

# Preparing Choral Students for College Vocal Auditions

Texas Music Educators Association  
All-State Convention  
February 10, 2005  
2:00, CC102

## Presented by:

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## Degrees/Careers for Vocalists:

- Performance
- Music Education (Public Schools or Private Teaching)
- Conducting - Choral, Opera (usually a graduate degree program)
- Vocal Pedagogy (usually a graduate degree program)
- Composition/Theory: Song Writing, Film Scoring
- Church Music
- Musicology
- Music Librarian
- Arts administration (usually a graduate degree program)
- Music Therapy
- Music Production/Engineering
- Music Business: Entertainment Law, Managers/Agents
- Double Majors: Science/Music, Business/Music, Psychology/Music

## What are music professors looking for in a vocal audition?

- The core voice
- Potential as a performer/teacher
- Propensity for success as a music major
- Sight-reading skills
- Piano skills
- Language skills
- Work ethic
- Spark/Personality
- Are you a transfer student? (Some schools do not allow you to begin the program in January.)
- Musical background

## Singing technique:

- Looking for basic elements: posture, breathing, tonal core, timbre
- Sound: organic, honest, free of manipulation, age appropriate
- Vocal projection
- Diction/pronunciation, vowel specificity
- Musicality: Phrasing, syllabic stress, text interpretation/communication

## What should the student be looking for in the college music program?

- Performer:
  - Voice Teacher:
    - Contact them before you audition.
    - Ask if you may have a sample lesson.
    - Is there availability in their studio?
    - This is the student's mentor for four years.
  - Opera Program
  - Graduate vs. Undergraduate Ratio
- Junior and Senior High School Music Educators:
  - Choral Conductor
  - Voice Teacher
  - Area schools near university location
- Academic Program vs. Conservatory
- Do the theater & music departments work well together?
- Location of University: Metropolitan vs. Rural

## Who is required to perform a vocal audition?

- Performance Majors
- Music Education Majors
- Any student wishing to earn a Bachelor of Music Degree that enables him/her to pursue other careers in music: i.e. Music Business, Arts Administration

## What music is appropriate for an audition?

- No big arias – Leave your big guns at home. They could do you more harm than good.
- Check your PML for current listings.
- Italian, German, French, English, Latin repertoire
- Some schools might allow a musical theater selection, but not typically.

## Preparing Your Package:

- Photo
- Recording: Be sure to label correctly. Hire a quality accompanist.
  - CD Labeler – Casio CW-75, Thermal Disc Title Printer (Amazon.com \$89.88)
- Repertoire List/Resume (several copies)
- Letters of Recommendation
- Accompanist Notebook: Clean copies with breath markings, tempi, etc.
- Appropriate Audition Attire:
  - Your appearance DOES make a difference.
  - You need to look like a singer.

### Women:

Dress with hose/stockings  
Dressy pant suit  
Dress shoes – no flip flops  
No formals  
Hair should be out of face  
Go easy on the jewelry  
Make-up  
Appropriate Undergarments

### Men:

Suit  
Sport coat with slacks (tie optional)  
Slacks and shirt  
No tuxes  
Dress Shoes (polished)  
Dark socks  
Hair should be neatly groomed  
Shave

**\*\*Be sure all clothing fits well. Nothing should be too tight, too long, or too short.**

- Interview:
  - Approach professors formally.
  - Communicate directly (Parents should only call if absolutely necessary.)
  - Voice Mail (Be careful about your message.)
  - Know what your aspirations are in music.
  - Professional Email Address

## The Audition:

- To whom are you singing?
- Exude confidence and positive energy

- Announce yourself
- Singer should know where to stand
- Realize the space of the audition room
- Less movement is often better
- Be able to communicate with your accompanist (!No taped accompaniments!)
- Music should always be memorized
- Know the composer
- Know the text translation for art songs
- Be prepared to sight-read
- Don't be surprised if...
  - they say nothing
  - they visit with you
  - they want to vocalize you
  - they ask what other schools you are applying to as well
  - they talk to you about financial needs
  - they ask you to take a theory placement test
  - they ask you about your favorite singers

### Vocal Scholarships: \$\$

- Schools need certain voices:
  - choral ensembles (some schools will offer money to sing in an ensemble)
  - opera
  - musicals
- Be realistic:
  - competition is fierce in most quality programs
  - Grades ARE important
  - SAT/ACT scores ARE important

### What if I don't have a voice teacher in my area?

- Resources:
  - Songbooks with CD packets:
    - 26 Italian Songs and Arias – Alfred Publishing
    - Gateway to German Lieder – Alfred Publishing
    - Favorite French Art Songs – Hal Leonard, publisher
    - Favorite German Art Songs – Hal Leonard, publisher
    - Songs of Joseph Marx – Hal Leonard, publisher
    - Italian Tenor Arias – Hal Leonard, publisher
    - Mozart Arias (Each voice type) – Hal Leonard, publisher
    - Sacred Classics – Hal Leonard, publisher
  - Diction Books:
    - Wall, Joan. *Diction for singers: a concise reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French, and Spanish pronunciation*. Dallas: PST...Inc., 1990.
    - Wall, Joan. *International phonetic alphabet for singers: a manual for English and foreign language diction*. Dallas: PST...Inc., 1989.
  - Interpretation and Audition:
    - Emmons, Shirley and Stanley Sonntag. *The Art of Song Recital*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1979.
    - Kimball, Carol. *Song: A Guide to Style and Literature*. Seattle: Pst...Inc., 1996.
  - Books on Pedagogy and Technique:
    - Bunch, Meribeth. *Dynamics of the singing voice*. Wien: Springer-Verlag, c1982.
  - Videos on Singing:
    - Wall, Joan. *The singer's voice*. Dallas: PST...Inc., 1991- (videos)
      - Volume 1: Breath
      - Volume 2: The vocal folds
      - Volume 3: A fiberoptic view of the vocal folds
      - Volume 4: The vocal tract
- Language teachers
- Internet sources:
  - <http://www.lottelehmann.org/artsong/> Art Song information
  - <http://www.radix.net/~dalila/Repertoire/musical.html> Musical Theater Repertoire suitable for Classical Singers
  - ArkivMusic.com - Classical Recordings