

CHORAL DICTION PROFICIENCY EXAM

MM Choral Conducting students must attain a general phonetic knowledge and skills that can be related to other languages. The following exam must be passed by MM Choral Conducting students to assert that they have acquired language competencies sufficient to understand texts in the repertory.

Part I Ecclesiastical Latin Diction

1] How many vowel sounds are used in singing liturgical Latin?

List each sound in IPA.

2] What is a diphthong? How do Latin diphthongs differ from English diphthongs?

IPA the following words:

a] veniae _____

b] prout _____

c] Deitas _____

d] jubeas _____

e] quorum _____

3] The letters/letter combination – c, g, and sc – will change their pronunciation, depending on what letters follow them in a word.

Using IPA, show both the hard and soft versions of each letter.

	Hard	Soft
c-	_____	_____
g-	_____	_____
sc-	_____	_____

Show the IPA for the following words, paying careful attention to the soft and hard consonants.

a]	ascendit	_____
b]	regere	_____
c]	rogamus	_____
d]	coenae	_____
e]	requiescit	_____

What 2 *sounds* consistently produce soft consonants, when they follow c, g, sc?
Show them in the IPA.

4] How is the letter “h” usually pronounced in Latin?

IPA the two main exceptions to this rule:

mihi	_____
nihil	_____

5] The following words all contain the letter “t” – IPA the sound produced by this letter only.

a] spiritu _____

b] catholicam _____

c] tentationem _____

d] timebo _____

How does a Latin [t] differ from the English [t]?

6] The letter “x” may be pronounced one of two ways.

The voiced version is: _____

And the unvoiced version is: _____

Show which version is used in the following words by IPAing the full word:

a) exsules _____

b) excelsis _____

c) exhibeo _____

d) calix _____

7] IPA the complete text below. The accent marks indicate stress.

Dómine Jesu Christe,
Lord Jesus Christ,

qui dixísti Apóstolis tuis:
Who said to your Apostles:

Pacem relínquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you:

ne respícias peccáta nostra, sed fidem Ecclésiæ tuæ;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church;

eámque secúndum voluntátem tuam pacificáre et coadunáre digneris.
And graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.

Qui vivis et regnas in sǎcula sǎculorum.
Who live an reign forever and ever.

8] What are some of the major differences between Ecclesiastical Latin and German Latin? Name a choral work which would use German Latin instead of the Ecclesiastical.

Part II: Italian Diction

1] How many vowel sounds are used in Italian Diction? Which sounds are added to our Latin vowels – show them in the IPA.

2] Where does the stress normally fall in Italian words? Can you think of an exception to this rule? Oftentimes, the setting of a text to music can indicate where the stress falls in individual words. How can the music indicate the stress?

3] What prepalatal consonant is unique to the Italian language – show the IPA for this sound. What spelling produces this sound? (Hint – there’s an example in the second and fifth lines of text below.) How does one produce this sound?

4] There are many monosyllable words in Italian that have diphthongs and triphthongs. In each word below, indicate which vowel sound receives the stress/length by writing it after the word and showing the sound in IPA.

a) mio _____

b) può _____

c) qui _____

d) puoi _____

5] What is a phrasal diphthong? How does one identify them in texts set to music?

6] Fully IPA the following text, being sure to indicate the stress for each multisyllable word using a stress mark before the appropriate syllable in the IPA. If there are places where phrasal diphthongs might be used in the music, please show this in the IPA. Accent marks have been added into the text to show the quality of each stressed e and o. é = [e], è = [E]

Qual fiamma avéa nèl guardo!

What fire he had in his gaze!

Gli òcchi abbassai pèr téma

I lowered my eyes for fear

Ch'èi leggésse il mio pensìer segréto!

That he would read my secret thoughts!

Oh! s'èi mi sorprendésse...

Oh! If he were to catch me...

Brutale cóme égli è!

Brutal as he is!

O ché bèl sóle di mèzz'agósto!

O what beautiful mid-August sunshine!

Part III: German Diction

1] Identifying root stems is an important step in determining where the stress falls in a word. What is a root stem? With each word below, identify all prefixes, root stems, and suffixes. Mark where the stress falls by placing a stress mark before the stressed syllable.

Root stem definition: _____

a) Einsamkeit (solitude)

prefix(es) _____ root stem _____ suffix(es) _____

b) Freiheit (freedom)

prefix(es) _____ root stem _____ suffix(es) _____

c) beglücklich (fortunate)

prefix(es) _____ root stem _____ suffix(es) _____

d) angenehm (pleasant)

prefix(es) _____ root stem _____ suffix(es) _____

2] How are mixed vowels formed? How can one work on improving mixed vowel sounds?

How many mixed vowels are used in German? Show the IPA for each one.

Identify the mixed vowel in each word below.

a) Vögelein _____

b) schwüle _____

c) schöpfen _____

3] What is a glottal stop? How is it articulated? When should one use glottals in German?

4] When is the letter “h” pronounced in German?

Show the IPA for each word below.

- a] hohe _____
- b] Geheimnis _____
- c] frisch _____
- d] gehen _____

5] Explain the difference between the sounds [x] and [ç]. Where is each sound produced in the mouth? What is the general rule that explains when to use the sound [x]? Indicate which sound is used in the following words and circle the letters that produce the sound. Do not IPA the entire word.

Difference: _____

Rule: _____

- a) Strauch (branch) _____
- b) brechen (to break) _____
- c) lustig (funny) _____

6] IPA the following text, being sure to include stress marks for each multisyllable word.

Brauner Bursche führt zum Tanze

The dark-haired lad leads to the dance

Sein blauäugig schönes Kind,

His blue-eyed lovely sweetheart,

Schlägt die Sporen keck zusammen,

He boldly beats his spurs together,

Csardas-Melodie beginnt,

The Czardas melody begins,

Küßt und herzt sein süßes Täubchen,

He kisses and hugs his sweet little dove,

Dreht sie, führt sie, jauchzt und springt;

Turns her, leads her, rejoices and springs;

Wirft drei blanke Silbergulden

Throws three shining silver florins

Auf das Cymbal, daß es klingt.

On the cymbal, so that it clangs.

Part IV: French Diction

1] What are three important elements that contribute to a choir singing French well, aside from singing all the correct sounds? In other words, what would you listen for and work towards to achieve impeccable French from a choir?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2] Oftentimes in French, letters will combine and act as a unit, producing only 1 or 2 sounds. Show the IPA for each unit below.

- a) -au- _____
- b) -aient- _____
- c) -oin- _____
- d) -ao- _____
- e) -eau- _____

3] The spelling -ent- can produce several different sounds dependent on the circumstances. Look at the following words and answer the questions below.

 Ils **parlent** (they are speaking)

 Les enfants **pleurent** (the children are crying)

 Les chiens **dormirent** (the dogs are sleeping)

a) Name the part of speech of each highlighted word.

b) What is the form of conjugation of each highlighted word?

c) Show the IPA for each spelling of -ent-.

4] What is a “mute e” and where does it occur in the word?

Show the IPA for this sound. What instructions would you give to a choir on approaching the singing of a “mute e”?

5] What is an elision? Why are they used in French?

What is a liaison – how and why are they used?

6] Is there stress in the French language? Explain your answer.

7] IPA the text below, showing all appropriate elisions and liaisons in the French.

Qui va là? triste veilleur,
Who goes there? Sad watchman,

Pauvre sentinelle, je traverse la nuit,
Poor sentinel, I move through the night,

Le sommeil me fuit terriblement.
Sleep flees from me.

Suis-je donc fait de fer?
Am I then made of iron?

Tout le monde dort et repose en paix
All the world sleeps and rests in peace

Et oublie les tracas du jour.
And forgets the troubles of the day.

Moi seul je cherche en vain du repos sur la pierre.
I alone search in vain for rest on the stones.

Part V: English Diction

1] When singing in English, how should a choir be instructed to sing:

Initial R's (reign) _____

Intervocalic R's (furor) _____

Final R's (furor) _____

2] Triphthongs sometimes appear in English. Show the IPA for the following words, clearly indicating which vowel sound should receive the length/stress in each triphthong.

flower (as a 1 syllable word) _____

hour (as a 1 syllable word) _____

owl (as a 1 syllable word) _____

3] When should glottals be used in English?

4] What is the difference between a voiced and unvoiced consonant?

List the voiced counterparts of each unvoiced consonant below.

[t] _____

[k] _____

[f] _____

How can a choir improve the crispness and clarity of its consonants?

5] What vowel sound should be sung in the underlined (unstressed) syllables below. Show the IPA.

Believe _____

Emotion _____

Charity _____

5] IPA the text below. Be sure to show stress in all multi-syllable words.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song

Pleasant and long:

Or since all music is but three parts vied,

And multiplied;

O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,

And make up our defects with his sweet art.

Part VI: Oral Recitations

Everyone will recite all IPAed texts from each section, on an individual basis, once you have completed the written portion of the exam.