

PREPARING TO MAJOR IN MUSIC IN COLLEGE

Audition Information
for
Guidance Counselors,
Music Teachers,
and
Prospective Students.

Prepared by:

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needed.

The Three Parts of an Audition

In addition to the admission requirements for all prospective college students (high school transcripts, SAT or ACT scores, etc.) almost all college music major programs require an audition which typically consists of three parts:

- the Performed Audition on the major instrument (or voice)
- a Theory Test
- a Sight Singing Test.

It is important for prospective music majors to prepare for all three parts of the audition process. This pamphlet has been prepared in order to assist prospective students in their college audition preparations.

Private Study

It is generally unrealistic to expect that participation in high school music programs alone will adequately prepare students for a college music major. Most successful applicants to college music programs have studied privately. It is important that the private teacher(s) prepare the student in performance, theory and sight singing. Students can also prepare for the theory and ear training parts of the audition by working through music software or visiting on-line sources such as www.musictheory.net

The Performed Audition

The performed audition is perhaps the single most important factor in determining admissibility and possible scholarship. Although music admissions teams consider teacher recommendations, musical experience and accomplishments, in most cases, much of the evaluation comes down to the “Here and Now” of how well a student performs – how well they present themselves musically and professionally on the day of the audition. Several key factors can contribute to a successful college music audition.

- Select and develop audition repertoire early – in the sophomore or junior year if possible.
- Strictly adhere to each school’s audition guidelines and requirements.
- Choose repertoire that demonstrates playing in a variety of styles and moods (up-tempo technical piece vs. slower more lyrical piece) to show depth and range of ability.
- Choose repertoire that is appropriate to your level. An easier piece played well is much better than a more difficult piece played poorly.
- Choose an opening piece that you can play confidently that shows off your strengths.
- Practice fundamentals – effective warm-up routines and practice habits.
- Prepare scales and arpeggios.
- Practice sight-reading so you are prepared to sight-read at the audition. The importance of sight-reading is often underestimated by students in preparing for auditions.

The Theory and Sight Singing Tests

Schools vary in the level of importance they place on these tests at the time of the audition. Some schools administer extensive theory and sight singing exams, while others do just one or the other.

Music Admissions teams recognize that the level of music theory offerings varies widely from high school to high school. Nevertheless, it is important for each student to prepare for the Theory and Sight Singing tests by:

- Working with the private teacher on theory, ear training and sight singing.
- Getting other outside help.
- Working through basic music theory software either purchased separately, or done online.

The student should be prepared to:

- read both treble and bass clefs.
- identify intervals and triads both on paper and heard.
- demonstrate the ability to match pitches by singing notes played on the piano.
- sing a major scale (with or without solfege).
- be able to sight sing a short, simple melody.
- perform simple rhythms accurately.

Instrumentalists should not be concerned about the quality of their voice as much as pitch and rhythmic accuracy. Poor or non-existent basic theory and aural skills could keep a strong player or singer from being accepted. Students should get precise information on what is expected from each school to which they are applying.

Tips For The Audition Day

- Schedule your audition early in the audition year/cycle. Many schools make admission and scholarship decisions on a rolling basis (after each audition day) and those who audition early get first consideration.
- Perform mock auditions – run through the audition repertoire several times before you actually audition at schools.
- You are probably auditioning at several schools. Space the auditions at each school well enough to allow adequate time for travel and rest between auditions.
- Submit all application and supplementary music materials to the music admission and college admission offices as early as possible in the senior year, but no later than the audition day itself. Observe all deadlines carefully.
- Arrive at the school the day before the audition if possible in order to get a good night's rest and be fresh the following day for the audition.
- Arrive early the day of the audition and warm-up, but be careful not to play too much before the audition.
- Be 10 to 15 minutes early to the designated audition space.
- Bring a copy of your resume for the auditioning committee, even if you have already submitted one with your application.
- Remember that the audition starts the minute you enter the audition room, not when you begin playing the repertoire.
- Dress appropriately, speak confidently and respectfully, smile and make eye contact with the adjudicators.

- Don't worry about little mistakes in the audition. If mistakes happen, just move on. It is the big picture that is important, and the audition committee is not expecting a perfect performance; they are measuring potential.
- Be prepared to play parts of pieces, not always starting from the beginning. Audition committees will occasionally only ask for sections of pieces.
- Enjoy the experience as much as possible, and treat the audition like another opportunity to share your art. This too will come through in the audition.

A Special Note about Taped Auditions

Distance from a given school, timing issues, or budgetary limitations can make it difficult for students to audition in person at every school. Though in-person auditions are always better, a well-prepared taped audition can be a fine alternative. Schools have varying ways in which they accept taped auditions (some prefer video while some take CDs, etc.), and students should prepare their recordings carefully according to these guidelines. It is extremely important that taped auditions follow the same requirements as live auditions, and that recordings are clearly labeled with their contents. Include a resume with your recording.