

# Preparation at the High School Level

The following is a list of recommended experiences that will help students in high school music programs make the transition to college music degree programs.

**Private Lessons:** Students who want to become music majors should begin private study on their instruments as soon as possible, as experience in a band or choir alone will not be sufficient preparation for a college entrance audition. They must also be proficient in music reading.

**Aural Skills:** Unless a student is blessed with a natural gift, these skills take the longest to develop. Among other skills, students must be able to identify by ear the degrees of a scale being played or sung, the type of triad being played or sung, and the chord factor in the bass or soprano of a chord being played. Students should also be able to tap back rhythms being played or sung and to notate simple tonal melodies being played or sung.

**Music Fundamentals:** Learning the fundamentals of music notation in freshman college theory can be daunting; knowledge is either assumed or is covered very quickly. The material students must know includes meter signatures, rhythmic values, elementary principles of form, written intervals and triads, treble and bass clefs, major and minor scales and key signatures, and key relationships.

**Vocal Ability:** All college music majors, no matter what their principal performance medium, must be able to sing intelligently and in tune. In fact, singing is required for most college entrance auditions. Students must be able to sing back pitches played within and outside their vocal range, sing back notes in a major and minor triad, and sing the major scale with numbers, letters, and solfeggio, and sight-sing simple folk tunes, among other things.

**Keyboard Skills:** All college music majors, no matter what their principal performance medium, must be able to play and read intermediate keyboard literature with ease and fluency. Students should also be able to sight-read one level of difficulty below their performance level and have a beginning knowledge of I, IV, and V harmonization or simple songs.

**The Right Attitude:** If students are passionate about and dedicated to music — as well as being aware of its rigors — then they belong in a college music program.

Note: This information is condensed and adapted from “So You Want to Be A Music Major,” by the Higher Education Division of Curriculum/Instruction of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, May, 1997 PMEA News. Used by Permission.