

# SIMPSON COLLEGE

Department of Music

## Piano Proficiency

All students pursuing a music degree must pass the piano proficiency exam before graduating. This exam is typically offered at the end of each semester and is performed before the piano faculty. Students must attempt to pass the piano proficiency exam at least once by the end of the sophomore year (4<sup>th</sup> semester of piano study). If a student does not pass on the first attempt, the exam must be retaken, and a \$50 fee will be assessed for each attempt at retaking the exam. The student must retake the exam at the next regular offering after failing the exam and all subsequent offerings until the exam is passed.

A student must enroll continuously in piano at least as a minor area of applied study until passing the proficiency exam. However, if a student has completed all the degree requirements for a music degree except for the piano proficiency, the requirement for continuous enrollment in applied piano is waived.

The exam must be passed one full semester before student teaching.

The exam will be approximately 15 minutes in length. Students who do poorly on the scales and arpeggios may be dismissed before the remainder of the exam is completed.

Only in cases of extreme emergency, a student may petition the piano faculty via the Department Chair to take the proficiency exam at the end of the May Term, in January, or at the end of the summer. If granted (and only in cases of extreme emergency), this exam will typically be scheduled during the last week of May Term, the first week of January, or on the Friday prior to the beginning of classes in the fall semester. Under these circumstances, the Department of Music is under no obligation to provide applied piano study over May Term, holiday break, or the summer months to a student seeking to take the proficiency exam.

The proficiency exam includes the following (in performance order):

1. Melody harmonization and transposition. The student will prepare in advance a folk-like melody in the original key, in a key a full step away, and in a key a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> away. Chord cadences of I-IV-V-I will be played in each of the three keys. Any style of accompaniment in the left hand is acceptable provided the harmony is well established.
2. Performance of *Happy Birthday* from memory in the key of F.
3. Performance of *The Star-Spangled Banner* from memory in the key of A-flat or G.
4. Scales and Arpeggios. Major and harmonic minor scales and arpeggios will be played in four octaves, hands together, ascending and descending. Students will be allowed to hesitate on the tonics if need be.
5. Sight Reading. A simple piano piece will be used for most students. This would be comparable to Vol. 17 and Vo. 27 of *Classics to Moderns*. More advanced students will read at a level comparable to Vol. 37 of *Classics to Moderns*.
6. SATB Open Score Reading. This will consist of a two-page example with a difficulty level of a typical high school or SATB church choir.