



[Dr. Julie Stone](#), Professor of Flute
Eastern Michigan University



THE COLLEGE AUDITION PROCESS

National Flute Association

October 2, 2022
2:00 p.m. CT, Zoom

There are several factors that must go into selecting a college if you wish to become a professional musician or if you want to study music as a minor or non-major. This selection is a highly personal matter and you must prepare early for the decisions you will have to make.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN AUDITIONING FOR COLLEGE

Preparation

- PREPARATION is key to any successful audition!
- Try to find a good flute instructor to help you prepare. If finances are a problem, be diligent in your self-study by watching online tutorials and gathering as much information as possible. You can definitely learn all of your scales on your own so begin with that! It is not a deal breaker if you do not have a private instructor although a private instructor can be invaluable.
- In the years leading up to a college audition, try to enter solo and ensemble/competitions, attend summer programs/festivals, join a local flute club, audition for local youth symphonies/bands, attend open master classes, etc. to give you experience and build your resume.
- Keep a good resume and repertoire list on hand so that you can add to it as you add more items.
- Keep a good head shot so that it is ready to go for any application.
- A note about academics: There are several options in high school to obtain college credit and to boost your academics for an application including dual enrollment, AP courses, International Baccalaureate, CLEP (College Level Examination Program), etc. It really depends on the colleges to which you are applying as to the importance/use of these types of options for college credit and acceptance. Some of these options can be very labor intensive so weigh the importance of the options at particular universities/conservatories vs. your time/stress level during your high school years and how they affect your college applications. AP Theory in particular can be a good idea but realize that the particular college you attend may or may not accept the score for college credit. You may or may not have to take a theory placement exam when you start your freshman year. There is not one correct answer for these.

Choosing a College, University, or Conservatory

- **Most importantly**, make a list of potential teachers with whom you would like to study. If you do not know of any, ask the advice of your current flute instructor, professional musicians, band directors, and any other musicians you may know.
- Decide if you would prefer a college, university, or conservatory situation.
- Always apply to several colleges/conservatories so that you may have back-ups in the case that your first choice does not come through. Have a list of “Reach”, “Fit”, and “Safety” schools.
- Learn all you can about the particular college, university, or conservatory where the teachers of your choice teach. Research the music school for information. Especially research about tuition costs, scholarship/assistantship availability, and degree curriculum. What kind of degree programs do they offer?
- Apply for any scholarships for which you qualify. Generally, many music scholarships go to needed instruments such as oboe, bassoon, viola, etc. so make sure you apply for music and academic scholarships.

- Make an informed choice by looking at websites, social media, online presence of the teacher and flute studio. What are their alums doing? What are the current students doing outside of the university? Do the students enter competitions? Ask yourself if this is the right fit for you.
- Make direct contact with the particular teacher(s) and try to schedule a trial lesson in person or virtually. This should probably be the spring before the year you will be auditioning but it can be in the fall as well. This will enable you both to see how you work together. This does not commit you to scheduling an audition for that particular school if it is not the right fit.
 - Remember that this lesson is designed for the teacher to see how you work together and for YOU to see how you work together. The interview goes both ways!
 - Have some questions for the teacher regarding scholarships, performance opportunities, curriculum, degrees offered, success of graduates, current student activities, study abroad, extra help with recording for competitions, facilities, etc.
 - Make sure to ask how much the teacher will charge for this lesson. Many teachers do this as a part of their job for free, and some will charge. (Try to get Venmo, Paypal, etc. to make this easier)
 - It is a good idea to write a handwritten thank you note to the teacher after the lesson.

Audition Research/Repertoire

- Find out everything you can about the auditions at each school. The audition process varies from place to place so be sure to know exactly what will be expected of you.
- Some bigger, more competitive schools require a prescreen audition by video to get a live audition (either virtual or in person). This requires recording techniques found in the section on recorded auditions. Some schools do not require this but apply early and audition early to make sure you qualify for any scholarships.
- Generally, for a performance degree, the committee will expect an entering freshman to play some combination (but not all) of a Bach **Sonata** or other baroque piece; a piece such as Hindemith **Sonata**; a French piece such as those by Faure, Enesco, Chaminade, or Gaubert; a movement of a Mozart **Concerto**, and perhaps orchestral excerpts. Scales and sight reading may also be required. For other majors such as music education, music therapy, Bachelor of Arts in Music etc. the requirements will most probably be fewer pieces. For graduate school, a major sonata, major concerto, Bach sonata, and a contemporary technique piece plus excerpts are most often required.
- If you have the option of a live, recorded, or virtual live audition, choose the live audition.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- Apply early so that you can focus on what is important.
- Take the SAT or ACT early so that it is completed in a timely fashion. Some schools do not require these any longer, so make sure you are informed before you select which test to take or none at all.
- As mentioned above, some schools now require prescreen auditions to obtain an audition. If this is required, make the prescreens well in advance so that you can record again if you wish.
- Do not wait until the last minute submit the application so that any technical glitches can be avoided.
- Request letters of recommendation from trusted teachers and others who you feel will write a good letter. Ask them well in advance and follow up nicely if necessary as teachers often need a nudge to complete the letter.
- Research any applications for scholarships at the school or in general and apply for those.
- Most high schools have some sort of assignment about an application essay so use that to your full advantage. If you have not written an essay, begin early so that it is one less thing you have to do.
- Keep a spreadsheet of all application requirements, audition days, deadlines, etc.
- After the audition either live or virtual, write thank you notes to the prospective teacher and pianist if applicable.

THE LIVE AUDITION

- If audition is live make sure to travel the day before if you are flying or driving a long distance, so that any travel problems will not affect the audition. If driving only a short distance, leave early the day of your audition so that you arrive an hour or two before your audition time.
- If you have to stay overnight, reserve a hotel with complimentary breakfast to minimize effort on audition day.
- Know what is expected of you so there will be no surprises.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses and plan your audition pieces toward your strengths if you have a choice of repertoire. Pick contrasting styles and pieces that you play well.
- Use your metronome in practice so that a good sense of pulse is conveyed in your performance. Use a tuner so that your pitch will be accurate.

- Play pieces for friends, studio class (if in a studio or college program) etc. and ask them to provide you with written comments. **Always perform your pieces before using them in an audition situation; practice the audition. Set up a mock audition situation so that you will be prepared.**
- If a collaborator (accompanist) is required, rehearse with your pianist or the one that is provided very carefully. If using a provided pianist, rehearsal time will be at a minimum so pick pieces that require less ensemble rehearsal time (those with consistent rhythmic pulse such as Mozart, Bach, Liebermann, Taktakishvili, etc).
- Try to find out what kind of hall or room you will be playing in and what kind of acoustics it has.
- Wear nice clothes (no jeans, sweats, etc.) that are nice that allow deep breathing. Try to avoid high heels as this can affect correct breathing.
- Always get enough sleep before your audition. Try to avoid caffeine (enhances nerves but include caffeine if you are used to it), and salty foods (can give you dry mouth); do not eat too much and eat the right foods such as pasta, bananas, etc. for energy.
- If you get dry mouth you can gently bite your tongue to produce saliva. If your lip plate gets slippery, you can apply a postage stamp to the solid part of the lip plate that meets your chin (not the embouchure hole).
- The day of the audition, make sure to have a good long tone warm-up and slow scale warm-up so that your fingers are relaxed; try to avoid playing pieces up to tempo to avoid tension.
- **Be early to your audition!**
- They will most likely let you start with a piece of your choice then they will pick after that.
- When tuning if using a piano, do not turn your back to the audience.
- If you are asked to sight read, concentrate on the rhythm and pulse and keep going.
- Remember to concentrate on making music. Try to convey to the panel what the composer intended in the music.
- Do not grimace at mistakes.
- Take time between pieces. Generally, the committee is assessing what they just heard and is not wanting you to rush into the next piece.
- Breathe! Take in some deep breaths throughout the day and before you audition to ensure good blood flow. This will also aid in relaxation. Always focus on deep breathing through the nose because this is usually the first thing to suffer when you are nervous. This can also slow the heartbeat that becomes elevated with nerves.
- Remember that the panel WANTS you to succeed!
- Not only are you auditioning for the school, they are auditioning for you in a way so be prepared with thoughtful questions such as scholarship availability, performance availability, summer opportunities, study abroad, current and alum student activities, etc.
- It is important to realize that some audition committees are straight faced and give no indication of their opinion of your audition so do not let this throw your confidence level. It is normal! Some panels do show some reaction and the reaction does not always equal the outcome so just be prepared for anything.

RECORDED/VIRTUAL AUDITIONS

If you have the option of a live, recorded, or virtual audition or performance, always choose the live audition or performance if at all possible. If you have to travel, chances are that it will be more expensive, but it is likely to be more successful in the long run. If the audition or performance is only by recording, here are a few suggestions to ensure a successful recording. Recordings have become essential in the time of the pandemic of 2020 so many platforms have incorporated more recordings into their events and it is crucial you understand the process. The best teacher in this situation is trial and error so practice making recordings to get the best quality. Many platforms also have a virtual option and many of these suggestions apply for virtual auditions as well. Also consult the above tips for live auditions for other pointers.

Video Quality and Equipment

- Make sure if it is video OR audio.
- If at all possible, hire a professional recording engineer to make the audition recording or live performance. If you are short on funds, borrow or rent good equipment, gather lots of advice from someone with experience with recording flute, and use the highest quality material.
- Invest in a good mic. Purchase a condenser mic as opposed to a dynamic mic. You can watch youtube videos comparing mic sound and make your own choices. Current suggestions include:
Shure MV88+ Lightning Port Mic for iphone (excellent quality and video)
Zoom Q2n or Q8n-4K (excellent audio; good video)
- Use good recording software and learn how to edit videos together if permitted.
- If live virtual, make sure the wifi is excellent and the mic and internet connection convey the best sound.

Preparation

- Make sure you know what is expected of you on the recording/performance and what order.
- Submit well ahead of deadline to give you peace of mind.
- **Always** put your best piece first if you have a choice. Committees listen to many recordings/performances and you need to catch their attention in the beginning. Do not put anything such as Bach first because it is controversial as far as interpretation. Always put something that shows off your sound first because that is your signature.
- Get a page turner if using piano.
- Make sure the piano is in tune and you are in tune with piano. Pitch problems will most certainly keep you from coming out on top.

The Scene and Useful Tips

- Wear clothes that are comfortable, dark, solid color (so there won't be any distractions), and business casual attire (no jeans, shorts, revealing clothes).
- Find a solid background without clutter. Having your bed, closet, dresser, stuffed animals, etc. is not professional and is distracting.
- Have light in front of you and not behind because it gives a silhouette. Do not stand in front of a window. [Sample video scenes.](#)
- The scene should include the piano if using piano.
- Record/perform in a recital hall or room with good acoustics. Acoustics are a major quality factor. Always find a quiet place without outside noise or traffic.
- The scene is best full body shot but at least from knees up. If using piano, use full body.
- Film landscape mode rather than portrait.
- Put "Do not disturb – recording/performance in progress" signs on the outside doors.
- If recording/performing at home, ask if family members can be 'offline' while you record/perform for better quality and less likelihood that the wifi will go out during your recording.

Physical and Technical

- Do not look at the camera while you are playing. It conveys that you are more concerned about the recording/performance than making music. This goes for in person auditions as well. Do not look at the judges.
- Put your music stand high enough but low enough that we can see you. If the camera is at a good height this will not be a problem, but if the camera is too low you will be looking down while playing which adversely affects your performance.
 - Make sure your face and your instrument are visible
 - Stand up.
 - Look confident.
 - State your name and any other information such as the piece(s) you will be playing. This is called "slating".
- Most good recording apps or equipment will have a mic gain selection which is the level and sensitivity. Do many tests and set the gain as high as possible without bleed or feedback in the sound. To do this, play your loudest and highest note and listen to the test. Make sure the needle or indicator is not in the red or bleed section. Conduct tests to see where the best placement will be. Usually, you will want the mic just above where your head is and about 6 feet away.
- Take time between pieces if the audition is in one take in a recording or you are performing live. Generally, the committee is assessing what they just heard and is not wanting you to rush into the next piece.
- For recording, it is a good idea to announce what take you are on to keep track of what version you like. You can edit it out later.



Practice the Recording/Performance

- Make a practice recording/performance, even if it is just on your phone or ipad so you can hear yourself and see yourself before you record the actual audition. This will also allow you time to get comfortable with recording yourself or performing for a virtual platform. Start this well before the recording/performance date.
- Review the recording and look for these things: background, lighting, sound quality, video quality, background noise, etc.

The Virtual Live Audition

- See section on **THE LIVE AUDITION**.
- Practice the hardware and software for the audition with a teacher or family member so that it is in good working order. **Practice the virtual live audition so you will be prepared.**
- Make sure to have good wifi

The Virtual Recorded Audition

- If posting a recording online, learn available software and apps and/or platforms to distribute. Youtube unlisted is the main option.
- If editing a recording is allowed, learn how to edit with your app if you feel comfortable, or hire it done professionally if you need editing in the middle of a piece. Most performances will work best with a clean non-edited performance. With current software it is easy to edit out the beginning and ending of a performance so that it does not show you turning on and off the recording or any other distractions. This type of editing is fine for auditions that indicate no editing.
- Record several takes of every piece so that you may pick the best performance. Announce each take of the same piece as Take 1, Take 2 etc. and keep a record of which you like.

THE WAITING GAME and the AUDITION RESULTS

Some schools have what is called rolling enrollment so you might know that day of your audition or soon after, the results of your audition. Some schools wait until they hear everyone audition so it is sometimes months before you hear any results. If the latter is the case just fill your time with other activities and be proud you put yourself out there. During this time, it is a good idea to write a handwritten thank you note for hearing your audition addressed to the teacher and the entire audition panel. Whatever the result of your auditions, please know that it is frequently not a determination of your potential or of your talent. Many things go into these results and you will probably never know the reasons why some decisions are made. It is important to know that you will end up where you are meant to be and that you can make the best of any situation. By doing good research on teachers before the audition cycle, you will end up at a school where you have a good teacher for you and that is the most important aspect. The name of the school is not always the best indicator of success. If your number 1, 2, or even 3 pick does not come through, you will be disappointed but know that you can have a great experience wherever you are. Have a good attitude and be receptive to everything presented to you.

WHAT THE AUDITION PANEL LOOKS FOR IN AN AUDITION

Tone - One of the most important aspects of your performance. If you do not have a good sound, no one will want to hear you no matter how fast and accurately you play.

Musicality/Expression - Another most important element; play from the heart; a performance with inspiration and life will be much more memorable than a purely "accurate" performance without inspiration. Pay specific attention to phrasing, style, and dynamics.

Intonation - This is self-explanatory; be aware of the traditional tuning tendencies and work with a tuner to anticipate problems; always listen and adjust if necessary

Technique - This is a given in any performance - it is expected; work for accuracy and rhythm

Articulation - Punctuation of music

- Clarity
- Lightness
- Speed
-

Rhythmic Accuracy and Pulse - Maintaining a consistent beat and accurate rhythm. If sight reading, RHYTHM is the most important, notes are secondary.

Ensemble - Accuracy of ensemble; do you move together and arrive at important parts of the phrase with accuracy and finesse? Are you playing as one?

Preparation/Attitude - These are not usually on an adjudication form but it does matter how you present yourself!

Memorized Performances - Some auditions require memorized performances. This takes careful practice and includes three steps:

1. Visual memory of the printed music
2. Aural memory of how it sounds
3. Digital memory in your fingers from practicing patterns

MANAGING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

We all know that performance anxiety is a natural part of being a performer. We have all had that dream where we get in front of a room full of people with music in front of us that we have not practiced! If we did not have any heightened sense of awareness in a performance, our magical moments might not occur. That said, the adrenaline created by this performance anxiety can at times be crippling so we need methods to cope. The following are some ideas to help combat the anxiety when performing.

- Preparation is key. If you are prepared, your memory of what to do can take over such as finger memory. If you feel prepared then it might lessen the amount of nerves.
- Accept the performance anxiety and adrenaline and learn to perform with it as it can enhance a performance.
- Performance anxiety can affect you physically, emotionally, and mentally.
- Convey what the composer intended rather than thinking about what makes you nervous.
- For technical sections, use practice techniques requiring repetition and slow practice.
- For slow music, “get into the music” - be the character of the music; become an actor.
- Maintain your concentration and control of what you’re doing with your instrument and try to not be distracted.
- If recording, try and record early, so you do not have the added stress of trying to submit at the last minute.
- Your performance is important to you but try to avoid thinking of impressing people. Your performance is important to others because they want to hear good music rather than you being impressive.
- The performance is not world peace. If something goes wrong just roll with it.
- There will be mistakes in a performance so learn to exist with them. It is important for the panel to see how you recover from mistakes.
- The most important aspect of a performance is its message, not its perfection.
- Think of every sound you make as your only sound! In other words, if you had only one sound to make, make it your best!
- If you are starting to feel the nerves, push in slightly on the bottom lip with the flute and away with the bottom lip at the same time for a secure connection.
- Some people like to put a pebble in their shoe to distract from the nerves!
- Breathe deeply because this is the first thing to be affected with nerves. If you breathe through the nose and out the mouth this will help ensure deep breathing. Breathe in whispering “whaaaaaaat”.
- Think of slowing down the heartbeat.
- Stay in the moment while looking ahead only slightly.
- Perform before you perform! In other words, play for friends and family before a big performance to get used to being in front of people.
- Limit caffeine and sugar the day of the performance, but if you are used to having caffeine go ahead and maintain standard usage.
- If you experience dry mouth, try gently biting the sides of the tongue to salivate.
- If you experience lip plate slippage, place a postage stamp on the lip plate.
- PERFORM more so that you get used to the feeling and how to manage it.
- Try exercising to some exhaustion then try playing a piece and learn how to make it happen with fatigue.
- Learn to distinguish between general life anxiety and situational anxiety of a performance and how to manage.
- Use imagery for the adrenaline rush such as containing the liquid in a jar until the performance is over, etc. although some find that adrenaline helps a performance. The audience WANTS you to do well! My colleague Barbara Ogar says, “Breathe in their support and blow out the beautiful gift of music for them.”
- **Remember the old saying “look forward and not sideways”** meaning to look to your own path and not to others to compare yourself.

CAREER INFORMATION FOR THE FLUTIST

CAREERS IN MUSIC

Music jobs include a wide variety of possibilities listed here plus others. There are several different paths that one can pursue in music related fields as well as paths that are not music related. It is widely known that employers like to hire those with a music degree even if the job is not music related. Musicians are known for having good skills at organization, discipline, interpersonal communication, team work, and many others.

PERFORMING/MUSIC

Orchestra

Band, Military Band

Chamber music

Solo

Studio musician

Composer (classical, video game, film, television)

Music arranger

Freelance

Woodwind doubler

Pit musician for musicals, opera

Conductor

DJ

Venue management

Contract negotiator

Entertainment lawyer (law school)

Publicist

Talent agent

Producer

Web design for musicians

Instrument maker

Instrument repair

Publishing editor

Journalist/critic

Concert technician

Web designer

Social media specialist

Author

Law School

Medical School

TEACHING

Music educator (public or private school)

College professor (instrumental, theory, history,
business, therapy, electronic, composer, etc.)

Private studio teacher

MUSIC THERAPY

Using music to assist various populations such as geriatric, prison, school, hospital, rehab. Note that this is not simply performing music, but using it as a clinical tool to develop a particular skill with clients to improve their quality of life.

MUSIC BUSINESS

Music sales such as in a music store or online business

Instrument sales

Marketing

Artist manager

Tour manager

ADMINISTRATION

Non-profit leadership

Festival director or employee

Arts series administrator

Music librarian

College School of Music director, associate director,
social media, advisor

PRODUCTION

Recording engineer (video and sound)

Sound production

Streaming concerts

Piano tuner

SAMPLE RESUME

YOUR NAME
ADDRESS
PHONE NUMBER
WEBSITE
EMAIL

EDUCATION

Sample High School, Graduation date,
List any awards

List private teacher if any and years of study

PERFORMING EXPERIENCE

Orchestra/Band

Principal flute, sample high school wind symphony

Master Classes and Summer Workshops

Selected performer, Name, Master Class
Auditor, Name, Master Class

COMPETITIONS, AWARDS, & HONORS

Winner, National Flute Association High School Flute Choir Competition, 2022, NFA
Convention, Chicago, Illinois

Winner, John Phillip Sousa Award, Name of High School, year

Solo and Ensemble

Solo First Division ratings and years
Chamber First Division ratings and years

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Flute Instructor, Private Studio in city; years; middle school through high school

REFERENCES

Name
Band Director
Contact Information

Name
Flute Teacher
Contact Information

SAMPLE REPERTOIRE LIST

NAME

Tone

Trevor Wye **Practice Book 1**
John Wion **Sing**

Scales and Technique

All Major and minor scales
Reichert **Daily Exercises**
Taffanel/Gaubert **Daily Exercises**

Etudes

Berbiguier **18 Studies**
Andersen **24 Studies, Op 30**

Solo

Chaminade **Concertino**
Debussy **Syrinx**
Hindemith **Sonata**
Doppler **Hungarian Pastorale Fantaisie**
Mozart **Concerto in G Major**

Excerpts

Brahms **Symphony No. 4**
Debussy **Afternoon of a Faun**
Mendelssohn **Scherzo from Midsummer Night's Dream**
Ravel **Daphnis and Chloe**

Contemporary Techniques

Chamberlain/Matthews **Beat Boxing and Beyond**
Clarke **The Great Train Race**

Chamber Music

Woodwind Quintet
Hindemith **Quintet**
Reicha **Quintet**
Flute duet, trio, quartet, choir
Moyse **Album of Flute Duets**
Zempleni **Trio for Flutes**
Dubois **Quatuor for flutes**
Adler **Madrigals**

Large Ensemble

Band
Holst **Suites**
Maslanka **Prelude on a Gregorian Tune**

Orchestra

Faure **Pelleas et Melisande** (list part)
Mozart **Symphony** (list part)