

Preparing for a Major in the JBU Music Department

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Teaching is our vocation – we are truly called by God in to serve Him through teaching – and we find genuine fulfillment in following that call. Through experience we have learned that we can be more effective teachers if we initiate the learning process before students enroll in any of our programs. We don't want our new students to be caught off-guard. To that end we offer you prospective students advice and guidelines for readying yourselves for majoring in our department.

Ideally, before beginning our program, you would do well to be able to:

- Read (execute) rhythms that include whole notes, halves, quarters, eighths, sixteenths, and eighth-note triplets – and the corresponding rests
- Count time in the meters (time signatures) found most frequently: 4/4 (common time), 3/4, 2/4, 2/2 (cut time), and 6/8 would do nicely
- Read treble clef and bass clef, including two ledger lines above and below the staff
- Know your way around the piano keyboard – be able to locate every A, C#, E-flat, etc.
- Find any note on the treble clef and bass clef on the keyboard
- Write any key on the keyboard on the treble clef or bass clef
- Sing all by yourself with as little self-consciousness as possible

All of these matters will be presented during the first week of class in both MUS 0103 Elements of Music Theory and MUS 1931 Class Piano I. You'll find that most (but not all) of your classmates already have these basics. You will have the opportunity to learn all of this, but it will have to be accomplished in a very short period of time, because we move quickly.

Also during the first week you'll be learning or reviewing other concepts and terms. It would be greatly to your advantage to know already all of this material:

- Dynamic markings
- Common tempo markings
- Articulation markings
- Small intervals (distances between different pitches)

If you can read music well, begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between music-in-notation and music-as sound. These ear-stretching exercises will plant a seed that will germinate to some extent in Elements of Music Theory, and then bloom in the Musicianship courses.

Choose a melody from a songbook, hymnal, choral work – something you've never heard performed. Play the first pitch on the piano, and then try to sing the melody, with correct rhythm and right pitches without using the piano. Then play the melody on the piano to check the accuracy of your singing.

Choose a familiar melody you've never seen in notation. Without using the piano, try to write it on staff paper in your choice of key, both the rhythm and the proper pitches for the key you've chosen. Then go to a piano and play what you have written to check the accuracy of your notation.

Choose a piece of music (choral, piano, orchestral) you know by heart but have never seen in print. (The "Hallelujah!" chorus from Handel's Messiah would be a good example.) Locate a score of the work and follow it as you listen to the recording. Studying the notation of a piece you already know well can be a memorable experience.

Some students enter JBU having already taken the AP music theory course or picked up a lot of the fundamentals of music through their private lessons. We offer a waiver test for MUS 0103 Elements of Music Theory.

Your performance area is a given, and the fundamentals of music notation and some basic aural skills follow. What else might you do to get ready?

Focus on the names of the composers and titles of the music you study. Don't be content to say that you are studying Beethoven's "Sonata." Because he wrote 32 sonatas, you should know which sonata you are studying, including key and opus number. His sonatas contain several movements, so you should know specifically which movement of which sonata. You should know if the vocal solo you are singing is from an opera or a group of songs, or other large work, or if it is a separate entity. You may not always be able to uncover this information (some publishers' editions are remarkably uninformative), but you should try.

We also urge you to broaden your spectrum of listening and performance experiences, given what's possible in your specific locale or situation.

You might also do some reading about performers, how they must prepare if they are to achieve their goals, and the lifestyle they must lead to satisfy the demands of their career. Or investigate some composers and their works. A really interesting project could involve your choosing one composer of each of the last four centuries (20th, 19th, 18th, 17th), read about them, identify some representative works, locate recordings, and thoughtfully listen to them. If you live near a college campus, the library personnel ought to be able to assist you. You'll learn a lot about musical styles.

Finally, you might talk to someone who has earned at least a bachelor's degree in music. It could be your high school band or choral director, the person who leads music at your church, or someone who has a piano studio in your town. Ask them to tell you about their experience in the music department at their college. Tell them of your musical ambitions and goals and dreams – and ask them to advise you as you prepare for college.

If you're reluctant to approach a stranger, e-mail us. Just pick one of us, and tell us all about yourself. If one of our colleagues would be in a better position to advise you, we'll forward your message to that person.

Talking to a current music major at JBU is the best way to learn about the program from a student's perspective.

We'd like you to consider JBU for your college education – and what better way to encourage you to look closely at what JBU can do for you in the future than by helping you in the present? Our personal attention to individual students is a hallmark of our department – we invite you to experience that even before you first step foot on campus.

We look forward to hearing from you via e-mail, meeting you when you visit JBU, listening to you perform and chatting with you when you come to audition, and finally working with you in the studio, classroom, rehearsal hall, and Cathedral sanctuary.



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