



Sample Interview Questions

Updated by Blaire K.S. Koerner, Jeff Dunn, and Jack Snelling

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Fit for the Position & Organization

- Tell us about yourself OR introduce yourself.
- Why would you like to work for our organization?
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to this organization?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- Which five words would you use to describe yourself? Why?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- What college courses did you enjoy most other than your core curriculum?

Your Future Plans

- What are your career goals? Where do you want to be in five years? Ten?
- What will it take to attain your goals, and what steps have you taken toward attaining them?
- Do you have aspirations in this field? What do you hope to accomplish through this position?
- Have you been in experiences in the past where your work has conflicted with your long-term goals? How did you handle the conflict?

Past Experiences

- Tell us about how you've grown in the last five years.
- What is an accomplishment that you are most proud of and why?
- What is the one experience you think has best prepared you for this position?
- What have you learned from your experiences outside the workplace?
- Describe a time when you overcame a challenge.
- Describe a time when you failed, what did you learn?
- Describe a time when you had a conflict with a colleague and how you handled the situation.
- Describe a time where your manager/boss was disappointed with your performance and how you handled it.
- Describe a time where you incorporated a variety of diverse perspectives into a final product or decision.

Logistics/Workplace

- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Can you share your work/life balance philosophy?
- How do you prioritize projects and tasks within the workplace?
- Tell us about your favorite manager/boss you've had in the past.
- Describe your ideal workplace environment.
- Are there any commitments you have in the next six months that we need to know about?



MUSIC TEACHING

General

- Tell us about your experiences as a teacher.
- What is the role of a teacher?
- What is your philosophy of teaching?
- Describe your teaching style.
- Describe an ideal curriculum in music.
- How would your students describe you?
- How do you know if a student understands what you are teaching?
- How do you evaluate student progress?
- How do you get students excited about learning?
- How do you individualize your teaching?
- How do you determine the level of your students?
- How do you handle a student who is constantly misbehaving?
- How do you handle a call from a parent who is upset with their child's grade?
- A student is constantly late or absent in class, how do you handle the situation?
- What is the most important part of learning - content, outcome, or process?
- Describe a positive music teaching experience.
- Describe a negative music teaching experience.
- Describe some current trends in the field that impact your teaching style or content.
- Tell us about the thought process behind your diversity statement.
- How are you diverse and inclusive in your teaching?

Collegiate Private Studio Teaching

- As a performer/composer/conductor, why do you like to teach?
- How do you structure an hour-length lesson?
- What might a student of yours play on a recital?
- How much practice time do you expect from your students?
- What do you believe makes a successful studio teacher?
- How would you approach teaching a student who was interested in performing music outside of your comfort range?
- How would your syllabus differ teaching music majors vs. non-music majors?
- What are some ways a studio teacher can interact with the ensemble directors to benefit and enhance the overall music program?
- Which repertoire and etude books do you use when teaching students?
- If you were to give a recital in your first year, what would be the repertoire and why?
- Name 5-10 outstanding contemporary compositions for your instrument written in the last 20 years.
- Describe your experiences working with electronics and contemporary technique with your instrument.
- How would you use studio classes?
- Why would students in this area come to study with you over other teachers?
- What are your recruitment strategies for local students? How do you recruit nationwide or internationally?
- What different kinds of students are you looking for when you recruit?
- How comfortable are you with teaching classes outside of your primary area of study? Would you



be able to successfully teach aural skills, music theory, music technology, or another subject?

- How do you introduce career education into your music class?

MUSIC TEACHING (cont.)

Collegiate Ensemble Conducting

- How would you organize a beginning conducting course?
- How would your syllabus differ teaching music majors vs. non-music majors?
- What is your favorite composer for band/orchestra/choir/opera and why?
- What would be a sample program for your ensemble in the first year?
- How do you aim to increase the level of the ensemble? How do you assess that?
- How do you divide your rehearsal time?
- What do you currently do to make your ensemble inclusive and diverse?
- What is your recruitment process to fill seats in the ensemble?
- Take us through your thought process for how you would construct a diverse program for this ensemble.
- Describe how you would collaborate with studio professors.
- What musical and non-musical skills would students gain in your ensemble?
- What activities do you expect the ensemble to perform/participate in, both within and outside of the school?

Collegiate Musicology & Theory

- What is your research specialty or focus?
- What are you currently working on?
- How does your research and teaching influence each other?
- What critical approaches do you find most persuasive?
- How would you organize a beginning history or theory course?
- What texts, readings, or concepts do you enjoy weaving into your course and why?
- What is your experience recruiting majors in your field?
- How do you prepare your students for the collegiate job market?
- Give some examples of how you incorporate music from beyond the traditional canon into your teaching.
- In what ways do you stay active in your field?
- What is your musical background and how did that influence your current career path?
- How would your syllabus differ teaching music majors vs. non-music majors?
- Describe some of the major projects that you assign in your classes.



MUSIC TEACHING (cont.)

K-12 Music Education

- What techniques do you use to keep students actively involved and motivated during class and rehearsals?
- How will you incorporate technology into your lessons?
- How do you engage a parent in the music education of their child?
- How would you recruit students for ensembles? How do you retain them?
- How much practice time do you expect from your students?
- What do students gain from studying music?
- Take us through your thought process for how you would construct a program for this ensemble.
- What would you do if a student could not afford to purchase or rent an instrument/materials?
- How do you handle the different ability levels in your classroom?
- If you had a 45-minute class period, how would you divide that time?
- How often will your marching band be expected to rehearse and who would assist you in these rehearsals?
- What are some topics you would cover in general music classes?
- What do you currently do to make your class inclusive and diverse?
- Provide a program sample for your spring concert.
- How comfortable are you with teaching classes outside of your primary area of study? Would you feel comfortable teaching (band, orchestra, choir, guitar/piano, music theory)?

CREATIVE POSITIONS

Composers

- Describe your compositional style.
- Describe your experiences working with ensembles in the past.
- Describe your biggest musical inspirations or mentors.
- Describe a time you wrote a piece collaboratively with a performer or ensemble.
- What current projects are you working on?
- Does your music engage with extramusical ideas? From what extramusical sources do you draw inspiration?
- How does your music engage with audiences? How do audiences generally receive your music?
- What avenues do you use to market yourself as a composer?
- Tell us about an experience where a performer was unable or unwilling to use a specific technique in a piece you had written, and how you handled the situation.
- What sets your music apart from other composers in the field today?



CREATIVE POSITIONS (cont.)

Chamber Music

- Describe your past experiences in chamber music.
- Describe your past experiences working on a small team outside of chamber music.
- What extramusical roles have you held in the past that might be useful for a chamber group? (social media, handling funds, contacting venues, website creation, interacting with donors)
- Name a dream composer you would like to work with (either in a solo or chamber setting) and tell us why.
- Name 5-10 outstanding contemporary compositions for your instrument written in the last 20 years.
- Describe a time you workshopped a piece with a composer.
- Give us your ideal concert program (for this ensemble's instrumentation).
- What is your philosophy regarding chamber music in the 21st century? How can independent chamber groups stay relevant and secure funding?
- How else do you interact with music beyond performing on your instrument?
- What avenues do you use to market yourself as a performer?
- What efforts have you taken to uplift the voices of underrepresented composers in your personal work?

Large Ensembles

- Describe your past experiences in orchestral/pit/band settings.
- Of the large ensembles you've been a part of, which ones had the best work environments? Which ones had the most effective rehearsals?
- Who is your favorite conductor you've worked with in the past and why?
- Who is your favorite section leader/concertmaster you've worked with in the past and why?
- Describe a time you workshopped a piece with a composer.
- Name a living composer you would like to work with (either in a solo or chamber setting) and tell us why.
- What are your dream pieces to perform with an ensemble?
- What is your favorite era of music to perform and why?
- Do you have experiences in chamber music in the past?
- Tell us about a time you performed for a younger audience or visited a school.



ADMINISTRATION & LEADERSHIP

- What is your experience supervising a team?
What about training colleagues?
- How do you feel about weekend or evening events and activities?
- What is your philosophy concerning fundraising and interaction with donors?
- How would you work towards engaging a younger audience?
- How does marketing play a role in the arts?
- How would you broach a difficult subject with the Board of Trustees?
- What do you do to stay on top of the industry?
- What are your comments about musical trends and the industry today?
- What types of professional development activities do you pursue?
- Describe your musical background and how it impacted your becoming a musical leader.
- Describe what being a member of the art community means to you?
- What communities do you believe this organization should serve?
- What are some transferable skills you learned from being a musician and how do you apply them?

QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK

General

- What is the most pressing priority in this position in the next 3 months?
- What are the major organizational objectives for the coming years?
- What do you feel would be the major problems or challenges I could be facing in this position?
- Who will be my direct supervisor? Could you tell me about their work style?
- Tell me about the ideal office environment or culture your organization strives for.
- What qualities do you look for in your employees?
- What kind of growth opportunities exist in this position?
- Could you describe the typical schedule of this position?
- What are some current projects or initiatives the organization is working on?
- Do I have a budget? If so, how is it typically spent?

Teaching

- How many classes will I be expected to teach?
- What textbooks or curriculum does this district/school use in this subject area?
- How do the parents and the community support your school/organization?
- What are the expectations for performance and creative work/research with this position?
- What are the expectations for student recruitment with this position?
- How do parents and the community usually support this program at your school?
- What resources will be available for me to use?
- What level are the students currently at? What are the long-term goals for this ensemble from the administration?