

“PREPARE! How to Successfully Apply and Audition for College Music Programs”

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“Clarinet students, private teachers, and parents will learn how to apply and audition for college music programs. They will gain insight on how to get the best experience when auditioning for music scholarships.”

The KEY TO SUCCESS in most anything you do is to PREPARE! So Congratulations on being here today! My main point is PREPARE! Do your homework! Get on that Internet, Google it! Start talking to band directors, private teachers, counselors, Etc. etc. etc.

I. PREPARE! YOUR COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

Music Major: This lecture is geared toward clarinet music ed or performance in ~Texas – there are other undergraduate music+ majors, but IMO YOU SHOULD MAJOR IN MUSIC ED – unlike what a great person said (quote his view)

Clarinet BME = band director – flexible – yes you can get an MM in performance with this!

Clarinet Performance = play in symphony, college professor, free-lancer, private lessons, etc. be an entrepreneur

Clarinet Liberal Arts/others - music business, etc. – these are very cool, but I suggest you get a music ed degree and either double major in this or get a grad degree in it.

Universities/Colleges/Conservatories Terms= Higher Ed, Academe, Academic, Prof/Dr., HOURS! Music Dept. vs School?

Generally = Research (U of Texas), Teaching (Texas State), Private Liberal Arts (TCU), CC (TCC) (mixed up!)

Music Programs generally, but not always follow above roles, depends on dept., and clarinet teacher(s)

NOTE: There is A LOT to be said for going to a school as an undergraduate that focuses on teaching undergrads and then go BIG TIME for your MM. It is also CHEAPER! MM is the cheaper 2 year degree (think BIG)

How Does a Music Major Work (Briefly)

Not 2+2! You start in your major right away as a first semester freshman with 8-10+ hours of music! Lessons, Ensembles, Music Theory/Ear Training, Piano (don't panic) and maybe 1-2 basics. They will tell you, don't worry. Just be sure to get advised by MUSIC people, AND NOT general counselors or you'll have to change your schedule. JUST DON'T PANIC!

“Possibles” LIST. No later than end of junior year, develop a list of 5-10 possible schools to apply to. Be sure to put at least a couple of “Dream Schools” (Miles is attending his Dream School – George Washington University in DC!)

Criteria for generating “Possibles” List, 1. Clarinet Teacher 2. Band Director 3. Quality (and Reputation!) of Music Department and Overall University 4. Location (if you hate cold, don't go to upper Midwest)

Get input from Private Teacher, Band Directors (watch out for BIAS from esp. the band directors or others!!!)

Internet Research (listen to ensembles on YouTube), Campus Visit, Private lesson with clarinet teacher

Factor in quality of your grades, emotional needs/desire to live far from home, and YOUR clarinet playing!

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE! LETS TALK ABOUT CLARINET PLAYING!!! See below

II. PREPARE! DON'T GET CLARINET REGRET "I wish I would've practiced more and prepared better!"

PRACTICE! I will assume you a good clarinet player, or you wouldn't be thinking of majoring in music. My experience has been that most students are least self-aware enough to know if they are any good. Many students could be great, but don't practice or have access to good instruction (my ClarinetMike Blog is partly designed for this.) Remember this:

Genuine Excellence in Clarinet Playing = Talent X Practice Time X Practice Quality

GET A CLARINET! IMO, you need to have a quality professional clarinet before your senior year in high school. (Bass Clarinet: Some schools won't let you audition on Bass Clarinet – you should plan on getting a Bb clarinet ASAP).

FIND A GREAT PRIVATE TEACHER! Make sure you have a private clarinet lesson teacher who can (and will) teach you how to play and practice better on the clarinet. Not just a nice person who ROTE teaches you the all-region music. For example, if you play with a bad sound, FORGET IT! [SCOLD ROTE TEACHERS-BUT DON'T BE TOO MEAN!]

III. PREPARE! Application Admonitions

(NOTE to Parents: This is not the time for a "Life Lesson" for your kid. GET INVOLVED! Mistakes could cost YOU \$\$\$\$\$. This stuff is like doing TAXES (BOOOO!) It is complicated, involved, and messy. Get "Down In The Weeds.")

RANKED LIST OF SCHOOLS! From your list of possible schools ("Possibles" LIST above) create a Ranked List of 3-6 or so schools to apply to no later than end of summer between junior and senior year. Put schools in a preliminary order of preference (I went to my original #6 choice for one of my graduate schools!)

DO INTERNET RESEARCH! All information on applying/auditioning etc. will be on university AND music dept. web pages.

FOR EACH SCHOOL YOU MUST APPLY FOR BOTH THE UNIVERSITY AND MUSIC SCHOOL! That means you must **DO 2 APPLICATIONS** for each school – one for the general university and one for the music school!!! Many of the music departments won't even let you audition (or even apply) for the music school unless you've already been admitted to the university. THIS IS A BIG DEAL! SO.....

YOU SHOULD APPLY EARLY! And that usually means by Dec. 1 (of senior year) for the general University application.

Repeat after me, I WILL APPLY EARLY! I WILL APPLY EARLY! I WILL APPLY EARLY! I WILL APPLY EARLY! (Esp. FAFSA!)

PARENTS! GO TO SCHOLARSHIP MEETINGS of all kinds. High schools sponsor these as well as universities – go to a couple at your top choice universities. These will help you understand things like ApplyTexas, Common Application and FAFSA, - Free Application for Federal Student Aid, is the application used by nearly all colleges and universities to determine eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid, including grants, educational loans, and work-study programs.

EXTRA APPLICATION HELP – NO! and YES! I suggest you stay away from organizations that, for a ~large fee, will supposedly help you apply and get accepted. However, some free stuff on the Internet is Great. I asked Miles and he said to use a variety of free stuff - like cappex.com and bigfuture.collegeboard.com and LOTS of others.

MAKE A GRID, POSTER, OR SPREADSHEET. Big and on the wall is great! Down left side: put schools like Texas A&M Commerce, TCU, UTA, Baylor, UNT, KU, etc. Across top: put things like 1. Due Date for University, 2. University Requirements (scores, transcripts, essays) 3. Music School Application Requirements (resume letters of Rec, special forms, pre-screen video SEE BELOW!) 4. Audition Requirements (scales, specific works/genres, sight-reading, etc. SEE BELOW) 5. Names of clarinet professors and band directors, 6. Results (accepted, scholarships, etc.) ETC.

IV. PREPARE! AUDITION ACUMEN [insight, expertise]

NOTE: LET ME REPEAT! Many of the music schools won't let you audition (or even apply) for the music school unless you've already been admitted to the university. So, you must be admitted to the university early! EARLY!

Check Online for Audition Specifics for Each Music Department. Some schools want specific works/genres, scales, etc. Others are more flexible. Again, it is all online– LOOK IT UP! Don't assume anything. If in doubt, email the clarinet professor. Sometimes they will allow a reasonable substitution. Piano accompaniment is generally NOT required, but YOU MUST CHECK TO MAKE SURE, as there are exceptions. Also, memorization is generally only required on scales.

Pre-Screen Videos. Some schools have started using Pre-Screen Videos before allowing a student to audition on campus. TCU, for example, is now doing it. Also, on the TCU website is a video tutorial for doing one – check it out! Dress up!

Prepare Literature Early! – Some schools, such as UT Austin have specific requirements for Pre-Screen Video and Live Auditions! So, you better start early, if you are going to perform major literature such as Debussy's *Premiere Rhapsody*.

Combine Literature As Much As Possible. Since you will be taking more than one audition, try to prepare music you can play at more than one audition. Work with your private teacher on this.

Play Literature You Already Know! For universities that have flexibility in audition requirements, it is always best IMO, to play something you already know instead of learning something new "that you think they will like."

University Music Auditions are NOT All-Region. Generally, professors are looking to find out how good you are, NOT if you can get all the right notes. TONE QUALITY is a high priority (unlike some crummy beancounting all-region auditions.)

Do A Mock Audition. Invite your buddies over (buy them pizza!) to be pretend-faculty on an audition run through. Video your audition and watch it! Also, don't schedule your favorite schools first.

Audition Day Checklist: Here are some common sense things to consider. Ask your private teacher for help.

- Clothes. Dress up! Coat and/or Tie for guys and female equivalent. BUT, be sure clothes are loose fitting and not tight (you may have grown!) NO JEANS, NO SHORTS, NO SNEAKERS. And be modest, please. Cover up tattoos and remove unusual piercings – this is NOT the time to express yourself.
- Get Sleep and Eat Healthy. Get good sleep the night before. Eat a good meal the night before and morning of an audition.
- Arrive Early and Warm Up Carefully. Don't goof this up. PLAN around late people.
- Have 2-3 great reeds ready to play. This is really one of the most important tips.
- Be prepared to sit or stand. Some will want you to stand on your solo, but all will want you to sit on excerpts.
- BE CONFIDENT and PLAY WITH GREAT TONE QUALITY.

Audition Follow Up. After getting home, send an email to the clarinet professor thanking him/her for the audition. If you interact with others on the audition panel, send them an email also, esp. if the band director is on the audition.

Audition Results. Generally admission/scholarship decisions are made in March and they will let you know by April 1. There are many exceptions to this. No scholarship decisions are binding until May 1 according to NASM rules. If a professor leans on you to decide early, they are being a bad boy/girl (i.e. unethical). Many schools have most of their scholarship money in academic scholarships (make A's!) and thus this is more of an entrance audition. Also, 20K is nothing at GWU!

V. PREPARE! QUESTION AND ANSWER

Check out my article on applying to Graduate Schools at www.clarinetmike.com/docs/applying_to_graduate_schools.pdf

*Note: this presentation was influenced by a recent presentation (and handout), "Applying to University Music Schools: Keys to Success" by Joseph Evans, Jeb Mueller, and Melanie Sonnenberg (University of Houston) at TMEA on Feb. 14, 2015.