

EVERY FALL,
In Tune presents
its special report
to help you
choose a college
music program. In
the past we've
focused on
faculty, facilities,
admissions, and
innovations. This
year's report
looks at some-
thing even more
fundamental:
what going to
music school
feels like. Because
in college, it's all
about...

THE

VIVO

Members of the indie-folk group Avenhart celebrate their battle-of-the-bands victory during the University of Colorado Denver's Lynkapalooza festival (named after university mascot Milo the lynx). The band is made up of current CU Denver College of Arts & Media students and alumni.



COLLEGE. IT'S A BIG STEP

that requires an equally big—and potentially intimidating—decision. If you've determined that a particular branch of music or related field is to be your main course of study, that's one part of the equation settled. And certainly, you want to attend the best school that you can get into. The word "best" should come with a disclaimer, by the way. When we use it, we're not talking about some kind of absolute rating; we simply mean what's best for *you*. But how can you really know what that personal best is?

It's important to look at your own academic and financial requirements, of course. (For more on the latter, turn to "Finding the Funding" on pg. 52.) But it may take deeper digging to see what really distinguishes one school from another, and how those differences mesh with not just your future plans, but your personality and values. There are many factors to consider: a school's primary focus, its history, its location, the makeup of its student body, its reputation, and even how it handles (and is handled by) the mass media. All these and more add up to a school's overall "vibe" or "feel"—and how that general atmosphere resonates with you can make or break your college experience.

So how can you investigate a school's vibe and determine if it will work for you? We've spoken with administrative staff, faculty, and alumni from dozens of schools with strong music programs that run the gamut from performance to music business

By
**Susan
Poliniak**

Photo:
Robert King



JOEL HEUMANN

Belmont University

Current Job: Recording artist signed to SONY HD Nashville

Major: Commercial music with a voice principal, with an emphasis in composition and arranging

Graduating Year: 2014

Instruments: Voice, piano, guitar, drum set

How did you know your school was the right choice?

Belmont had a vibe where it almost encourages you to go out and see other parts of the city as opposed to only hanging out on campus.

What did you learn from the differences between your expectations and reality?

At first I auditioned on piano and didn't get in. I ended up re-auditioning on voice later in the year, and was accepted. I learned that it's important to establish relationships with people in other fields, especially for music schools and conservatories, which can be very insular.

Where would you look first to find a college's core identity and values?

Definitely not from a brochure or website—that stuff is borderline propaganda! You'll get a better impression if you try to visit when school is in session.

What was the best guidance you received for your education?

My teacher Nathan Adams taught us the importance of diversifying your skills as an artist. Knowing the landscape enables you to know when to do it yourself and when to ask for help.

How did your education equip you for your current career?

Studying composition and arranging helped me as an artist, but the most helpful thing for my career has been the people that I met. Nashville is a city driven by connections.

What advice would you give a high school student researching music schools?

Spend as much time as you can looking at what majors there are, and what classes they entail. Get a handle on where you want to go, and what major is going to get you there.



DigiPen Institute of Technology • Redmond, WA

to technology to ethnomusicology. (You'll find many of these interviews in sidebars sprinkled throughout this special section.) We've asked them about their own college experiences, how those experiences measured up to their initial expectations, and what they've learned about finding the vibe of an educational institution.

GETTING STARTED

Another, less informal word for "vibe" is "culture." Some college cultures are profes-

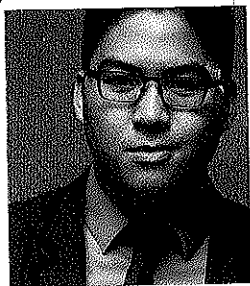
sional, clearly oriented toward developing careers in specific areas. In the fields of performance and composition, **The Juilliard School** in New York City fits this bill, but so does **Full Sail University** in Winter Park, Fla., for audio engineering and other technical fields. On the other hand, schools like **Bard College** in Annandale, N.Y., or **Reed College** in Portland, Ore., place more value on academic experimentation.

Many colleges encourage social interac-

The Hartt School • University of Hartford, CT



The Best Music Schools 2017



BRANDON ILAW Boston Conservatory

Current Job: Percussionist at Ensemble ACJW, freelancer in NYC

Major: Percussion Performance

Graduating Year: 2014

Instrument(s): Percussion

How did your expectations as a freshman compare to the real experience?

I expected the main portrayal in movies: huge universities with sororities and fraternities in a college town. However, I couldn't have had a more different experience since I went to a school whose population was around 800 students total!

What did you learn from the differences between your expectations and reality?

The most important thing I learned was networking, but not just in a professional sense. I valued cultivating some kind of relationship with as many people as I could, even if it just meant being able to say "hi" in passing.

Where would you look first to find a college's core identity and values?

The best way to find out about an institution is to talk to the students who currently study within the program you're interested in. Even though their experience will vary, their perceptions are a reflection of how the school is run.

What course turned out to be more valuable than you expected?

Having hated poetry my entire life, I decided to take a poetry workshop class. To my surprise, I've found that I love reading, writing, and analyzing haiku as well as a plethora of other styles/forms.

How did your education equip you for your current career?

I learned how to be a well-rounded and versatile musician who is equally at home in orchestral, solo, chamber, and pit settings.

What advice would you give a high school student researching music schools?

Something that I didn't take into consideration (but got lucky with anyway) was location of a school: find a city/town that has a robust musical scene, because that will absolutely influence your musical language.

tion with lots of extracurricular activities, while others view study as the ultimate priority. The atmosphere of a music school can be defined by the ensembles within its walls: **Tufts University** in Medford, Mass., for example, has a long history of fostering a cappella vocal groups, while **Texas A&M** in College Station, Texas, is famous for its marching band. Some schools have a more competitive atmosphere, while others give primacy to mentoring and student support. Some emphasize technology—whether it's a recording lab or the sound systems at its performance venues—and some focus on teaching.

An easy first step on the road to discovering the right vibe for you is to check out a school's website and other Internet resources. "Institution websites, social media, and school pages on websites like *majoringinmusic.com* are all excellent resources for students to begin their research on the core identity and values of an educational institution," says Megan Abernathy, director of admissions for **The Hartt School at the University of Hartford** in Connecticut.

These values may also be included in a school's mission statement, which can often be found on its website. "I think

it's always important that a program has a mission statement so you'll get an idea of their philosophy—how they approach the heart and the commerce of music," says Jeffrey Rabhan, chair of **The Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts** in New York City. Contacting faculty is the next step, he adds: "They're your best indication of approach and style—speaking with them, you get a greater sense of the program than looking at its website. You should also look at their résumés."

David Lee Fish, chair of the music department at **Catawba College** in Salisbury, N.C., recommends speaking with students as well. "I think that they have a fuller sense of the ethos, the lay of the land, of a music program across the board," he says. "The faculty has a partial picture. The students are willing to give unvarnished views of an institution."

For connecting with current students, and getting a boots-on-the-ground feel for a school's atmosphere, an on-campus visit can't be beat. "I would highly recommend that potential students visit our campus to get a feel for what it's like to come to school here," says Liz Johnson, director of public relations and marketing for **The Academy**

Columbia College • Chicago, IL





AMELIA ROSSETTIE

College at St. Rose

Current Job: Coordinator of Publishing and Mechanical Administration (Royalties) - The Orchard/Sony Music Group

Major: Music Industry

Graduating Year: 2016

Instrument(s): Violin, voice

How did your expectations as a freshman compare to the real experience?

I expected to be thrown into a dorm building with a bunch of people I didn't know, trying to figure out where my classes were and how edible the dining hall food was. I didn't realize that everyone else was in the same position as I was. It's said that college is "the best four years of your life." Those friends and family that you meet while you are independent for the first time are the most important relationships you form in your life.

How did you decide that your school was right for you?

The feel of a campus was the most important thing for me. At St. Rose, I met many friendly faculty members who made me feel welcomed. On my second visit, I was able to meet my "potential" violin teacher and receive a mock violin lesson.

What course turned out to be more valuable than you expected?

Record Production. In each class I learned something new about how every sound on a classic album was created. It proved to be extremely useful when I produced my own album for my senior project.

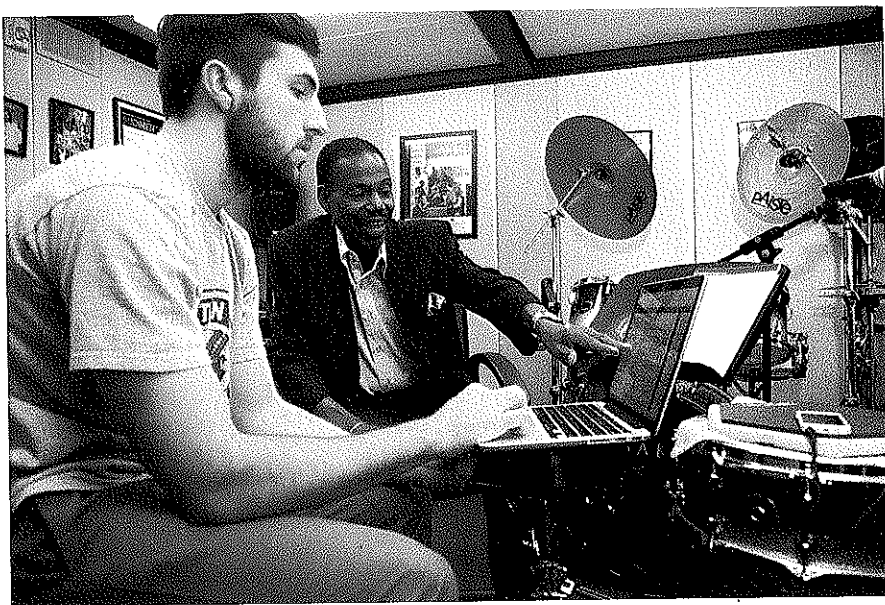
How did your education equip you for your current career?

A few friends and I created our own college record label, Rose Record Label Group in February 2015. Now, the label has signed artists, distribution deals, and publishing contracts. After that experience, I was 100% sure that the music industry was the place for me!

What advice would you give a high school student planning to attend music school?

Once you choose the college that best suits you, keep in contact with everyone you can. It will help you in the long run when looking for internships, jobs or even friends!

The Best Music Schools 2017



Thornton School of Music • USC, Los Angeles, CA

of Contemporary Music at the University of Central Oklahoma (ACM@UCO) in Oklahoma City. "Oftentimes students say that touring the school really solidified their resolve to attend the ACM@UCO."

While you're visiting the school, you should definitely take the official campus tour (an added benefit: many are given by current students) but, if time allows, also try investigating the campus on your own. Check out a well-known haunt or two, and sit in on a class, rehearsal, or performance given by students. "Connecting with our community in-person can help prospective students gain a better understanding of how our institution might align with their own identity and values," says Yvette Marquez-Kent, director of outreach at the DigiPen Institute of Technology in Redmond, Washington. "Our on-site opportunities include a Student Shadow Program, where you can go to class with a current DigiPen student; Review Days, where you can hear from the program directors themselves; and daily campus tours, where you can see our facilities first-hand and learn about what it takes to be successful here from an admissions professional."

Once you've gotten a good grasp of what a school can offer and what it stands

for, there's another question you may wish to ask yourself: How much of a personal challenge do I want? You should want to be challenged *academically*, of course—otherwise, what's the point of college? But do you also want to immerse yourself in cultures, people, situations, religions, and social groups different from your own? Or would you rather stick with something more familiar? Perhaps you may find that the best route is a combination of the two.

"It's important that a student share some values with the institution they're attending. Otherwise it won't feel like a good fit," Abernathy advises. "That will also allow them to find a level of comfort that is needed to step out, be challenged, and grow. Perhaps a student's beliefs will not change in the end, but they will understand how to look at all sides of a situation to better support their beliefs."

On the other hand, Marquez-Kent notes that "while it is much more pleasant and potentially easier to have similar values between a student and their chosen college, it is also extremely important that students learn to collaborate with other individuals who may not have the same set of values. In professional settings, employees will be expected to collaborate successfully with

PLAYING THE NUMBERS

If you're just getting started on researching colleges, a quick overview of what's out there can help give you a better sense of your options. One good place for such an overview is the College Board's website. Go to bigfuture.collegeboard.org, type in some search criteria, and see what you get—the results may surprise you. Here are a few numbers we came up with in a recent search.

1,263 colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada have an undergraduate music program ■■■ The U.S. state with the most college music programs is California with **79** ■■■ The states with the fewest are Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, and Wyoming, each of which has **2** ■■■ In the middle are North Carolina with **41** and Ohio with **44** ■■■ **598** schools in the U.S. and Canada have undergraduate degree programs in Music Teacher Education ■■■ **522** have majors in General Music Performance ■■■ **222** award degrees in Theory and Composition ■■■ **162** have a major in Voice/Opera ■■■ **139** offer a major in Music Management/Merchandising ■■■ **137** have Piano/Organ majors ■■■ **59** award degrees in Music Therapy ■■■ **58** have Stringed Instrument majors ■■■ **88** award degrees in Music History and Literature ■■■ **82** offer a major in Recording Arts ■■■ **75** award degrees in Jazz Studies ■■■ **45** have a Music Technology major ■■■ **35** offer majors in Music Pedagogy ■■■ **18** have a major in Percussion Instruments ■■■ **17** have Woodwind Instrument majors ■■■ **16** have Brass Instrument majors ■■■ **14** have a major in Conducting

their peers, despite agreement or disagreement on values. A college setting can be a great place to acquire and practice this challenging skill."

STUDYING FOR—AND IN—THE REAL WORLD

Speaking of professional settings, you may wish to consider how much you want your time at college to be like the "real" world (in other words, a job) and how much you want it to feel like a traditional school experience. If the schools you're looking

at offer lots of internships and work-study opportunities, that can be a great benefit, even if—sometimes *especially* if—you're not sure what you want to do after college.

At the same time, Richard Strasser, chair of music and entertainment industry studies at the College of Arts and Media at the **University of Colorado Denver**, notes that college isn't just about gaining more work experience for a future résumé. "All universities strive to develop a higher level of critical thinking ability and

problem-solving in their students," he says. "This type of training may come from a course, such as theory, that a student may not feel has a direct application. In a world that is more and more moving toward the intangible, having these transferable skills are invaluable."

"There are the hard skills—how you play your instrument, how you sing, the basics of songwriting, engineering, production, the industry—but these are only half of the equation," Catawba's David Fish says. "The soft skills like networking, teamwork,

The Best Music Schools 2017



SARAH GINGERICH

St. Olaf College

Current Job: Production Coordinator at The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Major: Music Performance

Graduating Year: 2011

Instrument(s): Cello

How did your expectations as a freshman compare to the real experience?

I was initially worried that there might be a competitive atmosphere in the music department, but it was a very collaborative environment. We all challenged each other to be better musicians, but with positive feedback.

What did you learn from the differences between your expectations and reality?

I realized that having talented friends can really bolster your own playing because you can learn so much from each other.

Where would you look first to find a college's core identity and values?

Since St. Olaf's orchestra and choir both traveled through my home state while I was in high school, I got to hear their concerts live, talk to the conductor after the performance, and watch the students interacting before and after the show. I was in awe of their talent. I knew I wanted to be a part of it!

What course turned out to be more valuable than you expected?

The liberal arts curriculum in general allowed me to explore many different subjects. I wondered whether the quality of the music would suffer since our focus as music students was divided, but instead I realized that the ensembles were enriched by it.

How did your education equip you for your current career?

The rigorous environment of a liberal arts school really prepared me for a job that requires excellent time management, communication, and problem solving skills.

What advice would you give a high school student researching music schools?

Ask yourself whether you want to be a big fish in a small pond, or vice versa. Sometimes it's good to start off at the bottom because it leaves you the most room to grow.

tenacity, and perseverance need to be there, too. But they can only be developed after the hard skills—after the students have hit a certain level of age and maturity.”

In other words, don't forget the basics. Those are especially good words to remember for students who may end up on a slightly different career path from the one on which they started—which is often the case with those who major in music-related fields.

The balance of pure academics to real-world experience depends, to an extent,

gaining industry-mimicking experience of working in teams with programmers, game designers, and artists, they get real-world experience seeing an entire project pipeline through to completion. In this process, they will be creating all of the audio, music composition, and recording all of the narrative and sound for the projects they collaborate on.”

It's important to bear in mind that, at some point in your college career, besides just honing your skills on campus, you should also be making connections to the



Indiana University • Bloomington, IN

on the track within music that you're planning to pursue. For students at NYU, real-life connections are crucial, and as Jeffrey Rabhan points out, “If you're going to school in New York, you'll have more opportunities for internships here, just by scale. Many kids in this business get jobs out of their internships.”

The program at DigiPen is similarly focused. “All of our programs, but specifically the Bachelor of Arts in Music and Sound Design, are project-based from year one,” says Marquez-Kent. “Beginning their first year of classes, students collaborate with multiple degree programs to complete either a game and/or animation project from start to finish. This means that while

real-life industry in which you think you'll be working. “We highly recommend students pay close attention to the networking opportunities programs offer,” says ACM@UCO's Liz Johnson. “The music industry is all about relationships, as are most other industries.”

A SCHOOL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Speaking of what goes on in the world beyond campus, some schools seem to grab the headlines on a regular basis, while others exist in relative media obscurity. A college's media presence may not be something you've considered before, but it can affect your experience at a school, as well



DARYL ROBINSON

University of Houston

Current Job: Assistant Professor and Head of the Organ Program, Westminster Choir College of Rider University

Major: Organ Performance

Graduating Year: 2011

Instrument(s): Organ

How did your expectations as a freshman compare to the real experience?

My expectation was that my time would be solely devoted to the study of music, but the curriculum also included a great deal of non-music study that I was not totally thrilled about!

What did you learn from the differences between your expectations and reality?

I learned a great deal from courses I took to fulfill certain non-musical academic requirements. Realize that your college years offer one of the only times in life that you have access to experts in a wide range of fields—take advantage of it!

What course turned out to be more valuable than you expected?

A course on the music of Benjamin Britten. It was my first experience studying the evolution of a single composer's music. This course not only expanded my knowledge of how to analyze 20th-century music, but also how to write about that analysis.

How did your education equip you for your current career?

Like many young artists, I lacked the discipline necessary to shape and mold my natural musical ability. I was extremely fortunate to work on that at UH. Being able to share conducting techniques and rehearsal strategies I learned as an undergrad have really enhanced my ability to educate a new generation of organists and church musicians.

What advice would you give a high school student researching music schools?

Ask for lessons with applied faculty. Explore the campus and observe the student body—what's the balance between students showing support for each other, goofing off, or just being locked in practice rooms?



Lee University • Cleveland, TN

as how that school may be viewed by others—including those who may be in a position to hire you or admit you to a graduate program.

This is because a college's reputation (something that can be enhanced or diminished by media coverage) influences its vibe. If a school is known to the outside world as a "band school," the expectations of that school's students, both within and outside campus culture, become different than those of students in a "technology school."

Remember also that just because a college isn't well known doesn't mean that it's lacking in quality. "We're a school that doesn't have that much of a spotlight on us," Catawba's David Fish says, "and I'm actually happy about that. I think that too much attention can wind up being the proverbial tail wagging the dog—you do things as much for the media value as the educational value."

For some programs, of course, media attention can be beneficial. In some cases, it's even an essential part of the curriculum. "We're in the media capital of the world; for us, it's advantageous," says Rabhan of NYU, a university whose campus culture is closely tied to the music-business world. "We're in the center—this is where the record companies are. I think it's important

that you're part of the landscape in a meaningful way that straddles the academic and professional worlds."

"A college with a major media presence has brand recognition, which has immense value when it comes to alumni connections, potential employment opportunities, resources, and funding," ACM@UCO's Johnson acknowledges. "However, I would encourage students to focus on their day-to-day experience as opposed to the affiliation they're garnering from attending the institution. In the end, it's about what you learn while you're there, not the mascot."

One point to bear in mind is how media outlets operate. "Although media attention can certainly indicate exciting happenings at an institution, it's important to remember that the media operates independently from the institution," Marquez-Kent says. "Prospective students should do their own research and explore what is exciting for them, rather than rely on what the media is telling them."

GO WITH WHAT YOU KNOW

Part of what you may be learning from mass media reports of a school—as well as from personal contacts, including music teachers and fellow students—is how its individual programs are perceived. This brings us back



ADIZA JIBRIL

Ithaca College

Current Job: Lead alto vocalist for The Army Voices of The United States Army Band "Pershing's Own"

Major: Vocal Performance

Graduating Year: 2013

Instrument(s): Voice

How did your expectations as a freshman compare to the real experience?

What I found the most jarring was that I suddenly had to work much harder to really learn and understand this talent that I've had my whole life, to be able to turn that talent into a skill.

What did you learn from the differences between your expectations and reality?

I learned that everyone was more or less feeling the same anxiety about being "up to par." Once I gained that perspective, it made it much easier for me to try my best.

Where would you look first to find a college's core identity and values?

It's really all about relationships. Is there a sense of community? Conversations with faculty and students are the best way to figure out the heartbeat of a school.

What course turned out to be more valuable than you expected?

I took a few black literature courses, and an Intro to African Diaspora course. Those helped me fill in some gaps in my education and better navigate the world as a woman of color.

How did your education equip you for your current career?

My private lessons equipped me with the tools I needed to work with my voice and self-correct. With my solo and ensemble training, I came into my job with the skills I needed to do it well.

What advice would you give a high school student researching music schools?

Definitely take a lesson with a teacher you're interested in, and notice if it leaves you feeling empowered. Look into extracurriculars that will be available to you outside of the music school, because being a music major is stressful. Even though music may feed your spirit, once you start being graded on it regularly, it changes your relationship to it.

The Best Music Schools 2017

to the subject of reputation. If you want to study as a classical instrumentalist, should you look *only* at schools that are popularly known for their instrumental programs—and conversely, if your studies have a different focus, should you be excluding these schools from consideration?

"What a school is known for is not always the entire story of what programs are strong," Abernathy says. "For example, the Hartt School was founded as a classical music conservatory, so that is what we are known for. And while our classical performance programs are certainly great programs, we also have dance and theatre programs that are truly hidden gems."

Of her own college experience, Johnson notes that she went to a "basketball school," but that her time there "was really shaped by the faculty members I studied with, as well as my choice of academic track and extracurricular activities. That being said, I encourage students to take note of what universities are best known for because this truly affects the cultures of said institutions, even if it doesn't affect one's studies directly."

Another pointer: Pay attention to what schools are "saying," but also look a little closer to see what they're not. "Schools

need to do a good job at communicating what they do well," notes Rabhan. "If you just look at websites, many schools claim to do everything well. We don't, because there are a lot of things we don't do at all. If you want to study theory and composition, don't come here. You get into trouble when you claim to be everything to everyone."

In many cases, it comes down to a "microclimate" within the department—in other words, the actual instructors and others with whom you will be studying. DigiPen's Marquez-Kent says, "Students should seek out individual departments and teachers and ask themselves, can I see myself studying with this professor? Is the faculty experienced in what I want to learn? Do they have the achievements to support that experience? Does the school have connections to help me get to where I want to be after graduation? The majority of professional careers in music require much more than just the ability to play an instrument well. Students hoping for a lifelong career in music should seek a program that provides training not only in musicianship, performance, and composition, but also in audio engineering and music technology."

ACM@UCO • Oklahoma City, OK





CHRISTOPHER PALESTRANT

Professor of Music, Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, N.C.

Teaches: Composition, music theory, counterpoint, orchestration, aural skills, introduction to music literature

Degrees: B.A. in Music Composition and Theatre, the College of Wooster; M.A. in Educational Theatre, New York University; M.M. and D.M.A. in Music Composition, the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University

Instruments: Piano, voice

When you were a high school student looking at colleges, what helped you make your final choice?

Visiting the campus, sitting in on rehearsals and lessons, and basically shadowing people. I was able to speak not only with students but also with faculty, which was very intimidating to me but so important. What struck me most was that nobody at Wooster was cynical. They all told me, "You've got to come here," and they meant it.

Did you have a life goal in mind when you entered college?

I didn't know what to do for a long time. It took me a while to declare my major because I couldn't make up my mind between theatre and music. Eventually, I split my major between the two. Not a double major but a joint major, which is both rare and tough. It wasn't until I'd done some teaching myself that I knew for sure I wanted to be in a college classroom.

Where should students look to find the true identity of a music program?

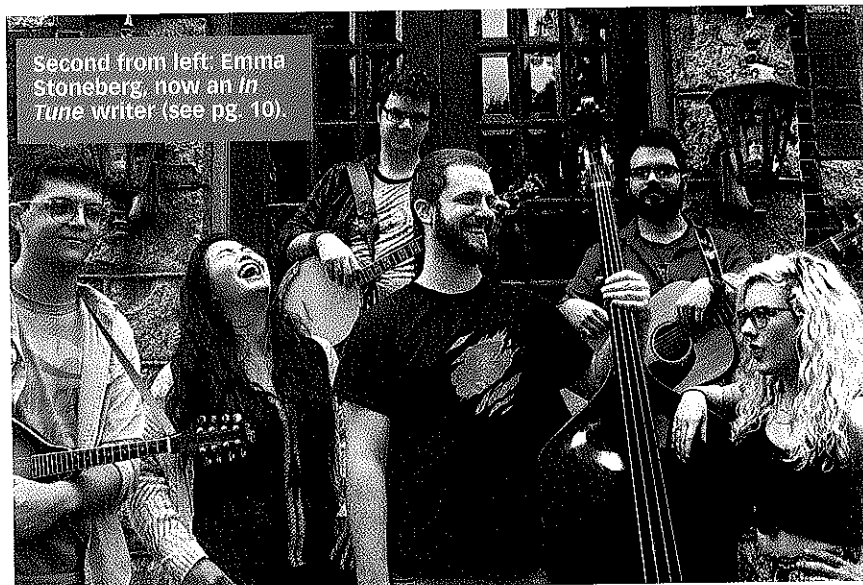
Facilities are easy to showcase and can look great in photos. But what it's all about, first, middle, and last, is the people.

What advice would you offer today's prospective music school applicants?

Music is a combination of gift and craft, and if you've already got the gift, you can learn the craft in college. An undergraduate degree, whether it's in music or any other field, doesn't determine your career. What it does is help you learn how to learn.

One related issue that may not be readily apparent until you do some research is the flexibility—or lack thereof—of the department and/or program at a school. "Certain programs are very rigid in the number and type of courses they offer," CU Denver's Strasser says. "Students may only have the opportunity to take two or three electives. Some institutions have greater flexibility in the number and type of

First off, realize that it may not be the school; it may be just that the situation is new to you. This is normal. "It is a massive transition—often the first time a kid is away from home, in a new city," Rabhan says. "You have to give it a semester. You have to be present. You have to give it your best shot. College is a microcosm of the real world; professionally, you're going to be put in positions that aren't your first choice. Give



Catawba College • Salisbury, NC

courses that a student can choose to shape their degree. What is very important is that students view a college education not as a series of courses to complete, but in terms of what skills, knowledge, and experiences they need to meet their professional goals."

WHEN IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT

Let's look a little further ahead, and presume you've already chosen your perfect school. It's possible that, once you've been there for a few weeks, it may not feel so perfect for you. Although you don't want to start your college experience expecting this, it's good to remember that, if it does happen, it's not the end of the world: Don't panic!

yourself a chance to find the parts that work for you."

It is extremely helpful to try to figure out what's making you feel this way—maybe the situation can be fixed with a little help. Abernathy recommends scheduling an appointment with an academic advisor as soon as possible. "There are many different reasons that some students have that moment. Sometimes, even if it feels huge to the student, it's something that we can easily help them remedy and move forward."

No matter what, you should know that *you are not a failure because a school doesn't feel right*. It just happens sometimes, and it's far better to transfer to a school where you'll be happy—and do better, academically.



Oberlin College • Oberlin, OH

cally and otherwise—than to stay in a school where you're miserable.

PARTING WORDS

Liz Johnson at ACM@UCO remembers thinking that her own transition from high school to college would be easy. "Instead," she says, "I really missed my parents and the comforts of home and friends from high school. Also, classwork was a lot harder than I thought it would be and I had a lot more homework than what I had in high school. All that being said, after just a few short months, I really started to get a feel for college life and began to truly love it. So my advice is this: Stick with it, even if it's tough for a while. You can do it, and you'll be proud you stayed with it even when it got tough!"

"I am a proud alumna of the Hartt School," says Megan Abernathy of the school where she currently works. "When I came to college, I expected the coursework to be harder than high school and was excited to be in an arts environment where I would get to take so many courses connected to the arts, but aside from that, I wasn't sure what to expect or where I



The Juilliard School • New York, NY

was really headed. I was correct, of course, that the courses were more challenging than high school. I was surprised, however, at how personal the education would be. My professors from across the university were interested to know who I was and help me figure out where I was headed and how to get there. They connected me to opportunities that were really helpful in discovering my future professional self. I never felt like I fit the mold in high school or even when I first arrived at Hartt, but

I came to realize that nobody did because there wasn't a mold. Everyone was headed to their own success, and the faculty were interested in helping us all get where we were meant to go."

Jeffrey Rabhan recommends writing down what you're looking for in a school — and not just academically. "List what you want from your college experience, and also what you don't want. If you make that list, it's going to clarify a lot for you. There's going to be a sweet spot. You don't know what you don't want until you actually think about it. Expectations have a way of always disappointing. Come in with a willingness to try new things and meet new people. Let

go of cherished beliefs. Don't go in with a regimented way of thinking."

"Choose a school that offers a broad range of high-quality training," Yvette Marquez-Kent advises. "Find a school that values both music fundamentals and media technology. Computers are an essential part of the music industry—if the school fails to teach you how to make music with them, your career path will be limited." Additionally, she recommends that high school students "get their feet wet" with outside projects before attending a school like DigiPen. "You don't have

to be great, but the experience is helpful. Not only does this give you a leg up for when you eventually attend your first year of college, but it also helps you to understand whether or not that is truly what you want to do. If you've never actually tried it, how would you know?"

Finally, Strasser's advice applies not just to your college choice, but life in general: "Do what you love and make sure what you do will still drive your passion 40 years in the future." ●