



COLLEGE/CONSERVATORY APPLICATION INFORMATION

Adapted from presentation by CMC alum Leah Branstetter

1.) THE COLLEGE SEARCH

- a. Before you can apply, you need to decide **where** to apply!
- b. Three-step process:
 1. Identify the type of school you are looking for
 2. Get more information
 3. Visit the school, schedule a lesson, or meeting, with the prospective teacher
- c. **Step 1: Identify the type of school you are looking for**
 - i. There are several different types of music schools and music degrees.
 - ii. Types of degrees:
 1. Bachelor of Music (BM): a professional degree granted by conservatories, curriculum typically very heavy in applied performance and music classes
 2. Bachelor of Music Education (BME). Usually comes with teacher certification program.
 3. Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA): more often reserved for theater or visual arts, so you might run into this if you're looking into musical theater. Also very heavy in applied classes.
 4. Bachelor of Arts (BA): a more general liberal arts degree with a major or focus on music, curriculum may have more general academics and less focus on applied music
 - iii. Types of schools:
 1. Conservatories: typically more competitive, offer rigorous pre-professional training, fewer liberal arts classes in curriculum. Ex: Julliard, Curtis. Unlike other schools, don't offer minors.
 2. Liberal arts college: By "liberal arts," a school that focuses on a broad education rather than specific professional or vocational training. Can be a small private school or a college/school within a larger university. Examples: Otterbein, Denison.
 3. School of Music associated with a University: sometimes offer both a BM and a BA program, often a hybrid of a conservatory and a liberal arts program. Examples: CCM, Indiana, OU, CU Boulder, Ohio State.
 - iv. Other factors: the things your counselor tells you about: location, size, available extracurricular
 - v. Each type of college and degree program are quite different and have different advantages and disadvantages

1. More academics & liberal arts = well-rounded graduate
2. Less academics = more time to practice and perform
3. Consider what kind of classes you enjoy taking
4. Consider what position you might want to be in when you graduate—do you want to go right out and audition for orchestras? Or maybe teach? Go on to law/medical/professional school?
5. If you are considering music education, think about what state(s) you would like to be certified to teach in and what grades you want to be able to teach. Not all teacher certifications are created equal!

d. Get more information

- i. Used to require getting a lot of stuff in the mail, but not anymore!
- ii. Most schools still offer request forms where you can get printed information or be placed on an e-mail list. If you fill these out, expect to actually get information. Don't give them your information unless you're already interested by what you see on their website, or you will be buried alive in junk mail.
 1. NUMBER ONE RULE!!!!: have a reliable, **working** email address that is not silly or offensive. Use gmail to make a college application address if you need to. Colleges will send you critical application information based off their mailing list and admissions officers WILL notice your e-mail address if you apply!
 2. Look specifically for the school of music or music department website—usually these have additional information about applying not available on the school's general admissions page. Sometimes even a completely separate application!
- iii. Another option is to attend a college fair. The National Association for College Admissions Counseling has a special fair ONLY for visual and performing arts students. You will be able to talk face-to-face with the MUSIC admissions counselors and ask them questions. All of the major music programs in the country will be represented.
 1. Closest visual and performing arts fairs: **October 9, 4:30-6:30pm** at the **Oberlin Conservatory of Music.**
<http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/admissions/campus-visits.dot> and the **Ohio University, Experience the Arts Day on Oct. 9, 9:00am – 4:00pm** more info here:
<https://www.ohio.edu/finearts/students/future/experience.cfm>
 If you go: bring a sheet of printed labels with your name, address, intended major, phone number, e-mail address, and intended year of enrollment

- iv. Ask current students and alumni of the school. Many former CMC students are currently at conservatories and college across the country; Youth Orchestra, school orchestra directors also a good resource.
- v. Processing the information
 - 1. The most important thing is the biographical information on the studio teachers. Use the internet to find out how active they are as teachers/performers, listen to recordings of them, and find out who their successful students are.
 - 2. Remember, average class sizes in a conservatory can be very skewed. How do you average a 1-on-1 private lesson with a 100-person orchestra rehearsal?
 - 3. Overall school ranking can be a poor reflection of the school's music program—look at the rankings by major when possible. The University of Cincinnati is a 3rd tier school, but has the 6th rated instrumental program.
 - 4. Best to find out information like: is the orchestra playing good repertoire? How many performance opportunities will you have each term? Will you study with professors or with TAs as an undergraduate?
- vi. If you are not planning to major in music or if you are planning to double major:
 - 1. It is even more important to ask questions/do your homework. Some schools do not offer minors. Others—especially schools with competitive performance programs—may have restrictions on what ensembles you can play in and who you can take lessons with. On the other hand, there are schools with many non-majors active in their music department.
 - 2. There may also be limitations on certain double majors if the curricula are too different or if one of the programs has very competitive admissions.
- e. **Step 3: Visit the School, schedule a lesson or meeting with prospective teacher**
 - i. It's very important to limit your list of choices to under 10, or you will go crazy and potentially broke.
 - ii. TAKE A LESSON WITH THE TEACHER.
 - 1. Think of it as a pre-audition. (But prepare to pay for it)
 - 2. Significantly helps your odds of admission in many cases
 - 3. Helps you gauge if you want to apply and if you can get in
 - 4. Work it into the admissions weekend if you need to, but best to do it a few weeks in advance—that way you can incorporate the teacher's suggestions into your audition and show improvement over time
 - iii. Watch the ensembles rehearse
 - 1. Ask: Are they more skilled than a youth orchestra?
 - iv. Sit in on freshman-level history or theory classes and take notes
 - v. Take a tour. Helps you compare the different schools' facilities
 - vi. Weigh the concert-going and gig possibilities in the area

2.) PREPARING TO APPLY

- a. Practice for your auditions, but don't let your grades and test scores suffer-- especially if you are focusing on universities or liberal arts schools. Check the minimum test score and GPA requirements for the schools you are interested in. The audition is the most important factor in the admissions decision, but when it comes down to two candidates with equally good playing ability, the one with better grades will be accepted.
- b. Discuss a budget with your parents. Most schools have an application fee, which can run over \$100 per school. Some schools have extra fees for auditioning for a music major or minor. Also expect to pay for travel costs and trial lessons with teachers. Especially if you are applying for schools out-of-state, costs can add up quickly before you even get your first tuition bill!
- c. Keep a calendar of deadlines. Create a spread sheet! You can't count on a late application being accepted. Make sure you know what weekends you are free to audition—rescheduling auditions is a real pain for all involved.
- d. Start early. Remember that it can take 4-6 weeks for records to be sent from your high school or from testing services to the college admissions office. That means you need to have them sent well before the deadline, which is usually December 1.
 - i. Baldwin-Wallace looks at a recently graded paper (from junior or senior year)
 1. Creative or history writing with teacher comments
 - ii. GPA needs to be 3.0 (B average)
- e. Track all of your musical activities during high school
 - i. For every concert you perform in, write down exactly what you played and the date
 - ii. Keep records of things that you do at CMC, Youth Orchestra, masterclasses, summer programs, etc.
 - iii. This will make resumes, activity and repertoire lists much easier!
- f. Identify teachers that can write your recommendation letters and talk to them about it early. You might be willing to do everything the night before the deadline, but they might not be!

3.) APPLYING

- a. Apply online, whenever possible. Be honest, accurate, and have someone proofread it before you click "submit."
- b. Again: have a good email. Check your spam blocker settings—I know more than one student who missed an audition because the notice was sent to their junk mail folder. Many e-mails sent from colleges are automated.
- c. FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS. How many copies of documents are required, where you are supposed to mail them, what materials are required, etc. How well you do this reflects

- back on you! Also, most of the directions are there to make the lives of the faculty and admissions office workers easier—these aren't the people you want to have mad at you!
- d. Conservatory applications can have one part or two or more. Sometimes you apply with only one application, sometimes you need to apply separately to the college or university and to their school of music. Read carefully!
 - e. Again: Apply early. Because:
 - i. Audition dates are always scheduled on a first-come, first served basis and can fill up quickly. ALWAYS DOUBLE CHECK your school, CMC, youth orchestra, academic, and family calendars when writing your preferred audition date!
 - ii. Admissions offices get piles and piles of mail and email from thousands of applicants. There is a much greater likelihood that your application pieces will be misplaced or misprocessed if you submit it during the deadline rush.
 - f. Keep copies of EVERY SINGLE THING you send, keep copies of e-mails received, and take notes on any information you get over the phone. In the heat of application season, it's easy for both you and the schools to get things confused.
 - g. If you have questions or problems, try to call the college representatives yourself. They want to get to know YOU—not your mom or dad. Also remember that you are being screened to see how well you will do in college. How does it look if your parents appear to be doing everything for you?

4.) AUDITIONS

- a. Create a spread sheet with details of deadline dates, prescreening requirements, repertoire requirements, potential audition dates, preferred teacher list, travel, lodging
- b. Your private teacher is your best resource for audition preparation.
- c. Take preparation very seriously. Cramming for an audition is next to impossible. But remember that preparation is more than just practicing, it is also planning:
 - i. Set your repertoire as early as possible and strive for peak performance in around January/February.
 - ii. Take care with your travel arrangements
 - 1. Whether you have to go across the country or just across town, make your travel and lodging arrangements so that you will arrive at the audition early, well-rested, and with the time and a place to properly warm-up. Strange college campuses can be confusing places, so allow plenty of time to find where you are going. Auditions are usually in the winter, and weather can be a factor.
 - 2. Don't schedule a flight for 10 minutes after your audition is over or a school activity for later that night. Audition schedules tend to run late, and there is no sense in making yourself more jittery during your audition because you're worried about missing a flight or being late for show choir.

- iii. It is YOUR job, not your private teacher's, to find out the specifics of each audition. Utilize that spread sheet!:
1. Find out if you are required to have an accompanist. Most instrumentalists do not, but you should check. If you are required to have accompaniment, find out if the school provides one or if you need to book your own. Don't procrastinate on making arrangements with your accompanist!
 2. Are you required to memorize all or part of your audition? Scales should ALWAYS be memorized, and a concerto is usually to be memorized.
 3. You may not be able to use the same repertoire at every school. Look over requirements carefully. In addition to certain types of pieces, you might be required to play orchestral excerpts, do sight-reading, or play scales or an etude.
 4. In addition to the audition, you might also take a music theory and/or aural skills test, have an interview, or audition on piano as well as your primary instrument as part of the audition process. You may need to spend time preparing for those things as well.
 5. Some schools (especially top-notch ones) require pre-screening tapes, which mean you might even have to record some or all of your audition repertoire BEFORE the December 1 audition deadline.
 - a. If a pre-screening recording is required, make sure it is high-quality and test it before you send it in. You wouldn't believe how many tapes we get that don't work! Non-digital recordings or bad recordings can distort your tempo and pitch on different playback equipment
 6. Practice in your audition clothes and shoes. Make sure you're comfortable and that nothing rattles, constricts, or otherwise interferes with your performance.
 7. Try some mock auditions before the real, especially if you're not an experienced auditioner. Expect that the audition committee will interrupt you and/or ask you to skip around. Expect anywhere between 1 and 5 people in the room and possibly also a video camera. Videotape yourself so you can see what kind of impression you are making and hear yourself as the audition committee will.
 8. Be prepared. Be professional. Be sincere. The committee is looking for potential, not perfection.