

College Planning Workshop

Hoff-Barthelson Music School, March 17, 2012

The first step in the process is to know what degree you want. A BA in music, like most BAs, will involve many courses outside of your major with approximately 12 or so courses in your major. A BM is essentially a professional degree, and the course balance will be the opposite. Most of your courses will be degree-related courses: private lessons, solo classes, ensembles, composition, music history, music theory, aural skills, world music, piano for non-pianists, etc. If you are planning a performance career, you are probably seeking a Bachelor of Music.

5-year double degree programs (BA/BM) are available at most universities and some conservatories which have arrangements with other colleges. This gives you the advantage of being able to experience both tracks without committing early on. It is generally easy to withdraw from one if you become focused on the other. Most students who begin as double degree candidates end up completing only one of the degrees. If you are interested, ask about the logistics. Scheduling and location are important factors in determining how manageable it will be, particularly in the paired institutions.

If you are going for a BM or double degree, it is an entirely different process from the one that you undertake with your guidance counselor. To begin with, you will have a different college list. You are looking for a teacher for the next 4 years, not just an institution. Instead of university reputation, you will prioritize the choice of teacher and the reputation and postgraduate outcomes of the studio as well as location, size, and cost/financial aid. Ask your music teachers, other musicians, students and parents to recommend programs. You will not be able to find this information in a guide book or magazine ranking.

If you are interested in a BA in music, a music minor or valuable performance opportunities, you will follow the general application process while focusing on the quality of these offerings. Beware of assuming that a university with a strong performance program or a separate college of music will be a good place for you. This varies, and in some cases the great professors and ensembles are limited to the music performance majors so that it can in fact be a disadvantage to you. As for BM candidates, you can schedule a trial lesson during your campus visit which can help with your ultimate choice of school.

A degree in music education is required to teach music in elementary or secondary school.

Please see the specific advice that follows for both tracks.

For students who want to study music within a liberal arts program:

Making your list

- Look at schools with strong music departments and ensemble opportunities.
- *Caution:* Universities that offer a BM degree vary widely in opportunities for non-majors.
 - At some, access to teachers and ensembles is limited to the music students.
 - Some offer performance minors.
 - Some invite non-majors to audition for the ensembles within the school of music.
 - Some have non-major orchestras and ensembles.
- Ask about teachers and performance opportunities.
 - Some smaller schools have consortia with other schools.
- Find out whether the school gives credit and/or subsidy for music performance.
 - Some have specific music scholarships

Planning the tour:

- Arrange to speak with someone from the music department when you visit.
- Find a class, performance or rehearsal to observe.
- You can ask to join an orchestra rehearsal.
- You can request a sample lesson (for a fee) with a teacher when you visit.

When you visit:

- Look into the adequacy and accessibility of practice rooms.
- Look around in the music department; read bulletin boards, posters.
- Talk to the students about their experiences.

The application process:

- Send recordings as supplemental materials to schools that will accept them.
 - Websites have specific instructions under admissions or the music department.
 - Some require it *earlier than their application deadlines*.
 - Some have specific requirements.
 - Schedule the accompanist and recording session. Allow ample time for the process whether recording professionally or with personal equipment.
- Include a music resume of activities since 9th grade. It helps to keep an ongoing record.
 - List:
 - Teachers
 - Music classes
 - Ensembles, including NYSSMA/WCSMA
 - Major performances
 - Major repertoire
 - Master classes
 - Summer programs
 - Outreach performances
 - Paid performances
 - Awards or honors
 - Teaching experience
- The Common Application has an arts supplement form.

For students who want to prepare for a career in music performance:

Making your list:

- Look for the best teacher as well as the reputation of the studio *for your instrument*.
- Ask your current music teachers, other musicians, students and parents for advice.
- Consider conservatories and university schools of music.
 - Is the academic aspect a priority? Do you want two bachelor's degrees?
- Attend a performing arts college fair. (See the NACAC website.)
- For location, consider access to sources of live music – orchestra, jazz, etc.
- Ask questions: Are there any anticipated faculty changes? (Very important!)
- Ask about other opportunities such as jazz if you are interested and not a major.
- Students generally apply to between 5 and 10 schools.

Planning the tour:

- Start by contacting each of the teachers to arrange a trial lesson.
 - This cannot be done after the audition. Fees can range from \$100 to \$250.
- Check the schedules for classes, rehearsals or performances to observe.
- Try to attend a professional orchestra concert if the members are on the faculty.
 - You may be able to meet them afterward.

When you visit:

- Ask permission to record the lesson; it is very useful in preparing for the audition.
- Find opportunities to speak to and observe the students.
- Look at the performance spaces, practice rooms and bulletin boards.
- Consider sending a follow-up note or e-mail after the lesson.

The application process:

- Check application deadlines early. Many are due on December 1.
- Applying earlier may give you more of a choice of audition dates.
- Only a few schools have early audition dates and early decision or rolling admissions.
- Keep a chart of deadlines, audition schedules and requirements, etc.
- Some universities have separate applications for the university and the school of music.
- Some conservatories use the Unified Application, which is like the Common Application, but as with the Common Application, most have supplements.
- Some require specific formats for the resume.

The audition:

- Recordings are not required for all instruments.
- All require live auditions, preferably on site. Regional auditions are recorded and reviewed by the faculty. A second visit shows interest and is another chance to meet the faculty.
- Check audition requirements early and plan your repertoire.
- Choose repertoire that highlights your strengths, not necessarily the most difficult.
- Plan recitals, mock auditions or recording sessions for practice. Enter competitions.
- Dress respectfully but comfortably for the audition. Jackets/ties are not universal.
- Arrive early and accommodate your need for warm-up.
- If given a choice, start with your favorite piece.
- The conversation is also important; this is your interview.

Senior year:

- Don't overload your school schedule.
- The applications are time-consuming.
- You will be spending a lot of time practicing for auditions.
- You will travel a lot and miss a lot of school.
- It is said that 80-90% of the admissions decision rests on the 10-minute audition.

Other useful information:

Competitions:

Hudson Valley Music Club Competition
Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra
Jerome Sala Wind Competition at Lehman College
Ridgewood Band Youth Soloist Competition
Westfield Symphony Tri-State Concerto Competition
NYSSMA Teachers' Association
Queens Symphony Orchestra Young Soloist Competition

For seniors only:

National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (nfaa.org)
Chaminade Music Club of Yonkers

For a professional recording:

Jeremy Tressler 914-290-4134
Robert Kessler 914-232-5250

Helpful websites:

www.peabody.jhu.edu/doubledegree

This discussion on the Hopkins/Peabody website addresses the issue of different routes for different kinds of students.

talk.collegeconfidential.com/music-major/258796-so-you-want-music-major-one-family-experience.html

College Confidential is a college guidance website with a parents' forum. This father presents a lot of information and ideas about this topic. You can browse for other discussions as well; search under your instrument for information on specific schools and teachers.

<http://www.sbomagazine.com/>

School Band and Orchestra; click on College Search & Career Guide for digital version.

Books:

The *Fiske Guide to Colleges* has a list of conservatories and schools "strong in music."

Peterson's *College Guide for Performing Arts Majors* has some general information, but the specific school listings are erratic.

Creative Colleges, 2nd edition, by Elaina Loveland has some advice for music applicants.

A Guide to College Choices for the Performing and Visual Arts by Ed Schoenberg