

EPISODE 4 (Faculty) START

{Intro Music}

This is the Institute for Music Leadership

Stephen: Welcome to another episode of *Create. Inspire. Lead.* I'm Stephen Biegner and we're back with another minisode with Dr. Blaire Koerner. Today? Becoming a faculty member. Now, I'd worked on a list of questions with a couple of students working at the IML - Emma Gierszal and Frances Inzenhofer - and not only did both of them have a bunch of questions about this topic, but it was also one Blaire was really eager to get into.

Stephen: There were a lot of questions about...

Blaire: Faculty?

Stephen: ...becoming a faculty member.

Blaire: Yeah, let's do that one. There's a lot of people that have very big misnomers about that, so we should tap into that.

Stephen: So, let's get into it.

Blaire: OK, so when it comes to becoming a faculty member for a specifically higher education institution, we could talk about community schools and other things as well, but let's talk about higher ed. First and foremost, I want to stress this: becoming a faculty member is not a backup plan. If you do the audition circuit and it's getting a little hard or you realize that, you know, it's... you have maybe a part-time position and such and so forth... Becoming a full-time faculty member is not a backup plan. Please realize that the amount of work that you have to put into becoming a full-time faculty member is just the same amount, if not more than being a full-time performer because of the amount of expectations that schools are now putting on their faculty.

Stephen: Even to be an adjunct faculty member nowadays, more and more it's required that you have at least a master's, if not a doctorate. As an adjunct, it's a high level of expectation, but low commitment, and usually low pay. It's not full-time work, so you usually have to put that together with something else. Now, a full time position, especially a tenure track position?

Blaire: ...when you get a full-time position, and specifically a tenure track position, there's basically three categories that is anticipated. One is teaching. Two is research, which we'll get to in a second. And three is academic service. And sometimes when you read a job description, they will literally call out how much percentage of your time you're going to be devoted to each section. They might say 60 percent is towards teaching, 20 percent is towards research and 20 percent is for academic service. That's a little heavy on the teaching. I've seen like 50, 30, 20. I've seen a lot of different combinations.

Stephen: So, what do these breakdowns mean?

Blaire: So let's say we're doing 40 hours, 60 percent of that would be towards teaching, and that's teaching your classes, prepping for them, being a mentor, advisor, office hours. All of that stuff. Great. The next thing is what your specialty is, the research. So for performers, it means you're going to perform. That could be in a school, but it also could be in the local community, being in an orchestra, being in a chamber group, anything along those lines. It also could mean, and they most likely would want you to get recorded, to do some commissions, to go and attend some conferences in your area specialty. For theorists and historians and so forth, that means actual research and publications. Publications are kind of up in the air for performers. It's more like recordings, but they might want you to present on some things. That kind of falls into that bucket. For composers, that means actually compose and get your work performed and recorded and so forth. So it's sitting in this field, you know, continuing to be active.

Stephen: Being active often means continuing to work on your faculty position over the summer - writing, performing, presenting - all to fulfill that research portion of your position. So if you were expecting summers off, not so fast. And the last section?

Blaire: Then, the last section is academic service. And essentially, that means whenever we have an opportunity that someone needs to step up and fill in, we're going to ask you to do it. That could be sitting on a diversity, equity, and inclusion board, that could be sitting in on a job search board, that could be calling and representing at a faculty group that comes together to talk about like benefits and other things for faculty, that could be helping out over the summer for their summer camp that they run. And that could be actually becoming the chair of your department for three years, right. So there's this variety of opportunities here.

Stephen: And why is this important?

Blaire: Because if you're seriously interested in getting a faculty position, all of these things need to be represented in your CV, and if they're not, you're not going to get an interview. So even as a student, as a doctoral student, you need to have teaching experience. Right after education, that's the first thing on your CV. And I've actually worked with a few people that didn't have any teaching experience and expected to get a full-time tenure track job. And I'm sorry, but that's just not going to happen. So you need to gain some experience. Of course, that gets at the whole cycle of how do you get experience without experience. That's a whole other topic we could talk about.

But the first thing that needs to be in your CV is teaching experience, preferably collegiate teaching experience, which could be masterclasses and stepping in, doing some studios, and TAing. And it's flexible, but that needs to be there. And then the research section is your performances, your commissions, your conferences that you've attended, etc. And so that could be pretty lengthy, too. And then academic service is kind of an open ended bucket. So, yes, if you were on the board of, you know, the general graduates students association, or you run a new music ensemble or you are an usher or you have an internship...

Stephen: Basically, you'd put any sort of administrative or leadership experience down to show that you can handle those things and essentially be a good all around colleague. This is also a space you can put down professional development.

Blaire: So if you are getting training in how to be acknowledging your biases or online teaching or anything, that's in the current expectations of the way that music is kind of going and the way that colleges are going, that should be in there. So needless to say, this could be an eight page document or more. And you need to gain this experience while you're in school or you don't gain experience while you're in school. You focus on school and then you're gaining experience in between school and when you start applying. But the worst combination out there is people who just go to school and just focus on schoolwork and don't do any of the experiences that we've talked about before.

Stephen: And so when they apply for a tenure track position with a measly 3-page CV? Well, they don't get anywhere.

Blaire: And they keep hitting their head against the wall and wondering why. And this is the reason why, because you don't have enough experience, you don't have enough things that you pursued during your education to help make you a really, really good candidate. And you're competing against people who've been teaching for five or six years and a college education. Right. So you need to make yourself competitive in order to do this, which means you need to spend a lot of time building all of these things to become a full-time tenure track faculty member.

Stephen: Now, I think there's a disconnect sometimes - especially in a conservatory - where students are thinking of their studio professors - many of whom just run their studio. And a lot of times, you'll run into studio professors who maybe just have their bachelor's degree. The bulk of their experience comes from working in their field. So, for students who just want to teach violin, or piano, or oboe - they sometimes they think if they're good enough, they can just sort of fall into these positions like their professors did.

Blaire: The world has changed. So a lot of the professors, including mine, just have bachelors. They don't have doctorates and they've gone through. That's an older system. And if you look at any job description, seriously, just go out. Look at University of Maryland and Michigan, Florida, Alabama, you know, a small religious school, a humanities school, a large research one institution. If you read every single job description, especially if it's tenure track, it's a guaranteed you need a doctorate. That is a new thing that has happened in the last few decades because there's actually been a plethora of people that pursue doctorates.

Stephen: According to the most recent census data, the number of people with doctorates has actually doubled to 4.5 million. And that's really driven in part by the increased requirements higher ed jobs are looking for. But if you go off and end up having a super successful performing career, is it possible to slip in to higher ed down the line?

Blaire: For the upcoming generations and the ones that are currently applying for these positions, I'm sorry, but you're out of luck, and this no longer happens. To become a full-time studio professor, they don't just accept performers anymore, especially if they're younger. Please realize that people that slip into this are usually the older generations that don't have these doctorates but have lots of years of experience and they now have the name to draw in and recruit individuals.

Stephen: But, as things move forward, this type of thing happens less and less, and having that doctorate is the thing you'll need to get a job in higher ed.

Blaire: ...which is always fascinating, because on top of that, as you just referenced, just because you have a doctorate doesn't mean you have pedagogical knowledge because we are not taught how to teach in doctorate levels. We're taught how to write papers and we're taught how to do a lot of things, but not actually teach most likely, unless you have one pedagogy class if you're lucky, but not everyone does, right. So that's something you have to pursue and actually learn.

Stephen: A whole other conversation, a separate episode we could do is about whether a DMA or PhD is necessary. And I don't think that's totally out of the scope of this conversation here. In a previous episode - about choosing a grad school - Blaire talked about answering the *why* of applying. And, if your *why* leads to a career that doesn't require a doctorate, you could be better off without one. While the pursuit of knowledge just for its own sake is noble and worthwhile in and of itself, doctorates are expensive in terms of time and money, and they don't automatically yield high-paying job prospects for every candidate.

Now, higher ed is driving the increased demand for doctorate degrees, and if you want a faculty position - if that's your *why* - then you likely need to get one. Still, higher ed's demand for these advanced degrees is sort of adversely affecting the job market - and people are starting to notice. According to Inside Higher Ed, 2017 was the first year that fewer doctorate degrees were awarded than in previous years - there was a slight dip. Previously, that number had been trending upward for decades. But eventually, all bubbles burst. And part of that dip in 2017 was related to the oversaturated job market - especially for the humanities.

For example, there was an article in the Atlantic from 2016 about the number of people pursuing PhDs compared to the number of job openings. And the article referenced history PhDs - so, not music related, but stay with me - and according to the article, back in 2014, graduate schools had 2 new history PhDs for every tenure track job-opening. And since then, still more doctorates are being awarded and fewer jobs are becoming available. That same article also mentions that the average income for a tenure track PhD position is about \$60,000. Post-doc positions had a lower average income of around \$40,000, and that's low compared to the median salary for someone entering the job market who just has a BA. Their entrance level salary is around \$45,000.

Now, that's not to say you shouldn't go out for an advanced degree. Again, if you want to be a full time, tenure track professor, more and more schools are requiring a terminal degree. And even if you don't want to be a professor, but really want to attain that high level of knowledge or understanding about a topic - go for it. But just make sure that you're adequately answering the *why*, and that you can afford it.

Blaire: But that's sidetracking.

Stephen: Right. Sorry. Where were we. So, yes. The way schools hire their faculty has changed. There is more required of their professors both in terms of advanced degrees and what they're expected to do within the job.

Blaire: And so they need to hire people that can do more and more things vs., you know, a few people that just... like one person that specifically focuses on bassoon and one person specifically... you know, so like now the bassoon professor are also the bassoon and theory professor. So you teach introduction to theory to be able to balance out a full tenure track position because you only have eight students and then you teach a few theory courses and now you're full tenure track. Right?

Stephen: So be sure to read the job description, because you may be perfectly suited for the main job. But if you don't have the chops to do those extra things, well...

Blaire: I've actually worked with a lot of doctoral students in my own instrument that didn't do any theory. I was fortunate and had that. But they can't apply for these positions or they try to where they're not getting into the interview round because they have no theory teaching experience. And then so they're out of the cut. And that's a hard thing to realize, is that you've become so specialized that you're not general enough to be hired at a regular university. And that's like the paradox that we have to deal with and that most people don't prep for. And in doing so, it trips them up. And they might have to take a few years after school to get this experience to even be looked at.

Stephen: The other thing you'll need to realize is what to expect going into the job market. When you first graduate with a DMA, your first teaching job is likely not going to be at a place like Eastman or Juilliard or anything like that fresh out.

Blaire: No, OK. So first and foremost, which I think is a huge eye opener, is don't wait until your last year to start looking and also start building materials. I usually get doctoral students that have, you know, are just but comp's and have been at school for five years. And I'm like, "Wow, that's five years we could have been working together and I could have helped you find all these cool things and we could have really built up your materials."

Stephen: So, be sure to start early. Book an appointment with Blaire, get some experiences under your belt, even if it's just small commitments here and there.

Blaire: A master class is not gonna kill you, right. So, like, that is not committing to an entire private studio. It's a master class. Do three in a year, right. And suddenly you've got a whole bunch of master classes over the course of three years that you can put on your resume. So, like, think about the ways to start committing, apply for a conference and do a presentation, do a recital outside of school.

Stephen: It's also good to start reading the job descriptions that are out there to get a sense of what you'll need to build up and work on.

Blaire: Read the job descriptions. Start signing up for all the wonderful places: Academic Keys, Chronicle of Higher Education. The College Music Society. Some of them are free, some you have to pay for. But just start signing up for the newsletters or at least the updates when jobs are in your inbox. And when you get that, read the job description. You'd be surprised at how particular some jobs descriptions are and how incredibly generic other job descriptions are. And for the generic ones, you need to read between the lines and kind of know what's expected generally to be able to apply appropriately. And for the specific ones, they may call out very particular things.

For instance, there is a recent one that was a piano position mainly, but they also wanted this person to run their African-American music center....I think that there's a specific title for it... but it essentially was a new center where they're gonna be doing a lot more research in this area. So you can imagine that specificity of someone who knows that field or has experienced researching it before. That's a very particular person to try to connect with. Right?

Stephen: There was also this example, about a bassoon playing musicologist.

Blaire: There was also one position where they wanted a musicologist, like a PhD musicologist who happened to play bassoon. So the main job was going to be musicology. But they also could pick up a few bassoonists on the side. So it wasn't... But they advertise it as a bassoon faculty position. But most people were automatically crossed out because they were not musicology PhDs who happen to play bassoon. So, like, there are some interesting job descriptions out there and you need to start reading those because then you know what to expect.

Stephen: Looking at job posts early also gives you an idea of how competitive your field is, and how frequently these positions pop up.

Blaire: It is very competitive out there. And I will say that I know my instrument's unique, right, so that's aside. Two years ago, there were three positions opened. A year ago, there was one or two positions opened. This year, there's been like six. It's surprisingly increased. But six is an increase, and that's surprising to me. That goes to show how infrequently these jobs are posted, right. So I'm saying six and you're competing against everyone across the United States. So they are not posted as frequently as you think.

Stephen: Again, starting this process early, will help you notice trends or gaps in your current résumé. And don't get discouraged. That's actually a *good* thing, because then you can go out and get some of that training - take some more pedagogy courses, brush up on theory, add something to your skill set that will set you apart when it comes time for you to apply.

Blaire: But prep yourself. I think that's the biggest thing, is that people just magically think there's going to be lots of opportunities and that they'll be able to get their foot in the door right out of school. And that's not usually the case. If those happen, it's very rare, just like people who get auditions and become first chair of some sort of orchestra right out of undergraduate. Again, those stories are amazing. And we feature them all the time, but they're not the norm. So we have to prep for the norm so that we can balance and figure out what life will mean four or five years after school while you keep applying.

{Outro music}

Stephen: Thank you again so much to Dr. Blaire Koerner. I'm sure this only scratched the surface for some of you, so remember, you can always make an appointment with Blaire through Handshake to ask more specific questions, or get started on that prep work to become a faculty member. I'll leave the link to Handshake in the show notes.

Remember that you can follow us on SoundCloud, or follow the IML on Facebook to get updates about upcoming episodes and podcast news. There are more minisodes with Blaire coming, and we have a few full-length episodes in the works as well, so stay tuned. If you liked this episode, or one of our older ones, it would be a huge help to share with a friend, or colleague. We would really appreciate it.

I mixed today's minisode, and I also provided some of the incidental music and intro music. The outro music was composed by Alexa Silverman. Thanks also to Emma Gierszal and Frances Inzenhofer for helping to prep a lot of the content and questions for these conversations. Contact info for the show is in the show notes, as well as a full transcript and all the links to the articles I mentioned. As always, if you have an idea for an episode, any comments, complaints, or kudos - let us know.

Now, go out. Make art. Do good work. From the IML, I'm Stephen Biegner. Until next time.

EPIISODE 4 (Faculty) END