

MUSIC MAJORS – HOW TO SURVIVE SENIOR YEAR/COLLEGE AUDITIONS!

Junior Year

- A. High school grades **ARE** very important, it's easier to start off with a good GPA (harder to keep grades up around audition time)
1. Good colleges/universities/conservatories are looking for “smart musicians”
 2. Higher level AP/IB classes, extracurricular activities, volunteer/service hours
 3. These things will set you apart from other students
 4. Do not let anyone tell you grades are not important if you're going into music – grades are always important
- B. Develop a master list of possible schools
1. Talk to your private teacher, other musicians, & do research to find out which schools have the best instructors for your instrument.
 2. Which schools have the type of program/degree you are looking for? Music Ed/Music Performance/etc.
 3. Typically high school guidance counselors are not experienced in dealing with music programs ... so you cannot rely on them for this type of information
- C. Start college visits **NOW!!!**
1. Come up with a plan to visit the schools on your list
 2. Get a tour of school (keep notes about visit – who did you meet (name & title), when did you meet, what did you like/dislike, etc.
 3. Talk to people – anyone that will talk to you – administrators, faculty, and students – what do they like/dislike about the school? Are they happy there?
 4. Take lessons with teachers – it's the only way you will find out if you would be happy spending the next four years working with this professor
 - a. send brief intro e-mail
 - My name is ...
 - I am a junior at _____ high school
 - I currently study with _____
 - One or two recent musical accomplishments/awards/honors
 - Would you have time to see me for a private lesson?
 - If so, what are your fees for the lesson? (Be prepared – most charge between \$100 - \$200/hr.!)
 - I am interested in pursuing a career in music and have an interest in your school
 - Thank you for your consideration
 - b. provide teacher with resume
 - c. be extremely prepared for lesson, in reality this is like an audition
 - prepare 2 or 3 pieces of varying styles/periods
 - prepare the pieces as though this were an audition
 - d. ask if it's okay to record lesson with a mini disc recorder/iPod
 - e. should a parent sit in on lesson?/definitely sit in on Q & A
 - f. go prepared with a list of questions:
 - Are there any books you would suggest I work out of?
 - Are there any summer programs you would recommend?
 - How many undergrad freshman are you planning to accept? ****Very important question!!!****
 - Would I be able to study with you if I come to school here? Or would I study with another teacher/grad student? ****Another very important question!!!****
 - Are there any pieces you would recommend for college auditions?
 - g. send thank you note afterwards
 - h. be sure to offer to pay for lesson

- i. build a relationship/take multiple lessons with the professor (if you are really interested in going to school there)
- D. Put together Resume – Keep it current
1. Letterhead – name, address, phone number, e-mail address (**nothing that could be construed as suggestive or distasteful!! (ex. highboy, roachman, lookinforfun, easygirl, etc.), photo (so they remember who you are)
 2. Private Instructor(s)
 3. Activities in Music/Honor Bands
 4. Summer Activities in Music
 5. Leadership in Music
 6. Awards in Music
 7. Secondary Instruments
 8. Solos/Solo & Ensemble Festivals
 9. Works Studied Last Four Years
 - a. Private Lessons
 - b. Orchestral Works
 - c. Wind Ensembles
 10. Non-Musical Activities/Achievements/Awards
- E. Plan Audition Material with Private Instructor – plan early!!!
1. Look at requirements for interested schools
 2. Limit number of pieces to prepare (use same pieces (or subset of pieces) for all auditions, some require specific pieces)
 3. Purchase music – at least one set (some places request a set of original music for audition panel)
 4. Work on audition material over the summer, you’ll have more time to practice over the summer than you will once school begins
 5. Some schools require some audition pieces to be memorized ... memorizing music makes a great impression

Summer Before Senior Year

- A. Bookmark websites for schools of interest
1. pay attention to calendar dates to be sure you are not looking at essays or audition requirements for a prior year
- B. Start school info sheet
1. school address/telephone #s/e-mail addresses/contacts
 2. professor name/telephone #s/e-mail addresses/studio room #
 3. are pre-screening audition CDs required? If so, what are pre-screening requirements? What is the deadline for pre-screening CDs to be submitted?
 4. audition requirements
 5. application deadline
 6. audition date(s)
 7. tuition/fees
 8. financial aid requirements/deadlines
 9. application requirements
 - a. SATs/SAT IIs/ACTs
 - b. Recommendation Letters
 - i. how many are requested? (usually ok to send 1 or 2 more than requested, no more!)
 - ii. who will you ask to write letters? “Will you write me a good recommendation letter?”
 - private teacher (almost definitely)
 - band/orchestra director
 - teachers
 - employer, neighbor, church/civic leader

- iii. plan early, ask people early, give them 3 or 4 weeks to write letters
 - iv. provide letter writers with addressed envelope, ask them to sign over seal, return to you by _____ (date), for each school – paperclip all paperwork together
10. Are auditions accompanied or unaccompanied?
- a. Use recommended accompanist, or ask professor for name(s) of accompanist – CALL EARLY to set up rehearsal time
- C. Start file folders/file cabinet for schools that you will be applying to

Senior Year

- A. Look at essay questions – print them off, start writing them, make deadlines and stick to them! State essay question at the top of the page.
- 1. Essays are very important – make them personal – why you want to attend their school? Be positive!
 - a. After my lesson with Ms. Campbell, I knew she would be a great teacher for me!
 - b. I felt at home on the campus ... I love the lakeside ... the buildings are beautiful ...
 - c. I went to a football game (which game? Who won?) and can't wait to play with the marching band!
 - d. I met some of the students in the studio ... They made me feel comfortable & I felt like I would fit in.
- B. Complete applications online – do one at a time – do not wait until the last minute – some applications must be completed in one sitting (3 or 4 hours) – others can be saved, revised, and submitted when you are ready
- 1. Make certain that any paperwork you are submitting to a school is personalized for that school. If you are using a similar essay for multiple schools, be sure that you have the correct school name on your paperwork (i.e., be careful not to send an essay to school A telling them how much you want to attend school B ... because you forgot to change the name in your computer document ... **DOUBLE AND TRIPLE CHECK EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THINGS!!!**
 - 2. All schools have online applications, however you will have to submit some supporting documentation via mail. Always allow 2 to 4 weeks for your guidance counselor (or others helping you out) to submit the proper paperwork for each school. Some schools do have ways to upload resumes, essays, activity charts, etc. into your applications, but many do not.
- C. Pre-Audition CDs
- 1. Some schools require pre-audition CDs. Pay close attention to what material they are asking for.
 - 2. Do not wait until the last minute to record CDs ... what if you get sick!
 - 3. Line up a piano accompanist and a recording engineer ASAP. You may want to schedule multiple meetings to do all of the recording (rather than try to record everything in one sitting). This is a tiring job, and you want to sound your best for these recordings.
- D. Map out possible calendar for audition dates
- 1. Check dates of other activities that may be important to you/your student, **PRIORITIZE** to avoid conflicts!! You cannot do everything ... or at least you cannot do everything well!
 - a. All-District or All-State Band/Orchestra
 - b. Bands of America Honor Band/Orchestra
 - 2. Some schools only have one audition date for a particular instrument
 - 3. Some schools publish a 10 day period for auditions, only confirm date 2 to 4 weeks prior to audition
 - 4. Some schools have multiple audition dates, you sign up for preferences
 - 5. Try to schedule the first audition to be an easier, less important, more relaxed/comfortable audition
 - 6. Prepare your band/orchestra director and school administration for any possible absences (especially if a concert or competition is concerned).
 - 7. Find out how your school deals with multiple absences and keep them abreast of your audition schedule
 - 8. Be prepared to stick up for your student with teachers/school administration. Don't be shy about pointing out that this is your child's future!

- E. Book hotels and transportation ASAP
1. Book hotels where you want to stay early ... book 1st and 2nd choice audition dates before school has confirmed date (then you can cancel the date you won't be using)
 2. Many schools have discount rates available at local hotels, check school website/call admissions office and ask
 3. Check airline/train schedules – many airlines will allow you to hold a “reservation” for 24 hours before booking/paying ... remember prices go up as travel time gets closer
 4. **ALWAYS** travel at least a day before your audition – get comfortable, find your way around, eat well, find the practice rooms (& use them ... but not too much!), get plenty of rest/sleep. Keep your body well hydrated by drinking plenty of water (especially for wind students).
 5. When flying, try to book non-stop flights (especially on the way to your audition, and look for reasonable prices). January through March are months when weather delays are more likely to occur. If you book flights with airplane changes/layovers, you could end up getting stuck at an airport due to bad weather!!!
 6. Get driving directions (Mapquest) from home to hotel/from airport to hotel, from hotel to college, etc. City maps/college maps are also extremely helpful.
- F. Make a CD of your audition material in case of illness – some schools will not allow you to re-schedule an audition due to illness/travel problems/weather conditions. Submitting a CD audition is not preferable, but it's better than not auditioning at all ... especially after you've gone to all the trouble to submit an application
- G. Limit January through March activities
1. Eat well, get plenty of rest starting in December – do whatever you can to prevent illness – stay away from sick friends – girlfriends & boyfriends (sorry guys, but how important are these auditions to your future???)
- H. Auditions
1. Think carefully before you audition at schools where you do not like the professor! You will be spending lots of time with this person for the next 4 years!!!
 2. Limit the number of schools where you will audition
 - a. I believe 4 to 6 is a good number ... it is difficult to audition well at 10 schools
 - b. Be realistic – some “stretch” schools, some “moderate” schools, one or two “fall-back” school
 - c. Auditioning on campus, at regional auditions, or via audio/video tape – If it is important for you to be accepted, always audition on campus. There are definite advantages to auditioning at the school
 - i. it says that it's important to you
 - ii. the best judge is the professor in your instrument (many outstanding musicians cannot pick out the best musicians in another instrument)
 - iii. you can impress your prospective professor, who typically is the one who ranks the students he/she wants in the studio. This can determine whether or not you get any scholarship money, or how much money you get
 - d. Auditions can become very expensive – travel, hotel, food, etc. If you have to fly to audition you will probably end up spending a minimum of \$500 to \$600 for one audition
 3. Bring back-up instrument, if possible. Special arrangements for traveling with larger instruments (harp, bass, cello, tuba)
 4. Allow enough warm-up time ... at some schools it is extremely difficult to find a practice room when you are ready to warm-up
 5. Travel with drinks and snacks (nuts, fruit (bananas - potassium), water, milk, oj (calcium) – not soda or candy
 6. Eat a good breakfast – with lots of protein!
 7. Limit stressful situations whenever possible
 - a. parents can be very helpful with this – make travel arrangements, confirm proper things are being taken to auditions
 - b. keep conversation light, happy, positive

- c. allow extra time for everything
 - 8. Dress Appropriately/Comfortably
 - 9. Be Confident ... Be Happy ... Be Prepared ... Be Yourself!
 - 10. Never make excuses ... "I've been sick" (even if you have been sick), "My favorite reed just broke", etc.
 - 11. School Paperwork
 - a. audition paperwork – some schools have a form to complete to be handed in at audition (it looks bad not to have paperwork that was requested)
 - b. helpful materials that you have collected over the months regarding school (these may come in handy during your trip)
 - c. Originals of Audition Sheet Music
- I. Review your school checklist for upcoming auditions
- 1. Be sure you are practicing the correct material for your upcoming auditions
 - 2. Confirm travel arrangements
 - 3. Take original music to auditions (some schools request a copy of original music for jury)
 - 4. Resume?
- J. Financial Aid
- 1. Need Based Aid
 - a. FAFSA – government ID# needed for student, **and** ID# needed for parent(s) – **APPLY FOR NUMBER EARLY** (in October or November ... it takes a while to receive your number, number is good forever and will be used for all your children)
 - b. CSS (same company as SATs) – some schools request completed form from them
 - c. Some schools have their own financial aid forms
 - 2. Merit/Talent Based and Academic Based – there is money out there for merit based scholarships – many times it is based almost exclusively on your audition!
 - 3. Don't not apply to a school because you think you can't afford it – talk to admissions/financial aid counselors to see what type of aid might be available from their school