

The Singer's Library

College Prep for Musicians

BY BRIAN MANTERNACH



High school students can begin now to prepare for their music degree by avoiding any misinformation and getting answers straight from the experts in a new publication.

Applying for college has never been simple, especially for those pursuing a music major. Deciding where to apply, meeting audition requirements, and exploring financial aid are just a few of the factors that can intimidate young musicians.

A new book—*College Prep for Musicians: A Comprehensive Guide for Students, Parents, Teachers, and Counselors*—breaks down the daunting process. The three co-authors bring different backgrounds (including three different doctoral degrees) to the book.

Annie Bosler, DMA, teaches horn at five different colleges in California and has performed on *Dancing with the Stars*, *Live from*

Lincoln Center, and *The Grammy Awards*. Her former students have earned admission into nearly every major conservatory in the United States.

Don Greene, PhD, is the author of eight books, including *Audition Success*, *Fight Your Fear and Win*, and *Performance Success*. He has taught his approach to peak performance for the New World Symphony, the LA Opera Young Artist Program, and the U.S. Olympic Training Center.

Kathleen Tesar, EdD, is the associate dean for enrollment management at the Juilliard School, where she oversees the office of admissions and financial aid.

College Prep for Musicians demystifies the procedures of

researching programs, applying to schools, navigating auditions, and handling the eventual acceptance or rejection.

Its step-by-step guidelines offer solid expectations and, thus, peace of mind to anyone directly or indirectly involved in the application and admission process. In the interview below, the authors discuss their book.



Brian Manternach

***College Prep for Musicians* is intended as a guide for students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Right away in the**

first chapter, you ask the question that is probably on the minds of most parents who have a child considering a music major: "Is it even possible to make a living with a degree in music?" How do you begin to address this question for concerned parents?

Kathleen Tesar: Part of the answer to this question is to encourage parents to step away from their own fears and have them take an objective look at their child. Do they see a hard-working person with a strong desire to do something in music or the performing arts? Then give that child the freedom to study and gain skills that will enable them to craft a career.

It's the same with wanting your child to be a doctor: Do they have a strong desire to be in medicine, to study hard, to craft a career?

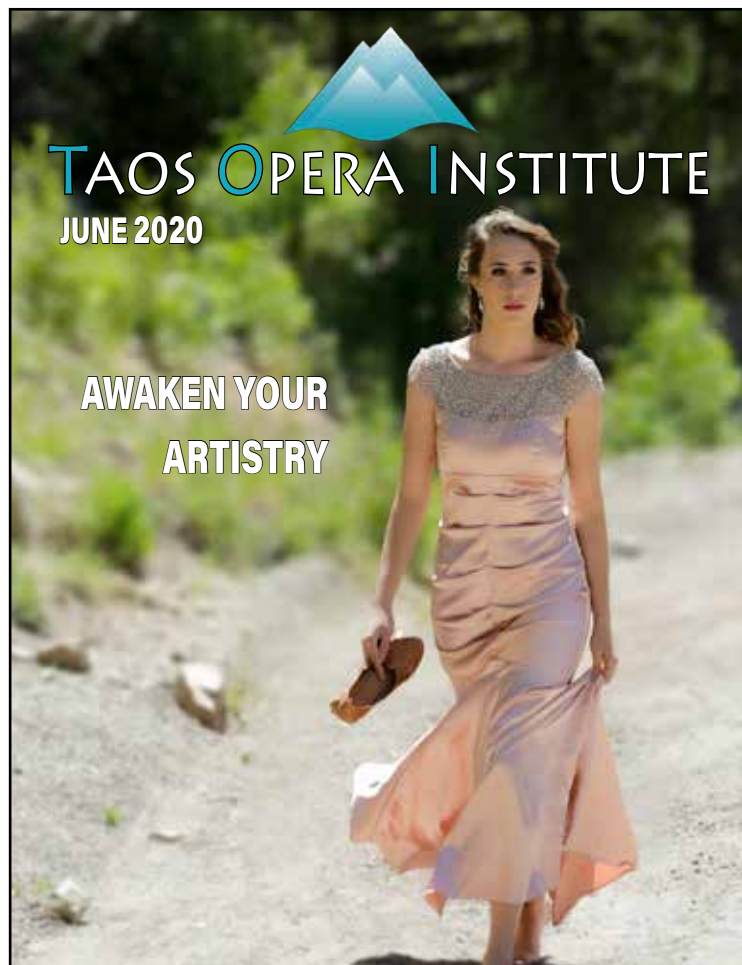
Because a medical student without drive is not likely to be any happier or more successful than a music student without drive. But with drive, passion, and skills, a career can be built.

Annie Bosler: My favorite thing to tell a parent who is concerned about their child majoring in music is "Take the word 'music.' Make it an adjective. Put it in front of most professions. You end up with music education, music therapy, music law, music business, music administration, music performance, and so on, and so on."

There are tons of jobs in music. For parents of students wishing to major in music performance, I see this as a great gateway into these other areas.

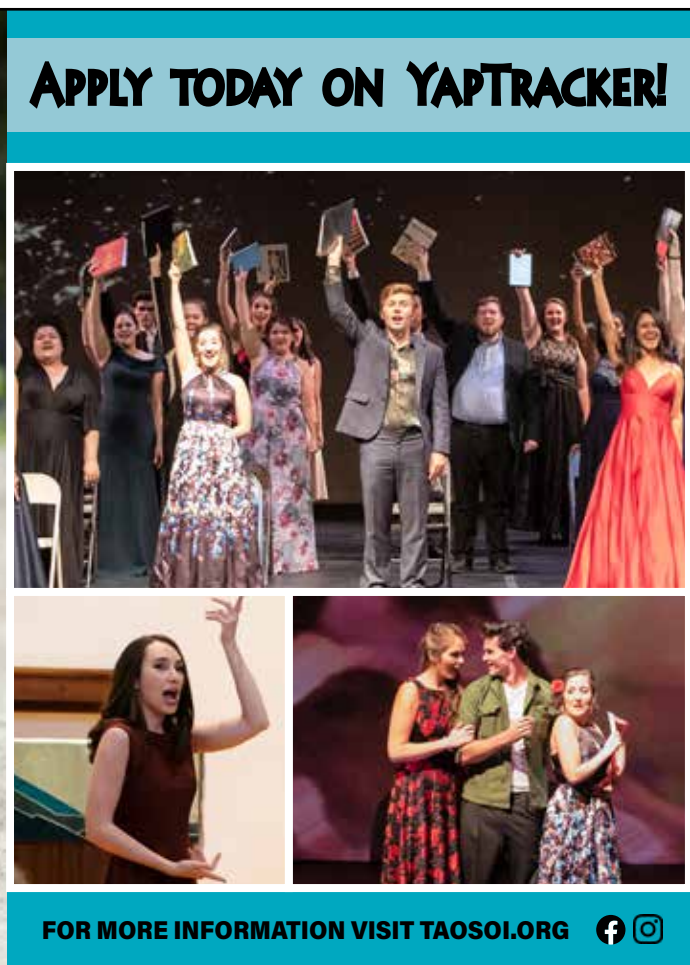
You also bluntly state that unless students have a passion that can sustain them through the inevitable challenges that will arise, they should not choose music as a career path. What's the best way for students to know whether music is just something they enjoy or whether it is their passion?

Don Greene: I think it is wonderful if the student enjoys music on a relatively captive level but also has other competing interests in their life. If they feel driven to music and could not imagine living their lives without it, that would be considered more than just enjoying music. I would consider that being passionate about music. In my experience, that passion is required for young musicians to make it through this very challenging career path.





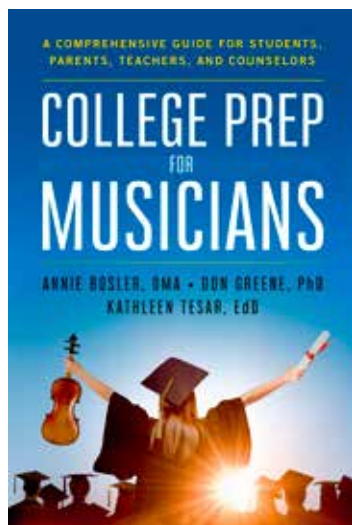
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Has the process of applying to and auditioning for college music programs gotten overly complicated? Is that why you chose to write this book?

KT: The process has become more complicated in part because there is more misinformation out there. Before there were social media, college applicants

made it through the application and audition process with a small number of resources. These may have included the applicant's private teacher, a music teacher at school, and students known by the applicant to have successfully navigated the process. Now it is possible to share advice and information—and misinformation—on a much larger scale. So our book is actually a way to simplify the

process by providing information in a clear and direct manner.

AB: The process to apply to school as a music major is not overly complicated; it is just complex. [When I was] a high school student planning to major in music, my parents (who are farmers) had no idea what to expect out of this process. . . . Students who don't have help from someone who knows the field are truly at a disadvantage.

Chapter two provides a general timeline for high school students who want to major in music with recommendations for each of the four years of high school. If a high school senior decides this week that she would like to pursue a degree in music for the following fall, should she be worried that she is already behind? What should she do first to get the process started?

KT: It is true that this student will now be under a great deal of pressure to navigate the application and audition process in such a condensed period of time, but it can be done. One priority would be to go to schools' websites and see what the prescreening and audition requirements are. Is prescreening required?

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Does the student have the required repertoire? What is the repertoire requirement for the live audition? If the student is applying to a college or university, what is the average SAT or ACT requirement for each school?

By asking these questions, students can decide whether or not to apply. If, for example, the student has not already learned three contrasting art songs or an art song in Italian (if that is the requirement), there is no point in applying. On the other hand, if the school's audition requirements are minimal and the student has some well learned repertoire, then it is worthwhile to move forward with the application and audition process.

Two different sections of the book list the myriad careers available to musicians. Considering how expensive it can be to attend college, how much debt do you feel students should be willing to accrue?

AB: The amount of debt a student is willing to take on varies and is, therefore, on a case-by-case basis—so it is impossible for me to determine that a student should accrue "X" amount of dollars in

debt. I can personally say that I have three degrees in French horn performance (BFA, MM, and DMA) and I probably took out more loans than most performance majors my age. I also have almost paid them all back approximately 10 years out of school. I would also not trade my education for anything.

KT: I would add that there are more and more resources available and being developed to help students learn to manage their money and their debt. . . . Students should take advantage of such resources to help determine how much debt is wise for them and how to manage payments after graduation.

As co-authors, you all bring varied backgrounds and experiences to the book. Can you describe how this team approach worked when writing the book?

KT: The book grew out of the presentations that we used to give together, where each of us addressed particular topics. . . . For my part, writing and editing the book gave me a deeper appreciation for my co-authors' expertise in their areas.

DG: Even though we all come from different backgrounds (mine being to help students perform well at auditions), *College Prep for Musicians* is our



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unified perspective on how to help a student get into the music school of their dreams.

AB: *College Prep for Musicians* is a one-of-a-kind book because of the varied backgrounds and expertise of the authors. I greatly enjoyed collaborating with Kathy and Don, not only because they are both amazing people, but also because of the wealth of knowledge that is brought to the table by each person. . . . We each wrote sections that pertained to

our areas of expertise, then spent the most time editing it to flow and be in one voice. The team approach, though, is what makes this book unique and necessary for any student wishing to major in music.

Interested in applying to musical theatre programs? Head to csmusic.net for a conversation with Amy Rogers Schwartzreich, author of The Ultimate Musical Theater College Audition Guide: Advice from the People Who Make the Decisions.

Brian Manternach is on the voice faculty of the University of Utah's Department of Theatre. In addition to his contributions to Classical Singer, he is an associate editor of the Journal of Singing. An active singer, he holds a doctor of music degree from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Visit www.brianmanternach.com for more information or contact him at bmantern@gmail.com. 



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