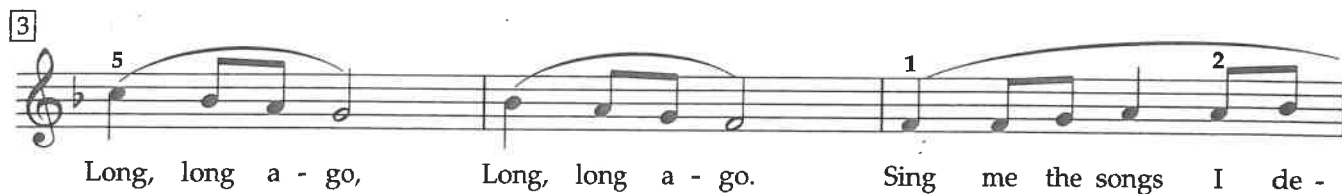
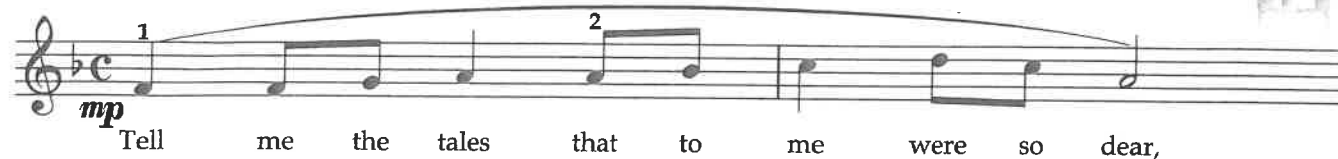
3. LONG, LONG AGO

Andante

Thomas H. Bayly (1797–1839)

170

MIDI



4. HUSH LITTLE BABY

Moderato

American

171

MIDI

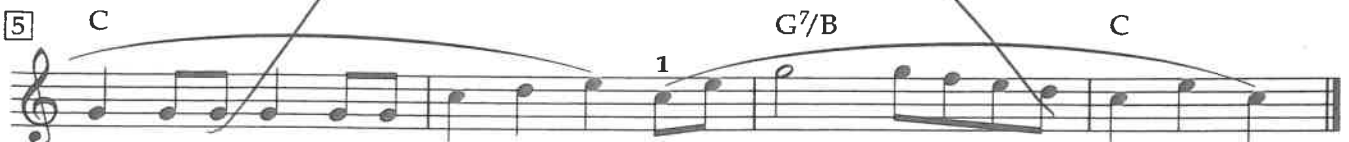
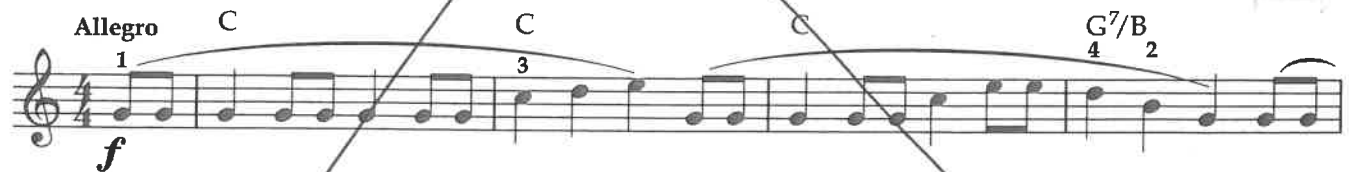


5. WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE

Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868)

172

MIDI



C. Choral score-reading. Students will play any two parts together.

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

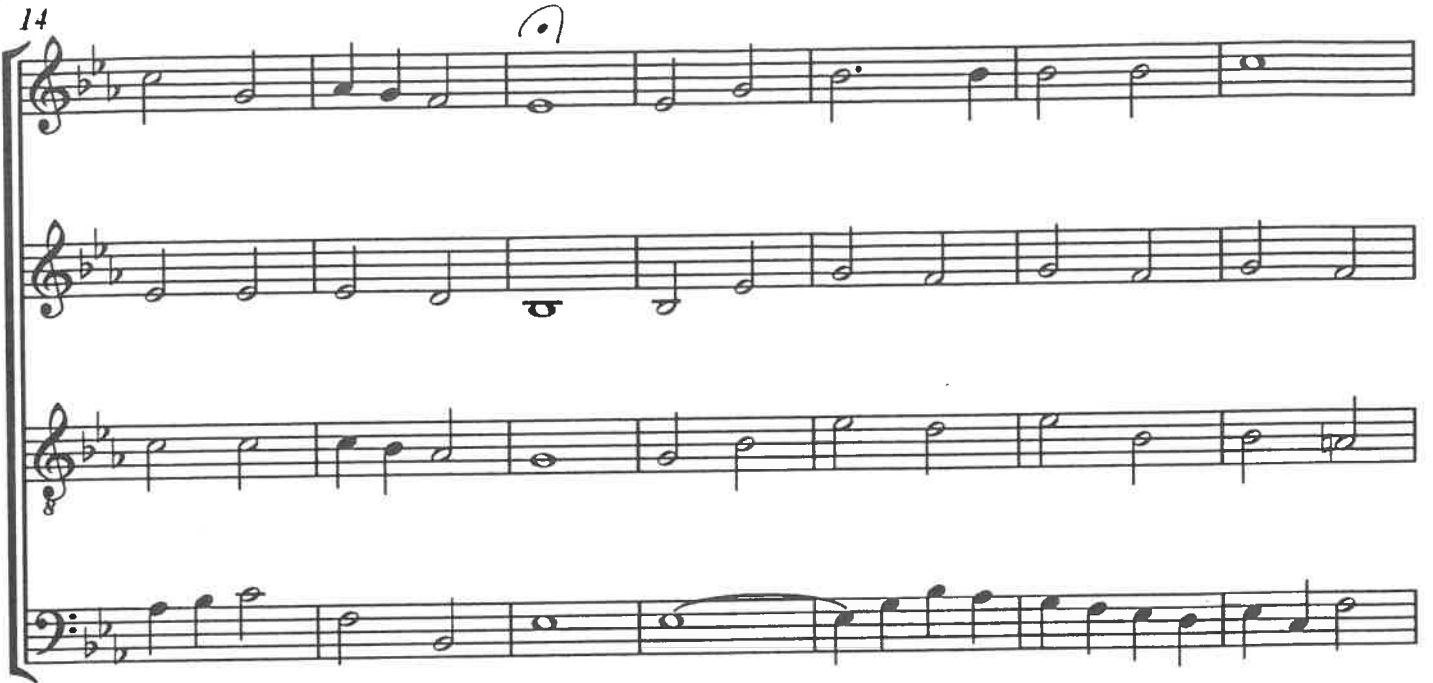
This block contains the first system of a choral score, measures 1 through 6. It features four staves: Soprano (treble clef), Alto (treble clef), Tenor (treble clef with an 8va marking), and Bass (bass clef). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The Soprano part has a fermata over the final note. The Alto part has a whole rest in measure 6. The Tenor part has a whole rest in measure 6. The Bass part has a long melodic line with a fermata over the final note.

7

This block contains the second system of the choral score, measures 7 through 10. It continues the four-part setting. The Soprano part has a fermata over the final note. The Alto part has a whole rest in measure 8. The Tenor part has a whole rest in measure 8. The Bass part has a long melodic line with a fermata over the final note.

2

14



Musical score for measures 14-20. The score is written for four staves (treble and bass clefs) in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). Measure 14 features a melodic line in the first staff with a fermata over the final note, and a bass line with a long note. Measures 15-20 show a continuation of the melodic and harmonic development across all staves.

21



Musical score for measures 21-24. The score continues on four staves. Measure 21 features a melodic line in the first staff with a fermata over the final note, and a bass line with a long note. Measures 22-24 show a continuation of the melodic and harmonic development across all staves.

D. Band score-reading. Students will play two parts together.

Band Score

Practice the band score in the following ways:

1. Each single line transposing the B \flat clarinets, E \flat alto saxophone, B \flat trumpets and F horn to concert pitch.
2. Combinations of two parts as follows:
 - a. Flute/oboe and B \flat clarinets.
 - b. Flute/oboe and E \flat alto saxophone.
 - c. B \flat trumpets and low brass & woodwinds.
 - d. F horn and low brass & woodwinds.
3. Combinations of three parts as follows:
 - a. Flute/oboe, B \flat clarinets and E \flat alto saxophone.
 - b. B \flat trumpets, F horn and low brass & woodwinds.
4. The piano accompaniment.
5. As a multiple piano ensemble with class members playing one, two or three parts each.

WOODLAND OVERTURE (EXCERPT)

 S-25

John O'Reilly

Maestoso



Flute Oboe

B \flat Clarinets 1 2

E \flat Alto Saxophone

B \flat Trumpets 1 2

F Horn

Low Brass & Woodwinds

Percussion (Tambourine, Bass Drum)

Piano Accompaniment

Chords: B \flat , Dm, E \flat , F 7 , Gm, E \flat , Cm, F

Fl. Ob.

Cls. 1 2

A. Sax.

Tpts. 1 2

Hn.

Low Br. & W.W.

Perc.

Pno. Accomp.

Chords: Cm, F, B \flat , Dm, B \flat , F, E \flat , F, B \flat

E. Demonstrate mastery of prepared pieces from the PPE packet. Nos. 1-3.

1
CHROMATIZONE RAG

Ann Collins

154 41-42

MIDI



The musical score for "Chromatizone Rag" is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Ornaments (small circles) are placed above certain notes in measures 1, 5, 9, and 13. Measure numbers 1, 5, 9, and 13 are enclosed in boxes at the start of their respective systems.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): Treble staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 3 1 3 1 and 3 1 3 1. Bass staff has chords and single notes with fingerings 5 1/3, 5 1/3, and 1.

System 2 (Measures 5-8): Treble staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 3 2 3 1, 3 1 3 1, 3 1 3 1, and 3 1. Bass staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 3, 2, 1, and 4.

System 3 (Measures 9-12): Treble staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 3 1 and 3 1. Bass staff has chords and single notes with fingerings 3, 3, and 3.

System 4 (Measures 13-16): Treble staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 1 3 1 2 3 1 and 1 3 1 2 3 1. Bass staff has eighth-note patterns with fingerings 1, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, and 1.

17

1 3 1 5 3 1 2 1 4

21

3 1 3 4 3 1 3 1 3 1 2 3

25

3 1

29

1 3 1 2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 8va



31. TO B OR NOT TO B FLAT

Catherine Rollin

At a leisurely, bluesy pace ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}^{\text{♩}}$)

First system of musical notation for "To B or Not to B Flat". The piece is in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major (two flats). The tempo/style is "At a leisurely, bluesy pace". The first measure is marked *mf*. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) followed by a quarter note (F), then a half note (E) and a quarter note (D). The left hand plays a bass line with a half note (Bb), a quarter note (A), and a half note (G). Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 are indicated for various notes.

Second system of musical notation. The right hand continues with a half note (C) and a quarter note (Bb), then a half note (A) and a quarter note (G). The left hand plays a half note (F) and a quarter note (E). Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 are indicated.

Third system of musical notation. The right hand continues with a half note (F) and a quarter note (E), then a half note (D) and a quarter note (C). The left hand plays a half note (Bb) and a quarter note (A). Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 are indicated.

Fourth system of musical notation. The right hand continues with a half note (Bb) and a quarter note (A), then a half note (G) and a quarter note (F). The left hand plays a half note (E) and a quarter note (D). Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are indicated. The system ends with a measure marked *dim.* and *p*, followed by a measure marked *mp* and *8va* (octave up).

9 (8)

5 3

mf

11 (8)

5 3

mf

13 (8)

3 4 3

mf

16 (8)

dim. *p* *mp* dim. *p*

loco 3 4 3 3

Prelude

The **prelude** is a short character piece that establishes and maintains a particular mood.

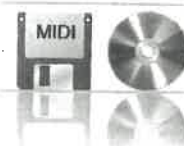
This piece is based on a continuous variation of a series of chords, which is called a *chaconne*.

30. PRELUDE NO. 7 IN B MINOR (Chaconne)

Robert D. Vandall

233

59-60



Stately

mp

1 3

1 3

5

1 3

1 2 4

1 2 4

9

1 2 5

1 3 5

cantabile

4

1

13

2

17

cantabile

3

3

5 2 1

1 2 5

simile

21

3

2

25

1

3

1

3

29

2

1

2

33

1

Exercise 33 consists of four measures. The right hand plays a continuous eighth-note scale starting on G4 and ascending to G5. The left hand plays a single eighth note in each measure, starting on G3 and ascending to G4. A slur is placed over the right hand's melody.

37

1 2 4

rit.

Exercise 37 consists of four measures. The right hand plays an eighth-note scale starting on G4 and ascending to G5. The left hand plays a single eighth note in each measure, starting on G3 and ascending to G4. A slur is placed over the right hand's melody. The third measure is marked with a 'rit.' (ritardando) and the fourth measure is marked with a 'rit.' (ritardando). The exercise ends with a double bar line.