

**WEATHERING THE PERFECT STORM:
PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION FOR A CAREER
IN MUSIC PERFORMANCE**

**A Monograph
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board**

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of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS**

**by
Joseph W. Kauffman
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Examining Committee Members:

**Dr. Charles Abramovic, Chair, Professor of Piano
Dr. Eduard Schmieder, Professor of Violin
Dr. Edward Latham, Advisor, Professor of Music Theory
Dr. Steven Zohn, External Member, Professor of Music History**

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ABSTRACT

A brief study of the history of classical music and the subsequent performance of it reveal magnificent innovative achievements in the inspired evolution of composers and the performing artists that have presented it. Throughout the centuries these performers have stimulated generations of audiences while taking them on musical journeys that cover the complete spectrum of human emotion.

Today the classical music world faces weighty challenges that that could very well crush the future of this valuable art form and lead the industry into a desolate demise. A thick cloud of smoke has descended upon these once proud and distinguished music institutions in the United States. Orchestras, opera companies, and other traditional performing institutions are facing financial tribulations, and many of these organizations have already shut their doors. Interest in classical music has plummeted and audiences have continued to disintegrate along with it.

In the meantime, music colleges and conservatories have ignored the plight of the professional organizations in turmoil by continuing to train performers in the United States the same way that they have always done since the National Association of Music Schools developed their accreditation standards in 1924. This has led to a generation of music performance majors being trained for jobs that are no longer viable. What's worse, once these students are finished studying, their music colleges and conservatories disregard them, and institutions move forward with training the next generation of students who will undoubtedly face a similar fate.

Along with the turmoil surrounding traditional performing institutions and a music performance curriculum built for a different time, another problem exists that will ultimately

push these two concerns to the forefront in the coming years. Higher education in the United States is beginning to experience a colossally devastating financial crisis as a result of decades of unlimited federal student loan aid, decreased state funding, overspending by institutions, and technological alternatives to traditional education that have triggered steady increases in tuition rates for students. These increases have culminated in a substantial amount of graduates taking on debt, on which significant percentages of those graduates are now defaulting. Subsequently, enrollment in higher education has been dropping every year since 2011, and a growing number of prospective students are losing faith in the system and are looking towards alternative avenues to receive their educations.

A “perfect storm” has developed in our midst. Several problematic elements of the storm have been simmering for quite a while, but have never been properly confronted or treated. Now a fresh set of storm indicators are emerging that will further emphasize the severity of the problems that have been there for years. Addressing challenges in institutions that have done things the same way for many decades can admittedly be arduous. But regardless of how long these problems have been ignored, they generally don’t go away by themselves, and they often become so insurmountable that only undesirable solutions are feasible. The perfect storm threatening the classical music world is not going away, but, fortunately, reforms are possible that can assist music colleges and conservatories in weathering it and help to reverse the negative forecast.

The purpose of this monograph will be to detail the different elements that make up this “perfect storm,” and explain why reforming the music performance curriculum so that it becomes relevant to the current realities of being a 21st-century performing artist is essential. In order to be able to proceed with these reforms, a fundamental reorganization of foundational aspects in music higher education needs to occur.

This project is not something that I wanted to take on, but I felt that it was my duty to do everything possible to reinvigorate and transform the training of performing musicians so that the next generation will be able to succeed in saving our art from its downward trajectory and move it onto a path of sustainability and relevance. I am writing this for my colleagues who are navigating the professional music world, for current music students, for future prospective students preparing to enter the music industry, for current and future music professors, for deans in music schools, and for the accreditors who build the music performance curriculum.

I dedicate this monograph to my dear teacher and mentor Dr. Eduard Schmieder.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are currently 651 schools of music in American universities that are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM),¹ as well as 1,795 institutions that have degree-granting music programs.² According to Robert Freeman, retired dean of the Eastman School of Music and author of *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians*, over 21,000 students graduate with music degrees from these institutions annually.³ With all of these trained music majors and music institutions, an outsider might conclude that traditional classical music is a booming industry in the United States. Unfortunately, this is not the reality; there is a greater supply of talented and deserving musicians, but lesser demand for their services in positions that have traditionally been available.

It is not a secret that the future stability of professional orchestras in the United States is in peril, with some organizations struggling to survive, others reshuffling and rebranding, and many ensembles having already folded into extinction. Robert J. Flanagan, author of a recent book about the financial challenges facing symphony orchestras, states “even the New York Philharmonic, one of the wealthiest symphony orchestras in the United States, faces significant economic challenges, with ever-growing expenses and declines in

¹ “Accredited Institutions,” The National Association of Schools of Music, accessed March 21, 2017. <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/directory-lists/accredited-institutions/>.

² Council of Arts Accrediting Agencies, Higher Education Arts Data Services: Music Data Summaries, 2012-2013 (Reston, VA: Higher Education Arts Data Services, 2013): <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/utils/getfile/collection/ejournals/id/6/filename/7.pdf>.

³ Robert Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), iBooks edition, 17.

some types of revenue.”⁴ He goes on to write, “between 1987 and 2005, performance revenue dropped from 48% to a mere 37 percent of the average symphony’s income.”⁵ Competition for orchestra jobs has also dramatically increased as a result of orchestras phasing out positions, and because of the oversupply of qualified applicants. Concert attendance in the United States has been in rapid decline for almost every musical genre. In the arts public participation survey released in 2015 by the National Endowment For the Arts, the deterioration of American concert audiences has dropped steeply from the ten-year period between 2002–2012, causing many to fear that the worst is yet to come for traditional classical music institutions.

Esteemed international music competitions that have launched the careers of many famous performers and pedagogues throughout the decades have lost much of their glory, acclaim, and reputation due to corruption and favoritism amongst judges. Internationally renowned cellist Julian Lloyd Webber confirmed this in a recent interview in 2014 when he stated, “everyone knows it [is corrupt], but no one says it, because when you’re in the profession, you don’t. It’s either highly political or it’s a fix for somebody’s pupil to win it. You have a situation where a juror is friendly with another juror and there’s a kind of trade off.”⁶

Tuition prices for higher education in the United States have gone up dramatically over the past 30 years, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Pursuing a degree in music performance without a substantial scholarship is an incredibly risky career choice, especially when taking into account the decline in traditional classical music jobs, the corruption in

⁴ Robert Flanagan, *The Perilous Life of Symphony Orchestras* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Kindle edition, 82.

⁵ Ibid., 580.

⁶ Hannah Ellis-Peterson, “Julian Lloyd-Webber: classical music competitions are rife with corruption,” *The Guardian* (London, UK), July 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jul/25/julian-lloyd-webber-classical-music-competitions-corrupt>.

international competitions, and the oversaturation of highly qualified musicians in the job marketplace.

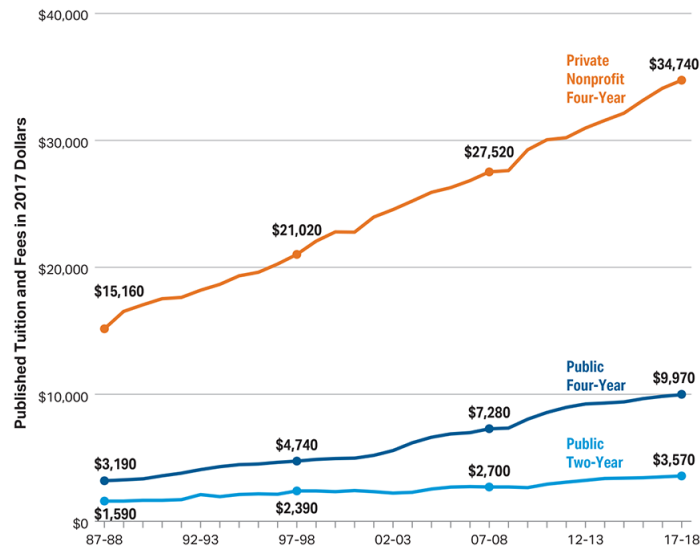


Figure 1: College Affordability, 1987–2018⁷

Enrollment in music schools has been trending downward since 2011. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, enrollment in four-year visual and performing arts degree programs dropped 3.9% in 2016, compared to where they were in 2015,⁸ and another 0.2% between 2016 and 2017.⁹ The fallout from the decrease in enrollment is beginning to impact the financial stability of music schools, making many of them vulnerable to budget cuts and unwelcome closures.

These revelations surrounding the classical music world’s decades-old performing and higher education institutions are troubling, but do not spell the end of classical music as some might suggest. Peter Miksza (Professor of Music Education at Indiana University) and

⁷ “Tuition and Fees and Room and Board over Time.” *The College Board*, accessed March 06, 2017.

<https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-fees-room-and-board-over-time>.

⁸ “Current Term Enrollment Estimates,” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, accessed March 9, 2017.

<https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CurrentTermEnrollment-Spring2017.pdf>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

fellow music educator Lauren Hime conducted a comprehensive study of recent graduates who obtained music degrees (in performance and education) from a university or conservatory in the United States, to see if they continued pursuing a career in music after graduation, and if they were able to find work. The study concluded that 55.1% of music performance majors were able to find work in their field, either while in school or within at least four months of graduation, and 64% were able to find work within one year of graduation. 30.7% of music performance majors pursued further education after graduation.¹⁰ Although many of the traditional jobs that performing musicians have looked to in the past are in rapid decline, performance majors have found a way to make a living after graduation, proving that there is hope for the next generation of classical performers.

Institutional reforms need to be made at music colleges and conservatories so that parts of the current performance curricula offered by most music programs can be amended and educators in these schools can prepare and properly train performance majors for all of the different types of opportunities that could be available to them after graduation. This begins by changing the program objective from a singular focus—for example, “I am going to music school to learn orchestral repertoire so that I can be in a major orchestra”—to a multi-tiered focus on becoming a well-educated, versatile, complete musician, a master of one’s instrument, and a properly equipped entrepreneur who is excited to embrace the rapidly evolving music world. Such a program would give students all of the tools needed to fit into whatever professional situations their work ethic and talent provide for them, allowing them to take advantage of the myriad of different opportunities and possibilities that could arise for them after graduation. Yes, a small minority of musicians will make it big in the traditional sense, but most performance majors will not become soloists,

¹⁰ Miksza and Hime, “Undergraduate Music Program Alumni’s Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status,” 6.

concertmasters, members of full-time orchestras, or soloists. Many will become chamber musicians, teachers, and freelancers, and that is not only completely acceptable, but the destiny of the vast majority of students who graduate with a music performance degree. As a string player myself, many topics discussed in this monograph will inevitably have a bias towards that specialization, but the goal will be to make the majority of recommendations apply to all performance majors.

Many people have spoken and written about much-needed reforms in the music performance curriculum. Some have even expressed their desire to scale down enrollment in programs, or even get rid of the performance degree altogether in music colleges and conservatories. The approach to this topic, however, needs to be considered through a different lens. Music schools exist to train musicians, but they are also in some ways businesses that need revenue in order to operate and properly educate their students. Proposed suggestions to the music performance degree curriculum often fail to account for the potential financial ramifications that certain recommendations could inflict on music institutions as a whole. Restrictions from accreditation bodies also limit the potential for implementing changes. These are major contributors to why curriculum reform has been slow for music performance degree programs; it is not because invalid ideas have been presented in the past, or because certain arguments lack moral relevancy.

As a performance major, I have been fortunate and blessed to study with fantastic teachers and professors, and I have great respect for the administrators at the institutions that I have attended. And I am honored to have earned multiple degrees from those schools. In no way is this monograph an attack on music schools or conservatories in the United States; rather, it is an effort to save and preserve them from the coming “perfect storm,” and a request to begin a conversation about adopting sensible reforms to some antiquated

practices, to suggest some new and innovative ideas for their curricula that would help better prepare performance majors for life after graduation, and to propose some institutional changes to music colleges and conservatories that would provide a new direction and lead to new avenues of revenue for these institutions. I am writing this monograph so that institutions can not only survive the coming challenges, but also thrive and become more relevant to training the 21st-century professional performer before it's too late.

CHAPTER 2

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Why American Universities Are Exceptional

American institutions have produced the most Nobel Prize laureates, made some of the world's most important medical breakthroughs, produced the majority of scientific papers on the planet, and have educated millions of students in the process.¹¹ American universities have excellent deans, professors, facilities, and administrators, which can be evidenced by the hundreds of American universities that place near the top every year in the annual *U.S. News and World Report* higher education rankings.¹²

The United States is the place where thousands of students from all around the world come to get their college education. Roughly 975,000 of the 20.5 million college students in the United States are international, which is the most foreign students in the world by a large margin.¹³ Approximately 57,000 of these international students come here to study applied and fine arts.¹⁴ There are a number of reasons why international students have journeyed to the United States over the years to further their education. Allan Good, the president of the Institute of International Education, believes the United States attracts many international students because “they can get a great education at many institutions in

¹¹ "Higher Education Not What It Used to Be," *The Economist* (Chicago, IL), December 1, 2012., accessed January 29, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21567373-american-universities-represent-declining-value-money-their-students-not-what-it>.

¹² Robert Morse and Alexis Krivian, "Best Global Universities Rankings," *U.S. News and World Report*, (Washington D.C.), October 23, 2017, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities/rankings>.

¹³ National Center for Education Statistics, *Fast Facts*, 2017, accessed March 6, 2017, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

¹⁴ Cory Turner, "U.S. Colleges See A Big Bump In International Students," NPR, November 18, 2015, accessed March 6, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/11/18/456353089/u-s-colleges-see-a-big-bump-in-international-students>.

all kinds of climates and settings here in America,” and that “you still have an opportunity to take courses in college and pursue the career of your choice rather than the career that is chosen for you based on your exam results.”¹⁵ Other contributing factors to consider are that the United States boasts the largest economy in the world,¹⁶ the North American continent has generally been free from conflict and war, and the citizens and legal residents of the United States are protected from their government by the Bill of Rights and the freedoms granted and guaranteed to them in the constitution of the United States.¹⁷ International students also receive these protected rights when they enter the United States, with exceptions that include voting in elections and running for political office. All of these factors play a role in contributing to the exceptionally tremendous success of American universities.

The Growth of American Universities

Higher education institutions in the United States have grown and multiplied in number over the years because of the large number of students wanting to pursue a college education after graduating from high school. College enrollment increased from approximately 6 million students in 1965, to its peak of almost 21 million students in 2011.¹⁸ This 350% increase in student enrollment can be attributed to the success of college-educated professionals. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, people

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Prableen Baipai, “The World's Top 10 Economies,” Investopedia, last modified January 10, 2018, accessed March 18 2017, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/022415/worlds-top-10-economies.asp>.

¹⁷ *U.S. Constitution*. <http://constitutionus.com/>.

¹⁸ “U.S. college enrollment and forecast 1965-2026,” Statista. February 2017, accessed March 04, 2017. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183995/us-college-enrollment-and-projections-in-public-and-private-institutions/>.

with bachelor's degrees earn on average 66% more than those without,¹⁹ and according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average worker with a bachelor's degree will earn approximately \$1 million more than those with just a high school diploma during their lifetimes.²⁰

This success has caused universities and colleges to evolve over time from small academic centers for the exceptionally gifted to large, business-motivated academic institutions that compete with each other to have the best faculty, facilities, research departments, sports teams, and a variety of other educational programs and amenities. They spend millions of dollars on these programs and amenities to garner accolades that will enhance their reputation on a global stage with the ultimate purpose of growing their school and attracting talented students to study there. Universities and colleges spend this money because they need a steady stream of students who will ultimately pay tuition and fees, study and complete their education, and then go on to succeed in finding a good job in the “real” world. Years after graduation, these institutions often ask these alumni to donate to their alma maters to help preserve and enhance their school for the next generation of students.

The federal and state governments of the United States realize the importance of higher education, and have played an important role in the growth of these institutions by providing billions of dollars in taxpayer funding. The United States federal government also provides tax credits to students and their families, and is heavily involved in the procurement of low-interest student loans that many graduates use to finance their educations.

¹⁹ “Median annual earnings of full-time year-round workers 25 to 34 years old and full-time year-round workers as a percentage of the labor force, by sex, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment: Selected years, 1995 through 2013,” Nces.ed.gov. November 2014, accessed March 5, 2017.
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_502.30.asp.

²⁰ “Employment status of the civilian non institutional population 25 years and over by educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 19 2018, www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat07.htm.

The Impending Financial Crisis

The average tuition and room and board cost for students attending American universities and colleges has risen exponentially, as shown below in Figure 2. The cause of these increases can be attributed to a large number of variables that include inflation,²¹ unlimited subsidized federal financial aid programs,²² state funding cuts,²³ and institutional overspending, amongst others.²⁴

This has resulted in making college expensive and simply unaffordable for many. After graduation, some students have accumulated tens of thousands, and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars in student loan debt. There are currently 44 million borrowers who own 1.3 trillion dollars of student loan debt, which is higher than the combined total of credit card and auto loan debt in the United States.²⁵ This debt has spiraled out of control in recent years, as shown in Figure 3 below.

²¹ Tim McMahon, "Historical Inflation Rate," Inflationdata.com, 14 Feb. 2018, accessed March 4, 2018, inflationdata.com/Inflation/Inflation_Rate/HistoricalInflation.aspx.

²² Grey Gordon and Aaron Hedlund, "Accounting for the Rise in College Tuition," NBER Working Paper, February 2016. www.nber.org/papers/w21967.

²³ Michael Mitchell, et al., "Funding Down, Tuition Up," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, August 15, 2015, www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/funding-down-tuition-up.

²⁴ Jon Marcus, "The Paradox of New Buildings on Campus," *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, July 25, 2016, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/the-paradox-of-new-buildings-on-campus/492398/.

²⁵ Zach Friedman, "Student Loan Debt In 2017: A \$1.3 Trillion Crisis," *Forbes*, February 21, 2017, accessed March 5, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2017/02/21/student-loan-debt-statistics-2017/#56b9f9035dab>.

Academic Year	In Current Dollars					In 2016 Dollars				
	Tuition and Fees			Tuition and Fees and Room and Board		Tuition and Fees			Tuition and Fees and Room and Board	
	Private Nonprofit Four-Year	Public Four-Year In-State	Public Two-Year In-District	Private Nonprofit Four-Year	Public Four-Year In-State	Private Nonprofit Four-Year	Public Four-Year In-State	Public Two-Year In-District	Private Nonprofit Four-Year	Public Four-Year In-State
1971-72	\$1,832	\$428	\$192	\$2,929	\$1,405	\$10,832	\$2,531	\$1,135	\$17,318	\$8,307
1980-81	\$3,617	\$804	\$391	\$5,594	\$2,551	\$10,525	\$2,340	\$1,138	\$16,278	\$7,423
1990-91	\$9,340	\$1,908	\$906	\$13,476	\$5,074	\$17,237	\$3,521	\$1,672	\$24,859	\$9,364
2000-01	\$16,072	\$3,508	\$1,642	\$22,240	\$8,439	\$22,382	\$4,685	\$2,287	\$30,972	\$11,752
2001-02	\$17,377	\$3,766	\$1,608	\$23,856	\$9,032	\$23,559	\$5,106	\$2,180	\$32,343	\$12,245
2002-03	\$18,060	\$4,058	\$1,674	\$24,867	\$9,672	\$24,132	\$5,476	\$2,237	\$33,227	\$12,324
2003-04	\$18,950	\$4,645	\$1,909	\$26,057	\$10,530	\$24,798	\$6,078	\$2,488	\$34,038	\$13,779
2004-05	\$20,045	\$5,126	\$2,079	\$27,465	\$11,376	\$25,469	\$6,513	\$2,642	\$34,896	\$14,454
2005-06	\$20,980	\$5,492	\$2,182	\$28,743	\$12,115	\$25,838	\$6,764	\$2,687	\$35,399	\$14,320
2006-07	\$22,308	\$5,804	\$2,265	\$30,497	\$12,837	\$26,380	\$6,863	\$2,680	\$36,054	\$15,180
2007-08	\$23,420	\$6,191	\$2,294	\$31,993	\$13,558	\$27,057	\$7,152	\$2,650	\$36,961	\$15,663
2008-09	\$24,818	\$6,599	\$2,382	\$33,800	\$14,372	\$27,152	\$7,219	\$2,606	\$36,978	\$15,723
2009-10	\$25,739	\$7,073	\$2,569	\$35,070	\$15,235	\$28,762	\$7,904	\$2,871	\$39,189	\$17,025
2010-11	\$26,766	\$7,629	\$2,742	\$36,465	\$16,178	\$29,545	\$8,421	\$3,027	\$40,251	\$17,858
2011-12	\$27,883	\$8,276	\$2,973	\$37,971	\$17,156	\$29,700	\$8,815	\$3,167	\$40,446	\$18,274
2012-13	\$28,989	\$8,646	\$3,154	\$39,447	\$17,817	\$30,450	\$9,082	\$3,313	\$41,434	\$18,715
2013-14	\$30,131	\$8,885	\$3,241	\$40,955	\$18,383	\$31,040	\$9,153	\$3,339	\$42,191	\$18,938
2014-15	\$31,283	\$9,145	\$3,336	\$42,445	\$18,931	\$31,598	\$9,237	\$3,370	\$42,872	\$19,121
2015-16	\$32,334	\$9,417	\$3,435	\$43,869	\$19,562	\$32,604	\$9,496	\$3,464	\$44,235	\$19,725
2016-17	\$33,479	\$9,648	\$3,520	\$45,365	\$20,092	\$33,479	\$9,648	\$3,520	\$45,365	\$20,092

Figure 2: College Affordability, 1971–2017²⁶

A college degree is not a guarantee of a well-paying job that will provide enough income to repay student loan debt. As a result, 40% of American students who borrowed money from the federal government student loan programs are either not making payments or are behind on more than \$200 billion owed, and 3.6 million graduates are currently in default.²⁷ Mark Cuban, the successful American businessman and entrepreneur, stated in a recent interview:

At some point there will be a cap on student loan guarantees. And when that happens you're going to see a repeat of what we saw in the housing market [the 2008 housing bubble]: when easy credit for buying or flipping a house disappeared, we saw a collapse in the price [of] housing, and we're going to see that same collapse in the price of student tuition, and that's going to lead to colleges going out of business.²⁸

²⁶ "Tuition and Fees and Room and Board over Time," *The College Board*, accessed March 06, 2017.

<https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-fees-room-and-board-over-time>.

²⁷ Josh Mitchell, "More Than 40% of Student Borrowers Aren't Making Payments." *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/more-than-40-of-student-borrowers-arent-making-payments-1459971348>.

²⁸ Myles Udland, "MARK CUBAN: 'The Student Loan Bubble Is Going To Burst,'" *Business Insider*, June 20, 2014, accessed January 17, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/mark-cuban-student-loan-bubble-2014-6>.

Further statistics point to a bubble that is beginning to burst. Student enrollment in higher education has steadily declined over the past six years, going from its 2011 peak of 20.6 million students to 18.07 million students as of the spring of 2017.²⁹ Doug Shapiro, executive research director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center stated, “These forces show no sign of slowing and will continue to challenge institutions in their planning.”³⁰

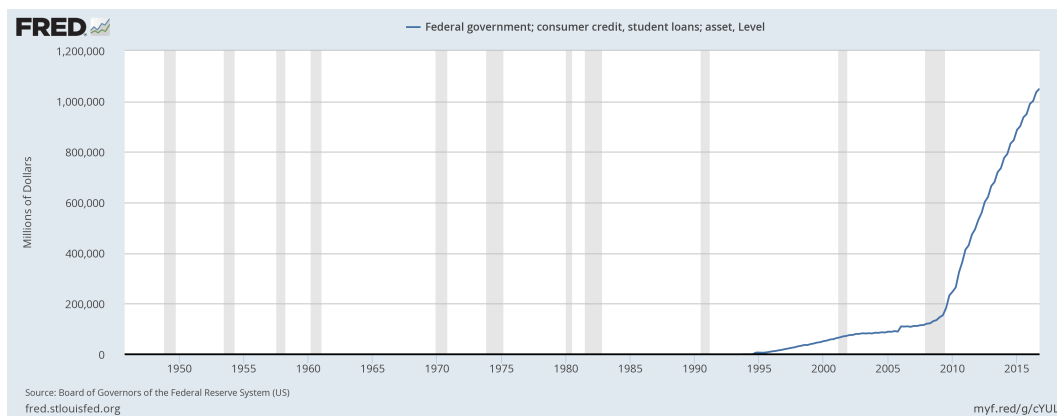


Figure 3: Federal Government; Consumer Credit; Student Loans; Asset; Level³¹

This data suggests an impending crisis that could potentially change the future of higher education for decades to come. Academic institutions that recognize these challenges, prepare for them, and focus on building programs that are attractive, innovative, and determined to help students find sustainable careers will likely have the ability to survive.

²⁹ “Current Term Enrollment Estimates – Fall 2016,” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, January 16, 2018, accessed February 13, 2018. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates-fall-2016/>.

³⁰ Melissa Korn, “College Enrollment Drops 1.4% as Adults Head Back to Work,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 2016, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-enrollment-drops-1-4-as-adults-head-back-to-work-1482123660>.

³¹ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US), “Federal government; consumer credit, student loans; asset, Level,” March 8, 2018, accessed March 20, 2018. Retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FGCCSAQ027S>.

Institutions that maintain the current status quo could struggle, and some might ultimately, as Mark Cuban stated, “go out of business.”

What This Means for Music Institutions and Music Performance Majors

Performance majors in music colleges and conservatories are particularly at risk for hardship because the oversaturation of music schools and the oversupply of graduates result in a low-demand work environment in an already dwindling market for performing classical musicians. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, a leading U.S. financial publication, has consistently rated music and fine arts undergraduate degrees in their top 10 worst over the past few years.³² *Forbes*, another leading U.S. financial publication, rated fine arts graduate degree programs as the #1 worst advanced academic degree for employment after graduation.³³ According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, enrollment in visual and performing arts degree programs dropped 3.9% in 2016 compared to where it was in 2015,³⁴ and fell another .2% from 2016 to the spring of 2017.³⁵

The average tuition cost for a bachelor of music degree (without factoring in room and board) is \$37,592 per year, with an estimated cost of \$150,368 to complete a four-year degree.³⁶ Using a student loan financial aid calculator with a standard 6.8% interest rate for a Federal Stafford loan, combined with the standard 10-year term, results in a performance

³² Stacy Rapacon, “10 Worst College Majors for a Lucrative Career,” *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, September 7, 2017, accessed January 27, 2017, www.kiplinger.com/slideshow/college/T012-S001-worst-college-majors-for-your-career-2017-2018/index.html.

³³ Lydia Dishman, “Best And Worst Graduate Degrees For Jobs in 2016,” *Fortune*, March 21, 2016, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2016/03/21/best-worst-graduate-degrees-jobs-2016/>.

³⁴ “Current Term Enrollment Estimates – Fall 2016,” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, January 16, 2018, accessed February 13, 2018. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates-fall-2016/>.

³⁵ “Current Term Enrollment Estimates – Fall 2017,” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, January 16, 2018, accessed February 13, 2018. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates-fall-2017/>.

³⁶ “Music Performance, General,” Most Affordable Colleges for Music Performance, accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.collegecalc.org/majors/music-performance-general/>.

major graduate needing to pay a monthly installment sum of \$1,730.42 for the loan, while paying an additional \$57,284.78 in interest over its duration, bringing the cumulative total to \$207,652.78 for tuition alone. It is estimated that a music performance graduate would need a job with an annual salary of \$207,652.80 to repay this loan.³⁷ One can only imagine these numbers when combined with the cost of books, acquiring a good instrument, and the price of room and board.

These financial realities are devastating, and unfortunately there are music performance majors who graduate with this kind of student loan debt. The median income for a classical musician is only approximately \$45,000 per year,³⁸ and 46.2% of performance majors make less than \$20,000 per year.³⁹ These numbers show that the overwhelming majority of music performance graduates do not make even a fourth of the annual salary recommended for this kind of loan. If tuition prices continue to soar, enrollment in music programs will certainly continue to plummet in the years to come.

The following comparison functions as a word of caution for music colleges and conservatories about the dangers of maintaining the current status quo and not seriously considering the future environment of their institutions. In 2004, Blockbuster Video was the king of movie rentals. The company was worth more than 5 billion dollars, with 9,000 stores employing more than 60,000 people worldwide.⁴⁰ Today, Blockbuster Video is a distant memory from a different time, replaced by a digital marketplace where Netflix and Amazon

³⁷ "FinAid | Calculators | Loan Calculator," FinAid - Financial Aid Advice, accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml>.

³⁸ "Strategic National Arts Alumni Project Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates in America," SNAAP, accessed February 27, 2018. <http://snaap.indiana.edu/snaapshot/#work>.

³⁹ Miksza and Hime, "Undergraduate Music Program Alumni's Career Path," 6.

⁴⁰ Christopher Harress, "The Sad End Of Blockbuster Video: The Onetime \$5 Billion Company Is Being Liquidated As Competition From Online Giants Netflix And Hulu Prove All Too Much For The Iconic Brand," *International Business Times*, December 05, 2015, accessed February 14, 2018. <http://www.ibtimes.com/sad-end-blockbuster-video-onetime-5-billion-company-being-liquidated-competition-1496962>.

Prime, amongst others, have taken over. In 2000, Blockbuster had the opportunity to buy Netflix for a mere 50 million dollars.⁴¹ Blockbuster thought it was a crazy idea at the time, and decided to pass on that opportunity. Today Netflix is worth approximately 89 billion dollars, and they continue to grow as a company every year.⁴²

This Blockbuster/Netflix example is certainly not a direct comparison to music schools, but it is an important lesson about the constant need to adapt with the times, be self-evaluating, and to not be completely risk averse as an institution. Music colleges and conservatories in the United States need to change and not be afraid to make bold and innovative changes to ensure that their music institutions can continue to be relevant in the ever-changing musical and cultural landscape. Investments that may seem outlandish at the time, as in the case of Blockbuster having the opportunity to buy Netflix for 50 million dollars, could end up solving much of the problems facing music colleges and conservatories in the near future.

Music institutions must find ways to make education more affordable for their students. They need to be continually assessing and transforming their degree programs, growing with the technological advances, not in spite of them, and willing to do whatever it takes to escape the annual “10 worst college degree lists.”⁴³

If the current trends continue as the data suggests, then change is definitely coming, and in some ways it is already here. The NASM-accredited McNally-Smith College of Music in Chicago abruptly closed at the end of the fall 2017 semester after not being able to make

⁴¹ Celena Chong, “Blockbuster’s CEO Once Passed up a Chance to Buy Netflix for Only \$50 Million,” *Business Insider*, July 17, 2015, accessed March 4, 2018, <http://www.businessinsider.com/blockbuster-ceo-passed-up-chance-to-buy-netflix-for-50-million-2015-7>.

⁴² Adam Levy, “Netflix Is Worth More Than Every Other Major Media Company Except Disney,” *The Motley Fool*, October 25, 2017, accessed March 4, 2018, <https://www.fool.com/investing/2017/10/25/netflix-is-worth-more-than-every-other-major-media.aspx>.

⁴³ Lydia Dishman, “Best And Worst Graduate Degrees For Jobs in 2016,” *Fortune*, March 21, 2016, accessed March 8, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2016/03/21/best-worst-graduate-degrees-jobs-2016/>.

payroll.⁴⁴ Oberlin College suffered an unexpected drop in enrollment, which has led to cuts in all departments, including the Oberlin Conservatory.⁴⁵ The drama surrounding Westminster Choir College's challenging soap opera has been well documented over the past year, and is sad to see unfold.⁴⁶ Which music institution will be the next to succumb to the imminent financial realities that loom?

A financial crisis in higher education is coming, and the early indicators, along with the recent string of bad news coming from a few music institutions, show us that it is almost here.

⁴⁴ Bill Chappell, "Minnesota Music College Closes Abruptly, And Students Scramble To Find Schools," NPR, December 19, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/19/571997969/minnesota-music-college-closes-abruptly-and-students-scramble-to-find-schools>.

⁴⁵ Sydney Allen, "Enrollment Drop Creates Financial Shortfall," *The Oberlin Review*, September 08, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018. <https://oberlinreview.org/14052/news/enrollment-drop-creates-financial-shortfall/>.

⁴⁶ Rick Seltzer, "Balking at the Buyer," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 26, 2018, accessed March 4, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/26/faculty-speak-out-against-proposed-buyer-westminster-choir-college>.

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL PROBLEMS IN THE CURRENT STATE OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE AND HOW TO APPROACH THE SOLUTION

Like most young people headed to college after high school, incoming music performance majors come to school with plenty of ambition and lofty expectations for their future careers. Some talented young musicians were winners of various competitions and received all sorts of honors while growing up. These incoming students have aspirations to become concert soloists, concertmasters, or members of major symphony orchestras. But are these career ambitions realistic and practical for the 21st-century generation of performance majors? Is the music performance degree curriculum actually training its students for the jobs that they will receive after graduation?

What Is The Music Performance Curriculum and Is It Viable?

Every year, The National Association of Music Schools (NASM) releases a handbook that details the requirements for all of the many types of music degree programs in accredited music institutions of higher education.⁴⁷ Below is a summary of the NASM standards that one must obtain to earn performance degrees. Included are the bachelor of music (BM), masters of music (MM), and doctoral of musical arts (DMA) degrees.⁴⁸

Bachelor of Music Degree (Undergraduate Performance Degree)

Purpose:

To develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician. To fulfill various professional responsibilities, the musician must exhibit not only technical competence, but also a broad knowledge of music and music literature, the ability to

⁴⁷ “An Advisory for Music Faculty and Administrators: NASM Standards –Performance,” National Association of Schools of Music, accessed February 2, 2017. <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/Advisory-Performance.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

integrate musical knowledge and skills, sensitivity to musical styles, and an insight into the role of music in intellectual and cultural life.

Performance students must acquire:

- a. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major performance area at a level appropriate for the particular music concentration.
- b. An overview understanding of the repertory in their major performance area and the ability to perform from a cross-section of that repertory.
- c. The ability to read at sight with fluency, demonstrating both general musicianship and, in the major performance area, a level of skill relevant to professional standards appropriate for the particular music concentration.
- d. Knowledge and skills sufficient to work as a leader and in collaboration on matters of musical interpretation. Rehearsal and conducting skills are required as appropriate to the particular music concentration.
- e. Keyboard competency.
- f. Growth in artistry, technical skills, collaborative competence, and knowledge of repertory through regular ensemble experiences. Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature.⁴⁹

Masters of Music Degree (Graduate Performance Degree)

- a. Students demonstrate advanced competencies in performance. Studies in this area comprise as much as two-thirds, or at least one-third, of the total curriculum.
- b. Students gain knowledge and skills in one or more fields of music outside the major such as theory and analysis, history and literature, musicology and ethnomusicology, and pedagogy. Such supportive studies in music that broaden and deepen musical competence comprise at least one-third of the total curriculum.
- c. Voice majors are expected to be proficient in English, German, French, and Italian diction and to have general phonetic knowledge and skills that can be applied to other languages. They should have language competencies sufficient to understand texts in the repertory.
- d. Early music of historical performance majors shall develop advanced knowledge of music history and performance practice.
- e. As a culminating demonstration of professional capability in the major field, the student must present a public performance, which may serve as the thesis. Normally, the performance includes at least 60 minutes of recital in which the performer is a soloist.

Doctoral of Musical Arts (Doctorate Performance Degree)

- a. Instrumental or Vocal Performance. The doctoral degree program in performance emphasizes presentation in a specific performing medium. Performance competence is at the highest professional level, with historical and theoretical knowledge supportive of the development of individualized interpretations. Competencies also include a broad knowledge of repertory and literature. Additional studies in pedagogy are recommended.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The NASM curriculum requirements contain many important components for aspiring performers such as developing a student's applied instrument, developing an understanding of the repertoire, cultivating proficiency in sight-reading, learning how to work with others in various ensemble settings, and discovering how to make artistic decisions on musical interpretations amongst others. Admittedly, the NASM requirements for performance degree programs are a true reflection of the ambitious expectations of music students, but one must ask, *if the music performance curriculum reflects the expectations of students when entering their degree programs, then why is there a problem?* The NASM handbook states in the first sentence of their bachelor of music performance standards that the purpose of the degree program is, "to develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician."⁵¹ The word "essential" is important because the current NASM standards do not develop all of the vital "knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities" for the professional performing musician living in the 21st century. Instead, they prepare aspiring performers for a music world that is impractical and far from the actual realities of the current job market. A music performance major could conceivably earn multiple performance degrees from highly regarded music institutions, achieve high grades in all of their coursework, complete all of the requirements to earn their degrees, but still have little hope of developing the career that they were expecting to find after graduation. Is it worth the investment of resources and time for a student to complete a degree and then realize that there were important aspects not covered in their college curriculum, and they are actually just beginning their education as a professional performer by being forced to learn the missing "essentials" on the fly?

⁵¹ Ibid.

Many concerned musicians and educators have presented commentaries dating back decades on the problems with the performance degree curriculum that cite the need for reform, and many have even stated that music schools should discourage students from majoring in music performance.

M. Emmett Wilson, the former Professor of Music History at the Ohio State University, was one of the earliest to speak out about the music performance curriculum in an article in 1947 titled “An Obsolescent Degree” that was published in *The Journal of Higher Education*. In this article, Wilson states:

Few colleges or conservatories which have been granting [Bachelor of Music] degrees for many years can boast a single outstanding performer among their graduates. Their constituency has been made up largely of those students who considered music one of the ‘accomplishments,’ and their curriculum grew out of the old finishing school. Sad indeed is the fate of those misguided students who still select—in fact, are often encouraged by a self-interested faculty to elect—this curriculum, which appears to lead to stardom but inevitably ends in frustration and narrow egoism.⁵²

Wilson’s opinion from more than 70 years ago is even more relevant today considering how many more music schools and performance majors there are than there were in 1947. Wilson then continues to discuss flaws in the music performance curriculum, noting that “the most sinister of these is the progressive subdivision of subject-matter which, in every field, masquerades as more refined specialization and efficiency.” Wilson goes on to state the reason why this “most sinister” weakness in the music performance degree curriculum was implemented in the first place is because it “has been a profitable device, since a separate fee can be charged for each course.”

Steve Roberson, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies at the University of North Carolina Greensboro and former Professor of Music at Butler University, strikes an even

⁵² M. Emmett Wilson, “An Obsolescent Degree,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 17, no. 7 (October 1946): 344-346+394, accessed February 27, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1975798>.

darker tone than Wilson in his 1994 article titled “Tradition and Change.” Roberson begins by confirming Wilson’s assessment about the music performance curriculum, saying, “the [bachelor of Music] performance degree springs from the conservatory tradition that, with its antecedents in the European model, took root in the United States in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.”⁵³ He then continues to voice his frustration with the assumed job placement record performance degree, arguing:

What other profession would accept such a dismal placement record for its graduates? Would medical schools be content to enroll students in programs with full time employment rates in the single digits? Questions of ethics and accountability arise, and the answers for many are terribly dismaying. Except for truly gifted and exceptionally talented young performers—and they are very, very rare—students who express an interest in music should be discouraged from pursuing professional performance degrees.⁵⁴

Roberson’s arguments are morally valid, but his idea of discouraging students from majoring in music certainly strike a dissonant chord that deans of music schools will not want to listen to, and is irrelevant to the situation.

Robert Freeman makes a similar argument in his book about faculty transparency and the need to teach performance majors how to develop their own careers, writing:

Too few faculty members tell their students that the world is full of competition winners, and that the number of management firms has withered in the past quarter century, as has the audience for classical music in America. While there are certainly firms that will take a young singer on commission, only a very small number of them work on a business model that requires large artists’ fees from which a 20 percent commission earns enough to cover overhead and make a profit. Put another way, most of our young graduates who are self-employed will need to know how to develop and to manage their own careers.⁵⁵

The relevant components of the music performance curriculum need to be kept and refined, the missing essentials need to be implemented, and the superfluous features need to

⁵³ Steve Roberson, “Tradition and Change,” *American Music Teacher* 44, no. 1 (August/September 1994): 12-15, accessed February 27, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43542721>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians*, 220-221.

be made supplementary or in some cases, disposed of completely because of their irrelevance. Music schools will not survive the coming “perfect storm” if they continue to prepare music performance majors for an imaginary career in a nonexistent world, considering that the traditional jobs that musicians have looked to in the past are in rapid decline.

The Decline in American Performing Institutions and How the Music Performance Curriculum Has Contributed

As noted in the introduction, the future of professional orchestras in the United States is continuing to trend towards extinction.⁵⁶ Though it is sad to see the slow demise of these once stable performing institutions, it is certainly not surprising, and one can only hope that the struggling institutions will regain their footing and a renaissance will occur for them. Unfortunately, the trends are pointing in the opposite direction.

One factor that has contributed significantly to the plight of these institutions is the loss of the American classical music audience. Concert attendance in the United States has been in rapid decline for the entirety of the 21st century. Conclusive evidence of this deterioration was reported in “The Arts Public Participation Survey” released in 2015 by the *National Endowment For the Arts*, which analyzed concert attendance from 2002-2012. In 2002 11.6% of the United States population attended at least one classical orchestra concert, but by 2012 that number had shrunk by almost 30% to 8.8%. Opera performances went from 3.2% of the population having attended to 2.1% of the population, and ballet concerts went from 3.9% to 2.7% of the population.⁵⁷ Orchestral audiences declined at an even more rapid

⁵⁶ Flanagan, *The Perilous Life of Symphony Orchestras*, 82.

⁵⁷ Bonnie Silber and Tim Triplett, “A Decade Of Arts Engagement: Findings From The Survey Of Public Participation In The Arts, 2002-2012.” *NEA Research Report #58*. Washington D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, Office of Research and Analysis, January 2015.

rate between 2010 and 2014, shrinking by 10.5%.⁵⁸ Michael Cooper, who covers classical music for *The New York Times*, stated in a recent article that “there is a stark reality increasingly facing American orchestras; they are now charities, relying more, on average, on philanthropy than on the ticket sales that used to buttress them.”⁵⁹ Is the decline in audience the fault of a failing American culture? Is it the music that is being played? Or is it the fault of the performers who have failed to connect with their audiences? In my estimation, the blame is on the performer, and in many ways, it is because of a lack of training by students coming out of the conservatory. If performance majors never learned how to connect with audiences while in school, why should it be any different once they have graduated?

The result of these struggles in traditional music institutions has resulted in a decrease in the number of traditional performing jobs for musicians, and today those careers have become increasingly rare. Matthew Waters, a freelance trombone player in southern California, confirms this in an article where he analyzed statistics taken from Data USA (an aggregator of U.S. government data).⁶⁰ He found that “as of May of 2017, there are 8 members of the Regional Orchestra Players Association that pay over \$25,000 base salary a year, with an additional 49 under other collective bargaining agreements with the AFM. That means there are 57 orchestras that one could theoretically find full-time employment with.”⁶¹ With a job market already oversaturated with music performance majors expecting to find work in the orchestra field, this is a pretty devastating realization. Waters goes on to conclude from his experience in the professional music scene that “the problem in most of

⁵⁸ "Orchestra Facts: 2006-2014." American League of Orchestras. November 15, 2016. accessed January 7, 2018. americanorchestras.org.

⁵⁹ Michael Cooper, “It’s Official: Many Orchestras Are Now Charities,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), November 15, 2016, accessed January 7, 2018, URL.

⁶⁰ “General Music Performance.” Data USA. accessed February 25, 2018. <https://datausa.io/profile/cip/500903/#intro>.

⁶¹ Matthew Waters, “The Orchestral Dream Is Dead,” *Phantombrass*, January 14, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.phantombrass.com/single-post/2017/06/16/The-Orchestral-Dream-Is-Dead>.

the training grounds today is that players are funneled into preparing for a job that they have little to no chance of winning, while totally neglecting all of the other possible jobs that are likely [to] be a part of a successful music career.”⁶²

In an article published by *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, Christian Colberg, the principal violist of the Cincinnati Symphony spoke about the rarity of winning an orchestra position, saying, “From a statistical chance, it’s probably easier to get into the NBA [National Basketball Association]. It’s a very tough process, a process that sends people to therapists, and that truly changes your life. It’s almost barbaric, but it is absolutely fair.”⁶³ The chances of getting drafted into the NBA are about 3 in every 10,000 high school (0.03%) or less than 1 in every 75 for NCAA men’s basketball players (1.3%).⁶⁴ The NBA comparison that Colberg makes isn’t completely out of the question, considering that music schools graduate tens of thousands of performance majors every year, some orchestras have only a few open positions per year, and others are experiencing hiring freezes because of financial problems.

Fred Bronstein, the former CEO of the St. Louis Symphony and the current dean of the Peabody Conservatory, has a similar opinion on the rarity of winning an orchestra job, but considers the problem to be rooted in the music curriculum, saying:

Even if you’re lucky enough to win a job in a symphony like the St. Louis Symphony – and very few people will – your ability to get into that orchestra may be [through the conventional audition process], but your ability to be successful in the culture of that orchestra is going to be driven by many factors including how you interact with audiences, how you talk to donors, how you do things with the media, how you are in a school setting, how you

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Janelle Gelfand, “Inside a Symphony Audition,” *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, OH), November 24, 2015, accessed February 24, 2018, <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/entertainment/music/2015/11/24/inside-symphony-audition/75478764/>.

⁶⁴ Chris Callaway, “Basketball Rules on Assists,” *Livestrong*, September 11, 2017, accessed March 4, 2018, <https://www.livestrong.com/article/141986-basketball-rules-assists/>.

are in a cancer ward – I mean it is a much bigger landscape than just being able to sit on stage and play your instrument.⁶⁵

Bronstein is right, and American orchestras and other traditional performing institutions will continue to falter if they just sit on stage and play their instruments without thinking about connecting with their audiences, cultivating donors, making use of the media, and availing themselves of every other strategy that successful entertainment institutions outside of the classical music world are employing. These skills that even musicians in traditional performing institutions lack are a direct result of the lack of preparedness on a higher educational level.

What Are Performance Majors Doing After Graduation, and Is Their Curriculum Relevant?

The Miksza and Hime study from Indiana University reports that 64% of music performance majors find work in their field within one year of graduating.⁶⁶ That success rate is actually much better than that for the average graduate from another degree program. A study done by The Federal Reserve Bank of New York concluded that just 27.3% of graduates find work in the field that they studied in college.⁶⁷ Though the Miksza and Hime study does not conclude that 64% of performance majors find *full-time* work, it can be concluded that the “dismal placement record” claim for performance majors is not quite as dire as suspected, especially when compared to the national average. The study also confirms

⁶⁵ Ricky O'Bannon, “Rethinking The Modern Music School Training,” Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, June 4, 2016, accessed February 22, 2018, <https://www.bsomusic.org/stories/rethinking-the-modern-music-school-training.aspx>.

⁶⁶ Miksza and Hime, “Undergraduate Music Program Alumni’s Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status,” 6.

⁶⁷ Jason R. Abel and Richard Deitz, “Do Big Cities Help College Graduates Find Better Jobs?” Liberty Street Economics, May 20, 2013, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2013/05/do-big-cities-help-college-graduates-find-better-jobs.html>.

that 73.9% of performance majors do end up having to work more than two jobs, however, and that “finding a single job that can sustain one’s lifestyle is difficult.”⁶⁸

Though music performance majors are not finding work in traditional jobs, they are finding a way to make a living and forge their own careers in music. Fred Bronstein notes that “training classical musicians in the 21st century is particularly difficult – both because the classical music business is [in] an uncertain, dynamic period and because the classical music world is often caught up in its own tradition.”⁶⁹ Performance majors make a living by freelancing, teaching their applied instruments, forming their own chamber music ensembles, starting their own wedding businesses, forming their own self-conducted chamber orchestras, creating their own concert series, and innovating in other ways, in order to make a living pursuing the art that they love. They are learning on the job outside of school, picking up the missing “essentials” as they go. Music colleges and conservatories need to embrace the exciting changes that are occurring in the music performance world, and train their students to cultivate new ideas. They must prepare their students to be innovators in the music performance field that will ultimately bring back the audiences that have abandoned this generation. Students need to be prepared for the types of jobs that they will most likely be accepting to make a living after graduation.

Performing musicians who are successful are talented performers in their field who have the tools to market themselves, who are able to connect and emotionally inspire their audiences, who have good people skills and are able to make connections, and who are mentally tough and battle-tested for the rigors and pressures that come from performing and auditioning on a full-time basis.

⁶⁸ Miksza and Hime, “Undergraduate Music Program Alumni’s Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status,” 8.

⁶⁹ O’Bannon, “Rethinking The Modern Music School Training.”

Reform Is Needed, but Why Hasn't It Happened Yet?

Strong and urgent voices have been calling for reforms to the performance curriculum for decades, and their ideas are scattered throughout the music literature collecting dust. If the ideas are there, why aren't music institutions reforming the curriculum? There are two main factors that can be identified as the main culprits that are handcuffing music colleges and conservatories from making the changes needed. The first is the outdated NASM curriculum standards for music performance degrees, and the second is the likely financial consequences of many proposed ideas that would endanger the stability of music colleges and conservatories if they were to adopt them.

Leaving the NASM Handcuffs Behind

Robert Cutietta, the dean of the Thornton School of Music at USC, in his article “K-16 Music Education in a Democratic Society” recounts the history of NASM and how the policies it created almost a century ago—in good faith, but during a different era—are still so extensively entrenched in the infrastructure of music institutions that it is difficult for them to adapt to the changes in musical culture everywhere else. Cutietta states, “in the early decades of the 20th century there were a few established programs in music that were defining what music education at the collegiate level should look like. For all the best reasons, these schools became concerned because there seemed to be no consistency in what was called a ‘music degree.’” He goes on to say that the NASM founders felt that “there was a strong need to establish some minimal standards and also provide a way to share what today we would call best ‘practices.’” The process of setting the curriculum was done through an internal vote by NASM members and “thus, by design the standards were

structured to reward what member schools were already doing and make it difficult for other schools to get in if they were doing something out of the ordinary. The result was a very powerful and structured approach to get schools that ‘aspired’ to be part of NASM to structure themselves like the established schools. By design, NASM was structured to reward compliance with the norm.”⁷⁰

Today there are 651 comparable music schools accredited by NASM⁷¹ that are still educating performance majors for life in the early twentieth century, not the twenty-first. Cutietta cites an interview from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* with David A Bergeron, the current vice president for postsecondary education at the Center For American Progress, on why accreditation systems are losing their credibility. Bergeron says, “The current accreditation system is more concerned with preserving the status quo,” and he goes on to lament, “the system is not driving change the way we would like it or at the pace we would like it.”⁷² This is why all NASM-accredited schools base their performance degree programs on instrumental ensembles like orchestras, wind ensembles, marching bands, and jazz bands, and accepting students to fill these positions in those ensembles, even though they do not reflect the professional marketplace for professional performers anymore.

Dr. Robin Moore, Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Texas at Austin’s Butler School of Music confirms Bergeron’s assessment in his book *College Music Curricula For a New Century* stating, “The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), founded in 1924, by all accounts acted as a deterrent to curricular innovation for many years

⁷⁰ Robert A. Cutietta, “K-16 Music Education in a Democratic Society,” In *Policy and the Political Life of Music Education: Standpoints for Understanding and Action*, eds. Patrick K. Schmidt and Richard Colwell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), iBooks edition, 756.

⁷¹ Data taken from the National Association of Schools of Music as of February 31, 2018. <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/directory-lists/accredited-institutions/>.

⁷² Cutietta, “K-16 Music Education in a Democratic Society,” 757.

in encouraging a focus on canonical repertoire through its accreditation policies.”⁷³ Moore explains that there have been discussions every year since 2008 about curriculum reform, but that “at present, such discussion has not yet translated into concrete changes in accreditation guidelines or advocacy for specific curricular policies on the part of NASM, but the sustained focus on the topic suggests this may well occur in the future.”⁷⁴ Cutietta notes in his book that many of the institutions that founded NASM, including Yale, Julliard, USC, New England Conservatory, University of Washington, Oberlin Conservatory, and others, have given up hope for change and abandoned the NASM accreditation.⁷⁵ Peabody, Rice, and the Berklee Schools of Music have also withdrawn which leads to the question, how can a music school be accredited without NASM? Moore answers this question in his book stating:

All colleges and universities, public and private, are examined periodically by regional accreditation agencies that span several states. These institutions may pursue additional accreditations in various disciplines from a discipline-specific agency such as NASM, but an institution is not required to do this in order to maintain its overall accreditation.⁷⁶

In 2015 Oberlin Conservatory, a founding NASM member, decided to withdraw from the accreditation. In a press release by Oberlin Conservatory communications staff, the school defended the decision stating, “accreditation from NASM is not necessary for a music school” and that “continued NASM membership commits schools to a second set of accreditation and annual reporting requirements. For Oberlin, and many of its peer schools, the redundancy of cumbersome accreditation processes is no longer possible to

⁷³ Robin D. Moore, *College Music Curricula For a New Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 24.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Cutietta, “K-16 Music Education in a Democratic Society,” 757.

⁷⁶ Robin D. Moore, *College Music Curricula For a New Century*, 79.

rationalize.”⁷⁷ It is not surprising that many of the schools that have freed their institutions from the shackles of NASM are the ones with the most innovative and relevant curriculums for the needs of 21st-century performing musician. Some of these music programs will be highlighted in the chapters to come.

It is time for the rest of the music colleges and conservatories in the United States to follow these schools’ lead, leave the NASM accrediting body behind, and put an end to the outdated music performance curriculum that was built for the early 20th-century performer. Why should music colleges and conservatories allow an accrediting body that has lost its credibility to tell them how to train music performers for their careers? We do not need 651 colleges of music training their musicians the same way. We need schools of music that are going to train musicians who will change the narrative of this decades-old collapse of our art. The handcuffs need to be taken off so that music colleges or conservatories can begin reforming the curriculum to fit the needs of our time. Is accreditation really more important than survival?

The Financial Constraints

Though many music scholars in the past have approached the topic of curriculum reform in the performance degree in good faith and with interesting ideas, often those proposed suggestions fail to account for the potential financial ramifications that their modifications would inflict on the music institution as a whole. In an ideal world, music schools would do many things to change, but at what cost? Who is going to pay for some of the ideas? It is not realistic to expect a dean of a music college or conservatory to reduce the number of performance majors who attend their school. That kind of decision would surely

⁷⁷ "Oberlin Conservatory Withdraws from National Association of Schools of Music."
<https://www.oberlin.edu/news/oberlin-conservatory-withdraws-national-association-schools-music>.

put that school of music out of business. Solutions to the performance degree curriculum must not only be relevant to the changing musical landscape of the performer, but they also need to make financial sense for the institution or else they will simply be ignored and eventually forgotten.

Tuition and fees, government funding (state and local), endowments, and philanthropic fundraising are major elements of the operational business model for music colleges and conservatories. Since the beginning of the great recession in 2008, state and federal funding for institutions has been reduced, and schools have relied more heavily on recruiting more students and raising tuition to meet the financial needs of their schools. A change in this revenue model is also paramount to the success of music colleges and conservatories going forward.

Chapter 2 noted the disturbing trends in higher education, which include dwindling enrollment numbers, skyrocketing student tuition prices, and the rising student loan default rate that will ultimately challenge the future stability and success of higher education.

Chapter 3 described the changing landscape of the performing musician caused by the turmoil encompassing the traditional music performance job market. It also addressed the resulting out-of-date music performance curriculum, the need for reform, and a strategic approach to the future, beginning with the recommendation to abandon the NASM accreditation standards, and find financially sound solutions that fit the twenty-first-century job marketplace for musicians.

The combinations of negative variables observed in Chapter 2 and 3 contribute to the “perfect storm” illustrated below in Figure 4. The need to act has never been greater, and it is in these dire moments, where hope is at its low point, that intelligent minds must come together to begin laying the groundwork for strategies that will overcome these challenges.

This is a defining moment in the future of our music institutions. In 30 years, will the next generation look back at our generation and speak about how we squandered the opportunity to save our art and music training institutions?

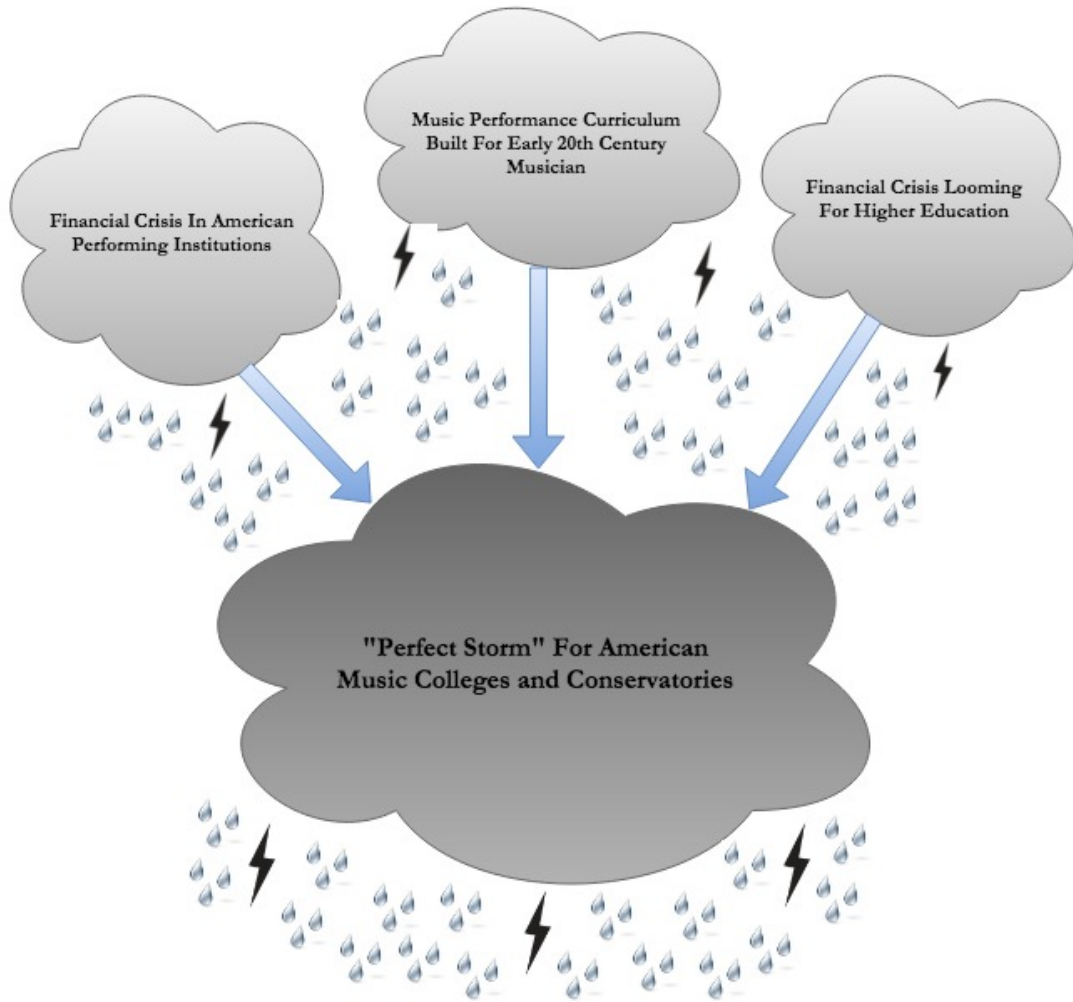


Figure 4. "The Perfect Storm"

CHAPTER 4

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS NEEDED IN ORDER TO FACILITATE CURRICULUM REFORM IN THE MUSIC PERFORMANCE DEGREE

In the late 1800s, horses were the primary mode of transportation both in the United States and globally. A severe crisis during that era was the extensive amount of horse manure covering city streets. The problem became so great that urban planning conferences were held to find solutions to combat the problem. One study concluded that, by the 1950s, cities would be covered in nine feet of horse manure.⁷⁸ Fortunately, the automobile was invented shortly after, and it became the solution to society's horse manure problem. Today, higher education music institutions have to confront different challenges, but, luckily, our automobile has already been invented, and all that is left to do is to take the keys, start the ignition, and take it for a spin around the block.

The future for music colleges and conservatories depends on embracing technologies that have already been invented, and putting the organization and infrastructure in place to facilitate continuing evolution, alongside the new advances that are made almost daily. Solutions that do so will transform how music institutions generate revenue, attract prospective students, and market themselves and their students; they will ultimately enable profound reform in the music performance curriculum.

Implementation of Distance Learning Music Courses

Roy Amara, a Stanford University computer scientist and the former head of the Institute for the Future, said in the 1960s, “we tend to overestimate the impact of new

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Kolbert, “Hosed Is There a Quick Fix for the Climate?”, *The New Yorker*, November 16, 2009, accessed January 18, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/11/16/hosed>.

technology in the short run, but we underestimate it in the long run.”⁷⁹ This statement today is referred to as “Amara’s Law,” and numerous examples can be cited to verify its relevance with new advances in technology.⁸⁰ The Internet is one model that historically validates Amara’s Law. In 1962, J.C.R. Licklider of MIT described his idea of a “Galactic Network” in a series of memos.⁸¹ It took more than two decades, but eventually that network became the internet. The internet transformed society in ways unimaginable back in 1962, and its world-altering effects are still being felt today.

Distance-learning courses have been around for more than two decades, but they still haven’t overtaken the traditional in-person classroom education. Is there any doubt, however, that the future of education will be a digital one? Distance learning is the future, and for the sake of the impending financial stability of music colleges and conservatories, institutions should do whatever is possible to be at the epicenter of this exciting technology. If higher education professors have the capability of increasing their classroom sizes from 20 students to multiple thousands, wouldn’t this have the potential to tremendously impact the economic profitability of their institutions? Distance learning courses would be monumental in changing the revenue model for music colleges and conservatories, and they would create become global centers of learning. Robert Freeman recognized the opportunity for increased revenue in this area and theorized in his book that “the rapid recent evolution of distance learning certainly suggests that some of our fiscal problems in this area might well be addressed through new technologies.”⁸² Berklee College of Music,⁸³ the Julliard School,⁸⁴ and

⁷⁹ Matt Ridley, “Amara’s Law,” Matt Ridley Blog, November 12, 2017, accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.rationaloptimist.com/blog/amaras-law/>.

⁸⁰ Alex Santoso, “Four Geeky Laws That Rule Our World,” Neatorama, September 5, 2012, accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.neatorama.com/2012/09/05/Four-Geeky-Laws-That-Rule-Our-World/>.

⁸¹ Barry M. Leiner, Vinton G. Cerf, David D. Clarke, Robert E. Kahn, and Leonard Kleinrock, “Brief History of the Internet,” Internet Society, 1997, accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-internet/brief-history-internet>.

⁸² Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians*, 229.

Eastman School of Music⁸⁵ have been at the forefront of embracing this technology, and have made tremendous advancements in the development of their distance music courses. These courses would give music schools the flexibility to change the music performance curriculum, while simultaneously ensuring the financial well-being of their institutions for decades to come.

The 2017 Distance Education Enrollment Report released by the Babson Survey Research Group cites statistics that show that over six million students have taken a distance course in 2015, an increase of 3.9% over the previous year. 29.7% of all matriculated students in higher education have taken at least one of these courses and 15.4% of them take distance-learning courses exclusively.⁸⁶ Between 2012 and 2015, the number of students studying on a campus dropped by almost 1 million, and these trends are likely to continue.⁸⁷

Theoretically, a whole collection of distance learning courses could be cultivated to fill a broad spectrum of music-educational needs that would provide access to matriculated students, college students from around the United States and the world, high school students thinking about pursuing a music degree and seeking Advanced Placement (AP) credit, adult amateur music enthusiasts looking to learn more, active professional musicians looking to brush up or learn new skills, or any person with an interest or reason to further their knowledge in music. Imagine how many incoming students would chose to purchase a distance-learning course that taught everything that was needed to pass the comprehensive

⁸³ "Online Music Courses." Online Music Courses - Berklee Online, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://online.berklee.edu/courses>.

⁸⁴ "Online Learning at The Juilliard School." At The Juilliard School, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://open.juilliard.edu/courses>.

⁸⁵ "Eastman E-theory." IML Store Home, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.esm.rochester.edu/iml/store/>.

⁸⁶ Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, *Digital Learning Compass: Distance Education Enrollment Report 2017*. Online Learning Survey. May 2017, accessed March 4, 2018, <https://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/digitallearningcompassenrollment2017.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

music theory and history entrance examinations? How many high school students would benefit from the ability to take an AP college course and have it count for credit when they enroll in music school? The opportunity to spread knowledge and reach more groups of people is limitless if pursued with the intention of creating effective distance learning courses for musicians.

There are considerable costs when developing distance-learning courses, but there is no better investment that a music school could make at this point. Would it be better to buy more horses when an automobile has already been invented? The newspaper industry has struggled since the rise of the digital era, and they had to adapt and evolve in order to survive. The newspapers that failed to do so are out of business. Likewise, would it be smart for a school of music to invest heavily in creating a larger wind ensemble or orchestra to attract more students? Probably not, and nobody wants to be the institution stuck with significant investments in something rapidly becoming obsolete. Investing in distance learning will accomplish what the former will not, and secure the future for music schools and colleges.

New Alliances and Mergers

In 1896, The Big Ten Conference was formed to “establish standards and machinery for regulation and administration of intercollegiate athletics.”⁸⁸ Today that partnership has become a cash cow, with a projection of forty-three million per institution in shared revenue for members of the conference.⁸⁹ A scenario where multiple music schools, not necessarily

⁸⁸ Big Ten Conference Athletics News: Official Athletic Site. accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.bigten.org/genrel/061110aag.html>.

⁸⁹ Andrew Bucholtz, "The Big Ten's New TV Deal Puts It into the Lead, May Provide a Competitive Edge." January 15, 2017, Accessed March 20, 2018, <http://awfulannouncing.com/ncaa/the-big-tens-new-tv-deal-puts-it-into-the-lead-may-provide-a-competitive-edge.html>.

in the same region, band together to form an association or alliance that begins with (but is not limited to) the shared development and distribution of distance-learning courses is an idea that could save many music schools from having to bankrupt themselves to build the necessary infrastructure on their own. This partnership would allow for important collaboration between the exceptional musical minds in higher education, giving them the opportunity to work together to cultivate both traditional courses and groundbreaking new ones. This would be beneficial in many ways; it would ensure that multiple courses of the same subject matter would not be competing with each other for enrollment and that institutions in the partnership would share the cost of developing the distance learning courses, as well as opening up a new stream of shared revenue for institutions participating in the partnership. This kind of partnership would become a brand for music schools, much like the Big Ten is in sports, and would strengthen the schools that would collectively enter into it.

If multiple music schools are located in the same geographic region, a merger should be considered if their partnership would result in making their institutions stronger as a result. “Moody’s last year issued a negative outlook for the higher education industry as a whole and found that 1 in 10 public and private colleges suffer ‘acute financial distress’ because of falling revenues and weak operating performance.”⁹⁰ The merger of the Boston Conservatory and the Berklee School of Music is an example of two forward-thinking institutions who foresaw trouble on the horizon if the status quo was maintained, and made the decision that combining forces would ultimately make both institutions stronger. In an interview with *Billboard Magazine* regarding the merger, Boston Conservatory president

⁹⁰ Kellie Woodhouse, “Mergers on the Rise?” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 17, 2015, accessed February 22, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/07/07/colleges-struggle-some-look-partnerships-and-mergers-relief>.

Richard Ortner stated “the time when a student could reproduce the music of Northern European composers of the last 200 years and get a job is over. The digital revolution has utterly changed how the arts are being created, distributed and consumed. We’re still going to operate like the Boston Conservancy, but on steroids.”⁹¹ The beginning results look to be fantastic for the newly merged institutions.

The Creation of a Department of Music Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and the business of music is an essential component to the working performing musician in the 21st century, and it should become a core element in the music performance curriculum. Often, performance majors have had to learn the business side of the music industry on their own, and unfortunately many are never able to develop those needed skills, which has resulted in many talented performers missing out on important career-making opportunities. A study conducted by Jennifer Slaughter and D. Gregory Springer, “What They Didn’t Teach Me in My Undergraduate Degree: An Exploratory Study of Graduate Student Musicians’ Expressed Opinions of Career Development Opportunities,” concluded that “to provide a more relevant undergraduate education for all music students and to equip them with the necessary professional skills for successful music careers, music institutions might consider ways to adapt to changing career profiles by offering applicable coursework in entrepreneurship, career education, and music business.”⁹²

⁹¹ Gail Mitchell, “How Berklee & Boston Music Schools Merged to Create A Conservatory “on Steroids””, *Billboard*, September 19, 2016, accessed February 17, 2018, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/7510286/boston-conservatory-berklee-merger-music-schools>.

⁹² Jennifer Slaughter and D. Gregory Springer, “What They Didn’t Teach Me in My Undergraduate Degree: An Exploratory Study of Graduate Student Musicians’ Expressed Opinions of Career Development Opportunities,” *College Music Symposium* 55, October 20, 2015, accessed February 27, 2018, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18177/sym.2015.55.sr.10889>.

Entrepreneurialism is valuable to performance majors, and learning how to market oneself will open new doors and avenues that could very well lead to important potential career opportunities. In a report released in 2017 by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project at Indiana University, some statistics were revealed about the impact of entrepreneurialism for students who developed and studied it while in school. 39% of Indiana alumni felt that their education integrated all aspects of career development, 36% were more confident in managing their finances, 14% were more satisfied with their income from their primary job, and 6% were more likely to locate a job within four months of graduating.⁹³ Those numbers reveal the importance of entrepreneurship to the success of a performer, and music institutions need to act on this finding. There are probably not any studies that show a notable percentage of performance majors feeling more satisfied with their income or job prospects after graduation because of their studies of Schenkerian analysis, dodecaphony, the music of Charles Ives, or the techniques of Karlheinz Stockhausen, yet there are entire courses dedicated to these subjects that performance majors are encouraged, or even required, to take, and not courses related to finding work as a performing entrepreneurial musician. Are such courses interesting and do they have value? Of course, and the intention is not to demean them, but instead to shed light on the gaping hole in the curriculum that needs to be filled. The Miksza and Hime study from Indiana University also concluded that “the continued development of entrepreneurial programs designed to help music students develop sustainable career options is necessary.”

⁹³ IU Bloomington Newsroom, “Research Finds Business Training Leads to Stronger Career Outcomes for Arts Graduates,” IU Bloomington Newsroom, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://archive.news.indiana.edu/releases/iu/2017/02/snaap-arts-survey.shtml>

⁹³ Miksza and Hime, “Undergraduate Music Program Alumni’s Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status,” 8.

There are music schools in the United States that have been early developers of coursework in the business of music, including Eastman School of Music,⁹⁴ Peabody Conservatory,⁹⁵ Manhattan School of Music,⁹⁶ New England Conservatory,⁹⁷ Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University,⁹⁸ and Berklee College⁹⁹ of Music, amongst others, but many NASM-accredited schools have not yet made a push to make music entrepreneurship a requirement in the music performance curriculum. These skills are critical in a world where traditional jobs in the classical music industry are fading, and they need to be cultivated and instituted as a required part of the curriculum for any student graduating with a music performance degree.

There are thousands of music performance graduates in the world who have completed their degrees, but have little to no training in the entrepreneurial side of the music industry. Many probably wish that they had learned these skills during their studies. Developing a certification in the business of music or music entrepreneurship would serve the dual purpose of providing continuing education for music performance graduates struggling in the real world, and creating a new source of revenue for music colleges or conservatories. Creating traditional entrepreneurship courses, taken in person, while simultaneously developing distance-learning portions of the courses would ensure both the present learning situation and its long-term viability in the global education market.

⁹⁴ "Courses." AIN Center for Entrepreneurship, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.rochester.edu/aincenter/courses/>.

⁹⁵ "Students & Faculty." Marketing and Self-Promotion, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://peabody.jhu.edu/life-at-peabody/career-services/marketing-self-promotion/>.

⁹⁶ "Center for Music Entrepreneurship (CME)." Manhattan School of Music, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://www.msmnyc.edu/programs/center-for-music-entrepreneurship/>.

⁹⁷ "Entrepreneurial Musicianship." Entrepreneurial Musicianship | New England Conservatory, accessed January 22, 2018. <http://necmusic.edu/em>.

⁹⁸ "Jacobs School of Music. Project Jumpstart: Entrepreneurship and Career Development," Jacobs School of Music: Indiana University Bloomington, accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.music.indiana.edu/departments/offices/entrepreneurship-careers/jumpstart/index.shtml>.

⁹⁹ "Learn the Modern Music Business with Berklee," Music Business Courses, Certificates, Degree - Berklee Online, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://online.berklee.edu/music-business>.

Some might ask, why not just create a Business in Music class and assign it to a professor already on the faculty? Greg Sandow, a composer and music critic who is on the graduate faculty at Julliard and is a key contributor to shaping their new curriculum, believes that “entrepreneurship is best set up as its own silo inside of a school.” He validates his opinion with some honest truths about music schools: “you’ve got on your faculty people hired because they teach harpsichord, or music theory, or trombone, or because they direct operas. Can they teach entrepreneurship, too? Very likely they can’t, and no blame to them for that. They might not be trained in it, they might not be entrepreneurs themselves, and nobody told them, when they were hired, that entrepreneurship would later be part of their job.”¹⁰⁰ Sandow’s conclusions represent yet another reason why music institutions have been slow to adapt to this change, and why this new department is needed.

Social Media and Multimedia Expansion

Music colleges and conservatories should make a full-court press regarding the development of social media and multimedia within the school to promote and grow their departments. Hiring a fulltime employee whose sole job would be managing the school’s website, Facebook and Instagram pages, Twitter and YouTube accounts, and remain on alert for all of the other new digital platforms that could become available to get the music school noticed by the world, would quickly upgrade music colleges and conservatories in this area. The end result would allow the school to display all of the happenings in their school of music, and would connect the institution with prospective students from all over the world. Robert Freeman notes in his book that “it is important to let the rest of the world know

¹⁰⁰ Greg Sandow, “What’s Wrong with Music Schools,” *Arts Journal*. March 11, 2013, accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2013/03/whats-wrong-with-music-schools-3.html>.

what is going on at your school.”¹⁰¹ What better way to do this than to create and publish great content daily for the whole world to see?

Many music colleges and conservatories have established video channels already, but most of these just post a video here or there of performances made by the orchestra or wind ensemble, or chronicle a special event, and it is not nearly enough. Imagine if each professor in a school of music was interviewed about their different teaching philosophies, their career successes, the exciting classes they are teaching, what some of their current and past students are doing in the professional world, and other highlights that prospective students would love to see. Students also need to be interviewed about what is happening in their day-to-day education, and their exciting developments should be promoted. There is a reason why reality television is so popular, and music schools should embrace this format so they can reach even the farthest corners of the world with the important teaching and learning that is happening at their schools. Students could give commentary during their recitals, for instance, like “Live from Lincoln Center.” Interviews with student performers, composers, and audience members could all be sought. The ideas for growth in this area are limitless.

The implementation of these technologies would enhance the education of music performance majors, provide opportunities for continued learning for recent graduates, and give the music institution the ability to make their school a global center of learning. The new innovations suggested could help to change the downward revenue trajectory that music schools are currently facing. By replacing the failing revenue model that relies heavily on students paying high prices in tuition and fees and gradually moving toward a new model that would lead to the stabilization of music schools for decades to come is essential to weathering the storm.

¹⁰¹ Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians*, 22.

CHAPTER 5

SUGGESTED REFORMS TO THE PERFORMANCE DEGREE CURRICULUM

When a student graduates with an undergraduate or graduate degree from a music institution, that student should be an outstanding musician, they should be able to play their respective instrument very well, and they should have the tools necessary to make a career in the music performance world. To keep the performance degree viable, graduates need to be ready to work by the completion of their degree programs. Institutions that take this consideration to heart and continually work to nurture and produce students who are able to make a living in their field after graduation, will thrive in the changing higher education landscape. Music higher education institutions that maintain the status quo will struggle, especially due to the current difficult financial realities noted in chapters 2 and 3.

Music Schools That Are Already Paving the Way to a Performance Curriculum Based on Relevancy and Innovation

In Chapter 4 it was noted that the schools of music that have made the most advancements in their music performance degree curriculums are the ones who have left the shackles of the NASM accreditation standards, and are now trailblazing the way forward toward a future model for music colleges and conservatories in the United States. Here are some of the exciting curricular innovations that several of those institutions have implemented into their programs.

Peabody Conservatory has made great strides in reforming the music performance curriculum to fit the needs of musicians in the 21st century. They have introduced a new curriculum known as the “Breakthrough Curriculum,” which includes five educational pillars based on excellence, interdisciplinary experiences, innovation, community connectivity, and

diversity.¹⁰² Their belief is that they have “developed a vision for the future of the 21st century musician in society and the training required for musicians to meet the new realities and opportunities of that role.”¹⁰³ Applications to study at Peabody conservatory are up 19% for the 2018–19 academic year compared to the previous year.¹⁰⁴

New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) has done a remarkable job in establishing new courses. They have developed ten different courses on the business of music and entrepreneurship.¹⁰⁵ NEC has also established entrepreneurial musician advising, which is a service that gives free career counseling to all of their current students and alumni. Students simply schedule an appointment online.¹⁰⁶

Oberlin Conservatory has developed excellent post-graduation resources for their graduates. As their website states, “your Oberlin Conservatory education doesn’t end when you graduate. With comprehensive professional development, one-on-one mentoring, and a close-knit, global alumni network, we’ll guide your first steps after graduation toward a pathway to success.”¹⁰⁷

Berklee College of Music has created “Berklee Online,” which has the most comprehensive distance learning courses to date in the United States. Students can earn certificates or even full degrees online, with a large variety of degree programs to choose from. Anybody in the world can sign up to take Berklee courses online, and one doesn’t

¹⁰² “Breakthrough Curriculum,” Peabody Institute John Hopkins University, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://peabody.jhu.edu/academics/degrees-programs/breakthrough-curriculum/>.

¹⁰³ “Students & Faculty,” The Breakthrough Plan, accessed March 17, 2018. <http://peabody.jhu.edu/explore-peabody/our-future/breakthrough-plan/>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ “EM Course Offerings,” New England Conservatory, accessed March 20, 2018. <https://necmusic.edu/em/course-offerings>.

¹⁰⁶ “Curriculum and Advising,” New England Conservatory, accessed March 20, 2018. <https://necmusic.edu/em/curriculum-advising>.

¹⁰⁷ “Life After Oberlin Conservatory,” Oberlin College and Conservatory, January 03, 2018, accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.oberlin.edu/conservatory/life-after-oberlin-conservatory>.

even need to apply to earn a certificate.¹⁰⁸ Berklee also has created 22 different courses covering many topics in the business of music.¹⁰⁹

The Thornton School of Music at USC has established full degree programs that complement possible career paths for those with performance degrees. For instance, they have a MM in Music Teaching and Learning designed “to prepare the student for an advanced level of pre-college teaching and leadership in the music education profession by developing core knowledge and expertise in pedagogical skills and scholarship.”¹¹⁰

A Different Prescription for Each Performance Major

Every music performance major enters their degree program at a different stage of their development as a musician, a performer, and an academic student. Some enter with highly advanced skills in chamber music and orchestral performance, but with only average skills on their primary instrument, and little academic prowess. Other students enter with great skill on their primary instrument, but no idea how to play in an orchestra, and with little to no experience in music theory and history. A student could also be great at music theory and history, but below average in everything else. These variable differences in the level of incoming students create difficult challenges for professors and administrators, and one important reform that is needed in performance degree programs will involve creating the ability for music institutions to refine areas of study for each individual student in order to mend their musical deficiencies and support their strengths.

¹⁰⁸ “Learn Music Online with Berklee.” Berklee Online - Music Degree, Certificates, Courses, accessed March 20, 2018, https://online.berklee.edu/?pid=6874&c3ch=Affiliate&c3nid=bcm_start_career.

¹⁰⁹ “Learn the Modern Music Business with Berklee.” Music Business Courses, Certificates, Degree - Berklee Online, accessed March 20, 2018. <https://online.berklee.edu/music-business>.

¹¹⁰ “University of Southern California.” Master of Music – Music Teaching and Learning, USC Thornton School of Music, accessed March 17, 2018. <https://music.usc.edu/departments/mtal/mm-music-teaching-learning/>.

As a comparison, imagine a scenario where a person becomes sick or injured. Usually in this situation, the ill person is encouraged to go and see a doctor for specific treatment that can provide them with a cure for what is ailing them. Some people have back problems, some have knee injuries, and others may have the flu or a common cold. A doctor would not be successful in their medical practice if they treated all their patients by writing the same prescription for all of those different and separate conditions. Can you imagine a doctor writing a prescription to treat the flu for a patient that was complaining about foot pain? That would be ridiculous! A good doctor instead examines and observes the patient, listens to the patient describe his or her symptoms, and then makes a judgment on the best form of treatment to assist in recovery from the ailment. In a way, professors and administrators in music schools serve as doctors to their students. When a student comes to school, they put their trust in their professors and administrators, as would a person seeing a doctor for treatment. Medical doctors often deal with serious, life-and-death situations; were they to write the same prescription for all of their patients, many of those patients would end up in the morgue! The consequences for students that result from professors and administrators who educate their students with the same prescription will not ultimately lead to physical harm, but they could lead to the mortality of some of budding musical careers.

A different prescription for each student is the best approach to training successful performing musicians. A music performance degree program cannot be consistently successful with a “one size fits all” list of curricula requirements. On the contrary, a differentiated method will effectively create a new generation of performing musicians: strengths and weaknesses of individual student will be identified, properly treated, and continually reevaluated until those students have ultimately reached their full potential, one

prescription at a time. Music institutions are obliged to help their performance majors or “patients” to reach their potential and become successful working musicians.

Who should be the primary “doctor” for a music performance student? Currently the NASM standards and policies dictate that institutions should be, but in a world free from those shackles, the private teacher and main advisor for the student would be the ones writing the prescriptions.

A Performance Major’s Private Teacher Is Their Cornerstone to Success

Becoming an excellent musician and master technician of one’s instrument is the most essential factor to succeeding and finding work as a performance major after graduation. If a musician cannot play their instrument well, then no matter how personable and well-connected they are they will never be able to succeed in the competitive world of music. When building a sturdy and long-lasting house, construction must always begin by laying a strong foundation on solid ground, and only after this has been properly developed can the other aspects of the house be put into place. Likewise, molding successful performers begins by developing the foundational musical and technical mastery of their applied instrument. Without this essential building block, there can be no career for the young aspiring performer. The applied teacher is the mentor expected to direct and cultivate the building of a performance major’s foundation, and this naturally positions them as the cornerstone to the future success of their student. The Slaughter and Springer study reached the same conclusion:

Of utmost importance within this support system is the relationship between student, adviser, and primary instructor. For students, mentors are the most significant resource for career advice and experiential connections. Mentors who fail to advise their students effectively do them a great disservice, especially when it comes to realities of employment following an earned degree. By providing better guidance at the beginning of a student’s

education, teachers are able to make clear the goals of the program, the realities of the field upon graduation, and the possibilities of a career as a 21st-century musician.¹¹¹

An era where the primary teacher, advisor, and student collaborate to generate a successful education is a model that will lead music colleges and conservatories into the twenty-first century of music education, and could inspire other specializations to follow their lead.

A Music Entrepreneurship Genesis

Forward-thinking music colleges and conservatories are developing many exciting entrepreneurial courses. The purpose here will not be to list and describe all of the essentials needed in entrepreneurial study, but instead to highlight some important components for the genesis of a new music entrepreneurship department. Some of these essentials include developing the ability to write at a high level, learning how to speak publicly in a concert setting, marketing oneself using social media and technology, learning how to cultivate an audience, interviewing for success, and understanding legal matters, among others. Having these skills is essential in building a career as a professional performer in the twenty-first century.

Being able to communicate through writing helps with building connections, interviewing for potential jobs, and marketing oneself as a performing musician. Having a course that teaches performance majors how to write all of the different kinds of letters that they will ever need— a cover letter for a job interview, a personal email to a colleague, or even a recommendation letter for a student—would be profoundly beneficial. This writing course would also teach performance majors how to write an effective resumé/curriculum

¹¹¹ Slaughter and Springer, “What They Didn’t Teach Me in My Undergraduate Degree: An Exploratory Study of Graduate Student Musicians’ Expressed Opinions of Career Development Opportunities.”

vitae (CV). At the conclusion of the course, students would have these documents ready to go. Learning how to write one's artistic biography is also an important skill that should be included in this course, as musicians always need these for various solo and chamber music performance opportunities. An introduction to grant writing should also be included because of the many different kinds of grants available to musicians that could potentially open up more doors to a performance major beginning their career.

A course guiding students on the lessons of marketing themselves as they go to look for work would be highly beneficial. In today's technology-driven world, building a professional website is essential to marketing one's skills as a performing musician. A personal website can host one's biographical information, CV, professional pictures, recordings, performance videos, interviews, reviews, and so much more. The technological aspects of building a website often prove an obstacle for musicians, and learning how to do this while still in school from a professional web designer would be a great asset for a new graduate. At the conclusion of the course, every student would have their own functioning professional website that they could maintain and edit for the rest of their lives. Performance majors also need to be equipped with the skills to build their social media and networking presence so that they can connect the art that they perform to the world. Playing at a high level is important, but getting people to hear and recognize one's talent is equally crucial. The social media platforms available in the twenty-first century can enable people worldwide to hear and respond to one's art.

Public speaking comes naturally to some musicians, but to others it does not. During concerts, if a musician is able to connect with their audience by speaking eloquently and confidently, then they are on their way to a successful concert, assuming that the actual performance is of good quality! Explaining the context of a composition, the programmatic

theme, or even the emotional background of a work being performed, can profoundly impact how an audience listens to and receives a performance. Students could theoretically be graded by practicing public speaking skills in their recitals and performances so that they are well equipped to communicate with their audiences after graduation.

As detailed in Chapter 3, American audiences are disintegrating. Developing strategies for bringing these listeners back to concerts should be a crucial focus when training the next generation of performers. Theoretically, a portion of a student's grade could be determined by how many people attend their senior recital and how well they connect with those in their audience, for example. Newspapers, radio programs, and other communication formats often interview performers regarding their upcoming performances. Learning how to communicate with these reporters is necessary so that the interview is not awkward or potentially boring to potential audience members. There are also many teaching or arts administration jobs that require an interview with a potential employer. Performance majors need to know the pitfalls to avoid, and need to develop the skills to interview well.

The legal system is particularly challenging for musicians who freelance. Learning how to navigate the complexities of the tax code while in school would save a lot of time and money for students who often have to learn this on their own. This portion of the proposed curriculum could also teach students how to form an LLC, a non-profit organization, or even how to construct a performance contract for the various forms of work that require it.

There are many other components of music entrepreneurship, but even a course that teaches these skills would be much better than the options that music performance majors have to choose from today.

Diversifying One's Portfolio

Many students enter music school with the singular goal of winning an orchestra job, becoming a famous soloist, or attaining some other similarly strong accolade. This is great, but the question that needs to be asked is, what if that singular goal is not achieved? Does it make sense to put “all of your eggs in one basket”? The statistics noted in Chapter 3 suggest that the majority of aspiring performers that enter music school with these singular goals will not achieve them. Diversifying one's qualifications would help make aspiring performers more desirable.

Being musically diverse is an attractive trait for a recently graduated performing musician. For example, if a violinist can also play viola, then they have the potential to double their opportunities for finding work as a performing artist or as a teacher. If a pianist can also play the harpsichord and the organ, then the number of job possibilities exponentially increases as well. Robert Freeman in his book determined that “encouraging double majors whenever possible at the undergraduate level seems to me a good idea for music's future and for the futures of many of our students.” He goes on to note the importance of diversifying what one can do, saying “imagine how valuable a young musician would be who could conduct instrumental and vocal ensembles, play the piano well, and deal administratively with a mayor and a city council, the chair of the school board, the chamber of commerce, and the heads of local churches, mosques, and synagogues.”¹¹²

One doesn't necessarily need to learn a new instrument in order to be diversified. Imagine a student who is capable of being an effective soloist, chamber musician, orchestral musician, jazz musician, and improviser. Wouldn't that also provide a lot of opportunities?

¹¹² Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians*, 167.

Being diversified can lead to important career opportunities. Music colleges and conservatories should embrace this reality and encourage a wide-ranging approach in the development of their music performance majors.

Training Students for Professional Orchestras, Not for The College Orchestra Experience

Orchestral training is an asset that every well-rounded instrumental performance major should have in their portfolio. Though only a small minority of performance majors will win a full-time orchestra job after graduating, other students will break into the various freelance scenes that exist throughout the United States, and will need to be well-trained and prepared. Music students should never expect full-time orchestral work after graduating, but training performance majors to become excellent orchestral players does not necessarily provide them with the false hope of a dream full-time orchestral position; rather, such training teaches students valuable skills in ensemble playing that they can then use in the freelance world.

There are already a number of great student orchestras in universities and conservatories throughout the United States. Many of the conductors who lead these orchestras are talented educators who do great work in training their students. These orchestras often perform wonderful and inspiring concerts during the academic year. Though the level of these orchestras varies among the various musical schools in the United States, the current model already produces results by generating orchestral performance opportunities and experience for performance majors. The glaring problem that exists in many orchestral programs lies in their rehearsal model and the resulting student mindset when preparing for these concerts.

College orchestras typically rehearse twice a week for a month and a half, culminating in a dress rehearsal and a concert. Some students will practice their parts diligently before the first rehearsal, but often students will use the glut of rehearsals and excess time before the actual concert to practice their sight-reading skills until they have played that particular orchestral program so many times that they are eventually somewhat ready for the concert. Often, orchestral playing takes a back seat to a student's upcoming music theory exam, or perhaps the ten-page paper that they need to write after rehearsal for music history. A student might even have their upcoming solo recital on a particular weekend. The end result is that some students never actually learn their orchestra parts to an acceptable standard, but they still pass the course and perform in the concerts. This type of orchestra curriculum does not train performance majors for playing in a professional orchestra setting. Professional orchestras typically have 3 or 4 rehearsals on simultaneous days leading up to their concert(s). The orchestral musicians are expected to have already technically mastered their parts by the first rehearsal. For a performance major who experiences the professional orchestra world fresh out of school, this can unfortunately often be the beginning of their real orchestral education.

The stark differences that exist between the college and professional orchestral model can be attributed to two factors, "time" and "incentive." Performance majors have too much time to prepare for their orchestra concerts, but in the spectrum of everything else required of them in their degree program, not enough time for everything else. The surplus of rehearsals gives the college musician time to work on their orchestra music during rehearsals, but it doesn't train them to play in a professional setting. There is also not an incentive for students to come prepared for orchestra rehearsals. Student musicians are not paid to play in the college orchestra, and they have many other obligations that they must

often prioritize over orchestra. These include private lessons, other classes, homework, exams, and practicing their primary instrument.

Professional orchestral musicians are incentivized by the need to work in order to provide for themselves and their families. If a musician does not perform up to the standard of their conductor and other colleagues, then they will lose their job or not be called back to play with that particular orchestra in the future. Professional orchestras do not have the time or the resources to pay their musicians for a month and a half of rehearsals before their concerts, and it would be a horrible business decision if they did. No viable professional orchestra could ever adopt the current college orchestra model without consigning itself to bankruptcy.

Universities and conservatories must strive to emulate the professional orchestral experience. Though a college orchestra cannot replicate the financial incentive of a professional ensemble, there are other ways to create this environment and to incentivize students. The first aspect of college orchestra reform that should be considered, and would be attractive to current and future prospective students, is a project-based orchestral curriculum.¹¹³ This curriculum would directly address the time disparity mentioned earlier. Instead of orchestra rehearsals being spread out over a 6-week time frame; rehearsals would be condensed into a 1-week period with four consecutive rehearsals, followed by a dress rehearsal and a concert. During these orchestra-intensive weeks, the rest of the music department faculty would be instructed to lighten their academic workload on students for that week so that they would be able to properly focus their attention on orchestra. This schedule would emulate the experience of a musician in the professional world from the very beginning of a college education. Imagine studying for six years in college, going out into the

¹¹³ Eduard Schmieder, "Orchestra Curriculum," interview by author, November 7, 2016.

professional world, and already being comfortable and familiar with the rigors of the professional orchestra schedule. Every student who had excelled at their instrument with their private teacher, and experienced a project-based college orchestra schedule, would have the skills to be successful in the professional orchestra world. Universities could maintain the same number of orchestra concerts that they were accustomed to before this reform, but with a compact schedule that would not only benefit the students, but also private teachers, and every other music professor who would not have to compete with orchestra for their student's time every week of the semester.

The next phase of orchestral curriculum reform would involve the implementation of common-sense solutions to incentivize the performance major to practice their orchestra music, and take their college orchestra seriously. As stated earlier in this section, some students already have this motivation, but many do not. The negativity of some students generates an unhealthy atmosphere for all students participating in the orchestra, not to mention for the conductor. The quality of the orchestra's performances suffers as a result.

Adding incentives, potentially with both positive and negative consequences, would persuade those who are not self-motivated. One week before the start of each orchestra series project, auditions would be held for the concertmaster position and every other principle chair in the orchestra. Every student registered for orchestra during that semester would be required to audition. The conductor would highlight every important passage in the repertoire one week prior to the audition, and the orchestral students would audition with those excerpts. Every student would receive a pass or failure for his or her audition, but the best individual (as determined by audition) in each section would become principal, and be paid a small monetary reward. Those who auditioned and were not prepared would need to be tested again until the music was learned at an acceptable level. Failure to learn the

music would lead to failure of the course. These auditions would result in students coming to the first rehearsal having already learned their music at a high level, and would give them the experience of auditioning, which many will need after graduation if they are looking for an orchestra job or freelance work. This audition-based incentive would allow the conductor to focus on shaping the music during rehearsals instead of practicing notes; it would transform the attitudes of students participating in orchestra, and the end result would raise the musical level at college orchestra concerts.

The reforms discussed above provide a university or conservatory with a template for building an orchestra curriculum that would prepare performance majors for the professional orchestral world and would be attractive to future prospective students. These modifications are based on the core principles of “time,” “incentive,” and creating a professional environment for the performance major. These principles are imperative to the success of college orchestral programs. The ideas presented in this section are certainly not the only ways to update the orchestra curriculum in music schools, but hopefully these suggestions will spark the creative minds of others to ultimately find a successful template that will better prepare performance majors for the professional orchestral world.

Proficiency in Music Theory and History for Performance Majors

The knowledge gained through studying the theory and history of music is important to the development of the vast majority of performance majors. There will always be exceptions. For instance, the legendary operatic tenor Luciano Pavarotti enjoyed a storied singing career, even though he once admitted during an interview in 1997 that “yes, it’s true,

I don't read music."¹¹⁴ His talent and musicianship was so profound that regardless of his limited background in theory and history, he had the talent and ability to succeed.

Performers of Pavarotti's ilk are the exception, and having a solid understanding of musical theory and history provide priceless benefits for most performers when interpreting and understanding the classical music literature.

American universities and conservatories have tremendous theory and history professors who are also some of the most accomplished musical scholars in the world. The concern for the performance major is the amount of time needed to successfully complete these courses, combined with what knowledge is actually practical to them post-graduation, and what information they actually will retain. Often times, once the basic theory and history courses are completed, performance majors are required to enroll in multiple upper-level courses in these subjects to complete their degrees. The higher-level courses are generally interesting, enlightening, and rewarding experiences for the performance major, but the pertinent question to be considered is: at what cost? Are performance majors spending too much time on music theory, history, and other academic subjects, and not enough time on developing their instrument, performing skills, and entrepreneurial toolbox? This question is quite controversial, and there are invariably many diverse opinions on the subject, but instead of battling to make the case for more or less music theory, history, and other academic subjects for performance majors, institutions should strive to find common ground, look to be bold and innovative, and begin reforming the curriculum accordingly.

Modifications to the current standard curriculum should ensure that performance majors have developed the proper knowledge considered to be necessary by the departments

¹¹⁴ "Pavarotti Confesses - He Cannot Read Music." *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), July 21, 1997, accessed February 17, 2017. <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/573390/Pavarotti-confesses---he-cannot-read-music.html>.

of these academic subjects while advancing the performance major's writing abilities, but in an efficient manner that leaves an appropriate amount of time for a student's foundational applied instrument studies. Developing a standard proficiency for performance majors in music theory and history through a collaborative process designed and approved by the theory, history, and instrumental departments of a music institution would ensure that these two areas of common ground are achieved. If an undergraduate or graduate performance major with advanced knowledge in music theory and history passes this department determined standard proficiency in one or more of these subjects on their first day as a matriculated student, then they would automatically test out of those academic subjects instead of being required to take them. Those that test out would be able to use that valuable time to focus their attention on practicing and developing their primary instrument—the foundation of their music education. A performance major who enrolls in school with a limited understanding of these subjects would have to enroll in the currently structured music theory and history courses, but with the goal of becoming proficient as quickly as possible. Realizing the importance of performance major's primary focus as an aspiring performing artist, music theory and history professors should strive to get these students out of their classrooms and into the practice room as quickly as possible. Performance majors who are struggling in these subjects would be assigned an upperclassman or graduate music theory or history student tutor to help mentor and expedite their learning. A student-tutoring program would be valuable not only to the struggling performance major, but also to the music theory or history major that would ultimately benefit from the teaching experience. The addition of distance-learning courses, as mentioned in the previous chapter, would theoretically allow for many students to gain the theory and history knowledge needed

to pass the department determined proficiency exams in these subjects while in high school before they even enroll in a post-secondary institution.

These suggested reforms in music theory and history would maintain high academic standards, ensure that students learn and retain important and necessary information, and ultimately free up valuable time for the performance major to focus and develop their primary instrument and career entrepreneurial skills. These reforms would benefit current students, would be attractive to both prospective students and some music faculty, and would ultimately enhance the reputation of the music performance degree in the institution that adopts these reforms.

Implementation of a Weekly Performance Hour / Distinguished Student Recital

Music performance majors need as much experience as possible performing during their studies so that they feel comfortable in front of audiences by the time they finish their education. The current music performance curriculum provides performance opportunities in the form of solo degree recitals, chamber music recitals, orchestra concerts, and jury exams at the end of each semester. Though these experiences are important to the growth of the performance major, there can never be enough performance and more opportunities should be explored.

Implementing a weekly “Performance Hour” for music performance majors would help give students more performance opportunities. Professors, instructors, and administrators would select one hour during the school week where no classes, lessons, or rehearsals would be scheduled, and where there would be a mixed student performance in one of the recital halls in the music school. Students, with the permission of their private teacher, would sign up to perform a musical work that they had been studying during the

week prior, and then perform in the “Performance Hour” recital. Students matriculated in music performance degree programs would be required to perform at least once per semester in these weekly recitals, except in cases where the private teacher deems it would be harmful for the student and writes a letter that excuses that particular student from performing in the “Performance Hour” for a particular semester. Performance majors would be mandated to attend a certain number of these performance hours during their degree tenures. The College of Music at Penn State University has a successful variation of this performance curricular idea called “Common Hour,” which is held weekly on Friday afternoons.¹¹⁵ Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University has also implemented a similar idea with their “Friday Noon Recital Series.”¹¹⁶

In addition, the instrumental faculty would select the best individual student performance each week from the weekly student “Performance Hour,” culminating in a monthly public student recital called “Distinguished Young Artists of [name of music institution].” The college faculty would pick these individuals on the basis of the students’ musical and technical mastery of the work that they had performed. This recital would be held at the university or at a public venue in close proximity to the school, and would be live-streamed on the Internet, or even broadcast on the local TV and radio stations, if possible. Proceeds generated from donations or ticket sales at these concerts could conceivably go to the scholarship fund of the music school and be designated for performance majors.

These “Performance Hour” recitals would benefit students tremendously by giving them more opportunities to perform, and they would reward the hard-working and talented

¹¹⁵ “Common Hour, Recital, and Concert Attendance,” The Penn State School of Music, accessed February 24, 2017. <https://music.psu.edu/ug-handbook-2015-2016/common-hour-recital-and-concert-attendance>.

¹¹⁶ “Students & Faculty,” Friday Noon: Strings, accessed February 23, 2017. <http://peabody.jhu.edu/event/friday-noon-strings/>.

ones by giving them the opportunity to be featured in the “Distinguished Young Artists” recital series. The mandate put in place for student attendance would give performance majors the opportunity to perform in front of their peers, which is not an easy feat. For the music institution, the monthly “Distinguished Young Artists” recitals would give them the opportunity to showcase their talented students to the community, and would help raise funds for scholarships. Live-streaming and broadcasting these recitals would generate attention from the community and the rest of the world that would make the institution attractive to future prospective students and wealthy patrons looking to support the musical arts.

Training Performance Majors to Teach their Primary Instrument

The vast majority of performing artists also teach. Looking at the history of some great artists, Jascha Heifetz, David Oistrakh, Itzhak Perlman, and many others decided that they did not just want to perform, but they also wanted to teach. Quite often when a music performance major finishes school, one avenue of income that they can rely on almost right away is private teaching. Some performance majors realize the challenges of becoming soloists, getting a job in an orchestra, and cultivating a successful chamber group, and exclusively teach students to support themselves after school. One conclusion made in the Miksza and Hime study was that “it seems that the anecdotal understanding that many music performance degree students may ultimately find themselves in a teaching career or pursuing graduate degrees upon graduation was also supported.”¹¹⁷

The great composer and musician Arnold Schoenberg stated in his article entitled “How Can a Music Student Earn a Living,” that “almost every young student can teach his

¹¹⁷ Miksza and Hime, “Undergraduate Music Program Alumni’s Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status,” 8.

instrument to beginners and laymen, or to any other person—if he finds one who knows less than he and who considers him an authority; and for the pupil it need not be worse than with any other teacher he can afford. But to teach theory might be of advantage to both the student teacher and the student pupil.”¹¹⁸

In the study conducted by Jennifer Slaughter and D. Gregory Springer about music performance majors’ preparedness for life after completing music school, performance graduates said that learning how to teach in the studio was a skill that they had to develop on their own after graduation, and that, nonetheless, for many teaching was their primary source of income. The study reported:

Currently, many music schools and departments prioritize performance skills in their curriculum; however, the majority of professional musicians cite teaching as their primary activity – not performing. If teaching represents the majority of a musician’s income, then institutions of higher education might reflect this trend by including content related to pedagogy, studio development, and developmental psychology across coursework for all music students.¹¹⁹

Barbara English Maris, Professor of Piano Emerita at The Catholic University of America, writes in her article “Training Musicians to Teach” that “instead of encouraging the most outstanding performers to develop outstanding teaching skills, too often the training of music teachers has been treated as an insurance policy for those who might not be “good enough” to succeed as professional performers.”¹²⁰

Are music universities and conservatories truly helping their performance majors learn how to teach so that they can begin making money right out of school? Or is this just

¹¹⁸ Arnold Schoenberg, “How Can a Music Student Earn a Living?”, *Proceedings of the Music Teachers National Association* 34 (1939): 251-255. – In English.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer Slaughter and D. Gregory Springer, “What They Didn’t Teach Me in My Undergraduate Degree: An Exploratory Study of Graduate Student Musicians’ Expressed Opinions of Career Development Opportunities.” *College Music Symposium* 55. October 20, 2015, accessed February 27, 2018. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18177/sym.2015.55.sr.10889>.

¹²⁰ Barbara English Maris, “Training Musicians To Teach,” *American Music Teacher* 41, no. 2 (1991): 30-55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43538822>.

another example of the growing list of “essentials” that performance majors need to learn on their own after graduation? Yes, generally there are pedagogy classes, and some institutions even have preparatory programs where their performance majors are asked to teach as TAs, but is this really enough? The research dictates that that music conservatories and colleges should do better in this area, and there are many ideas that could help prepare music performance majors for the teaching their primary instrument. Imagine a scenario where music performance majors would have the opportunity teach music education majors how to play their primary instrument for methods courses. This is just one possible solution, but others should continue to be explored.

Chapter 5 noted some of the innovative accomplishments in music schools and conservatories in the United States and continued a conversation about reforms to the music performance curriculum that would begin to make it relevant again to the twenty-first-century performer. The hope is that these ideas will lead to further conversations that will result in actions being taken to create robust and relevant reforms to the music performance curriculum in American colleges and conservatories.

CHAPTER 6

MUSIC SCHOOL FOR LIFE

In many cases, once performance majors graduate from music school and are awarded their degree, the institution sends them on their way, and these former students are left to sink or swim in the unforgiving world of music. These students have finished their studies and are no longer paying tuition to the school, so why should a music college or conservatory care about what happens to them? With the decline in enrollment of students in fine arts programs in colleges and conservatories, as evidenced in Chapter 2, music colleges need to do more to attract potential students. The focus of this chapter will be on how to continue nurturing and promoting alumni who have already graduated, helping them to find work at the completion of their studies. These recommendations will not only help graduates to find career success, but will also increase the visibility and revenue of music colleges and conservatories and make them more attractive to prospective students.

Your Music School for Life

When a student enrolls in a music college or conservatory, the institution should promote the idea that the school is invested in the success of those that they educate for life. Once enrolled, the student becomes part of an exclusive musical family, and once graduated, those alumni become part of a strong professional network that will help connect currently matriculated students to potential professional career opportunities in the future. Knowing that post-graduation resources will be there to help guide graduates to successful careers would ultimately make attending a music school mean something much more than it does today.

Music colleges and conservatories should begin by having an exclusive section of their website dedicated to alumni. This section would publish job opportunities locally and throughout the nation and world, including teaching positions, upcoming auditions for orchestras and chamber groups, opportunities for various musical grants, summer festival opportunities, local master classes, important concerts, and anything else that could be potentially useful to the music performance graduates from the school.

Peabody Conservatory has developed a “Peabody Alumni Map,” where graduates can login and find where their fellow alums are around the globe, and how to network with them.¹²¹ Music colleges and conservatories should follow their lead and build an online network and database of as many of their alumni as possible. The database could include a graduate’s year of graduation, current job, current city of employment, a picture, a biography, a link to his or her professional websites, contact information, and other important details regarding his or her career. This database could also serve as a social networking tool for alumni, where graduates could send each other messages, post job opportunities, develop new collaborations and ideas with each other, or give/ask for career advice. The faculty and administrators of the music school could also be active on this network so that they could answer questions or give career advice. This network would serve as a laboratory for alumni, and, if successful, one can only imagine the unlimited possibilities that this network could provide, and how attractive it would look to prospective students looking to enroll in music school.

Music colleges and conservatories should encourage alumni to write to them about their career successes, and continuously publish updates about them on their website, social media accounts, and newsletter periodicals. Music schools should keep alumni informed of

¹²¹ "Students & Faculty." Alumni, accessed March 4, 2018, <http://peabody.jhu.edu/alumni/>.

important student concerts happening at the school, and provide them with special invitations to these concerts.

Concert Series at Music School for Alumni

Music colleges and conservatories have trained countless performing musicians that are out in the real world performing and leading successful musical lives all around the world. These alumni have become polished artists because of the training they received while in school, and they are a reflection of their alma maters. These alumni have incredible value to music schools because they give their institution credibility. Donors to the music school would presumably be more likely to give money, and more prospective students would be inspired to enroll, if these success stories were visible and the achievements of these alumni were on display. Implementing a concert series for alumni of the music institution would provide a music college or conservatory with the ability to showcase the talent that they have already produced, and would also provide an important musical and artistic presence in the community. These concerts would ideally be heavily promoted and broadcasted live via the school's live stream, which would give the world the opportunity to see the high caliber of alumni that have graduated from the institution. The funds generated and collected from ticket sales and donations at the concerts could be used to increase the scholarship capabilities of the music school. This could also help to create a network of arts supporters in a music school's community that would enjoy the great concerts and be inspired to support the school philanthropically. These alumni concerts would provide excellent exposure for performers, would be an inspiration to current and prospective students, and would ultimately lead to an increase in visibility for the music school in the surrounding community and the world.

Post-Graduation Advising and Transitional Education

A music school that never forgets about their graduates and embraces advising, connecting, providing references for jobs, and offering a transitional mentoring program for recent graduates after they have completed their degree is an institution that will be attractive to prospective students. Graduates have spent years of their lives studying, and many have invested thousands of dollars in their education. Not only does it look good for the music institution when their graduates are succeeding and working in the music world, in many ways it is an institution's moral obligation to care about what happens to their former students. The Miksza and Hime study discovered that career counseling and networking was something that music performance majors thought was lacking in their education. This portion of the study concluded, "it is also interesting to note the relatively low ratings music performance students gave to items regarding career advising, work/internship experience, and opportunities to network compared to the education subgroup."¹²² If alumni of music colleges and conservatories have the ability to receive career counseling, are given access to the most recently cultivated distance-learning courses at a heavily discounted price, are granted use of some music facilities for rehearsing and teaching, and have the ability to enroll in a transitional post-graduate program where they can continue taking applied lessons, orchestra, and chamber music, then this would be helpful to any performance major facing the real world that needs a little bit of extra support.

¹²² Miksza and Hime, "Undergraduate Music Program Alumni's Career Path, Retrospective Institutional Satisfaction, and Financial Status," 9.

CONCLUSION

This conversation began with a description of the calamity surrounding traditional performing institutions, the growing irrelevance of the music performance degree curriculum for twenty-first-century performing musicians, and the financial crisis destined to assault higher education in the coming years, all of which have combined to contribute to the “perfect storm” that brings with it incredible challenges that demand solutions.

To weather this “perfect storm,” a case was presented that discussed freeing music colleges and conservatories from the shackles of the NASM accreditation standards that have inhibited music colleges and conservatories from finding financially viable solutions to reform the music performance degree curriculum. The discovery that many of the founding members of NASM have since left the governing organization led to the recommendation that music colleges and conservatories that wish to remain relevant must follow in their footsteps and withdraw.

A plan was then presented, describing suggested institutional changes that would secure the financial stability of music colleges and conservatories in the United States for the future. Recommendations were made concerning the development of distance-learning courses in music colleges and conservatories that would theoretically open up music education to the rest of the world, and ensure that these institutions are not left behind by the trending digital future of higher education. Also described was the formation of a conference of like-minded institutions through a collaboration to make the digital infrastructure and development of these distance-learning courses more financially viable. Ideas were presented, such as revenue sharing, the elimination of duplicate courses so that conference members don’t waste valuable time and resources competing with each other,

and opening up the door for professorial collaborations involving multiple schools to find new and innovative courses for the music world. A case was then made for the formation of a department of entrepreneurship in music colleges and conservatories so that this neglected “essential” can be properly taught to performance majors preparing for work in the twenty-first century. The last potential institutional change examined was the advancement and continued development of social and technological media in order to promote students, professors, music colleges and conservatories, and the music being created in these institutions, so that the rest of the world can be exposed to it.

The discussion then progressed to co-opting some of the exciting advances in the music performance curriculum that are already being implemented at various music institutions, and included some recommendations for changes to the current curricular model. Those changes included the idea of a different prescription for each performance major, the establishment of the private teacher as the foundation for a performer’s education, a genesis for the beginning of music entrepreneurial courses, a plan for a project-based orchestra curriculum, the establishment of a proficiency in music history and theory, the formation of a weekly performance hour to increase performing opportunities, and the design of a course that would instruct performance majors in the art of studio teaching.

The conversation concluded by discussing life after graduation for performance majors and the thought of making a music college or conservatory “a school for life,” while promoting alumni through a recital series, implementing post-graduation career advice for students, and generating a transitional program for those performance majors that have just finished their degrees.

Along the way numerous statistics and music studies were shared, as well as the opinions of many notable musicians, deans, administrators, and intelligent minds in higher

education. This is just the beginning of a broader conversation about the problems and subsequent solutions that those challenges bring. A wise man once said in the book of Proverbs, “intelligent people are always ready to learn. Their ears are open to knowledge.”¹²³ Similarly, this is not the end of the conversation; rather, it is just the beginning. The hope is that great minds will continue to learn, and that the knowledge that they gain through these discussions will eventually pave the way for more solutions that will help shield and combat the music world from the coming “perfect storm.”

¹²³ Proverbs 18:15.

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