

Considering a Degree in MUSIC or MUSIC THEATER

If you are planning to audition at colleges as a music major or musical theater major, here are some things to know. Most colleges and universities require an audio recording and/or video as a first-round screening tool. They use this to determine which students will be called to a live audition which is conducted regionally or on campus. Usually, the recording is due prior to the regular college application, so it's never too soon to start planning. When you know which schools you are applying to, find out the audition requirements for each school. Create a spreadsheet or other organizing tool to keep track of specific requirements and due dates. Some schools administer a theory test at the audition which may include sight-reading, tonal recognition, scales, etc. First thing, however, is the recording. I organize a recording date with an accompanist and recording engineer to ensure you have what you need for applications.

MUSIC MAJORS: Prospective students are asked to prepare and sing contrasting songs from different periods of music including English and at least one or two foreign languages (Italian, German, French, Latin). Repertoire must be memorized. Some schools require that you prepare specific songs from a list or from a particular collection. Most, however, simply require 2-3 contrasting art songs, one or more of which may be arias from an opera or oratorio.

MUSIC THEATER MAJORS: Prospective students are asked to prepare and sing contrasting songs from different periods of music theater. Some schools require specific songs from a list or collection. Repertoire must be memorized. In some instances, specific songs, musicals or composers are strongly discouraged. Most, however, simply require a ballade and an up-tempo cut (often 16 bars ballade, 32 bars up-tempo). It's a good idea to learn the entire song as well as the cut. In addition, most schools want you to prepare and present a monologue and exhibit some proficiency in dance.

Degree Programs: Music, Education, Music Theater

Schools of **Music** that offer a BM (Bachelor of Music) degree typically have the most intensive programs. Most Conservatories offer BM degrees. That said, many excellent music programs only offer a BA (Bachelor of Arts) in Music. **Education** degrees can be offered as BME (Bachelor of Music Education) or a BA (Bachelor of Arts) in Music Education. If you want a degree in Music Education, be sure it includes credentialing. **Music Theater** schools offer a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) degree. This is the most intensive program, but many excellent programs only offer a BA in Music Theater, Theater or Dance. In general, BA programs involve more general education courses and fewer major offerings and faculty.

Previous Voice Students Have Gone to Schools in the Arts Including:

CSU Chico; CSU San Diego; CSU San Francisco; UC Berkeley; UC Davis; UC Irvine; UC Los Angeles; UC Santa Barbara; UC Santa Cruz; U of Colorado; Belmont; Berklee College of Music; Boston University; BYU; Chapman; DePaul; Eastman; Ithaca; Loyola Marymount; Marymount Manhattan; New York University; Northern Arizona University; St. Olaf; Southern Methodist University

Famous Music Schools or Schools with a Name Include:

Boston Conservatory; Curtis Institute of Music; Eastman School of Music; Florida State University College of Music; Indiana University (Bloomington); Julliard; University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance; New England Conservatory; Northwestern University School of Music; Oberlin Conservatory of Music; St. Olaf; Westminster Choir College

You Can Learn Anywhere

Students and parents are often drawn to famous "name" schools. The fact is, you can learn anywhere and many successful performers have graduated from schools you've never heard of. For undergrad, I went to Wheaton Conservatory, a music school within a small Christian college in suburban Chicago. Wheaton was my first choice and I have life-long friends from college. While my degree was in music, I was actively involved in theater. When I looked at graduate schools, I ultimately followed several theater students from Wheaton to SMU. Again, I pursued a music degree with an assistantship in opera, but I took classes in stage combat and theater and regularly attended theater productions. Every school has something to offer and any can be the best school -- for you.

My Schools and Degrees:

Wheaton Conservatory, Bachelor of Music, Voice Performance

Southern Methodist University, Master of Music, Voice Performance

A Fall-Back degree

A lot of parents and students are nervous about spending a lot of money on an education in the arts. The fact is, the majority of college graduates don't actually end up working in the field they majored in. The main thing is to get a degree. College is a time to become an adult, to learn to thrive outside the nest and to be on your own. It's also a time to **follow your passion!** Reality hits soon enough. If you want to major in the arts, go for it. The worst that could happen, you earn a degree and you have fun doing it.

Getting Started. Develop a pro/con list. What is negotiable, what is not?

- 1) Size of school, big or small. State vs. Private.
- 2) Number of choirs, number of operas or musicals produced, number of full-time voice staff, course offerings, undergrad participation in productions, etc.
- 3) Degrees offered and degree sought (BM, BA, BFA).
- 4) Housing situation (on campus, or off).
- 5) Number of students in program.
- 6) Visit campuses and follow your gut.
- 7) Other considerations important to you.

“I Know a Career in the Arts is What I Want”, You Say? GREAT!

A dancer once asked Martha Graham, "do you think I have what it takes to make it as a dancer?" She replied, "if you have to ask, then no." Basically, you have to be compelled to work in the arts. You have no other choice, you're so driven to make it work. If this is you, think strategically. Look at schools where the market is prime for the skills you want to develop -- New York and Los Angeles are major arts hubs, but many major cities have an opera, symphony, ballet and theater company. Plan to audition a lot and make money singing or performing as soon as possible. Sing at a place of worship, at weddings and funerals. Many places pay experienced or trained singers to enhance their ensembles. Seek these out and start gigging. It will boost your confidence and lead to more work. Learn and earn!