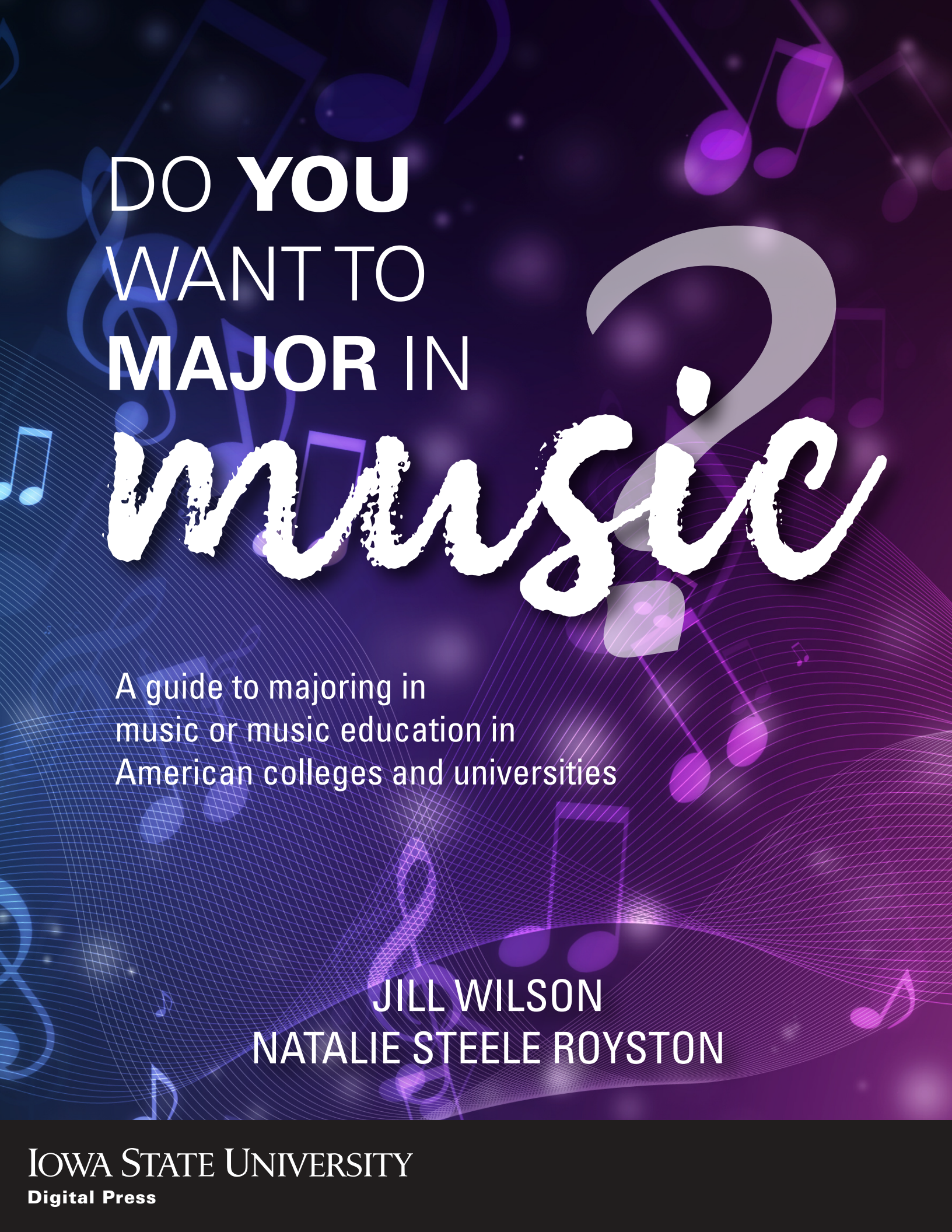


The background is a gradient of dark blue and purple. It features several musical notes and a large, stylized question mark. The notes are in various colors, including blue, purple, and white. The question mark is large and white, positioned behind the word 'music'.

DO YOU WANT TO MAJOR IN

music

A guide to majoring in
music or music education in
American colleges and universities

JILL WILSON
NATALIE STEELE ROYSTON

Do You Want to Major in Music?

DO YOU WANT TO MAJOR IN MUSIC?

A Guide to Majoring in Music or Music Education in
American Colleges and Universities

Jill Wilson and Natalie Steele Royston

Iowa State University Digital Press
Ames, Iowa



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31274/isudp.2024.157>

This book is published by

Iowa State University Digital Press
701 Morrill Rd, Ames, Iowa 50011, United States

www.iastatedigitalpress.com

Iowa State University is located on the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje (bah-kho-dzhe), or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained the land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today.

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Many students had an enjoyable experience playing, singing, or making music in high school. Many students also admired their music teacher and are inspired to become a music major and professional musician.

As a music major or music professional, please keep in mind that enjoying playing and singing is not enough! It takes more than a love of music. College degree programs have a rigorous and relevant program of study requiring a strong background, skill development, and a lot of discipline and dedication.

This volume was not created to scare you, but to help you have realistic knowledge of the expectations and to be prepared for what lies ahead on a very exciting path!

Foreword

This volume is written by two collegiate music teacher educators who have met with numerous prospective music students and answered thousands of questions. We've seen students enter our institutions as excited music majors only to be blindsided by the demands of the program of study.

Throughout the book, we share advice collected from music majors, music education majors, current music teachers, and music teacher educators. While there are programs being designed for non-classical musicians, a vast majority of college and university music programs still focus on the performance and study of Western European classical music. We feel as though the world needs music educators who are guitarists, producers of electronic music, or members of a rock band in addition to classically trained instrumentalists and vocalists.

Researchers have reported several factors that predicted success in music teacher education programs. These included high school GPA, years of private study, years of piano study, music/other arts performance experiences, music leadership/teaching experience, and non-music leadership/teacher and extracurricular experience. It is not uncommon to hear first-year theory and aural skills courses described as the “weed out” courses for music majors. One of the key reasons for writing this book is that we feel as though, even if you don't check all of the boxes on the list above, **you are capable of success in a music teacher education program**. May you benefit from the advice in this book! Enjoy!

PART I

Deciding to be a Music Major

Part I of this book contains information about majoring in music for prospective students. This opening section will provide information about deciding whether to major in music, the types of music majors and degrees that are available, some things you can do with a music degree, choosing your major and school, preparing for your audition, and coursework that you should expect on the path to a music degree. While this information contains general advice and information, please know that every school will have some unique and specific requirements and procedures and further, specific research will be required as you make your decisions.

CHAPTER 1

Why Major in Music?

Deciding Whether to Major in Music

As a high school student, you are expected to make many decisions. Many of them are HUGE and stressful. Deciding on a college major, choosing a school to attend, deciding what you want to do with the rest of your life... It can all be very, very overwhelming!

If you are reading this book, you must be interested in music. You have probably been very involved in music in school, at home, and it has become a significant part of your life. As you think about the question of whether majoring in music is the right choice for you, consider a few questions. Do you LOVE music? Are you PASSIONATE about music? Are you willing to dedicate yourself to your musical development through hours of practice? Are you interested in studying music in depth including theory, history, composition, and improvisation—not just performing? (Majoring in music is very different from participating in band, orchestra, or choir in high school.) Are you willing to make sacrifices to be the best musician you can be?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you are on the right track. There are two more questions to consider... Do you want to dedicate your life to music, or do you want music to be part of your life? Can you see yourself doing anything else with your life?

Types of Music Degrees

Each college/university/conservatory will have a unique music program and will have slightly different options. What the university labels the degree does not always matter but knowing a little about the philosophy, purpose, and requirements may help you understand the options better. The degrees offered are usually the Bachelor of Music (BM), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Music Education (BME). The following descriptions are general and may not apply to all situations.

Bachelor of Music (BM): This is a music-focused and intensive degree. When offered at a college/university, the curriculum usually closely resembles that of a conservatory program with the intent of preparing professional musicians. The majority of the coursework will be focused on music with general education requirements included.

Bachelor of Arts (BA): This is a liberal arts degree with a music emphasis. It will contain fewer music requirements and allow more opportunity for other interests and courses. This degree offers the most flexibility and many times, this is a good option for those wishing to pursue a double major and graduate on time.

Bachelor of Science (BS): This is a degree with a music emphasis but also often leans to other areas such as technology, business, or education.

Bachelor of Music Education (BME): This degree is designed to prepare individuals to teach music. Most programs will lead to state teaching licensure. The curriculum will include music courses as well as education and general education courses.

Dual Music Emphasis: A very common option for students wanting to major in music but unsure of their future plans is to pursue a dual emphasis in Music Performance and Music Education. This is an excellent option for anyone who wants to perform or teach music in any way in their career. The music performance degree will help you to develop your performance skills and musical knowledge to their fullest with all of the opportunities to perform. Music education prepares your pedagogical skills as well so you will know how to teach music to others in any venue and any age group, whether it be K–12 schools, college/university/conservatory, a private lesson studio, master classes as a professional performer, pre-concert talks as a conductor, or any other setting. The education degree will also prepare you to be a licensed teacher in the state you are studying.

Music Education is NOT a Fallback Degree

There is a common misconception that music education is for less talented musicians or is a fallback degree for performers that 'don't make it.' Nothing could be more false. Music education is an important and valuable degree providing musical development, knowledge, and a skill set that is transferable across all music careers. The world needs great music teachers. Music is an important part of a well-rounded education, not to mention a rich culture. Zoltan Kodály once said:

It is much more important who is the music teacher in Kisvarda (a small city in Hungary) than who is the director of the opera house in Budapest... for a poor director fails once, but a poor teacher keeps failing for thirty years, killing the love of music in 30 generations of children." (Kodály, 1974, p.124)

Music education majors today teach in an exciting and increasingly varied career. Options include teaching general music mostly in elementary schools, as well as band, orchestra, and choir in the middle and high schools. Many college/university/conservatory ensemble directors also hold an initial degree in music education. Others with music education degrees teach guitar, mariachi, steel pan, world drumming, music technology, songwriting and composition, as well as modern band and popular music. It is also good to keep in mind that a degree in music education does not mean that teaching in K–12 schools is your only option. Getting a music education degree will prepare you to professionally and effectively share your passion, knowledge, and skills with others.

This is an exciting time to be a music educator. Music is more available to students now than ever before. All students have some interaction with music on a daily basis. Being a music educator allows you to meet them where they are, provide them with opportunities, and take them to what they may become.

What if I am not sure?

For many students, and families, majoring in music is a scary venture with uncertain career prospects. There are many stories of the 'poor, struggling musician' and articles listing music as a 'worst' choice in college majors. The reality is that no college degree guarantees job or career success. If you are passionate about music but majoring in music feels too risky, there are options to choose a double major or minor in music. What does this look like?

If you are considering majoring in music in any way, it is best to begin there. It is much easier to transfer out of a music major, transition to a music minor, or add a second major than it is to transfer into a music major. As will be discussed in more detail later, the music degree curriculum is very sequential and transferring into the program can lead to additional time to complete a degree. So, if you think music is a serious option for you, start your studies there and begin the sequenced coursework to stay on schedule.

If you find that majoring in music is not for you after you begin the major, adding another major and changing to a music minor is often an easy option. After a year of school as a music major, many times the minor requirements will already be complete, some courses may count toward another degree and you will have time to complete another major and graduate on time.

Another option is simply adding a second major. This option is becoming more and more common for students who have multiple interests and want to broaden their options. How do you make this decision? Ask yourself the question: Can you see yourself giving up either option? If the answer is no, then this might be the right choice for you. What can I choose as a second major? Anything! Some common options are math, sciences, psychology, business, technology, journalism, and languages.

What can I do with a degree in music?

There are many career options for those that major in music and earn a degree. Some music majors go on to become professional performers and perform in large ensembles such as orchestras and bands. Some perform on stage in operas. Some perform as soloists, in chamber ensembles, as accompanists, or in churches. Many music majors become teachers and work with young children, in K-12 schools, or in colleges.

Some other options that are not always as obvious are becoming a music therapist to work with those needing mental, physical, or emotional help through music. You could become an agent or arts journalist, a recording or sound engineer, an acoustician, a composer, songwriter, or arranger, a music publisher, a music librarian or historian, or work behind the scenes as a talent scout, running music events, or managing a music venue. The options go on and on. See below for a list of some options:

- accompanist
- acoustician
- arranger
- artist management
- arts management
- artistic director
- audio engineering and editing
- church/sacred music
- community music school director
- copyist/transcriber

- conductor
- critic/reviewer
- cruise ship performer
- DJ
- electronic production and design
- film scoring
- instrument repair
- luthier
- manager/promoter
- music business
- music journalism
- music librarian
- music therapist
- musicologist
- performer
- piano tuner
- pit musician
- production
- publishing
- radio programming and research
- session musician
- songwriter
- sound technician
- summer camp music director
- talent scout
- touring/road work
- vocal coach

Additional Resources

Baskerville, David and Tim Baskerville. (2019). ***Music Business Handbook and Career Guide*** (12th edition). Sage Publications.

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Michael Fink. (1996). ***Inside the Music Industry: Creativity, Process, and Business*** (2nd edition). Cengage Learning.

Passman, Donald S. (2023). ***All You Need to Know About the Music Business*** (11th edition). Simon & Schuster.

Royston, Natalie S. (2013). **Preparing for the Future: Helping Students Prepare to be College Music Majors**. *The Instrumentalist*, 68(4), 26–30. <https://theinstrumentalist.com/november-2013/helping-students-prepare-for-music-school/>.

CHAPTER 2

First Steps

Choosing Your Major

There are several different majors within music, and programs and requirements vary from institution to institution. Some of the most common are music performance, music education, composition, music production, music business, church/sacred music, and arts management. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is often possible to double major in music and another field, however, it may take additional semesters to complete both degrees.

A **Music Performance** degree is primarily for those who are interested in performing classical music professionally. This degree often focuses on individual skill development and performance techniques with an emphasis on private study which often allows students to spend more time in the practice room than some other degrees. There are usually concentrations in voice, keyboards, and all instruments. In addition to performance skills, you will receive a comprehensive music degree including studies in music theory, aural skills, and history.

Some schools also offer specialized performance degrees that are focused on specific genres. **Musical Theater** is a great choice for those interested in performing professionally on stage. This degree is usually a combination of theater and musical studies. A degree in **Jazz Studies** focuses on individual skill and musical development while focusing on the specific skill sets and foundations of jazz music and performance rather than classical/art music.

Some advice for a high school student interested in majoring in music from music students:

Study basic music theory on your own—know solfège, key signatures, and scales before college.

Start practicing and playing piano! Learn how to practice. Practice as much as possible!

Identify your “why” and write some ideas down. Remembering why you got into something can be very motivating.

Some advice for a high school student interested in majoring in music from music performance faculty:

It's a difficult and competitive path, but highly rewarding in terms of interactions with audiences, colleagues, and students. It's time consuming—prepare to practice.

There is no shortcut to success or improvement without consistent, sustained practice.

Be sure that you love multiple aspects of music—not just the social components of ensembles or the thrill of performing. You will spend MUCH more time researching, practicing, and preparing than you do actually performing.

In general, music is like a sport. If you think you want to do it for a career, you have to be working on the fundamentals of theory, aural skills, technical proficiency on your instrument, and the passion for making music. You will want to do it at the highest level there is.

Music Education is for those interested in teaching music. The most common path is teaching children in preK–12 public and private schools while some individuals teach at a college/university later in their careers. Many collegiate ensemble conductors/directors taught public school and gained valuable experience before pursuing collegiate teaching. Music education majors complete core music courses including music theory, aural skills, and music history, take multiple “methods” courses to learn how to teach as well as spend time in local schools working with teachers and students throughout their degree program.

You can find advice from music education students, practicing teachers and music teacher educators in [Part III](#).

Music Theory/Composition is a degree for those interested in writing original music or arranging and orchestrating. There are a wide variety of opportunities, from working for a publisher, to writing compositions for professional and school ensembles, to film and video game scoring, to teaching theory and/or composition in colleges or universities.

A **Music Production** degree is more commonly found in schools where music/recording studios are more abundant. This degree is for those interested in working in a music studio as a sound engineer or producer. The course of study includes music core courses as well as audio editing, recording, technology, and often, business courses.

Music Business degrees are becoming more popular and can offer a variety of options. This degree provides a foundation in music and business. Some common career paths for this degree include management, such as serving as executive director of a symphony, music academy, or theater. Others include working in music publishing, music licensing, artist management, concert management, or intellectual property/entertainment law. This is a degree that provides foundations in music and prepares you for a career in music that is not focused on being a performer or teacher.

Music Therapy is a health-related field for those interested in using music as a source of healing and comfort in hospitals, rehab centers, and many other settings. Music therapy is frequently used for rehabilitation for brain injuries, as well as therapy for PTSD, dementia, and autism. There are various areas of specialties including pediatric, geriatric, and rehabilitation. While there are some programs with bachelor's degrees, graduate school is required for licensure. Many earn a bachelor's degree in music performance or education and go on to graduate school to complete a masters degree in music therapy.

Musicology and Ethnomusicology are degrees for those interested in making a career of studying music throughout Western European history or music-making in cultures around the world. Many musicologists and ethnomusicologists are employed as college professors and music librarians.

Choosing a School

Choosing a school is one of the most exciting, yet challenging tasks to be undertaken. It is vitally important to do your research and make this choice wisely. Many factors must be considered as the list of colleges is narrowed. Some of these are:

- Types of school (community college, college/university, conservatory)
- Musical talent/ability
- Interests
- Career goals
- Academic ability
- Family finances (scholarships and financial aid help!)
- Size of campus and music program
- Geographic location
- Length of program (can you finish in 4 years?)

One of the greatest resources at your disposal is your high school ensemble director and/or private lesson teacher. However, remember that there are also other schools “out there.” There are many great institutions and music programs. Look for the one that fits **YOU** best, not the one that others want you to attend.

While financing a college education can be scary, you should always remember that college is about the experience and is an investment in your future. While you don't want to get buried in debt, make sure you also get a quality education and the most for your money. Quality education can be found in many different settings.

As you create a list of schools you are interested in, be sure to visit their websites. This is the easiest and fastest way to get information and should help you start to create a “short list” of schools you are most interested in attending. When you get this short list, you should try to visit the campus in person. You want to see if you like the atmosphere on campus, see how you are treated, and determine if the school is too large or too small.

While visiting the campus, ask to meet with conductors, applied faculty, music education, and other teaching faculty in the music department. If possible, consider setting up a private lesson with the applied studio teacher to gauge whether it will be a good fit and sit in on some rehearsals and classes. Doing this allows you to get an 'inside look' at the school and the people you will be working with, and also to be known to them before audition day.

Do your research, meet people, and ask questions. You want to be confident in your choices before you start applying, as there will be many long forms to fill out, essays to write, and application fees to pay. Try not to waste your time or money. In addition, only some of those that audition can be accepted each year. Early connections and good impressions, along with good academics and strong musical ability, can help you get into the school of your choice.

Overall, remember that no school is going to be perfect and full scholarships are rare. Find a program that feels like it is the best fit for you, get accepted, and then work out the details. This is the first step toward your career in music!

Auditions

Students desiring admission to music programs are usually evaluated on musical skills and knowledge as well as potential for success. Audition committees vary at each institution but are usually made up of applied faculty (private lesson teachers), and sometimes conductors, music education professors, or other faculty members. Most music schools in the United States require prospective majors to perform music from Western European/American traditions on a band/orchestra instrument, keyboard, or in the *bel canto* vocal style for entrance and scholarship auditions.

Unless you are being specifically recruited and know exactly where you want to go to school and you have a confirmation that you will be accepted, it is generally a good idea to audition at three or more schools. Multiple auditions give you more options as well as the ability to make more informed choices. Prior to these auditions, it would also be a good idea to set up a mock audition at your high school in order to get the experience of the process, get a run-through of your material, and get some valuable feedback from individuals that you trust.

As you prepare for this process, do your homework! Look at school/department/program websites for detailed information and schedules. Contact each school early to schedule visits and audition dates, learn about the procedures and requirements, and ask questions. If they are not listed on a website, you should ask if there is a prescribed set of pieces required for the audition in addition to clarifying exactly what will be expected during the audition such as scales, sightreading, aural skills, theory, or piano exams. Make sure you reserve your audition time early as time slots can fill fast. Below are some general, practical suggestions to help you prepare.

What to Prepare

For Everyone

- If you can select your own audition music, choose music that shows off your strengths. Choose pieces that can be played well every time (even when you are nervous!). A common mistake is to choose music that is too difficult and then perform poorly. The faculty listening to your audition, and deciding who gets accepted, want to hear an expressive and polished musical performance. Other important criteria include (in no specific order): good rhythm, good intonation, and good breath support or bow control. If possible, work with a private teacher or ask one of your current or former music teachers for help in preparing the audition. Bring originals of your audition music for yourself and your accompanist, if needed. Please do not bring photocopies. See below for more information on audition music recommendations.
- Be prepared to answer and ask questions. Personal interviews can also be a part of the audition as the committee wants to learn about you, your experiences, your goals and career aspirations. Here are some questions you may want to ask: What are the strengths of this music program? What opportunities will I have for performing, conducting and teaching? What is the graduate school and job placement rate of the graduates?
- Be prepared to sight-read or sight-sing melodic and rhythmic excerpts.
- Practice and Prepare! Good programs are competitive and have limited openings each year.

For Instrumentalists

Brass & Woodwind

- Prepare at least two contrasting pieces. Make sure that one demonstrates technique and one demonstrates lyrical, musical performance. At minimum, prepare one technical study or etude and one solo work (no band music). Check with the institution to determine if there are minimum or maximum time frames or specific requirements.
- Practice all of your scales. Many auditions will require scales. At the minimum, be prepared to play a chromatic scale covering the full range of the instrument and all major scales from memory. Some programs may also ask for minor scales, arpeggios, or other technical patterns.

Percussion

- Prepare an excerpt (30–60 seconds) of a solo or etude on as many of the following instruments as possible: snare drum, timpani, keyboard (preferably marimba), drum set, and/or multiple percussion. If you are selecting your own music, be sure to choose pieces that demonstrate a variety of skills, styles, and interests.

- Be able to play all major scales and a chromatic scale from memory on a keyboard instrument and 40 rudiments on snare drum. Some programs may also ask for minor scales, arpeggios, or other technical patterns on the keyboard.

Strings

- Prepare at least two contrasting pieces. Make sure that one demonstrates technique and one demonstrates lyrical, musical performance. At minimum, prepare one technical study or etude and one solo work (no orchestra music). Check with the institution to determine if there are minimum or maximum time frames or specific requirements.
- Practice all of your scales. Many auditions will require scales. At the minimum, be prepared to play a chromatic scale covering the full range of the instrument and all major scales from memory. Some programs may also ask for minor scales, arpeggios, or other technical patterns.

Piano

- Prepare 10–15 minutes of standard literature including two prepared pieces in contrasting styles. Memorization is required.
- Be ready to play scales, arpeggios, or other technical exercises you have studied.

For Vocalists

- Prepare two art songs in contrasting style. Memorization is required. At least one of these pieces usually must be in English and the other, likely, in Italian, German, or French. One of the selections may be an opera or oratorio aria. Musical theatre songs are sometimes acceptable, but you should contact each school at which you plan to audition to see what their policy is regarding these song choices.
- Don't be surprised if you are asked to do tonal memory exercises. This simply means the faculty member may play a pattern on the piano and ask you to sing it back.
- You may only have one quick run-through with the supplied accompanist or you might be expected to bring your own. Accompanist policies differ. You should check with the school where you are auditioning. Either way, make sure that you have a copy of the accompaniment (in the right key) with you at your audition just in case.
- One very important piece of advice: Don't talk about the cold you've had for the last two weeks! It sounds like an excuse and, if it's true and having a negative affect on your sound, those listening will be able to tell anyway.

Non-Musical Aspects

During the Audition

Your audition begins the moment you walk into the room. Be early, dress-up, be friendly, respectful, and confident. Try to relax and smile. Know that mistakes will happen (we all make them) and you should just keep going. Due to time constraints, it is very common for the committee to cut a performer off before the end of a piece, this is not a signal of a bad audition. At the end of the audition, be sure to always be gracious and thank the committee (and your accompanist).

After the Audition

As you make your college choice, one of the most helpful things you can do is to check the general education requirements of the university to see where you will stand and what questions you should ask. It could benefit you greatly to look at all general education requirements (especially foreign language, English, math, social studies and science) and discuss these in depth with an advisor as early as possible. Check for any dual-credit, Advanced Placement (AP), or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) credits that may be able to be applied to your degree. (Every school will handle this a little bit differently.) Any credits waived or transferred into the university will save time and money on the path toward graduation.

You should also determine if any credits can be transferred in, or courses waived, due to completed credit courses from high school. For example, many universities require you to take a foreign language as part of your degree if you did not take enough credits in high school. It is common to require two semesters of foreign language at the university (8–12 credits) unless you have taken three years of a single foreign language in high school. If three years of high school foreign language are successfully completed, then the collegiate requirement may be completely waived.

CHAPTER 3

What to Expect

Degree Requirements

Degree Requirements and Other Important Skills

Once you have been accepted and decided to commit to a college music program, you will be given several assessments for placement to determine what to enroll in your first semester. At the minimum, these placement tests usually include music theory, aural skills, and piano skills. While you are finishing high school, you can begin to further develop your musical skills and knowledge that will prepare you for the placement exams, give you a headstart and prepare you for your college coursework. By doing this, you can ease the transition into being a music major in college and perhaps, shorten the length of time it will take to complete your degree program. The next several sections will help you be prepared for:

- Applied lessons
- Ensemble participation
- Academic coursework and skill-based classes (Music theory, Aural skills, Piano proficiency, Music history, Music education—Methods courses, Music education—Practical experiences)

Applied Study

Applied study refers to the individual lessons that you will take on your primary instrument or voice throughout your degree as a primary focus of your musical study. You will want, and likely be required, to continue private study throughout your degree program. Some schools will only require six semesters, but more commonly, every semester you are on campus. In addition, at some schools, you may be required to take private lessons on a secondary instrument or performance area.

You will typically take a 30-minute or 60-minute lesson each week in your primary area. Lessons are considered a class at this level, and you will receive a grade and academic credit toward your degree. The specific requirements depend on the major you select, and the degree plan for your school. This is something you should ask about when you make your initial visits and make sure you understand before beginning your degree. Since these lessons are classes, you will pay tuition for the credits and possibly an additional fee. At some schools, lesson fees are included for no extra cost if you receive a music scholarship; at others, lessons require an extra fee in addition to tuition. These are all issues that you should ask about during campus visits or the audition process so you know exactly what is required. It is important to remember that all schools handle these issues differently and these variances may factor into your choice of school to attend.

While it is mandatory to have one area of focus for applied study, it is also a good idea to develop proficiency with as many different areas as possible. Basic piano study is usually mandatory for all students, and guitar is often recommended as a versatile instrument, but some time spent on recorder, drum set, bass guitar, or any other instrument, would be beneficial as well. If you are an instrumentalist, it can also be very beneficial to take voice lessons and develop these skills as well.

Studio Classes

At many schools, all of the students of a private teacher or performance area get together on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to perform for and critique each other in an informal setting. This is generally referred to as studio class or seminar. At smaller schools, the seminar may involve the students of several different teachers, which allows you to receive feedback from multiple instructors. A few times a semester, the full music student body may come together for a performance seminar in more formal concert settings. This is again time for students to practice performing for others and receive feedback. There is often a required number of performances at these events that are part of your private lesson grade. Attendance at these seminars is also usually mandatory.

Juries

A jury is basically an end-of-semester final exam in your primary performance area (voice or instrument). This will be a performance assessment in which you will show your growth from the semester through a performance. The “audience” for your jury will consist of your private teacher and other music faculty members which will be determined by school policy and practice. Juries usually take place during finals week at the end of each semester. There is often a “barrier” or “continuation” jury at the end of the sophomore year at which time the faculty will examine your academic, musical, and personal progress and decide if you are attaining a level of musical and academic progress appropriate to continue in the major.

Recitals

Music majors are usually required to give individual, solo recitals as part of the degree program. Performance majors will often be required to perform a junior and a senior recital. Music Education majors are usually required to perform a minimum of a half recital in the junior or senior year. Other music degrees may also have recital requirements. Each institution will determine their own degree programs and requirements. The purpose of the recital is to serve as the final demonstration of your performance skills as an undergraduate college student and a chance for you, as a student, to show the faculty, your family, and your friends what you have accomplished. A half recital usually consists of about 25 minutes of music so that two performers can share a performance and complete a full recital in about an hour. This means you may be able to share a performance with a peer. A full recital is generally about 45-50 minutes of music. Recitals are generally focused on solo literature (with accompaniment), but also often include chamber music, secondary performance areas, jazz combo, or about any other musical style you and your teacher agree upon.

A special jury or “hearing” may be required in the weeks before the recital performance in order to receive an approval for the performance. At that point, all pieces requiring memorization must be memorized (especially vocalists and pianists). Program notes must also be written. These consist of a paragraph or two about the background of the piece or information about the composer. At some schools you will also be responsible for designing your program and for publicity beyond having it on the school of music calendar.

There are generally extra fees associated with the junior or senior recital. Fees for the accompanist are sometimes based on the difficulty of the music and the amount of rehearsal time that will be needed. You may also want to ask your accompanist to make a recording for your own personal practice and preparation. Your accompanist might be a professional on staff, someone from the community, or one of the student pianists.

Ensembles

As a music major, you will be required to be involved in at least one large ensemble every semester you are on campus. No matter what size the school, there will be “y’all come” ensembles that anyone is invited to participate in and groups for which you will have to audition for membership. In some schools, students are not allowed to be in more than two ensembles. In others, it is not uncommon for music majors to participate in many various ensembles. Perhaps you are a singer in choir, a trumpet player in band, and play the piano in jazz band. Be sure to find out what the ensemble requirements and policies are for any school you are interested in attending—some ensembles may not count as major ensembles or there may be specific minimum requirements such as marching band or opera studio.

Requirements for an ensemble may range from a single 1-hour rehearsal a week, three 50-minute rehearsals per week, or as much as 2 hours daily. It is also required at some, especially smaller schools, that you participate in both choral and instrumental ensembles. At most institutions, you will receive academic credit for the ensemble participation; at some private colleges, ensembles may not count as a credit in order to save money on tuition. Be cautious—while this may free you up to schedule more required courses, it can make for a very busy, intense schedule.

If piano is your primary instrument, there will likely be other options available. These often involve accompanying, playing with ensembles, or collaborative piano experiences. In some cases, accompanying soloists on a certain number of recitals or accompanying an ensemble for a certain number of semesters will fulfill this requirement.

Leadership Opportunities

When you go on a campus visit, it is a good idea to ask about possible practical experience and leadership opportunities related to ensemble participation. As a leader, you may be given opportunities to lead sectionals. This is a great way to further your musicianship and prepare yourself for directing an ensemble or being a teacher.

In larger universities and programs, student director/conductor opportunities often go to graduate students, but in some programs undergraduates may have the opportunity to lead and direct large ensembles in rehearsal and/or performance. Some of these opportunities are tied to advanced conducting courses and you may have the chance to rehearse and conduct a large ensemble in concert. Other opportunities for leadership are also frequently available for instrumentalists through marching band, pep band, and jazz ensembles. Again, you may want to ask what kind of opportunities might be available when you meet with faculty during your campus visit as this may influence your school decision.

Student-Directed Ensembles

On some campuses, there are very impressive student-led ensembles. Membership in these groups is strictly voluntary and usually does not carry course credit. There may or may not be requirements concerning who the student director may be and whether a faculty sponsor will oversee as necessary. While your primary responsibility is to your private lessons, large ensembles, and coursework listed in the college catalog, these organizations can be a lot of fun and a great experience.

Coursework

Required Courses for All Music Majors

Theory and Aural Skills

In many music schools, music theory and aural skills are taken simultaneously and begin right away in the first semester of school. It is common to have theory classes Monday, Wednesday, Friday while aural skills class meets Tuesday and Thursday. Both include skill practice, but aural skills, especially, includes a lot of drill. Music theory will teach the fundamentals to understand, analyze, and create music. This will include aspects of harmony, melody, and rhythm as well as compositional elements such as form, tempo, notes, chords, key signatures, intervals, scales, and more. It also examines musical qualities such as pitch, tone, timbre, texture, and dynamics. Aural skills classes, sometimes referred to as ear training, will include learning to hear and dictate melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic ideas. You will learn to identify pitches, intervals, melody, chords, rhythms, and other basic elements of music, solely by hearing.

Class Piano

Class piano teaches basic piano skills to all students and is available to those who need to prepare for a proficiency. Most schools allow students with strong piano skills to “pass out” of this requirement by taking the proficiency exam early. Passing the proficiency doesn’t necessarily mean, however, that you have all of the piano skills you will need. You need to keep practicing and playing!

Music History

Music history is usually a multi-semester sequence of courses that provides an overview of the Western music tradition and its historical eras including the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern. Sometimes a Jazz History or History of Popular (or Rock) Music course may also be offered.

World Music

An examination of music that is not Western European or American in origin is often referred to as World Music. These courses provide insight into different cultures, communication patterns, rhythms, instruments, sounds, and ways of making music. These classes are sometimes included as part of the Music History sequence or can stand alone.

Conducting

These courses focus on developing conducting skills for music majors. Degree programs usually require 1-2 semesters of study. Students learn fundamental beat patterns, basic conducting technique, phrasing, articulation, and tempo. Other common topics include terminology, score study, transposition, and rehearsal skills.

Required Courses for Music Education Majors

Methods Courses

Usually methods courses will teach you 'how to teach.' They will likely be divided into general music, vocal/choral music, and instrumental music. These courses will introduce you to different pedagogies and often provide "lab" experiences in which you will practice your skills through peer teaching activities. Instrumental majors will also be required to take classes on all of the instruments in order to gain basic performance skills and learn how to teach them to future students.

Education Courses

All music education programs work cooperatively with the education school or program on campus and the state to ensure that all graduates meet local teacher licensure requirements. Required courses will likely include some sort of educational or developmental psychology course as well as courses in educational policy, literacy, special education, and multicultural education.

Clinical/Practicum Experiences

Clinical or practicum experiences are a very important part of your teacher education program. In these courses, you will go out into the schools and spend time observing and teaching. You will work with teachers and students in real-life situations. Most states require a certain number of "practicum" or "clinical" hours during coursework usually spread out over multiple semesters and then a culminating semester of student teaching where you will be in a school setting full-time for your last semester of the degree program, much like an internship.

Other Skills

Practice

Practice will be the greatest support activity to your applied lessons and your music major. But, what is meant by practice? Practicing is more than learning the music, repetition and putting in the time. Quality practice involves goal setting, both long- and short-term, as well as focused attention to detail and problem solving. As an independent activity, you will identify problems then work out solutions on your own, so a good foundation of practice skills and time management is important. During practice, it is important to dedicate time to technique, etudes, solo literature, and ensemble music.

In addition to ensemble music, solos, and etudes for your lessons—there are many, many other aspects that will need time to practice as well. These include, but are not limited to: long tones, scales & arpeggios, intervals, diction, rhythms, intonation, dynamics, and articulations. Sightreading should also be a part of your daily routine—this is an important skill that cannot be practiced too much. You should spend time listening to great performers in your area as well as other instruments and singers as often as possible—there is much to be learned from these great musicians and performers.

In college, your teacher will help set expectations for how you spend your time in the practice room. While practicing is a solitary event and many people find it hard, establishing good habits and routines is vital to become a successful musician or music educator. Time management and scheduling is important as well, several smaller sessions often will yield much better results than cramming for four hours the night before your lesson or performance.

It is important to remember that we all learn from repetition. A good phrase to always keep in mind is Practice Makes Permanent—so, don't practice mistakes. If we practice something in our music incorrectly, those issues can become habits very quickly. Once a bad habit or incorrect musical passage is learned, it then takes significantly longer to re-learn it correctly. In general, we need to perform something correctly at least five times for each incorrect attempt. We also need to experience a new habit correctly several days in a row before it will become natural and habitual (permanent).

Every practice session should have defined goals—beyond practicing a certain number of minutes. Time will be divided based on availability, goals, and urgency. If possible, set aside the same time every day to practice—consistency and repetition is important in skill and muscle development. Schedule your practice time into the day. Make it a priority! Find a practice location that is free from distractions and has good light, adequate space, a music stand, and a good posture chair (if desired). Most schools will have practice facilities available to the music majors enrolled in their program.

Resources Needed for Good Practice

When you approach practicing, you need to start out by making sure that you have the resources needed to be successful. Some items that may be needed:

- Music Stand (and chair—don't sit on your bed!)
- Instrument, Piano, or Keyboard
- Pencil
- Tuner
- Metronome
- Fingering Chart or Fingerboard Diagram
- Glossary of Music Terminology
- Technology access (recording, listening, SmartMusic, etc.)
- Mirror

Segments of a Good Practice Session

- Warm-up (always take time to warm up physically and mentally)
- Breathing exercises for wind instruments and vocalists
- Long tones—focus on tone production, air movement, & intonation
- Buzzing and lip slurs for brass players
- Rolls & rudiments for percussion
- Vocalises to activate the vocal mechanism, focus the sound, and/or extend the range
- Technique—finger patterns, scales, arpeggios, rhythm, articulation
- Method & Etude books—technical skills, musical phrasing, style, dynamics, key signatures
- Solo Literature—all aspects
- Ensemble Literature—if needed
- Sightread or sightsing
- Play or sing straight through one or two pieces in their entirety that you enjoy—you always want to end with a feeling of success (perhaps also record the run through to listen to later)
- Reflect on what is going well and what still needs improvement, then set goals for the next session

Make the focus of your practice time the things you need to work on the most. Reward yourself with the music you most enjoy at the end.

Reflecting & Evaluating Your Abilities and Skills

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Breathing/Air?
- Rhythm?
- Counting?

- Tone?
- Note names and fingerings?
- Playing fast and technical passages?
- Playing smooth and musical phrases?

Evaluate your practice habits and routine.

- How did I spend my practice time?
- What is good?
- What needs improvement?

Strategies for Musical Practice

- Check posture, hand position, grip, embouchure, etc.
- Double check key signature, accidentals, time signatures, etc.—write reminders in the music as needed
- Simplify passages that are difficult to make them easier to learn
- Isolate notes or passages and play long tones to focus on air, tone quality, buzz, and/or intonation
- Write counts in the music, tap and count rhythms out loud, clap the rhythm, “sizzle” the rhythm
- Sing (solfège) and finger on instrument
 - Play or sing a rhythm on a single pitch until it is correct then reintroduce actual pitches
- Practice silently fingering or bowing the part
- Play the music very slowly, then gradually increase tempo until indicated tempo is reached
 - Isolate the trouble spot and work on it in isolation until it is correct
- Remove all ornamentations and play or sing basic notes and rhythms
- Look for alternate fingerings, bowings, or sticking patterns that may help
 - Change marked articulations, slur everything or tongue everything until the technical issue is solved, then return to markings in the music
 - Change dynamics from what is marked or add a crescendo or decrescendo to help with air flow
- Play or sing five times in a row with no mistakes
- Play the problem phrase from memory
 - Record and self-critique (what improved the most? what needs more improvement?)
- Perform for someone (parent, friend, teacher, etc.)

Most importantly, remember to be patient and diligent. Practice takes time and improvement is gradual. Often the individual performer has trouble recognizing the improvement without utilizing some form of recording or feedback. If you get excessively frustrated, take a break from that music for a while and play or sing something you know well and enjoy. This will ensure that you keep your practice session in balance.

How much practice will be expected? As with many aspects of this book, the answer to this question will vary from institution to institution and from teacher to teacher. A performance major is likely to be expected to spend three or more hours each day on their principal instrument (voice is included). For music education and other music majors, expectations will vary greatly. Generally, at least one hour of practice

a day in your primary area will be required in addition to practice time on piano and, possibly, secondary instruments or areas.

Technology

In the past few decades technology has become a significant presence in the music industry. From recording and editing to creation of music through electronics to music teaching, technology is here to stay. It has already become an indispensable part of our world and will be a vital part of your future career in music. It will be important for you to understand and be able to utilize the available technology. We will give you a brief overview of some of the technology you should know about moving forward, however, please keep in mind that there are full courses and degree programs available focusing on music technology.

Recording and editing has been an integral part of the music industry for a very long time, however, it is easier now than ever before. High quality and high functioning personal technology has made the capabilities and opportunities skyrocket. What once required a rented recording studio with equipment and an engineer, now often requires only a phone, a computer, and a microphone.

When recording at home, whether it is music, a podcast, a YouTube video, a USB microphone is a simple and necessary addition to improve the quality of the sound. USB microphones are typically affordable and an all-in-one device, meaning you don't need additional cables, amps, etc. Most of the time, you open the box, plug into the USB port and you are ready to go.

There is some basic information on microphones that you should know. First, there are two basic types of microphones: dynamic and condenser. We won't go into the construction details of the two, but this information is readily available online if you are interested.

The **dynamic microphone** is the oldest form of microphone and the better option for loud sounds, live instruments, drums, and low frequencies, particularly in a live setting. They are generally not sensitive to quiet or high frequency sounds. They tend to be inexpensive and do not need external power. They also can usually withstand a lot of use, are durable, and are the best option if they are to be used in a warm, humid environment.

The **condenser microphone** is better for quieter, more complex sounds, and tends to be better for a wide range of frequencies, especially higher ones. They are typically more sensitive and accurate, but also more expensive and fragile. Hot and humid environments are not good for these mics. They do not usually do well with loud sounds and they do require outside power from a battery or pre-amp.

Two more words that are important in the microphone world are omnidirectional and cardioid. **Omnidirectional** means that the microphone captures sounds from all around it. These are good when you want to capture an instrument or voice but also the sounds in the room around them, such as the echo of a large room. An omni mic will generally sound more distant. **Cardioid** microphones only capture the direct sound of the voice or instrument, not background or room sound. This is a good type of microphone for a soloist with a band playing and produces a clearer, more focused sound. The microphones will work the same whether using them for live sound or for recording.

When recording, determine what you want for your final product. Recording can be done as single track or multitracks. A **single track recording** means that all voices are recorded together, which is a more authentic performance mode for many musicians, but will likely require a professional sound engineer if significant editing is needed. A single microphone can be used for a single or small number of performers. When recording a large, live ensemble two microphones are typically placed over the audience in order to capture the full sound and reverb of the room. If each voice, or instrument, is recorded individually (**multitrack**) it is easier to edit and mix for a high quality product and can easily be done by anyone with simple (and free) software. In this case a single microphone can be used to record each individual part and then combine them digitally into a single product.

There is some very good and inexpensive **recording and editing software** for anyone to make high quality products. One of the best is [Audacity](#), which is free, open source, cross platform multi-track recording and audio editing software. Within this user-friendly software you can record, edit, and export sound files. There are many online tutorials and the software is robust enough for virtually any recording project you will undertake. Additional options can be found at the end of the chapter.

Notation software is another commonly used technology tool for musicians to write and produce printed music. There are many options for software for both the computer and mobile devices, some are free and some cost money. The more advanced and complex software platforms such as [Finale](#) (which is being phased out), [Sibelius](#), and [Dorico](#) are cross-platform, tend to be quite robust and versatile, but also quite expensive. They are widely used by collegiate music majors as well as professional musicians in every corner of the industry to produce professional looking sheet music.

A good free option for notation software is [MuseScore](#). Although it is not as powerful as the paid applications, it is easy to use and powerful enough for most students and music teachers.

In addition to creating printed and digital notated music, the more advanced programs can also work with a **DAW** (Digital Audio Workstation) and **MIDI** (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) to create audio renditions of the printed notation and to create music. The DAW is an electronic device or software used for recording, editing and producing audio files. DAWs vary from a single software program on a computer to a complex configuration of several components controlled by a computer. One of the most common components to input musical data into the computer is a MIDI keyboard on which the music is played directly into the DAW which can then save it as a MIDI data file, use notation software to create sheet music, or save it as an audio file.

When music is imported through MIDI, it creates data files of the music that are standardized, small, can be edited, and easily shared with others while maintaining the settings and sounds of the music. It codifies pitch, timbre, duration, volume, and tempo so that it remains constant without actually using musical notation and without needing the same computer software or computer to interpret the data. There is much you can do with DAWs and MIDI and you can learn more about how they work, what they can do, as well as controllers, sequencers, drum machines, and popular options in the resources chapter later in this book.

Music creation and performance using technology is a growing and popular area and will likely continue to expand in the future. In addition to musical notation and DAWs discussed above, there are also many

musicians performing on digital platforms and instruments. In addition to the MIDI keyboards and basic controllers, there are MIDI controllers that function similar to instruments such as a digital wind instrument that looks similar to a saxophone, an electric violin, digital drums, and a drum machine.

There are also many people making music with mobile devices such as phones, iPads and other tablets. One increasingly common performance medium is an iPad. Using the free app [GarageBand](#), the iPad can be used to create music with sounds, tracks and loops or it can be used as a live musical instrument, performing alone or with others. There are numerous iPad bands performing and recordings can easily be found on YouTube. With the settings, the iPads, which can be connected directly to sound boards and/or speakers, can generate authentic sounds and be performed along with acoustic instruments or voices. There is no limit to what music can be created using available technology.

In K–12 music education, technology is taking on a bigger role as well. Teachers can use the technology and computers for the organization side of the job including keeping budgets, fundraising, inventories, attendance, lesson planning, grades, and every other type of record keeping responsibility. Basic word processing and spreadsheet applications can do everything that is needed. Teachers can also communicate with students, administrators, parents, and the public with the help of all sorts of technology including, but not limited to email, all social media platforms, websites, mobile apps such as [Remind](#) and [Band](#), and blogs.

And most importantly, music educators can use technology as part of their teaching. We can record and post audio files on school learning sites, we can post music, lessons materials, instructional videos, utilize digital tuners and metronomes, and web resources and tools such as [Sight Reading Factory](#) and [SmartMusic](#) to help increase student engagement and individualization. We can use any device to give students portable accompaniment tracks. We can use apps such as Coach's Eye to provide students with digitized critique and with audio and video feedback. We can also teach lessons and classes, or host a guest speaker or conductor through video conferencing platforms. With more and more schools installing computers with projection and sound, interactive whiteboards, and utilizing 1:1 individual device technology, there are increased opportunities, and expectations, for technology to be used in the music classroom and the options are endless—we have mentioned just a few.

Additional Resources

Bauer, William I. (2020). ***Music Learning Today: Digital Pedagogy for Creating, Performing, and Responding to Music*** (2nd edition). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197503706.001.0001>.

Hosken, Dan. (2014). ***An Introduction to Music Technology*** (2nd edition). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203539149>.

Manzo, V. J. (2016). ***Foundations of Music Technology***. Oxford University Press.

Watson, Scott. (2011). ***Using Technology to Unlock Musical Creativity***. Oxford University Press.

Preparing to be a Music Major

This part of the book is designed for those that have made the decision to major in music and are needing to prepare for the next steps. In this part, we are going to provide you with information to help you prepare for college music program entrance and/or placement exams as well as some basic knowledge that will help you as you begin your program of study as a college music major.

Included in this part will be information about music theory, aural skills, piano skills, and music history. We will also discuss additional preparatory activities that you may want to consider while still in high school.

CHAPTER 4

Music Theory

In this chapter, we will introduce you to the music theory skills and knowledge that you may want to become familiar with before taking your music entrance and placement exams and starting your music degree.

To experience the greatest success as a new music major, it will benefit you to know some basic music theory before you begin your collegiate program. What is meant by music theory? It is the systematic study of the musical elements including, but not limited to pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and notation.

To get your best start, you will want to be able to identify and understand the following

- Notation on the treble and bass clef
- The music alphabet and piano keyboard
- How to construct major and minor scales
- Key signatures
- Intervals
- Triads
- Symbols of duration (rhythm)
- Meter and time signatures

If this is all new to you, we have included a basic primer on these topics in this chapter and a list of websites and free online resources is provided in Section 5. In addition, your school music teacher, private lesson teacher, or other local musician can also likely help you prepare in these areas.

You should also keep in mind, if these topics seem too far out of your league or uninteresting to you, perhaps a majoring in music isn't for you—but keep reading—there is much more information to follow.

Treble and Bass Clefs with Notation



Lines and spaces denoted in a staff.

To begin we will start with basic music theory and explore simple treble and bass clef notation. A **music staff** is a series of five lines and four spaces that each represent a different musical pitch. The lines and spaces are numbered from bottom to top; the bottom line is the *first line* and the top line is the *fifth line*. The plural of staff is **staves**.

A **grand staff** is a combination of two staves put together, usually a treble clef (G clef) on the top and a bass clef (F clef) on the bottom staff. These clefs tell us the names of the notes on the staff.

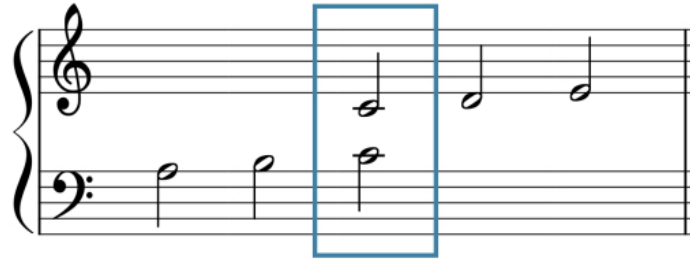
The names of musical notes go from A to G and then start over. The lines and spaces of each staff do the same thing, but 'A' is not conveniently located at the bottom of either staff.



Pitch placement on the grand staff

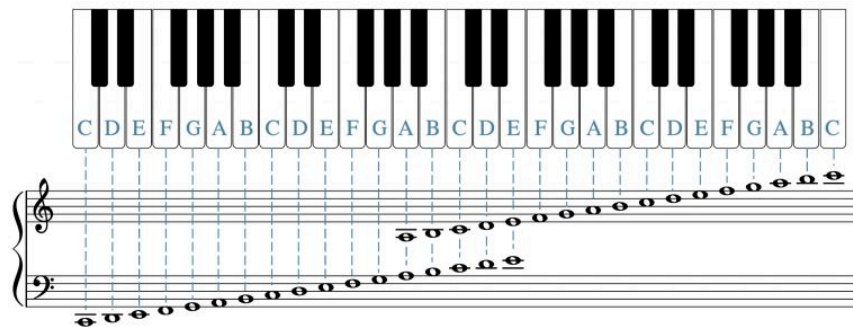
You probably notice that there is a gap in note names between the treble and bass staves of the Grand Staff. The B is placed on the staff directly above the top line of the bass staff, and the D is placed on the space directly below the bottom line of the treble staff. But what about C?

When we run out of lines and spaces above or below either staff, we use what are called **ledger lines** to temporarily make the staff bigger. Instead of adding a whole new line that runs the width of the page, we shorten it to just around that one note. The C in between the two staves is called middle C, and can be written on either the top or bottom staff, like you see here:



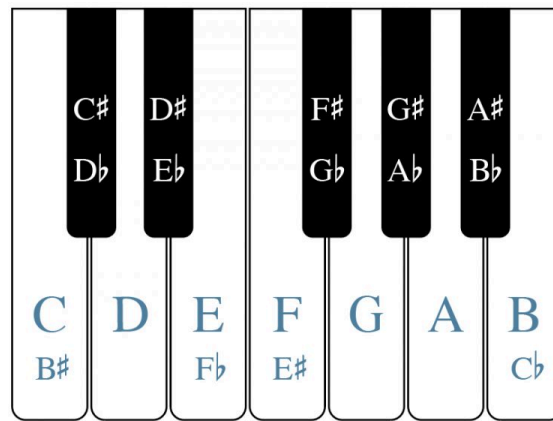
Middle C indicated in a grand staff.

The Music Alphabet and the Piano Keyboard



A grand staff with lines and spaces labeled with pitch names.

The musical 'alphabet' works the same way on the piano as on the notational staves. On the piano keyboard, there are a total of 88 keys. Unlike the diagrams above and below, on a real piano "A" is the very lowest note on the left side. If you start saying the musical alphabet there, you'll notice that "A" falls in the middle of the set of three black keys every time. The same type of repetitive pattern is true of every note with the highest note on the piano being a C.



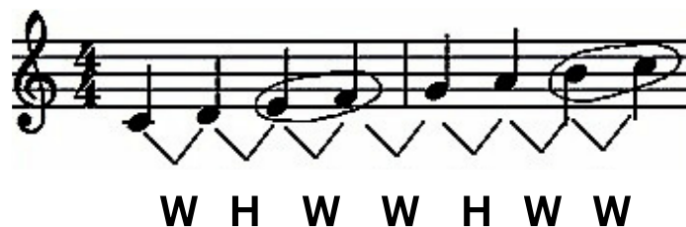
A piano keyboard with letter names of keys labeled.

The black keys are the half steps. A sharp (#) in front of a note tells you to play it up a step higher (the key to the right). You may also notice that the sharped note is not always a black key—there is no black key to the right of “E” or “B” so $E\sharp = F$ and $B\sharp = C$. Flats (b) merely are the opposite; they tell you to play a half step lower (one key to the left). You’ve got it— $D\sharp$ is the same note as $E\flat$.

Major and Minor Scales

Scales are a basic component and the tonal basis of music. They are an organized series of seven distinct notes with a repeated note at the octave (diatonic) consisting of a pattern of half steps and whole steps. The most common and basic are the major and minor scales.

Major scales are some of the most commonly used musical scales. They are **diatonic**, meaning they include the seven ‘natural’ pitches arranged by five whole steps and two half steps for each octave. The sequence for a major scale is: whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half. The most basic major scale to see as an example is the C Major scale.



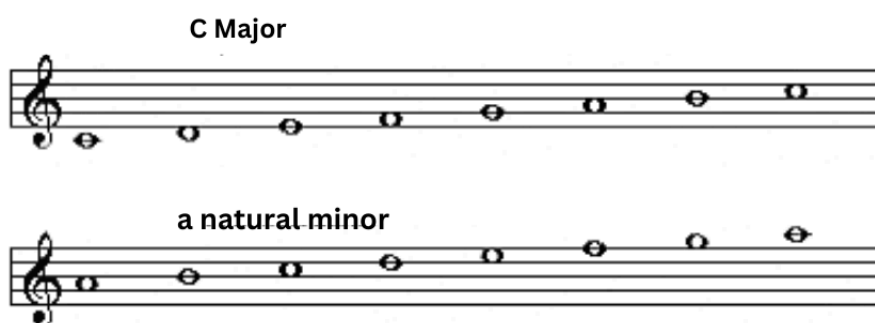
Whole and Half Steps in C Major Scale

A major scale can start on any note. If we start on D $\flat$ instead of C, the pattern whole and half steps need to remain the same, so we must alter some notes. The same pattern of whole and half steps beginning on D $\flat$ is: D $\flat$ E $\flat$ F G $\flat$ A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C D $\flat$.

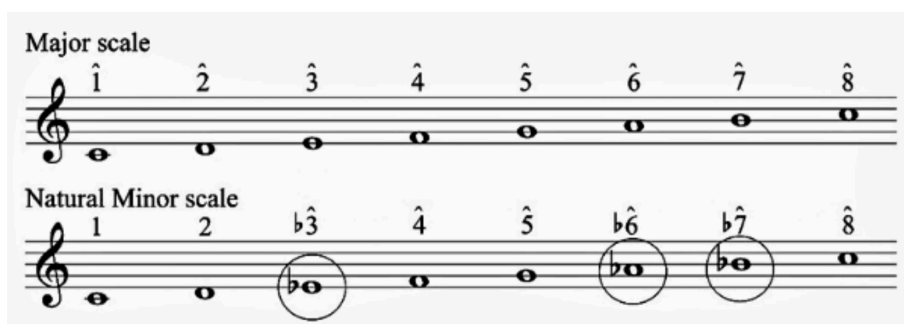
Natural minor scales are similar to Major scales in that they are diatonic with seven unique tones and a repeated octave and made up of patterns of half and whole steps, but the pattern is different. The sequence for a minor scale is:



The most basic natural minor scale is the a natural minor scale which has no sharps or flats. Here are the C Major and a natural minor scales.



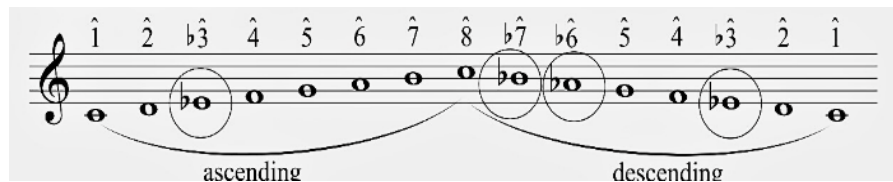
These two scales would be labeled as **relative**, meaning they have the same sharps and flats. C Major's relative minor is a. There are also **parallel minor** scales which have the same starting note but different sharps and flats due to the patterns of whole and half steps. For example, C minor, would be the parallel minor of C major. The c minor scale = C D E $\flat$ F G A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C. The natural minor scale can also be represented by the notation: 1 2 $\flat$ 3 4 5 $\flat$ 6 $\flat$ 7 8.



The **harmonic minor** scale is similar to the natural minor, except that the seventh degree is raised by one half step, making a larger interval (augmented 2nd) between the sixth and seventh scale degrees. The sequence for harmonic minor is whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole+half, half.



The **melodic minor** scale is the only scale that is different ascending and descending. Ascending it is similar to the Major scale except the melodic minor has a lowered 3rd scale degree. Descending, the melodic minor is the same as the natural minor. The sequence for ascending melodic minor is whole, half, whole, whole, whole, whole, half. The sequence for descending melodic minor is whole, whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole. The ascending melodic minor scale can be notated as: 1 2 $\flat$ 3 4 5 6 7 8, while the descending is: 8 $\flat$ 7 $\flat$ 6 5 4 $\flat$ 3 2 1.



Key Signatures

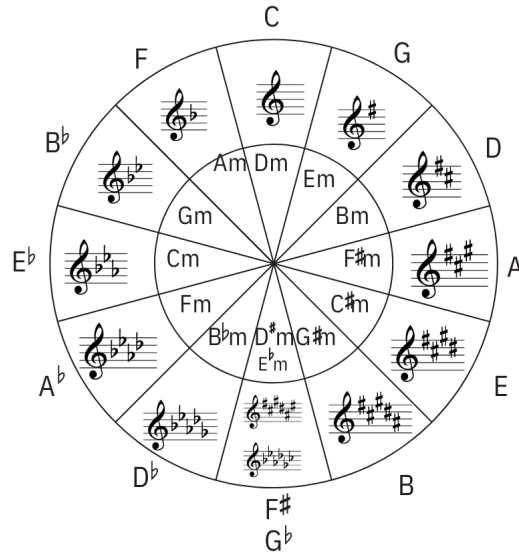
The sharps and flats placed at the beginning of a piece, between the clef and the time signature, is called the key signature. This indicates the tonal center or keynote/cornerstone of the piece. (Sometimes, you can cheat and just look at the first and last notes too.) The key signature is used so that every sharp or flat in the composition doesn't have to be marked. The sharps or flats at the beginning of a piece always appear in the same order.

Order of Sharps →
F C G D A E B
← **Order of Flats**

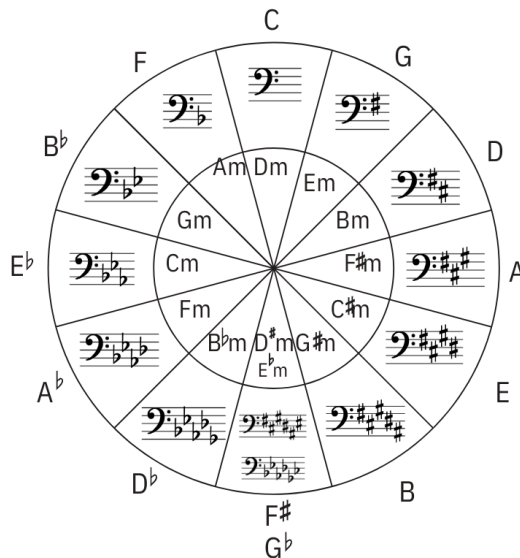


When you look at the key signature and you have one sharp at the beginning, it's always going to be F $\sharp$. If you have two sharps, they will always be F $\sharp$ and C $\sharp$. These are five notes or an interval of a fifth apart. (Just count to five: **FGABC**).

The interval of a fifth can also be used to help you identify and name key signatures. For example, the key of C Major has no flats or sharps. The key of G Major has one sharp (F $\sharp$). C to G is a fifth apart or five notes (CDEFG). The same applies to minor key signatures, a minor has no flats or sharps, and e minor has one sharp (F $\sharp$). When you lay these all out in a circle, it is called the **Circle of Fifths** and can be seen below.



Circle of Fifths, Treble Clef



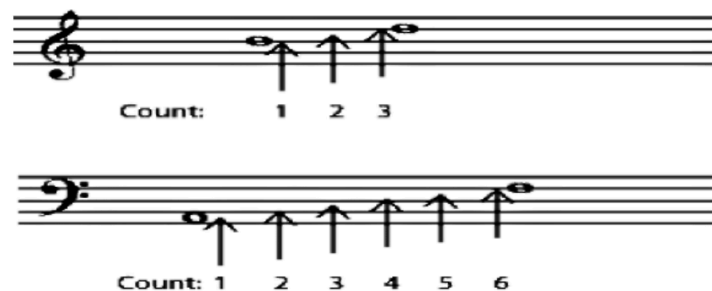
Circle of Fifths, Bass Clef

If you can't remember the major key from the sharps in the key signature, you can go up a half step from the last sharp in the key signature. For example: If there are 2 sharps in the key signature they would be F $\sharp$ and C $\sharp$ which would make it the key of D Major. (If you're familiar with solfège, the last sharp is "ti" to the keynote "do.") In minor, the key is one who step below the last sharp. For example, if you have 2 sharps, F $\sharp$ and C $\sharp$, they will be b minor.

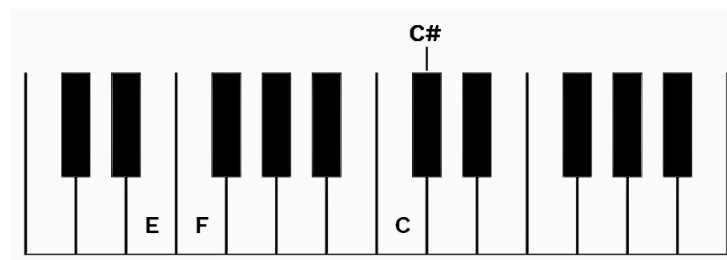
Flats work a little differently. For Major keys, you move back one space on the Circle of Fifths or use the next to last flat. If you are familiar with solfège, the last flat to the right is "fa" to the keynote "do." If you have three flats, they will always be B $\flat$, E $\flat$, and A $\flat$, and you are in the key of E $\flat$ Major. Another way to remember this is, if you begin on D $\flat$ and play a major scale (WWHWWWH), you will have flatted BEAD and G in the process. For minor keys, there isn't an easy shortcut other than memorization. The one method that will work is to look at the last flat and the key will be a Major third above this pitch. For example, if you have two flats, B $\flat$ and E $\flat$, you will be in the key of g minor. G is an interval of a Major 3rd above E $\flat$ —G,A,B $\flat$.

Intervals

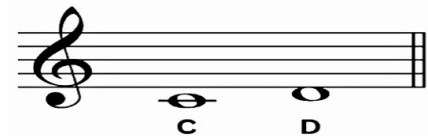
In music, an interval is the distance between two pitches. The first step in naming the interval is to find the distance between the notes as they are written on the staff. Start with the line or space the original notes is on, and then count every line and every space up to and including the second note. This gives you the number for the interval. The example in the treble clef example below is the interval from a B to D. To determine this, you simply count B, C, D—which is a third because there are three notes. The bass clef example below is an A to an F. You count, A, B, C, D, E, F—which is a sixth.



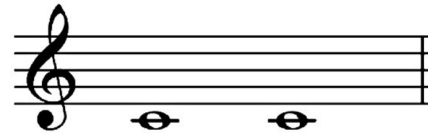
The smallest interval possible is a **half-step**. This is the next higher or lower note. For example, a half step above an A is an A $\sharp$; a half step below an A is an A $\flat$. A half step above a B, is a C. A half step below a G $\flat$, is an F.



A **2nd**, is also known as a **whole step** (or two half steps).



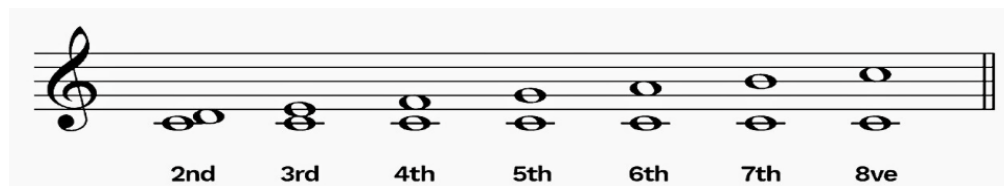
An interval that has two of the same note is called a **unison**.



Identifying Interval Quality

We generally name the interval based upon its quality as well as its number. Intervals can be Perfect (P), minor (m), Major (M), Augmented, (A), or diminished (d). A major third (M3) is an interval name, in which the term major (M) describes the quality of the interval, and third (3) indicates its number. . An interval can be described as melodic if it refers to successively sounding pitches, or harmonic if the pitches are sounded simultaneously.

To look at the quality of intervals, we will begin by looking at the intervals within a major scale. Every note in a major scale is either a major or perfect interval (starting from the tonic pitch). Below are the intervals in a major scale.



Intervals in a major scale

To be a perfect interval the upper note has to be in the major scale of the lower note. There are three intervals that are considered **Perfect (P) intervals**:

- Perfect 4 (P4)
- Perfect 5 (P5)
- Perfect 8 (P8)—octave

There are four intervals that are called **Major (M) intervals**:

- Major 2nd (M2)
- Major 3rd (M3)
- Major 6th (M6)
- Major 7th (M7)



If we take the Major intervals and make each of them a half-step smaller, they become **minor (m) intervals**. Because there are four Major intervals, there are also four minor intervals.

- minor 2nd (m2)
- minor 3rd (m3)
- minor 6th (m6)
- minor 7th (m7)

Here is an example of minor intervals with an F Major scale but with the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th, lowered to minor intervals.

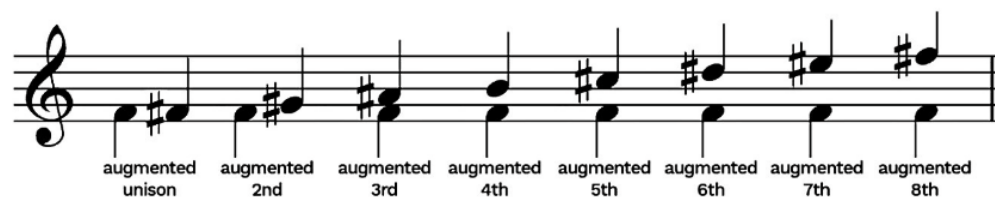


An **Augmented (A) interval** occurs when a Perfect or a Major interval is increased by a half-step, without changing the note name. The following example shows a M2 increased to an A2.



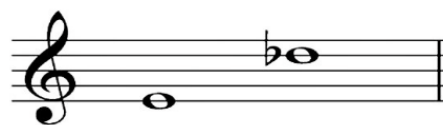
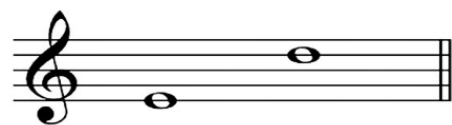
Major 2nd and augmented 2nd

The following example shows the F Major scale with all Augmented (A) intervals.

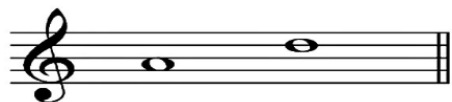


Augmented intervals

As we saw previously, if we lower a Major interval by a half step, it becomes a minor interval. If we lower a minor (m) or Perfect (P) interval by a half-step, we get a diminished (dim) interval. Here are examples of each of these:



Minor 7th and diminished 7th



Perfect 4th and diminished 4th

If we want to see these intervals applied to major and minor scales, here is an example. This is an example using C Major and c natural minor scales with intervals for each scale degree as well as the quality of the interval.

The diagram illustrates the intervals between the notes of the C major and C natural minor scales. The C major scale is shown on a treble clef staff, and the C natural minor scale is shown on a bass clef staff. The intervals are labeled as follows:

Interval	C major scale	C natural minor scale
perfect unison	C to C	C to C
major 2nd	C to D	C to D
major 3rd	C to E	C to Eb
perfect 4th	C to F	C to F
perfect 5th	C to G	C to G
major 6th	C to A	C to Ab
major 7th	C to B	C to Bb
perfect octave/8ve	C to C	C to C

Next are a couple of resources to help you understand and remember the qualities of intervals.

Example 1:

(Unison, 4ths, 5ths, and Octaves)

Diminished ← Perfect → Augmented

-1 Half-step ← Default → + 1 Half-step

(2nds, 3rds, 6ths, and 7ths)

Diminished ← Minor ← Major → Augmented

- 1 Half-step (again) ← -1 Half-step ← Default → + 1 Half-step

Example 2:

Example 2 shows two musical staves illustrating interval qualities. The first staff shows three intervals: Augmented (C to D#), Perfect (C to F), and Diminished (C to Eb). The second staff shows four intervals: Augmented (C to D#), Major (C to E), Minor (C to Eb), and Diminished (C to Eb).

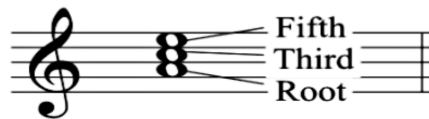
Interval Chart—Ascending Intervals

Interval Name	Abbrev	½ steps	Example
Perfect Unison	PU	0	C – C
minor second	m2	1	C – D ♭
Major second	M2	2	C – D
Augmented second	A2	3	C – D #
Diminished third	dim3	2	C – E ♭ ♭
minor third	m3	3	C – E ♭
Major third	M3	4	C – E
Augmented third	A3	5	C – E #
Diminished fourth	dim4	4	C – F ♭
Perfect fourth	P4	5	C – F
Augmented fourth (tritone)	A4	6	C – F #
Diminished fifth (tritone)	dim5	6	C – G ♭
Perfect fifth	P5	7	C – G
Augmented fifth	A5	8	C – G #
diminished sixth	dim6	7	C – A ♭ ♭
minor sixth	m6	8	C – A ♭
Major sixth	M6	9	C – A
Augmented sixth	A6	10	C – A #
diminished seventh	dim7	9	C – B ♭ ♭
minor seventh	m7	10	C – B ♭
Major seventh	M7	11	C – B
Augmented seventh	A7	12	C – B #
diminished octave	dim8	11	C – C ♭
Perfect Octave	P8	12	C – C

If you are comfortable with solfège, this may be another method for you to make sense of, and remember, intervals.

Triads

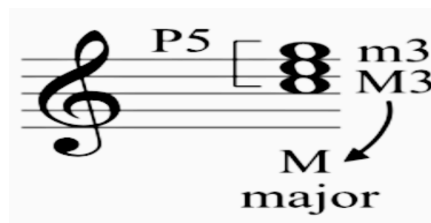
A triad is a chord constructed with three notes. The three notes are stacked on top of one another in consecutive thirds. Triads are a basic chord structure and the basis of how other types of chords are constructed. When the three notes are stacked, the lowest note is called the **root**, with the other two referred to as the third and fifth, which corresponds to their scale degree. For this example, the root is A, the third is C, and the fifth is E.



There are four kinds in triads we will discuss:

- Major
- Minor
- Augmented
- Diminished

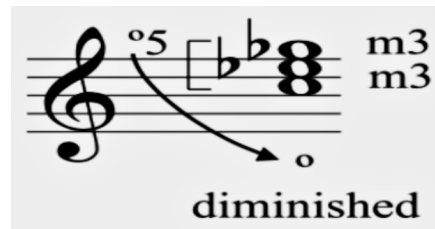
The **Major triad** consists of a Major 3rd between the root and the third, and then a minor third between the third and fifth, with a Perfect 5th between the root and the fifth.



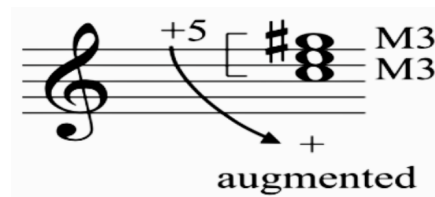
The **minor triad** consists of a minor 3rd between the root and the third, and then a Major third between the third and fifth, with a Perfect 5th between the root and the fifth.



The **diminished triad** consists of a minor 3rd between the root and the third, and then another minor third between the third and fifth, with a diminished 5th between the root and the fifth.

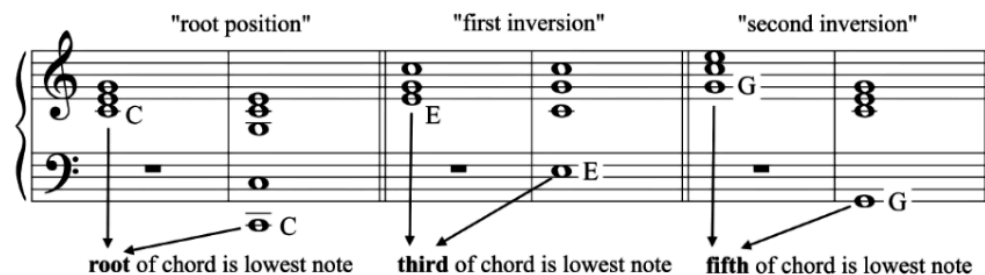


The **augmented triad** consists of a Major 3rd between the root and the third, and then another Major third between the third and fifth, with an augmented 5th between the root and the fifth.



Triad Inversions

An **inverted triad** still contains the same pitches but does not have the root as the lowest note. A triad in **root position** has the root as the lowest note, **first inversion** is when the third of the chord is the lowest note, and **second inversion** is when the fifth is the lowest note. Here is a diagram showing the three triad positions



Additional Resources

Holm-Hudson, Kevin. (2016). ***Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician***. Oxford University Press.

Kostka, Stefan and Byron Almén. (2024). ***Tonal Harmony*** (9th edition). McGraw-Hill Education.

Laitz, Steven G. and Michael R. Callahan. (2011). ***The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Theory, Analysis, and Listening*** (5th edition). Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 5

Aural Skills

Aural skills (a.k.a. “ear training”) courses are linked to music theory courses on many college campuses. The theory/aural skills sequence generally takes four semesters and begins in the fall of the first year. Many schools offer some sort of fundamentals of music theory course in the first semester for those who are unable to pass a placement test in the summer prior to admission.

You do not need to enroll in an advanced placement theory course to be successful with theory and aural skills in college. Those who do so or have been studying piano will certainly have an advantage, but it is not a necessity. There are many online resources available (see Appendix A) to help you get your ears ready for success!

Skills Practiced and Assessed in Aural Skills

Your multiple semesters of aural skills will be dedicated to similar skills, but in an increasing level of difficulty. In the beginning, patterns will be short (perhaps only two notes) and part of the major or minor scale or perhaps one measure in 4/4 time, for example. You will be asked to read/perform, detect errors in given musical listening examples, and dictate (write down what you hear). The difficulty level will increase quickly and this is a skill-based course, so it is important that you practice. There are no shortcuts!

Sightsinging/Sightreading

Sightsinging, or sightreading, refers to the ability to pick up a piece of music and being able to perform it without first hearing it or without help from accompaniment or any other instrument. For choir, band, and orchestra musicians (Western European traditions), music literacy refers to the ability to translate notation into sound (*reading*) and sound into notation (*notating*). These skills are important as a musician. Being able to produce the music with your voice demonstrates your ability to internally ‘hear’ it (often referred to as audiation) and, therefore, more easily and accurately put it into your instrument.

Studying music has many parallels to learning a language. When we’re young, we absorb lots of sounds, then begin to try to imitate what we hear. Then, people label things for us (This is a cat. The cat says “meow.”) and we begin to try out a few words. Those words eventually become sentences. Again, adults read picture books to us so we can associate the words we know to the pictures. Only after that labeling do we learn how to recognize words on a page. The letters are abstract symbols in much the same way notes are symbols. The final step—in a nutshell—is to read and write. A lot had to happen before you to the letters meant something, yet I bet your first band or piano book had symbolic notation on page one or soon after!

The ability to read standard notation is integral and authentic to participation in the performing ensembles that have been so carefully nurtured in schools in the United States. Musicians in this tradition must be able to do more than imitate. Unfortunately, the pressure of performance often leads to choirs that are taught exclusively by rote. In other words, the teacher feeds singers the “answers” to the “test” from a piano. Band and orchestra musicians are taught to read symbolic notation, but are often taught “by eye” rather than through sound before symbol. In this case, players may be able to decode (press certain buttons when they see certain symbols), but being able to press the correct keys on an instrument in response to notation does not confirm that the performer comprehends what it is they are playing or singing. One parallel might be to compare a French class and learning French in a diction course. In the diction course, you will learn how to pronounce each consonant and vowel so that you can sound like you speak the language, but not have any idea what you’re saying. These musicians will be slow in learning new works (and will probably require a music teacher to do so).

Knowing that a note on the third line of treble clef is “B” means you have a way of talking about music and understanding the theory behind it. Praxis, or practice (doing music), needs to come before theory. Knowing that a note on the third line of treble clef is B does not make you a better musician. Improvisation is not just for jazz musicians; it is being creative in the moment. It is a fundamental aspect of musicianship requiring you to think in music. We recommend several resources for practice later in this volume, but an easy way to get started if you have never been encouraged is to simply use a familiar rhythm and give yourself the choice of one of two pitches to use for each note. You can increase the number of notes or start from a tonal pattern (outlining a major triad—*do mi sol*, for example) and change the rhythm. You’re improvising!

In the beginning, music reading should focus on just rhythm or just pitch. You will quickly be required to multi-task and perform both together, but one of the first steps on the road to being able to read notation is interval identification. As described in the previous chapter, an interval is the distance between two notes. Being able to identify intervals aurally (by ear) is a foundational skill for later reproducing the intervals vocally, stringing longer numbers of pitches, (patterns), together and, finally, reading melodies. Being familiar with intervals is the foundation for almost everything you will do in your aural skills courses (and later in your job!).

Error Detection

One of the most important skills you will need as a music educator is the ability to hear what is wrong (detect the errors) so that you are able to fix them. Error detection is about picking out and correcting wrong notes, rhythms, or anything else in music. You’ll begin with finding wrong rhythms or pitches in a melody or and eventually move on to hearing incorrect pitches in chords, intonation errors, etc.

Rhythmic, Melodic and Harmonic Dictation

Dictation refers to writing down what you hear. You'll begin with short patterns of pitches or single measures of rhythms and move to longer phrases, two-part exercises and, eventually, progressions of four-part chords. Listening to and echoing short rhythmic or melodic patterns is a great way to prepare yourself for this skill.

Prepare Yourself!

Again, learning music is similar to learning a language. First, you must get the sounds in your ears. Only then can you reproduce them yourself and, eventually, be able to translate what you hear into written notation. Before you enter a degree program, it would be helpful to be able to sing intervals accurately and perform simple melodies at sight (this applies to instrumentalists as well as vocalists). You will find several different ways to label pitches and rhythms in this chapter.

Symbols of Duration/Rhythmic Notation

Rhythms are patterns of sound in time, a basic element of all music. Beat is the unit division of musical time. The beat is the steady pulse that might make you want to tap your feet or move to it. That's good—rhythm has to be felt in the body!

Meter

Meter is the way we group the beats. More formally, it is the beats organized into recognizable/recurring accent patterns. We group eggs by the dozen. We group days by the week. We group beats into twos and threes. That is meter. There are two basic kinds of meter: duple and triple. In other words, you can either march to duple (two beats = strong-weak) or sway to it with triple meter (three beats = strong-weak-weak). Each of the beats can then also be divided into either two (simple meter) or three (compound meter). Here are a few examples:

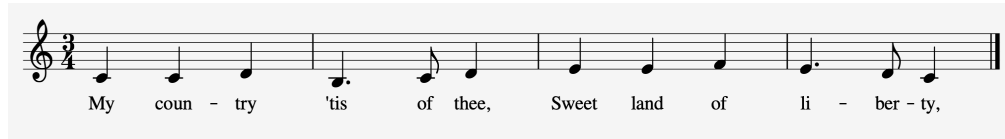
Rain, Rain Go Away

Duple simple (two beats in a measure, beats are divided into two)



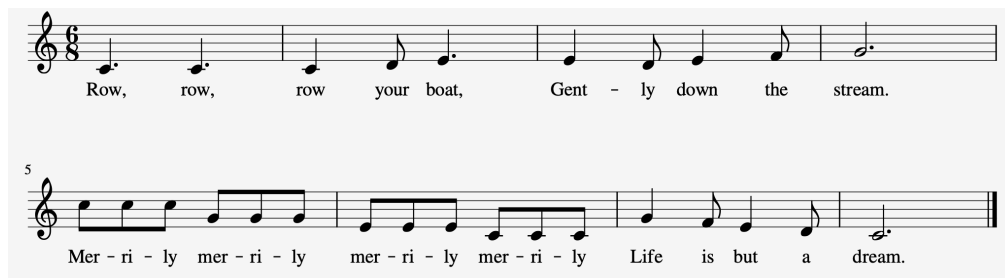
My Country 'Tis of Thee

Triple simple (three beats in a measure, beats are divided into two).



Row Your Boat

Duple compound (two beats per measure, beats are divided over three)

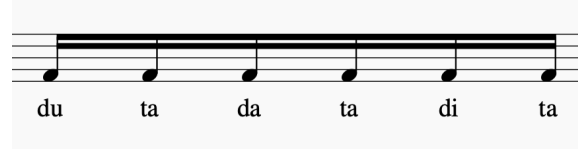


Counting Systems

There are several different counting systems in use. They exist to aid both in counting and in time-keeping. The system used in aural skills may vary depending on the college or university you choose. This is certainly a question you could ask when you visit. Fortunately, it is not only easy to switch back and forth between each, but actually beneficial for you as a future teacher. On the pages that follow, you will be introduced to Gordon's Music Learning Theory, the Kodály method, Orff principles, the Eastman system, Takadimi, and (of course) the traditional numbers counting method. You will likely recognize some of these from your music classes at school.

Music Learning Theory

Edwin E. Gordon, former professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, founded the Gordon Institute of Music and created Music Learning Theory. Gordon was a highly published and well-respected leader in the world of music education research as well as the creator of many standardized tests for music aptitude and music achievement.



Gordon Rhythm Syllables

Gordon's Music Learning Theory is an all-inclusive method for teaching musicianship that has as its cornerstone audiation, or the ability to hear the music in your mind. The system employs the use of patterns to practice "sound before symbol." It is concerned with beat function rather than notation/note values. In other words, he promoted "rote before note" by focusing on what you hear ("du" signals the beginning of a beat, which might be divided into two or four) rather than what you see (half note = two beats — which isn't even always true!). Remember, it is important to be able to hear, not just decode.

Kodály

Developed in Hungary in the early 20th century, composer Zoltan Kodály originally designed this system to create a national curriculum for his country so that all students would continue to learn national folk songs and be learning the same skills in their music classes even if they moved to a new school or new city.



Kodály Rhythm Syllables

You may have been introduced to ta and ti ti in your elementary music classroom experience. Here, the syllables are assigned to specific note values (in other words, ta = quarter note and ti = eighth note). It is an aural (relating to the ear) system that focuses on beat division. Some teachers still use these syllables at the elementary level, but it is not sophisticated enough to take a student through the more complicated rhythms they may later encounter in high school and collegiate programs. Books published in recent years show that Kodály practitioners have embraced Takadimi.

Orff

Orff practitioners often use the rhythm of language in their teaching because singing, speaking, and movement are all naturally connected and a developmentally appropriate step in music learning. For example, eighth notes may be “ap-ple” and sixteenth notes “wa-ter-me-lon.” The natural flow of language makes it easy for young students to feel the stress and perform rhythms before reading notation. Like Gordon and Kodály, it is a beat-based system. Unfortunately, apple, berry, Peter, water, and carrot all = two eighth notes, so while there is value in being able to get to music making quickly, so many labels for the same rhythm may cause confusion as students progress in their training.



Eastman System

As you may have guessed, the Eastman System was designed at Eastman School of Music in New York. It employs both numbers and syllables. Here are the five rules of the system:

1. All notes on a beat get the beat number.
2. Notes on the upbeat are “te.”
3. A note on the second third of a beat is “la” and a note on the third third of a beat is “le.” (triplets go “...la le.”)
4. A note on the second fourth of a beat is “ti.” (sixteenth notes are “...ti te ta.”)
5. All other notes are “ta.”



Numbers

Our guess is that you’re already familiar with this one! The tradition of numbers, developed in American public schools, is still the most common method in use. This system focuses on counting the beats within a measure and is found in many band/orchestra series books and beginning piano books. This system focuses on sight before sound and unfortunately, does not necessarily begin with aural understanding as with Takadimi.



"Traditional" Numbers

Takadimi

Designed by Hoffman, Pelto, and White in 1996, this system has been taken to new heights by Dr. Carol Krueger. Her book, [Progressive Sight Singing](#), and accompanying online materials are valuable resources (that we'll help you find later in the book)! Takadimi has been referred to as a "womb to tomb" system because it can be used by the very young and never "breaks," no matter how complex the rhythm becomes.



Simple Takadimi Syllables



Compound Takadimi Syllables

In this system, syllables are assigned to a location within a beat. The syllables were drawn from the vocalizations used for the division of a pulse in North Indian tabla playing. *Ta* is always on the beat and *di* is the second half of the beat. When the beat is subdivided into four parts, *ta* and *di* are in the same place, but the subdivisions are labeled with *ta-ka-di-mi*. In compound meter, when the beat is divided into three, there are three syllables: *ta* (which is still on the beat), *ki* and *da* (see above).

Takadimi is beat-oriented rather than notation-based. It's an aural system, which works well because music is an aural art. Our ears need to make sense of it before we can begin to understand notation. It's about note relationships. Syllables are not symbol-specific. *Ta* is not always the quarter note; the beat might be the eighth note or the half note, etc. For example, the time signatures $\frac{2}{4}$ and $\frac{2}{2}$ sound the same. In compound meter, *ta* = the dotted eighth. If you were like us, you were taught that $\frac{6}{8}$ time = six beats per

measure and the eighth note gets the beat. That's not how music works! In $\frac{6}{8}$, there are two beats in a measure and each beat is divided into three.

Many band and orchestra directors prefer the numbers system. Takadimi, however, lends itself easily to tonguing and vowels that promote an open throat. Students comfortable with Takadimi can easily translate to numbers when it comes time for band. It is very easy to replace *ta* with the number of the beat when and if the placement of the beat within a measure becomes important. There is one instrumental lesson book series that employs sound before sight using Takadimi: *Jump Right In*. It was designed by none other than Edwin Gordon and has been carried on by professors at the Eastman School of Music.

Comparing the Systems



Gordon:	du de	du de	du ta de	du	du ta de ta	du de ta	du de	du ta de...
Kodaly:	ti ti	ti ti	ti ri ti	ta	ti ri ti ri	ti ti ri ti ti	ti ri ti...	
Takadimi:	ta di	ta di	ta ka di	ta	ta ka di mi	ta di mi ta di	ta ka di...	
Traditional:	1 +	2 +	3 e +	4	1 e + a	2 + a	3 +	4 e +...
Words:	piz-za	piz-za	broc-co-li	pie	pep-pe-ro-ni	an-cho-vy	pizza	broc-co-li

No matter what system you use, you will benefit from getting your body involved and practicing in a variety of different ways. For example, you could pat the beat while speaking the syllables. Trying walking the beat while clapping the rhythm. Conduct while you tap with the other hand. The way to master this skill is through effective drill! The good news is there are really relatively few rhythmic patterns to learn. The Takadimi illustration shows almost all of the possibilities within one beat. Melodic patterns are another story...

Symbols of Melody/Pitch Notation

Pitch refers to the speed of vibration or, more simply, sounds that are higher and lower. While rhythm refers to duration, pitch is a tonal element. When we put the two together, we have melody.



Major Scale in the Key of C

Labeling Pitches

Moveable do is the most common method of *solfège* singing in the U.S. In moveable do, do is the key note of the piece. In other words, if the song is in the Key of F, F is *do*. The picture above happens to show a major scale in the key of C. It is the easiest place to begin because it contains no sharps or flats. The example above and those that follow are all shown in the key of C. It is called a *relative* system because the focus is on the relationship between the pitches rather than an absolute system, where the label is always the label. For example, in fixed do, the pitch C is always do and D is always re, etc. regardless of what key the piece is in, much like the way the note names (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) never change. Truly, you will need to be able to use both relative and absolute systems but we already have note names and moveable do is the aural system (ear before eye, sound before sight, rote before note)!

Sometimes a number system is employed in which do = 1, re = 2, mi = 3, etc. to designate the scale degree. This maybe become confusing as numbers are often used as counting syllables (1 + 2 + 3 +....) and when an accidental is added, one must sing “flat seven” or “sharp four”—not terribly pleasing vowels and impossible to accomplish if one is, for example, trying to sing fast sixteenth notes! The vowels used in solfège are much better for singing. Researchers have not concluded that one method is better than another, but Gordon, Kodály, and Orff all employed moveable do in their pedagogy. If your brain attaches solfège syllables to pitches and patterns, you will more easily be able to recognize when it feels or doesn’t feel right and be able to read or, later, write what you hear quickly.

Chromatic Scale

There are 12 half steps in each octave. As you go up the scale, vowels turn to “i” (ee phonetically). As you come back down, lowered pitches are labeled ending in “e” (eh) with one exception—*re* becomes *ra*.



Chromatic Solfège Syllables

The hand signs used in several methods for teaching music to young people were attributed to John Curwen, but developed by Sarah Glover. They make your brain work just a little bit harder and give you something to attach to the aural sensation. After all, the voice is an instrument you can’t see.



You may have noticed in the previous chapter that all diatonic intervals ascending from *do* are either major (2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th) or perfect (4th and 5th). All diatonic intervals descending from *do* are minor (2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th) or perfect (4th and 5th). Interval recognition will not always begin on *do*, but it's a good place to start. If you don't comprehend the interval instantly, try making the first note you hear *do* and either singing up the scale until you get to the correct pitch or singing down to it.

MAJOR SCALE INTERVALS MOVING OUT FROM TONIC														
d	r	d	m	d	f	d	s	d	l	d	t	d	d	d
		t		l		s		f		m		r		d
Tonic	M2	m2	M3	m3	P4	P4	P5	P5	M6	m6	M7	m7	P8	P8

You hear arpeggios (*do-mi-sol-do-sol-mi-do*) in music all of the time. They are often the basis of large ensemble warm-ups. These notes are your friends and every other note in a scale is only one step higher or lower—*re* is a whole step (and often wants to resolve to) *do*. *Fa* is but a tiny half step above *mi*. *La* is just one step higher than *sol* and *ti* will bring you right back to *do* (as the famous tune from *The Sound of Music* reminds us). These are what we usually call “tendency tones” in the scale; this is how the notes “behave” in standard chord progressions.

Reading melodies at sight using the notes in the major scale is the focus of much of the first semester aural skills. A good way to practice would be to listen to patterns on a neutral syllable (like “la” or something played on an instrument) and echo what you hear on solfège syllables. Once you are good at that skill, challenge yourself to label the intervals as well. You will see websites and maybe even books that list songs to help you be able to recognize or reproduce intervals, like “Here Comes the Bride” for a P4 or “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean” for a M6. The scale is a better tool and will make you a faster and more accurate reader. You will not have time to stop while you’re reading and think about that song and you may find that you can make a P4 sound just like the P5 of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” in your head under the pressure of a quiz or test!

Additional Resources

Cleland, Kent D. and Dobrea-Grindahl, Mary. (2021). ***Developing Musicianship through Aural Skills: A Holistic Approach to Sight Singing and Ear Training*** (3rd edition). Routledge.

Krueger, Carol. (2023). ***Progressive Sight Singing*** (3rd edition). Oxford.

American Orff-Schulwerk Association. <https://aosa.org/>.

The Gordon Institute for Music Learning. <https://giml.org/>.

Krueger, Progressive Sight Singing 4e Resources. <https://learninglink.oup.com/access/krueger4e>.

Organization of American Kodaly Educators. <https://www.oake.org/>.

Takadimi. <https://www.takadimi.net/>.

CHAPTER 6

Piano Skills

If you have no experience with piano, you are strongly encouraged to get started with private study as soon as possible! This skill cannot be emphasized enough. If you are a choral director, you will not always have a full-time accompanist in your school music program for rehearsals. As a choir director there will be multiple occasions in which you will need to be able to help your students one-on-one in which piano skills are indispensable. Everyone may need to be able to accompany simple solos at contest.

Before entering a degree program, make it your goal to, at the minimum, be able to read a simple melody with one hand. Find some beginner level piano books and practice reading at sight. Hymnals are another great resource. Accompany your right-hand melody with your left hand using I, IV, and V chords (included in this chapter). This will help you be able to “fake it until you make it!”

Piano Proficiency

It is common to be required to take four semesters of class piano (sometimes more) and/or pass a piano proficiency test. If you already have some piano skills, you may be able to opt to take private piano lessons, but these will likely be at an additional cost (which is money well spent!). You may also be able to take the proficiency exam early.

In case you didn't already catch it, a wide variety of musical activities—in the classroom, rehearsal, private lesson or in performance—involve the piano—especially if you are a choral director or elementary music teacher. It is important that you have some working knowledge of this indispensable teaching tool. It is impossible to practice piano too much! There are several YouTube videos on how to play songs and online piano instruction and apps, but nothing beats a weekly lesson with a qualified teacher.

Already have the skills?

Do you already have decent piano skills? Once you are in college, you can continue to develop them by becoming a collaborative pianist (accompanist). At some schools you can accompany for voice class, seminars, choir rehearsals, or friends' recitals. This can also be great way to earn money (it certainly beats working in the cafeteria!)

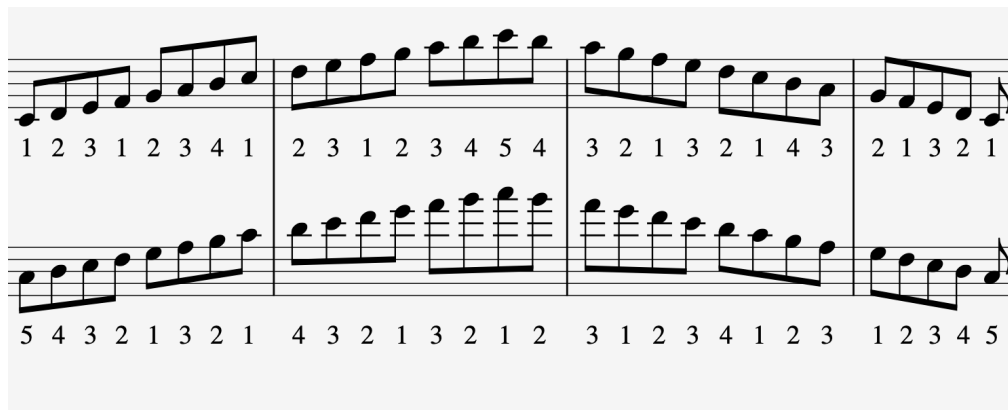
The Proficiency Test

Solos

Perform two memorized, contrasting pieces at the appropriate level.

Scales

Prepare two octave scales in all major and minor (both harmonic and melodic) keys, with the correct standard fingering, observing good hand position and maintaining a steady tempo (80 b.p.m., or beats per minute). Here is a C major scale with fingerings. All 12 major and minor scales can be found on the Oktav site (see link at the end of the chapter).

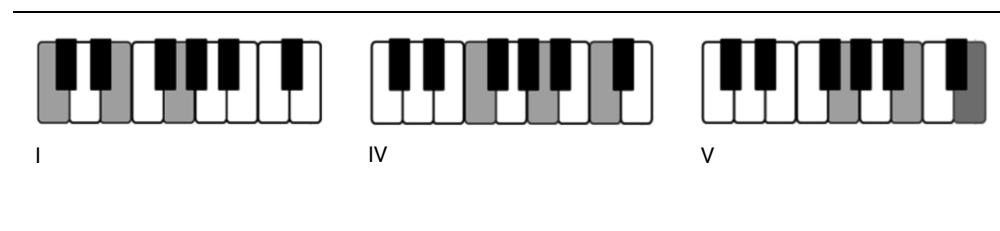


Sightreading

Play (without prior practice) a short piece in a key signature of up to two sharps or two flats. There is also often a requirement to sightread a choral open score, a four-part church hymn, or a condensed score for band/orchestra.

Chords

Prepare the primary chords of I, IV and V in all major and minor keys. Here they are in the Key of C:



Melody

Sightread a given treble-clef melody (as may be found in an elementary music textbook), and then harmonize it with LH chords.

Transposition

Transpose a melody and its chordal accompaniment into a different key. (All intervals stay the same and the melody sounds the same, but begins on a higher or lower pitch.)



Harmonization

Provide a left-hand accompaniment to a familiar tune. Think tunes like *Amazing Grace*, *Old MacDonald*, *Happy Birthday*, or *You Are My Sunshine*. Can you sing or hum these melodies and figure out which chord to use? (All can be done with only I, IV and V—with roots of *do*, *fa*, and *sol*, respectively.) Then, play the melody in the right hand while playing the left-hand accompaniment. You can find loads of lists of two-and three-chord songs online (see Chord Genome below).

Additional Resources

Beth's Notes: Songs with Chords I, IV, V. <https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2017/04/songs-chords-iv-v.html>.

Chord Genome. <https://www.chordgenome.com/search-common-chord-progressions/>.

Find thousands of songs that use common chord progressions.

Chuku Onyemachi. **How To Play The 1-4-5 Chord Progression In All Twelve Major Keys.** <https://gospel.hearandplay.com/main/how-to-play-the-1-4-5-chord-progression-in-all-twelve-major-keys/>.

OKTAV. **All Major and Minor Scales.** <https://stories.oktav.com/en/s/major-and-minor-scales>.

CHAPTER 7

Musical Traditions

Western European Music History

Music history focusing on Western European traditions will be, at a minimum, a two-course sequence at the collegiate level that provides primarily an overview of historical eras in Western European music history. Many programs also include a World Music course or embed ethnomusicology in an existing course. Truly, ALL music is “world” music! Musical history really dates back through the Ancient times. There is strong evidence that music existed well back to the earliest times of man. Although there is no existing documentation, music scholars are certain that music practice started with the primitive peoples, continued through the ancient civilized people such as the Chinese, Indian and Japanese, and then through the development of Egyptian, Hebrew, and Greeks. The music of these early non-western people was functional to daily life and largely improvisatory.

Those in positions of power have long believed (and influenced generations that followed) that it is Western European culture that moved music into an independent art form. While experts in the profession are working to decolonize the subject matter, what follows is the “Cliff Notes” version (otherwise known as the tip of the iceberg) of the Western European tradition has long been the focus of historical study in music in this country. Please understand that there are varied dates given for the eras, but these are generally a range of dates in which the music had similar characteristics.

The Middle Ages or Medieval (476–1450)

The [Middle Ages](#) extended from the time of the fall of the Roman Empire until the beginning of the Renaissance. The first half, until about the year 1000, is frequently referred to as the Dark Ages, while 1000–1450 is referred to as the late Middle Ages.

In the nearly 1,000 years of the Middle Ages, you might say change was slow. The church was very powerful and all education was centered in the church to the extent that only clergy were educated. Music consisted primarily of a single melodic line sung with no accompaniment. This is often referred to as “chant.” Our current system of notation had not yet been developed and a simple four-line staff, with no clef, time signature, or key signature was used.

When harmony was brought in around 850, it was one of the most important developments in Western music. It was called polyphony, which was a combination of two or more simultaneous melodic lines. They were mostly a parallel line to the melody and then later some of the parts started to move faster. Much of the music was sacred, being composed for Catholic Mass and performed by priests and monks. Notation

was beginning to be developed around the year 1200, but unless you were clergy you were probably illiterate anyway. This early notation generally included a simple four-line staff, with no clef, time signature, or key signature.

There was some secular (non-church) music during this period as well. This was the music of the common people and was their popular music used for entertainment. It consisted of songs and dances that common people performed and enjoyed as part of their daily lives. It was mostly poetry set to music that included an individual vocal line with an improvised instrumental accompaniment.

Instrumental music started to emerge in the 14th century as well. They played a supporting role in vocal music, doubling or accompanying singers. Instrumental arrangements of vocal music were becoming increasingly popular. However, instruments found their most significant role in dance music, where rhythm was a prime consideration. They had the same general categories of instruments as we do today; strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and keyboard. However, they were much more limited in range and volume than modern instruments.

Key stylistic features

a cappella, monophonic (one sound/melodic line), lacks metrical feeling, beginnings of harmony, early polyphony

Key composers

[Leonin](#), [Perotin](#), [Hildegard von Bingen](#), [Machaut](#), numerous anonymous monks

Key terms

[Gregorian chant](#), monophony, polyphony, organum, [mass](#), [motet](#), minstrels

Renaissance (1450–1600)

Often referred to as the “re-birth” and the age of enlightenment, this period brought a revived interest in the science and arts of ancient Greece and Rome. [The Renaissance](#) was a time of great learning and advancement. Culture moved away from the church toward a more secular society and a great belief in reason and science. This was a time in which exploration was rampant and there were discoveries and inventions such as gunpowder, the compass, and the printing press.

Musicians were now employed by the church or the government, or by the wealthy, such as royalty. There were many jobs for musicians. The rise of the middle class also led to additional performance venues and the rise of amateur musicians. Printed music books became common and affordable. Musical literacy spread across the population.

This was the grand time of the a capella (unaccompanied) style of singing. Vocal ranges, as they are currently known, were established—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—but women were not yet allowed to sing

in the church so treble parts were still sung by boys. Composers also began to work harder to represent the text in the music with word painting and began expanding the harmony through the use of fuller and thicker chords (using the 3rds and 6ths instead of 5ths and octaves). This period also saw the increased use of duple meter instead of the triple that was favored previously.

The religious compositions of the time were the mass and the motet. The composers used the polyphony to set the fixed portion of the Mass that was sung daily. Because of the frequency, this allowed composers great opportunities for writing and performing music. The motet was a shorter work with a single line of Latin text set to music for three or more voices.

The [madrigal](#) and [chanson](#) were secular types of vocal music that were popular during this time. They were poetry in the common language set to music and written for two or more voices. They were generally a capella but could be accompanied by instruments.

This was also a time that saw the emergence of solo instrumental music, particularly for the lute and keyboard instruments. And instrumental dance music exploded in popularity. Printed dance music (often madrigals and chansons without words) became readily available but instruments were unspecified by composers. Instrumental music for the church also began to be composed late in the period particularly in Italy. Most famous would be St Mark's Cathedral and the brass music of [Gabrieli](#).

Stylistic features

polyphony (many voices doing something equally important/ interesting at the same time) becomes popular, usually major or minor, pleasing harmonies—"clashes" or close harmonies like 2nds and 7ths are avoided, increasing attention paid to text

Key composers

[Dufay](#), [Josquin des Prez](#), [Palestrina](#), [Monteverdi](#), [Gabrieli](#)

Terms

a capella, word painting, madrigal, chanson, mass, motet

Baroque (1600–1750)

The [Baroque](#) era was a time of great change in politics, science, and the arts. It was a time of religious wars between the Catholics and Protestants and a time of exploration. There was a rise of the middle class, however, monarchies were still prominent and the aristocracy and churches were major patrons of the arts. Music was everywhere, being made in the universities, churches, and homes.

During the Baroque era, there was a shift in interest from large polyphonic works towards monody (solo line with instrumental accompaniment) that led to a profound interest in instrumental music. The increased interest and the creation of high-quality instruments led quickly to the development of the

virtuoso musician that demonstrated technique that had never been seen or heard before. New forms of music were developed called the sonata, the concerto, and the suites. Some famous pieces include Vivaldi's [The Four Seasons](#) (a group of four violin concertos), Bach's [Brandenburg Concertos](#), and Handel's [Water Music](#). Organ music for the church also exploded with the two most common forms being the [chorale prelude](#) and the [fugue](#). [J. S. Bach](#) composed extensively for the keyboard instruments.

Improvisation continued to be an important aspect of instrumental performance. Like the architectural style of the day, the music was very ornate with lots of fast runs of notes and motor rhythms. During this time, you also heard a lot of terraced dynamics (which meant either loud or soft with no gradual change in between).

Composers sought to free themselves from the complexities of the Renaissance counterpoint. Not only did this discovery lead to the flourishing of solo instrumental music, but also led to the invention of opera and the formation of small orchestras. The operas were large scale music dramas that combined poetry, acting, scenery, and costumes with singing and instrumental music. They included solo [arias](#), [recitatives](#), and choruses accompanied by [harpsichord](#) and small orchestra. Baroque composers of opera included [Monteverdi](#), [Purcell](#), and [Handel](#).

With the rise of the Lutheran church in Germany also came a new addition to the repertoire that was called the sacred cantata. These were large multi-movement works that included solo arias, recitatives, and choruses all with orchestral accompaniment. They were usually unified through the use of a [chorale](#). J. S. Bach was a prolific composer of this genre. A larger form similar to the cantata was the oratorio. It is a large-scale dramatic genre with a religious text performed by solo voices, chorus and orchestra that does not include staging or costumes. One of the most famous oratorios is [The Messiah](#) by G. F. Handel.

The notation used for the solo lines was the same as we used today. However, musicians of the time were very familiar with harmonies being used and so composers did not fully write out chords in the accompaniment. Instead the composer used a short-hand (figured bass) with the bass note and a number to indicate the chord. The performing musicians would fill in the rest. This use of chords also led to major-minor tonalities and the common chord progressions we still use today. This was also a time when expressive qualities were becoming more important to the music as well through the use of dissonance and basic dynamics (forte/piano).

Stylistic features

highly ornamented, soloistic and virtuosic performance, opera and instrumental music became popular, productions were becoming large scale

Key composers

Monteverdi, J. S. Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Purcell, Corelli

Terms

monody, figured-bass, opera, oratorio, cantata, chorale, aria, recitative, fugue

Classical (1750–1825)

The “**Classical**” period was a time that sought to re-discover classical antiquity, especially the ancient Greek and Roman traditions and virtues. This term was also used to imply a model of excellence and focused on order and objectivity. It was a time of strong aristocracies in Europe as well as the American and French Revolutions. There were great advances in science and mass production was made possible through the Industrial Revolution. Many music scholars refer to “Classical” as more of a style than a period.

Composers viewed this time as a period of musical experimentation and discovery. They expanded the use of the major-minor system and perfected the large-scale instrumental music forms. The melodies were lyrical, used symmetrical four-bar phrases and had clear cadences. There was great use of repetition with harmonies that supported the melody and are firmly rooted in the key. Strong rhythms, steady tempo, and basic meters are characteristic as well. Several forms were developed during this time, like [sonata form](#) (exposition, development, recapitulation), [theme and variations](#) (which is just like it sounds), and [concerto form](#) (often with a double exposition—one for the accompaniment instrument(s) and one for the soloist). Many composers were also influenced by folk music.

Composers were often employed by the aristocracy or churches and had to produce a lot of music, quickly, for social events and special occasions. This patronage system provided composers with the economic security within which they could experiment musically. Through the course of this time period music began to transition from the palace to the public concert hall. There was a great eagerness from these public concerts for new music as well. However, music is still primarily for the upper class and you must have attended a live performance in order to be exposed to it.

The era was the pinnacle for chamber music. These pieces were composed for groups of two to ten players with every player on their own part. There were duos, trios, quintets, octets, serenades, and divertimentos, however, the string quartet was the most important and prolific of the time. Haydn’s (68) quartets were characteristic and are considered to be some of the best. His pieces utilized dense textures and great use of folk music elements.

Instrumental music continued to be developed and grow in importance, especially by [Mozart](#), [Haydn](#), and [Beethoven](#)’s earlier works. The large-scale symphony was developed in this time and the orchestra, as we know it today, was established with the [four families of instruments](#) (strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion). However, the orchestra only tended to have 35-40 performers making it still more appropriate for small venues. The modern piano was developed which also led to greater soloistic/virtuosic music forms including the [concerto](#) (solo instrument and orchestra; mostly violin or piano) and [sonata](#) (a solo instrument or a duo such as violin and piano). As the period came to a close the works of Beethoven, particularly, led to the transition to the Romantic period through expanded forms, larger orchestras, and profound musical intensity.

Large-scale choral music such as the mass, requiem, and oratorio continued to be developed. They were starting to be performed in the concert hall as much as in the churches. Opera was taken to new heights through *opera buffa* (Italian comic opera), *opera seria* (Italian serious opera), and others that were sung in the vernacular language (common language of the people). Opera during this period was the most

important form of entertainment and reached a wide public audience. Mozart's operas are considered to be some of the greatest.

Stylistic features

Music of the Classical era is usually marked by even, symmetrical phrases (4 + 4 = 8). Music was generally major and minor (diatonic) with lots of dance rhythms. Development of larger form styles, limited improvisation, and emotional restraint.

Key composers

Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, [Schubert](#)

Terms

symphony, diatonic, homophonic, sonata, concerto

Romantic (1825–1900)

The [Romantics](#) felt as though bigger was better. Everything was expanding in the music of this time. This was a time of subjectivity in contrast with the order and objectivity of the Classical period. Following the [French Revolution](#), there was a rise of the middle class. The arts turned to more creative and exotic topics. Emotional expression was a prime motivation. Artists in every genre challenged the boundaries of tradition. Due to the [Industrial Revolution](#), instruments were of better quality and more affordable than ever before. There were greater opportunities to study music as [conservatories](#) were established across Europe and the United States.

Music during this period was expansive with lyrical, appealing melodies and greater use of chromaticism than ever before. Harmony was emotional and expressive using more dissonance. Rhythmic diversity with tempo fluctuations (rubato) was common. The music was being heard by more middle-class patrons and secular music was dominating the style. As instrument quality improved and the performer's virtuosity developed, composers seized the opportunity to display their musical talents. Nationalism (using folk songs and dances of their native lands) became widespread.

As orchestra music moved from the palace and church to the concert hall, the ensemble increased in size. The improvement to instrument quality also led to the addition of new instruments to the orchestra including the tuba, trombone, [English horn](#), harp, piccolo, [contrabassoon](#), and valved brass. These changes allowed the composers greater freedom to explore tone, color, and dynamics. The growing ensemble and increased complexity of the music also led to the addition of the conductor in front of the ensemble since it was no longer possible to lead from the keyboard. The instrumental forms of music grew in size. The [symphony](#), the most important instrumental form of the period, grew into a monumental work that could last 40-90 minutes. The music was often programmatic (instrumental music that tells a story). One of the most famous examples is [Symphonie Fantastique](#) by [Hector Berlioz](#).

The piano became a widely popular solo instrument (as well as accompaniment) and began to appear in middle class homes everywhere. It was especially popular with amateurs due to the ability to play melody and harmony at the same time. Through the improvements to the structure and strings of the piano, it became a more powerful and reliable instrument. Many great composers who were also great pianists emerged during this time including [Chopin](#), [Liszt](#), and [Schumann](#).

This era brought with it the rise of instrumental virtuosity. [Paganini](#) could play violin like nobody's business and was pretty much the Elvis of his time. Composers began to recognize the virtuosity of the performers and to display that in new compositions. Many concertos were written through this time by all of the composers.

The [art song or lied](#) was a product of the Romantic period and a vehicle for personal expression. They were short, solo songs with piano accompaniment in German. Some composers wrote sets that were unified by some common thread (song cycle). *Lieder* were appropriate for amateurs as well as professional musicians. Among the great masters were Brahms, Schubert, and Schumann

Large-scale choral music continued to be composed in the traditional forms (oratorio, mass, requiem). These became very popular with the middle class who were forming amateur choral groups across Europe and the U.S. These choral groups were a growing social and artistic outlet for the communities. Brahms' [German Requiem](#) is considered a masterwork of the era.

Operas, like the other musical forms, grew to massive proportions including story lines, length, costumes, choreography, staging, virtuosic singing and wide vocal ranges. There were multiple categories of opera including grand opera (large historical dramas with grandiose effects), *opera comique* (French comic opera with spoken dialogue), singspiel (German opera with light, comic stories), music drama (more serious German works such as operas of Wagner), *opera seria* (Italian serious opera), and *opera buffa* (Italian comic opera). They continued to be a hugely popular form of entertainment for the middle class.

Stylistic features

Expansive, great use of crescendo and decrescendo—the ultimate “sweeping” Romantic gesture; rubato (a bit of freedom or give-and-take with the rhythm), expanded harmonies and chromaticism, very expressive, increased virtuosity.

Key composers

Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, Berlioz, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Wagner, Liszt

Terms

rubato, chromaticism, Programmatic, Nationalism, Lied, opera

Contemporary (1900–present)

There hasn't been enough history to know when this era ends or ended or even to give it a proper name, for that matter. The name of the game for this time period is diversity. Think of all the different music styles you can name just in the realm of rock, country and jazz; this list is almost endless. Most importantly, in the past hundred years, developments in recording and the endless choices we have in what we listen to on our personal devices has greatly changed the music world.

In the 1900's, composers began to break all the "rules" set up by composers in previous generations and there was an intentional rebellion against Romanticism. The early twentieth century art music introduced [Neoclassicism](#) (a return to classical traditions with twentieth century harmony and melody) and [Expressionism](#) (a reaction to Impressionism). There was a new rhythmic complexity including polymeter (more than one meter) and polyrhythm (simultaneous use of several rhythmic patterns). Symmetrical melody was abandoned for a new driving melody, frequently employing wide leaps and dissonance.

Harmony changed more drastically than anything else with additions of extended chords and dissonant polychords. Tonality abandoned the traditional major-minor traditions for new ways of organizing sounds including polytonality (multiple simultaneous tonalities), atonality (no clear tonality), and twelve-tone music (incorporation of all 12 chromatic tones with equal importance). The dense orchestrations of the Romantic also gave way to thinner sounds and smaller ensembles with greater emphasis on woodwinds, brass, and especially percussion.

Stylistic features

dissonant, simplistic and abstract, new harmonic and melodic practices, return of balance and objectivity, new importance to rhythm

Composers

Stravinsky, Ives, Bartok, Schoenberg, Copland, Webern, Bartok, Ives

Terms

dissonance, polychords, polyrhythm, polytonality, 12-tone, Neo-classic

Jazz

Rising during the early 20th century, Jazz was the first American music style and a major contribution to the musical world. It drew its origins from the African traditions as well as popular music of the U.S. African American ceremonial and work songs were early influences and it relied heavily upon call-and-response singing.

The development of jazz music went through many stages. [Ragtime](#) was a precursor to Jazz that developed from the African American piano style that was characterized by syncopated melodies. [Scott Joplin](#), who was often considered the “king of ragtime” was the first African-American composer to receive international attention and fame. He is most remembered for his piano rags such as [Maple Leaf Rag](#).

[Louis Armstrong](#) was one of the great early jazz musicians as a trumpeter and singer. He introduced scat singing (using syllables to sound like an instrument –but no meaning). He was associated with [New Orleans Jazz \(Dixieland\)](#) that used small ensembles in which players improvised simultaneously. [Blues](#) is a simple, repetitive form and is considered to be a fundamental form of jazz. It originated as a combination of elements from ragtime, blues, spirituals, and work songs. A typical blues has a few lines of text that has been set to a repeating harmonic pattern of twelve or sixteen measures (often known as 12-bar blues). Improvisation was extremely important.

The [Swing Era \(or Big Band Era\)](#) started in the 1930's and lasted through WWII. It was characterized by large ensembles featuring trumpets, trombones, saxophones (and other woodwinds), and rhythm instruments (piano, bass, drums, and guitar). Some of the great band leaders and musicians of the time included [Benny Goodman](#), [Duke Ellington](#), [Glenn Miller](#), [Gene Krupa](#), [Count Basie](#), and [Ella Fitzgerald](#). Late in the 1940's other styles started to emerge such as bebop and cool jazz. [Bebop](#) (also known as bop) returned to smaller ensembles with longer and more frequent soloing. Popular musicians included [Dizzy Gillespie](#), [Charlie Parker](#), and [Thelonious Monk](#). Other musicians were active in multiple styles such as [Miles Davis](#), who was known for Bebop and [Cool Jazz](#) (a more mellow and subdued style). [Free jazz](#) emerged in the 1960's and was a very experimental form that was never really well accepted by audiences due to the unusual approaches.

Musicians

Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Scott Joplin, Miles Davis

Terms

[call-and-response](#), ragtime, syncopated, [scat singing](#), blues

History of Popular Music

An early type of popular music, known as rock 'n roll, evolved largely out of the jazz traditions from ragtime through the 1940's. The name 'pop' music came from the word popular and was used to describe the contemporary music that appealed to a large audience. The music was often found on radio stations with short song durations, it had easy to remember lyrics, and often, danceable tempo and style. The 1950's were a time when TV's stormed into American homes and the radio industry began to cater to popularity and influence. The 'Top 40' radio format was introduced in 1955 and popular songs were often played as

many as 30 or 40 times a day. The radio industry was driving record sales and the music industry had changed for good.

A new style of music began to emerge from Chicago in the 1950's that was being referred to as rhythm and blues, or [R&B](#). Although record sales of R&B were segregated from white music records, the music was classified as "race music," and it was even banned from some radio stations, artists such as [B. B. King](#) and [Muddy Waters](#) were rising to incredible levels of popularity and appealing widely to audiences with an estimated 40% of sales to white consumers by 1952.

Around this time the term [Rock and Roll](#) began to emerge. Musicians such as [Chuck Berry](#) and [Little Richard](#) contributed greatly to the continued popularity of the new genre. [Elvis Presley](#) was also one of the early stars to popularize this style of music. His contributions and popularity earned him the nickname, the "King of Rock and Roll." His music was widely played on the radio, he was regularly seen on TV, and had enormous record sales. However, his greatest contributions were his willingness to perform and record music written by black artists and his popularization of rockabilly music, which was a combination of rock and country music. Elvis was undeniably the first rock and roll icon and he paved the way for many to follow.

Elvis' popularity and the American domination of the Rock 'n Roll industry lasted until 1964 when the [Beatles](#) arrived as part of the [British music invasion](#). They were an instant success. Some of the British bands that were also rising to the forefront during this time were the Kinks, the Zombies, the Animals, Herman's Hermits, and the Rolling Stones.

In Detroit, [soul music](#) began to emerge as a new genre that combined R&B, pop, gospel, and blues. The musicians sang about the lives of black Americans. Notable performers of this music included [James Brown](#), [Aretha Franklin](#), and [Otis Redding](#). This music industry led to the launching of the [Motown](#) record label. Motown was one of the most successful Black-owned businesses and one of the most influential independent record companies in American history.

Two other uniquely American styles also developed during the same time period, a new wave of music arose on the American west coast led by the [Beach Boys](#) which was referred to as [surf music](#) with bands of young men singing about cars, beaches, surfing, girls, and the California youth culture. [Country rock](#) was a fusion of country and rock that grew to incredible popularity with bands such as the [Nitty Gritty Dirt Band](#), [Credence Clearwater Revival](#), [Charlie Daniels Band](#), and the [Eagles](#).

By the late 1960's, [folk music](#) was emerging as the sound of social activism. Many of these singer-songwriters performed music about civil rights, discrimination, feminism, environmental issues, and to protest the Vietnam War. Popular artists of this era were [Joan Baez](#), [Peter, Paul, and Mary](#), and [Bob Dylan](#). The Protest music of the 1960's was also aligned with the hippie culture, drug use, rebellion, and free speech. Many artists of this time include [Jimi Hendrix](#), [Jefferson Airplane](#), the [Grateful Dead](#), and [The Doors](#). This era culminated with the Woodstock music festival in the summer of 1969.

The 1970's led to two new music styles, [glam rock](#) and [disco](#). The creation of glam rock was a reaction to the previous hippie generation. It was an extravagant form of rock that incorporated flamboyant costumes, heavy makeup, and elements of hard rock and pop. It was primarily a British movement that featured artists such as [David Bowie](#), [Rod Stewart](#), [Freddie Mercury](#), and [Elton John](#). The disco movement occurred during

this same time period. Disco was also very flamboyant but focused more on electronic sounds with the intention of getting people to dance. Prominent performers included [KC and the Sunshine Band](#), [Gloria Gaynor](#), the [Bee Gees](#), and the [Village People](#).

Although glam rock was primarily a British phenomenon, in the United States, there was a similar movement led by musicians such as [Alice Cooper](#) that ultimately led to the [heavy metal](#) and [hair bands](#) of the 1980's. This was also sometimes referred to as glam metal. These bands performed heavy metal styles while incorporating the costumes, makeup, and theatrics of glam rock. Examples of this style are [Kiss](#), [Mötley Crüe](#), [Ratt](#), [Quiet Riot](#), [Twisted Sister](#), [Stryper](#), [Bon Jovi](#), and [Poison](#). This was the most popular and commercially successful music of the time.

Rock music continued throughout the 1980's as well. Some of the most successful musicians of this time were [Michael Jackson](#) (the "King of Pop"), [Whitney Houston](#), [Prince](#), [Madonna](#), [Bruce Springsteen](#), [Cyndi Lauper](#), [Billy Joel](#), [Pat Benatar](#), and [Phil Collins](#). Some of the most popular bands were [REO Speedwagon](#), [Foreigner](#), [Chicago](#), [Styx](#), [Journey](#), [The Police](#), [Queen](#), and [Fleetwood Mac](#).

The 1980's also led to the rise of [hip-hop](#). The music and culture of the black American youth were represented through the lyrics, break dancing, graffiti art, and musical techniques including rapping, sampling, and scratching records. Lyrics were often political and social in nature with the frustrations of the culture being expressed through the music. Early rap artists included [Run D.M.C.](#), [Ice-T](#), [DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince](#), [LL Cool J](#), [Queen Latifah](#), and [MC Hammer](#). The popularity continued into the 1990's with [Tupac Shakur](#), [Dr. Dre](#), [Ice Cube](#), and [Snoop Dog](#).

[Grunge](#) music came to the forefront during the 1990's. Originating in the NW United States, it was inspired by [punk](#) and heavy metal. [Soundgarden](#), [Nirvana](#), [Green Day](#), and [Pearl Jam](#) were the most popular of this genre. In the 2000's, artists like [Carrie Underwood](#) and [Taylor Swift](#), originally considered to be country singers, became more mainstream. While some artists found success in the [alternative](#) or [emo](#) worlds, by 2010 hip-hop was by far the most popular genre due to artists like [Eminem](#) and [Kanye West](#). The [past 90 years](#) have seen an explosion of different styles. It will be exciting to see what takes hold next!

World Music

The use of the phrase "world music" can be a little problematic, but it's difficult to find a term and doesn't make it seem like there's Western European classical music and that all other musical traditions are "other" or lumped into the same category. There is no way to be an expert in all types of music of the world, but some extra effort and study will help you to be more authentic in your teaching and performing of a variety of music.

[World Music Pedagogy](#) is becoming popular through summer professional development offerings and a [WMP book series](#). Both initiatives have been led by prolific author Patricia Shehan Campbell, formerly a professor at the University of Washington. The aims of the initiative include global expansion of perspectives on music and culture with a focus on five dimensions of experiencing world music beginning with attentive listening and ending with integrating and creating.

There is much to explore. Prepare to be a lifelong learner! Over 900 languages are spoken on the continent of Africa, so you would probably guess that there is more than one musical tradition as well. Still, it's not uncommon to see "African folk song" at the beginning of an arrangement (when at the same time we are practically the birth and death dates for all of Bach's 20 children)! Not only are the characteristics of the music and popular instruments different in Ghana than Ethiopia and Tanzania than Zimbabwe, there are a number of traditional and contemporary genres within each region. Consider North America; on this continent you might hear folk songs of French Canadians, Mexican mariachi or *ranchera*, or Jamaican ska. (Actually, Jamaica is just one of 26 Caribbean islands, each of which is an independent country or territory!)

Here are but a (very) few examples of the many possibilities of musical traditions from five different continents:

Africa—West African Highlife

Again, it is impossible to portray all of the rich traditions in even the Western part of this continent. Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria are but three of the countries in this region, each with their own unique music traditions. While much West African music shares a percussive music most commonly played by drums, bells, and rattles, it is more than layered rhythms. Syncopated rhythms layered on top of each other can create very complex polyrhythms (*poly* meaning many). The [djembe](#) is a popular drum and you have probably also seen [tubanos](#) in many elementary music classrooms. Other common percussive instruments include the [gankogui](#) (a two-toned bell) and the [shekere](#) (a gourd rattle). While rhythm is the cornerstone of traditional music, the idea that playing, singing and moving are inseparable from each other is a key philosophical difference.

While it would be unheard of for the audience to be invited to join in at a professional symphony concert, there is less of a delineation between performer and audience. One way in which this might occur would be through call and response in which a leader alternates with the group. Music is largely an aural tradition, meaning it isn't learned from a score (or maybe hasn't ever even been written down!) Music is used for entertainment, but has an integral role in societies in many important occasions throughout life and is even used to make work more efficient.

Asia—Japanese and Hindustani (Northern India) Classical Music

Smaller groups are preferred in traditional Japanese music, which commonly has a monophonic (a single musical line) texture, employs the pentatonic (five-note) scale with ornaments (embellishments like trills), limited harmony, melody and timbre are main values, There is little or no improvisation involved.

Popular instruments include the [koto](#), a 13-stringed instrument that is played by sliding, scraping, and striking the strings; the [shakuhachi](#), an end-blown flute; and the [shamisen](#), which often accompanies the flute and is played by plucking its three strings. Learning to play these instruments happens through an apprentice model with the master passing down knowledge to the student.

Historic traditions include [gagaku](#), the oldest documented orchestral music in the world, which was born in the imperial courts of the 9th to 11th centuries and [kabuki](#) (opera). Japan has unique pop, rock, and folk traditions as well as [taiko](#) drumming, dating back to ancient times and is re-gaining popularity.

In northern India, [Ravi Shankar](#) may be one of the most famous virtuoso musicians of all time. He brought the sitar to prominence by playing it on Beatles, Doors, and Rolling Stones albums! The [sitar](#) was created in medieval India and was an important instrument in Hindustani classical music.

Representative instruments also include the [tambura](#) (also called tanpura), a stringed instrument that creates a drone and supplies harmonic support, and the [tabla](#), a drum used to accompany vocal and instrumental music. The music is characterized by the use of two elements: [raga](#) is the melodic element and [tala](#) refers to the rhythmic structure.

South America—Brazilian Samba

Samba is one of the most popular music and dance styles to emerge from the South American country of Brazil. Often associated with Rio de Janeiro's [Carnaval](#), it is known for its syncopated rhythms and rocking body movements. Samba employs a battery of percussion instruments, many of which come from African traditions, and lyrics in Portuguese, often in a call and response form. Before it became popular as a ballroom dance in Europe and America in the 1940's, a form that exemplified its African roots involved more of a group circle or line dance.

In the 1950's [bossa nova](#) was inspired by the samba and, like its predecessor, became popular worldwide, but especially in American jazz. *Bossa nova* is Portuguese and translates to "new wave" or "new trend." Perhaps the most famous American popular song in the style was "The Girl from Ipanema," composed by composer Antônio Carlos Jobim. Here is a [recording](#) by one of the most accomplished musicians in the style, guitarist/singer João Gilberto.

North America—Mexican Mariachi and Texan/Mexican Conjunto

Mariachi traditionally refers to a small group of mostly stringed instruments that originated in Mexico. These include violin, guitar, [vihuela](#), a type of five-stringed guitar, and [guitarrón](#), a stringed bass guitar of sorts with no frets. Trumpets were added in the early part of the 19th century. The violins and trumpets often play the melody. Dress often includes trousers and short jackets with ornaments, boots, wide bow ties, and sombreros, the uniform of cowboys of Jalisco (a state in west central Mexico).

To the north, another folk tradition, [conjunto](#), took hold, becoming popular as early as the 1920's along the border between Mexico and the United States as a way to preserve working-class Mexican culture. It often has a spirited beat to inspire joyful dancing. The prominent instrument, the [bajosexto](#), is a 12-string bass guitar that provides and is used to accompany the [accordion](#). Initially, the repertoire included a lot of waltzes and mazurkas, but more recent performers include drum set and electronic instruments.

Eastern Europe—Russian and Ukrainian Folk

One of the defining features of Eastern European folk music is its strong emphasis on storytelling and passing on cultural traditions aurally. The music often features modal scales, melodic ornamentation, and the use of irregular and asymmetrical meters (like $\frac{7}{8}$ or $\frac{9}{8}$). The [balalaika](#), a triangular-shaped string instrument that is played by plucking, is prominent in the folk tradition.

Vocal techniques in Eastern European folk music are diverse. For example, [yodeling](#), a technique that involves rapidly switching between chest and head voice, is common in certain regions. Singers often use ornaments, or embellish melodies with trills, runs, and melismatic (singing one syllable over several notes) passages.

The bottom line: These styles are only the tip of the iceberg. You are going to have to be a lifelong learner and simply put in the time to study the culture, listen to the music, and take advantage of opportunities to learn from culture bearers! Several resources for further study are included below.

“Non-Traditional” Ensembles Offered in Collegiate Programs

**(not band, choir, orchestra or their derivatives)*

- Bluegrass ensemble
- Afro-Latin ensemble
- Mariachi ensemble
- African percussion ensemble
- Contemporary worship ensemble
- Modern band ensemble
- Steel pan ensemble
- Mariachi ensemble
- Bagpipe ensemble
- Guitar ensemble
- Ukulele ensemble
- Contemporary a cappella ensemble
- Gospel ensemble
- Electronic ensemble
- Javanese Gamelan
- Piano ensemble
- Brazilian ensemble
- Bagpipe ensemble
- World pop ensemble
- Hand Drumming Ensemble
- Sikuri ensemble
- African music ensemble
- Drum choir
- Tabla drumming
- African popular music
- Hands in harmony ensemble
- World music choir
- Middle Eastern ensemble
- Indian music ensemble
- Improvisation ensemble
- Country ensemble
- Japanese music
- Irish ensemble
- Latin ensemble
- Composition ensemble
- Jewish/Klezmer ensemble
- Chinese ensemble
- Healing arts ensemble
- Thai ensemble
- Salsa ensemble
- Balkan ensemble
- Celtic ensemble

- Korean ensemble
- Andean ensemble
- Mexican ensemble
- Arab ensemble
- Kulintang ensemble
- Eurythmics in music ensemble
- Middle Eastern music ensemble
- Pin-peat ensemble
- Sangeet ensemble
- Electroacoustic percussion ensemble
- Soul band
- Fife and drum ensemble
- Kaji-Daiko-Taiko ensemble
- New music ensemble
- Piano sight reading ensemble
- Taiko ensemble
- Mexican marimba ensemble
- Indonesian orchestra
- Recording ensemble
- Electronic dance music
- Orff ensemble
- Songwriting ensemble
- Hip-hop ensemble
- Video game ensemble
- R and B ensemble
- Cajun music ensemble
- Asian music ensemble
- Near East ensemble
- Hawaiian chorus
- Okinawan ensemble
- Philippine ensemble
- Gagaku ensemble
- Tahitian ensemble
- Oceanic ensemble
- Conjunto ensemble
- Hispanic Caribbean ensemble
- Bucket drum ensemble

Additional Resources

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PART III

Additional Considerations for Music Education

CHAPTER 8

What Else Can I Do Now to Be Prepared?

Aside from musical skill and pedagogical knowledge (how to teach), all teachers need to demonstrate organizational and leadership skills. This chapter contains a variety of ideas for obtaining leadership experience and other practical experience while still in high school to prepare you for the many non-musical aspects of the job.

Participate in Ensembles

Naturally, you'll want to be part of a large ensemble at your school. Large ensemble instruction is the mainstay of American music education at the secondary level, after all. Take part in as much as you are able. Instrumental and vocal experiences complement each other and will give you a myriad of varied skills that will aid you as a music educator. Likewise, if your director offers you opportunities to play in honor bands, choirs and orchestras or university festivals (even if it's not where you eventually want to go), etc., take them!

Be the Student Director

It would be wonderful if all future music education majors had the opportunity to be on the podium directing during their high school years, but this is not the only way to gain student directing experience. You could take on the responsibility of serving as a section leader or audition to be the drum major. You will begin to look at your ensemble from a different perspective and are likely to have increased communication with your director regarding the behind-the-scenes goings on.

Consider shadowing your, or another, music teacher, work on organizing the music library, make concert programs, and/or help set up equipment.

Participate in All Things Extra-Curricular

Does your school have an annual musical? How about a jazz band? Show choir? Marching band? Take part in as much as you can do well; the school you teach in will have these offerings, too.

Give Lessons

Help your teacher by providing mentorship or tutoring younger players. If you are especially skilled, you may even decide to start your own small studio. Familiarize yourself with beginning pedagogy and keep in mind that you won't be able to charge the going rate of a college teacher or someone who has a bachelor's or master's degree in music.

Accompany

While you want to be sure you don't get stuck at the piano the whole time and still get a chance to sing, accompanying is a great opportunity to get to know a piece more thoroughly and work closely with your director. If you aren't quite ready for that amount of pressure, solo/ensemble contest is another great opportunity (with a much smaller audience). You may even get to do some coaching with younger singers as their accompanist.

Church choirs are often looking for accompanists for their adult and children's choirs. You can get paid and gain great experience at the same time! Once you get to college, if you've honed your skills, accompanying for voice class and recitals beats the heck out of working in the cafeteria!

Do you remember in Chapter 4 when we told you that you can't practice piano too much? That's still true! It's also important to remember that playing piano and being able to accompany are two different skills. Having some experience from the bench will be of benefit to you when you are the one on the podium.

Ask Questions

Mentors abound in the music education world. This is certainly not true of all professional conferences, but those associated with music education are filled with the sharing of ideas and mentoring. In many states, you will be assigned a mentor in your building. Many states Music Educators' Associations (MEAs) have well-organized mentorship programs and will also provide you with an experienced or retired teacher who will come to your school and be available 24/7 for your questions.

Find out how your director chooses music. Don't be afraid to talk to the director at the next university honor choir you attend for advice. Seek out professional development—it's out there through your state music education, choral directors, band directors, or string teachers' organization.

Be a Leader

Some opportunities that do not appear to be directly related to music may also be beneficial. Take on leadership positions in community or school organizations and clubs: chess club, student government, 4-H, Girl Scouts, etc. all provide ways for you to grow as a leader. Yes, you'll need to spend lots of time honing your musical skills, but your personal skills are just as important.

Participate in Team Activities

Team building is an essential part of school music. Reflect on how you feel as a member of a team and make a note of things that your coaches or leaders did that you thought was effective. Sports teams probably come to mind first, but there are other possibilities, too, like large-group speech or being in a school play.

Seek Out Jobs that Involve Working with Young People

Summer camps are a great way to spend a lot of time working with children. Whether through a library, back-to-school program or local college or university, these experiences are invaluable if you plan to be an educator. They may not pay well, but will more than make up for the loss of income when you have it on your resume and that real-life job comes around. Lifeguarding and/or being a swimming instructor is another great option.

Think "outside the box" and CREATE OPPORTUNITIES if none present themselves. Start a private studio. Volunteer to help with beginning summer band lessons. Direct a musical with an all-kid cast. Look for a possible void in your community where you can make a difference!

CHAPTER 9

The 21st Century Music Educator

Majoring in music education provides an opportunity to earn both a college degree and a teaching license. In some states, you will become certified to teach both vocal and instrumental music for grades K–12. Others are broken down by grade-level of student or by vocal/instrumental focus. To find what your state requires for teacher licensure, see your state's Department of Education website to find the most up-to-date information. At the time of this publication, 49 states offered an all-level music teacher license (K–12 or P–12) and, in more than 30 of those, it was the only license available. If your desire is to teach high school band, that is certainly possible but know that you will be spending practicum and student teaching time at the elementary level as well and will have some coursework with a vocal focus as well. If you are thinking about attending college in a state other than the one in which you will be teaching, you will be able to see if there are additional requirements to obtain a license or, at the very least, find contact information for someone who can help.

A music education major must not just have a desire to teach music, but students. If you're looking to major in education merely for a steady paycheck, you're in the wrong place! The profession needs people who are excited to share their passion with others. We feel very fortunate that music is the subject through which we reach students.

Dispositions

As an education major, you'll be asked to examine and reflect on several personal qualities needed to be an effective teacher. Here are five of the dispositions most commonly assessed in teacher education programs:

Caring

Teachers must have a passion for working with people and possess the ability to empathize (see things from another person's perspective). Enthusiasm about the content is as important as patience and compassion. Finally, an effective teacher is able to recognize the issues surrounding and appreciate diversity.

Communication

Effective interpersonal skills and the ability to collaborate or work together as a team are also important. Teachers should be aware of and able to respond to other's needs. It is essential to be authentic and responsive.

Creative

A teacher must be flexible. Teaching requires that one adapt/adjust/think on their feet. The best teachers are resourceful, finding inventive ways to meet the needs of their students.

Critical

Regular self-evaluation and a willingness to work to overcome weaknesses are hallmarks of good teaching. The needs of the learner must come first. A good teacher takes initiative and maintains high expectations for their students and themselves.

Professional

Appropriate dress, punctuality, and a strong work ethic are important. Perhaps even more important is the need to provide a role model who is responsible, respectful and has integrity.

InTASC Standards

In addition to dispositions, there are standards for teachers that were created by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium and are most often assessed through portfolios that include artifacts like lesson plans and teaching videos and are built throughout the degree program. The 10 standards are organized in four different categories:

The Learner and Learning

1. Learner Development
2. Learning Differences
3. Learning Environments

Content Knowledge

4. Content Knowledge
5. Application of Content

Instructional Practice

6. Assessment
7. Plan for Instruction
8. Instructional Strategies

Professional Responsibility

9. Professional Learning and Ethical Practice
10. Leadership and Collaboration

Some states require a standardized test, like Pearson's Praxis test, for licensure. Others require a portfolio, like the edTPA, that you assemble during your student teaching semester. Requirements change fairly often, so it is best not to worry too much about it until you are nearing the end of your program. Often a teaching license in one state will be sufficient to obtain at least a provisional one in another state.

National Core Arts Standards

Rather than setting a bar for teachers, these standards were created as goals to strive for when teaching students. They were created in 2014 to guide educators in providing a unified quality education in all art forms for students in Pre-K through high school. The 2014 Music Standards are all about *music literacy*. Musicians in the Western European tradition often think of music literacy as the ability to read standard notation. It is so much more! The standards emphasize conceptual understanding in areas that reflect the actual processes in which musicians engage. The standards cultivate a student's ability to carry out the three Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing, and Responding. These are the processes that musicians have followed for generations, even as they connect through music to themselves and their societies.

There are five strands in the 2014 standards: Music (which refers to K–8 music education and is organized by grade level), Harmonizing Instruments, Theory and Composition, Traditional and Emerging Ensembles, and Technology. The last four strands are organized by achievement level: novice, intermediate, proficient, accomplished, and advanced. These levels offer success to the student who, for example, joins for the first time as a sophomore as well as to the student who has studied multiple instruments privately and intends to make music a career. The big-picture overview is provided below.

National Core Arts Standards for Music At-a-Glance

Creating	Performing	Responding
Anchor #1 IMAGINE Generate musical ideas for various purposes and contexts Anchor #2 PLAN, MAKE Select and develop musical ideas for defined purposes and contexts Anchor #3 EVALUATE, REFINE Evaluate and Refine selected musical ideas to create musical work that meets appropriate criteria PRESENT Share creative musical work that conveys intent, demonstrates craftsmanship, and exhibits originality	Anchor #4 SELECT Select varied musical works to present based on interests, knowledge, technical skill, and context ANALYZE Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance INTERPRET Develop personal interpretations that consider creators' intent Anchor #5 REHEARSE, EVALUATE, REFINE Evaluate and refine personal and ensemble performances, individually or in collaboration with others Anchor #6 PRESENT Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and appropriate to the audience and context	Anchor #7 SELECT Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose of context ANALYZE Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response Anchor #8 INTERPRET Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers expressive intent Anchor #9 EVALUATE Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation and established criteria
Connecting		
<i>Embedded within Creating, Performing, and Responding</i> Anchor #10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music Anchor #11 Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding		

NASM Standards

The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) is an organization that provides comprehensive processes to ensure program quality. Those institutions deemed worthy are then given accreditation. NASM created a list of desirable attributes, essential competencies, and professional procedures. These standards were created for music programs. The following attributes are to be nurtured and competencies demonstrated by students in accredited programs.

The prospective music teacher should have:

1. Personal commitment to the art of music, to teaching music as an element of civilization, and to encouraging the artistic and intellectual development of students, plus the ability to fulfill these commitments as an independent professional.
2. The ability to lead students to an understanding of music as an art form, as a means of communication, and as a part of their intellectual and cultural heritage.
3. The capability to inspire others and to excite the imagination of students, engendering a respect for music and a desire for musical knowledge and experiences.
4. The ability to articulate logical rationales for music as a basic component of general education, and to present the goals and objectives of a music program effectively to parents, professional colleagues, and administrators.
5. The ability to work productively within specific education systems and promote scheduling patterns that optimize music instruction.
6. The ability to maintain positive relationships with individuals of various social and ethnic groups, and be empathetic with students and colleagues of differing backgrounds.
7. The ability to understand, apply, and practice principles of professional ethics.
8. The ability to evaluate ideas, methods, and policies in the arts, the humanities, and in arts education for their impact on the musical and cultural development of students.
9. The ability and desire to remain current with developments in the art of music and in teaching, to make independent, in-depth evaluations of their relevance, and to use the results to improve musicianship and teaching skills.

Competencies listed as a “means for developing these attributes” include: conducting and musical leadership; arranging; functional performance on piano, voice, and another instrument appropriate to specialization; and knowledge of analysis, history, and literature. Essential teaching competencies are also listed:

1. ability to teach music at various levels to different age groups and in a variety of classroom and ensemble settings
2. understanding of child growth and development
3. ability to assess aptitudes, experiential backgrounds, orientations of individuals and groups of students
4. knowledge of current methods, materials, and repertoires appropriate to the teaching specialization
5. ability to accept, amend, or reject methods and materials based on personal assessment of specific teaching situations
6. understanding of evaluative techniques

There is still more! Additional specialization competencies are listed for general music, vocal/choral music, instrumental music, all levels/all specializations, and specific music fields or combinations (composition, electronic music, guitar keyboard, history, theory, and popular music). These can be found in the [NASM handbook](#) which is available on their website.

The Future of Music Education

Next, we provide a quick introduction to some of the challenges to progress in what tends to be a very traditional profession. The question is, *whose* tradition? A focus on Western European traditions in American schools raises concerns about equality and social justice. The changing demographics of students in American classrooms along with the evolution in how we create and consume music in the 21st century are but what happens in those classrooms has not changed much, despite numerous calls to do so, in many decades. Music is an important part of any culture and can benefit all students, but how that education is being delivered is the question.

Teacher Education Programs

In nearly all institutions, applied faculty make the decisions regarding scholarships and who is admitted to the music program. Initially, your performance skills are simply more important than what you bring to the table in terms of teaching. Sadly, this process, along with an almost complete focus on band, orchestra, and choir, have resulted in a lack of diversity among preservice teacher candidates. If musicians who can afford private study on the “right” instruments are the ones being accepted into teacher education programs, it is likely that they will continue to perpetuate the stereotype when they become teachers. As you have already read, the focus on performance continues once you are admitted as well, with requirements for juries, recitals, and ensemble participation. All of this makes for strong performing ensembles, but does not embrace musical traditions outside of the privileged Western European tradition.

The good news is that the study of popular music, world music, and instruments beyond those found in traditional large ensembles are starting to be accepted, much in the same way jazz was once not recognized in academia (and now you can earn a doctoral degree in it!)

Reaching the “Other 80%”

In addition to the established choir, band and orchestra programs, today’s music educator needs to be prepared to meet the needs of a wide variety of students. Music education is offered (but not necessarily required) almost exclusively in the form of large ensembles at the secondary level. Jazz, chamber and other assorted select groups are common and necessary to further challenge “the talented few,” but what happens to the rest of the students? If we are to serve more than about 20% of our students, we must provide more varied opportunities for them to make music.

These opportunities might mean allowing students to focus on composition, listening, music history, guitar or keyboard. Secondary offerings might include mariachi, rock/fusion, steel pan, gospel, world drumming, recorder ensembles, etc. High school programs may also offer AP music theory, composition, guitar and keyboard in addition to choir, band and orchestra ensembles. In deciding what and how to teach, music educators should consider how students in their communities interact with music outside of school.

Many students interact with music outside of school for their own personal enjoyment. This music tends to be mostly non-classical. Concert attendance is no longer a big deal. We have many ways to hear anything

we want to listen to without even leaving our homes. We no longer need to attend concerts to hear good music. We can easily make our own, too, with a guitar or keyboard. Today, the best-selling instruments are electronic keyboard and guitar. (Think about that – especially considering the cost of school band and orchestra instruments.) We might even use electronic means or share our music digitally. This kind of interaction with music can lead to a lifetime of musical involvement.

In contrast, school music is often classical, composed by someone else, rehearsed for a one-time performance, and often focused on instruments that restrict musical involvement after graduation except in large ensembles. Choir, band and orchestra involve an elite few and tend to be autocratic. The conductor makes the decisions on repertoire and interpretation. The rehearsal can become more about carrying out the instructor's musical ideas and less about students' musical growth.

Honoring Tradition While Rising to the Challenge of the Future

Music education is about finding a balance between upholding traditions and embracing new ones. Live performance is not as important as it once was. Thanks to technology, musical communities can be formed by shared interest rather than physical proximity. Music teachers must be versed in the use of technology, arranging, and a wide variety of music from folk to Latin American to rock and pop. The ability to understand the contexts in which many styles of music are created is crucial in helping students to use music for personal expression.

The music curriculum must meet the needs, desires and abilities of students. It can and should be affected by available school and community resources. Music educators must be prepared to connect students with musical offerings in the community to avoid the divide between school music and music in "real life" to promote lifelong participation. We are not suggesting throwing away the amazing large ensemble tradition that is envied by others internationally; we humbly ask you to consider what could be if you believe music is an important part of the education of all students.

It is an exciting time to be a music educator! If you have taken piano lessons since first grade, you are well on your way. If your high school band director took you to every honor band in a five-hour radius, you have experiences that can greatly benefit you as a teacher. If your experiences include playing bass in a rock band, the profession needs you. If your experiences consist of gospel choir at your church, there is a place for you in school music education. If you learned 300 songs on guitar by ear, you have skills that will help make you an amazing music educator. Just as there are a variety of musical genres, there are an even greater variety of students in our schools who will benefit from your expertise!

Advice from Current Students, Practicing Teachers, and College Faculty

Students

“What is one thing you wish you had known before beginning your music education degree?”

I wish I would have realized how much practicing ahead of time pays off in the long run—the more you practice early, the better prepared you will be.

It is difficult to participate in ensembles and work at a job. It takes a lot of time to practice, study, go to concerts, etc.

Be confident but recognize that you are the new one and are surrounded by people who have been there much longer than you; you will not be the “top dog” anymore.

Find out about requirements—don’t assume all transfer credits from community college or high school will apply to your degree.

I wish I would have had a regular practice schedule. I wish I would have learned better study skills for subjects that I’m not entirely interested in (History, Government, etc.)

I wish I were more fluent with takadimi and solfège using moveable do.

Before starting college, I needed piano lessons and some music theory. I wish I would have had more varied performance experiences.

A full load will mean more than four classes like other majors. It is likely you will have six or seven classes per semester. Prepare to be busy all the time. work on your time management skills.

The amount of work outside classes is huge: recital credits, practicing, rehearsals, homework...

Music education leaves no room for other minors. It’s difficult to graduate in four years and you hardly have any time for electives unless you take a 9th semester.

The number of licensure tests and hoops to jump through (like portfolios).

“The best part about being a music education major is...”

There is a lot of variety—you definitely don’t get stuck doing the same thing over and over again!

Everything you will experience will challenge you for the better!

You get to do two things you love—teach and make music.

Current Teachers

“What advice would you give to future music educators?”

Observe several teachers; we all do something different.

It may seem scary at first, but it's totally worth it... It will be hard at times and you'll have moments where you want to quit, but keep going. You'll thank yourself later.

You are a musician and an educator. Do both of them to the best of your abilities. The minute you sacrifice one for the other is when you begin to fail in your responsibilities to your students.

Pay attention in methods class and get as good as possible on secondary instruments as you can.

Be prepared to teach ANY type of music education at ANY grade level. You never know when your assignment may change.

Spend as much time in a classroom with a master teacher as possible. Continue this during your first three years.

When you get your first job starting out, you will be surprised to learn that you are not that good! It took me about five years to get to feeling comfortable in front of a group. So, don't throw in the towel on your career too soon! Give yourself a chance to learn.

Get into the classroom as much as you can and don't limit yourself to one age/specialty. Explore everything, ask questions, make connections with practicing teachers, and if you're able to, get in there and actually teach!

Please never forget that you are often the first person to expose students to the joy of music. Make it a great experience.

Be flexible, be kind, be patient, breathe, and make sure the custodians and secretaries are your best friends.

Get as much teaching experience as possible- private lessons, vacation bible school music, marching band camps, church childrens' choirs, anything. And find some great music teachers to observe.

Be humble and always willing to do the work to improve your knowledge or skill.

Find a piano teacher ASAP!

“What do you like best about your job?”

I love connecting with people on a deeper and more emotional level that daily discourse sometimes provides.

The community of educators is so inspiring and fun. I'm very thankful for the mentors and colleagues who are in my life!

I love exploring and exposing people to new cultures and viewpoints through music.

Getting to spend time making music every day. Getting to watch students grow in their skill and confidence while realizing that they enjoy it more the better they are!

I love working with kids! They bring so much joy to all to the music we make together, and every day is unique.

Music and Music Education Faculty

“What do you like best about your job?”

I love making music with people and sharing that passion with students and colleagues.

I like that I get to use lots of my musical, organizational, and pedagogical skills on a daily basis. Each day of my job is different, and there is always something very rewarding that I experience on any given day.

Creativity, collaboration, communication with students, certain flexibility and ability to pursue various music-related projects.

The ability to collaborate with a variety of people in a variety of genres (from duets to ensembles, from opera to musical theatre to jazz to classical, from young students to seasoned pros).

Each day allows me to flex different parts of my creative self.

I enjoy the work of bringing a piece of music to life. It can be a deeply challenging process full of doubt and fear, but I love feeling those things and finding it in myself to persist anyhow.

“What advice would you give to a student majoring in music education?”

Get as much teaching experience as possible—private lessons, vacation bible school music, marching band camps, church childrens’ choirs, etc.

Spend as much time in a classroom with a master teacher as possible. Continue this during your first three years of teaching. Realize that you may have just graduated with all of the new and “up-to-date” tools but your predecessors and elders still know more.

When you get your first job starting out, you will be surprised to learn that you are not that good! It took me about five years to get to feeling comfortable in front of a group, so don’t throw in the towel on your career too soon! Give yourself a chance to learn.

Go make live music. Go hear live music. Listen to all kinds of music, even if you don’t like it at first. Be curious!

Be prepared to teach any type of music education at any grade level. You never know when your assignment may change.

Go beyond student teaching and get as much experience as possible. Be exposed to a variety of school situations.

Be flexible, kind, and patient.

Breathe.

Additional Resources

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Online Resources

Music Theory

teoría: Music Theory Web

<https://www.teoria.com/>

Here is a great place to find tutorials on reading music, intervals and scales. You will also be introduced to chords, harmonic functions and musical forms, but DON'T PANIC because these are concepts that will be addressed later in your coursework. This site offers note-reading practice and the ability to set your own level of difficulty on drills, which include rhythmic dictation, pitch dictation and intervals.

musictheory.net

<https://www.musictheory.net/>

This site explains basic vocabulary including lines and spaces, whole and half steps, and clefs and ledger lines. Simple notes values, time signatures, scales and key signatures are described in detail. One click allows you to both see and hear each concept. This site does include chords and Roman numeral analysis; go for it if you're ready, but don't worry if you're not. You'll get to it in your semesters of undergraduate theory courses!

Music Theory

<http://www.musictheory.org.uk/>

Special features of this site include the ability to practice constructing scales and understand key signatures. A list of Italian, French and German musical terms is a unique feature. Do you need manuscript paper? You can print it for free from

here in a variety of sizes. The site is somewhat interactive, but previous knowledge of concepts is helpful as basic terms are not always explained and concepts become more advanced quickly.

Tone Savvy

<https://tonesavvy.com/>

You can register for access to a variety of drills for a minimal fee. There are links to multiple free resources as well.

G Major Music Theory

<https://www.gmajormusictheory.org/>

Study fundamentals, harmony, listening and practice dictation using this site. Free piano and guitar music are easily downloadable. Tutorials are also available in Spanish!

Musicards

<http://musicards.net/>

Choose the concepts with which you need work—note names, key signatures, spelling triads, piano notes names, etc.—and drill yourself.

The Music Theory Minute

<https://musictheoryminute.com/>

The site provides one-minute video tutorials. There is also an opportunity to ask questions of the site's designer.

Aural Skills

The Music Theory Minute

<https://musictheoryminute.com/>

“Dr. Jack” is available to chat and answer any questions you may have. Short video lessons are available on this site for those of you who are auditory learners that explain intervals, triads, and more advanced concepts like suspensions and modulations (remember—you do not have to worry about these yet!). If something doesn’t quite “click” for you on another site, try this one to come at it from a different angle.

Good Ear.com

<https://www.good-ear.com/>

Choose “beginner” and start with simple interval identification, then move on to major vs. minor scales. There are some drills where you are asked to think in solfège. Unfortunately, you have to sign in to go beyond the basic version.

Theta Music Trainer

<https://trainer.thetamusic.com/>

This site not only defines scales, but you can listen to .mp3 examples. The same is true for melodic intervals and dictation. You can obtain a free account to work your way through theory and aural skills courses, earning “belts” along the way. Games like “Parrot Phrases” ask that you play back what you hear on a keyboard or guitar. You can even play a game called vocal match, but a microphone and headset are required.

Ear Beater

<https://www.earbeater.com/>

Exercises begin at a basic level and allow you to practice intervals, scales and chord identification. Some exercises go far beyond the scope of preparing to begin the aural skills sequence. Choose your level and challenge your ears as far as they’ll take you!

MakeMusic

<https://www.makemusic.com/>

MakeMusic is a tool that can be used to practice sight-singing. The best part is that you get instant feedback on which notes were correct. Unfortunately, the cost is high, but if your school has a subscription talk to your teacher about the capabilities. It is probably more helpful for instrumentalists, but vocal exercises can be added fairly quickly and easily using Finale.

Chet

<https://chetapp.io/>

Chet is an app that can be used to practice a variety of aural skills. There are tons of fun games to help you identify intervals, increase your tonal memory, and label scales and chords. You decide the difficulty level. Unfortunately, it is only available for Apple products.

Piano Practice

Be careful! Some sites charge a hefty fee and several are set up only to help you play by ear. Since you need to be familiar with actually reading notation at the keyboard, here are a few FREE sites that may be helpful to you. Again, there is no substitute for live weekly lessons with a qualified instructor!

Piano Lessons.com

<https://pianolessons.com/>

You will find short YouTube videos that show a view from above so that you can see what notes the instructor is actually playing. The gentleman moves fairly quickly through notes and scales. This is not necessarily a method condoned by people who study piano pedagogy, but if your musical knowledge is already in place but your fingers haven't caught up, this may be a helpful site. Clips are short and you can begin at different levels depending on your prior knowledge. You can also see, hear and read a short synopsis of what is being explained in the video.

G Major Music Theory's Free Piano Music

<https://gmajormusictheory.org/Freebies/freebies.html>

This is a great site for finding sheet music for beginning and intermediate levels. It offers PDF's, mp3, and videos of the site's creator playing the songs. Several also have an accompaniment track so you can play along. The easiest pieces come with pictures of where to put your fingers and all notes labeled with finger numbers. There are four

intermediate levels featuring several pieces that would be appropriate solos for the piano proficiency test when the time comes.

Zebra Keys

<https://www.zebrakeys.com/>

This site offers 50 lessons for older beginners. There are links to You Tube video tutorials, but what really caught my eye were the written explanations of the practice steps to be taken in learning a piece. The flash animation with a picture of a keyboard that lights up along with the note on the staff as you listen didn't hurt either!

Free-scores.com

<https://www.free-scores.com/>

This site won't help you learn how to play, but it will provide enough music to keep you busy for a long time. No sign-up is necessary to download almost 8,000 public domain piano solos and scores (no pun intended) of sheet music for piano duets, trios, etc. as well as for piano with other instruments. Many also include .mp3 files so you can listen to what you're seeing on the page.

Music History

Summary of Western Classical Music History

<https://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/>

Short explanations of how music has changed throughout history interspersed with listening examples. Just click to hear what the author is describing!

Naxos: The World's Leading Classical Music Group

<https://www.naxos.com/classicalmusichistory>

Find a timeline and links to multiple recordings from each of the historical eras.

Music History 102: A Guide to Composers and their Music from the Middle Ages to the Present

<https://www.ipl.org/div/mushist/>

This brief history contains links to more information about composers and key terms.

JazzStandards.com

<https://www.jazzstandards.com/>

The site discusses the history and analysis of the standards jazz musicians play the most as well as musicians, and includes many resources.

Music Production, Music Notation and Communication

Audacity

<https://www.audacityteam.org/>

Audacity is a free multi-track recorder and editor. You can import, edit, combine, and export sound files with this easy-to-use, open-source software.

Band

<https://band.us/en>

This is a great tool for group communication. The teacher can check to see that all students have received and read the message.

GarageBand

<https://www.apple.com/mac/garageband/>

For Mac users, GarageBand allows you to electronically play instruments of all types as well

as produce multi-track recordings with the available sounds library or of your creation. It's a complete music studio right on your computer or device.

Noteflight

<https://www.apple.com/mac/garageband/>

This online music writing software can be used to create professional-looking scores. It is very user-friendly. A paid version allows you to share, purchase and sell scores.

Remind

<https://www.remind.com/>

This tool makes group communication and individual texting a breeze. It will even translate your message into different languages.

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