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.

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