Incoming Freshmen's Guide to Music Theory at Murray State

Is there anything I can do before I come to MSU to better prepare for the theory diagnostic exam and my theory classes in general?

We encourage our incoming music majors and minors to enter the program with the following skills:

- **Basic literacy of musical notation, particularly that which describes pitches, rhythms, time signatures, and key signatures**
- **Ability to read notes in *both* treble and bass clef**
- **General knowledge of the layout of a piano keyboard**
- Ability to aurally differentiate between upward and downward melodic motion
- Ability to aurally differentiate between stepwise motion (C to D) and leaps (C to E)
- Ability to use your singing voice comfortably**

The diagnostic exam will assess the first three skills listed above (in bold), but you will be using the last three right away in your aural skills classes. If you have access to a computer, you can learn and practice many of them at the following free website: http://www.musictheory.net/

*** The functional use of your singing voice (for instrumentalists as much as vocalists) is important to your success as a music student at MSU, and later as a music teacher in private lessons, ensemble rehearsal, or the classroom. If you have not recently had experience singing, then you are urged to find a place in a school or community choir or another musical venue where you can develop your skill and comfort level.*

You can also purchase your theory textbook in advance. Since the fall of 2008, the Murray State music department has been using:

Tonal Harmony by Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, sixth edition, with workbook and CD, McGraw-Hill.

Working on the first three chapters ahead of time and at your own speed will help you score higher on the diagnostic exam, and you will be better prepared for your theory classes. If your teacher or school library has an older edition of *Tonal Harmony*, you can use that until you arrive at MSU.

Can I test out of my theory courses?

For those of you taking the AP Music Theory Exam, scoring a 5 gives you credit for both Theory I and Theory II (MUS 170 and 173), giving you the option of taking Theory III as a freshman. Scoring a 4 gives you credit for Theory I only. In addition, the department provides "challenge exams" for Theory I and II at the very beginning of the fall semester. There will be a sign-up sheet posted on Dr. D'Ambrosio's office door (FA 544) at that time.

How do I know whether to register for MUS 100 (Developmental Music Theory) or MUS 170 (Theory I)?

All freshmen register for both courses. When school starts in the fall, you will take a music theory diagnostic exam that will officially determine your schedule. Those not needing MUS 100 will automatically pass the course and attend only MUS 170. Students requiring additional practice with music fundamentals will need to take MUS 170 but will also need to attend and receive a passing grade in MUS 100, which meets during the first five weeks of school.

When and where will the theory diagnostic exam be given?

If you follow your class schedule, you will go to your MUS 100 class at 8:30 AM on the first Wednesday of the fall semester. The diagnostic will be given at that time.

If you have any further questions or concerns, feel free to contact Dr. Mike D'Ambrosio at mike.dambrosio@murraystate.edu or (270) 809-3142.