

The Dynamics of the Job Interview

Sponsored by the SMT Professional Development Committee

Megan Lavengood, George Mason University
— Mike Callahan, Michigan State University
Philip Duker, University of Delaware
Elizabeth Sayrs, Ohio University

The Dynamics of the Job Interview - part 1

—
Megan Lavengood, George Mason University

ABOUT ME

- Was on the job market two seasons ago, in 2016–17
- Now employed at George Mason University
- Will be presenting mainly from the interviewee's perspective

-I think I'm on this panel to provide the viewpoint of someone who just did this

-was on the job market in 16/17

-I had 6 on-campus interviews, totalling 10 teaching demos (schools had me teach 1 or 2 classes, and in one case, 3 full classes)

-now employed, and I have been on a job search committee once already

now, so I have a little of that perspective, but I'm gonna present mostly on the teaching demo, from the interviewee's perspective.

Mentors who have helped me:

-Poundie Burstein

-Joe Straus

-Lynne Rogers

-Arnie Cox

So many of the ideas I'll mention today are not things I personally came up with—they are just the way that all of these peoples' ideas have been internalized and executed by me (but that's what knowledge always is).

OUTLINE OF TALK

- Six tips for teaching demonstrations
 1. Embrace the awkwardness
 2. Make music right away
 3. Vary your activities
 4. Make a handout
 5. Reflect your teaching statement
 6. Show your lesson plan to others
- One specific goal I had for each undergraduate and graduate lesson

-want to avoid rehashing what might be obvious, like, “ask for a syllabus, text, and calendar”

1. EMBRACE THE AWKWARDNESS

- Just acknowledge it: “Hey everyone, I know this is very awkward! Let’s pretend it’s not!”
- Remind students that you are being judged, not them

The teaching demo is awkward for you and for the students. Not only do Ss not know you, they are also kind of “performing” in front of all their theory teachers. I found it helpful to just acknowledge that, and remind the students that I’m being judged, not them.

2. MAKE MUSIC RIGHT AWAY

- Play music or make music within five minutes of beginning your lesson
- Tips for having students sing:
 - don't attempt 4-part singing
 - practice your own singing and playing
 - rehearse with the schools solmization system

make music right away

I once got advice that you should be playing or making music within 5 minutes of starting your lesson. Nothing engages students better than asking them to sing, or asking them to listen to a cool piece of music.

Tips for singing:

-don't attempt four-part singing; too

easy to get bogged down in fixing it

-practice singing/playing yourself!

-check on what solmization system they use and rehearse using that

2. MAKE MUSIC RIGHT AWAY

- Tips for having students listen to a piece of music:
 - Know who's performing and inform students
 - Give students a concrete goal to listen for before playing
 - It's okay to talk a little bit over the music to show important analytical moments
 - Bring a portable bluetooth speaker, in case tech isn't working.

there

Tips for listening:

- make sure to give students a concrete goal to listen for while you play the piece (e.g., “raise your hand when you hear that weird harmony”), to encourage active listening
- feel free to talk over the music with important analytical points
- buy a portable bluetooth speaker in case tech isn't working when you get

3. VARY ACTIVITIES

- Other possible activities besides lecturing:
 - Singing
 - Having students work in small groups, while you walk around the room and interact with the groups
 - Getting students started on homework and walking around to help students one-on-one with homework
 - Encouraging students to discuss points with partners before calling on them to answer questions

I try not to straight lecture for more than 5 or 10 minutes. I intersperse lecture with other activities, such as:

4. MAKE A HANDOUT

- Advantages of making a handout
 - Eliminates time spent writing things on the board
 - Students and faculty have a take-home of the lesson
 - Frees you from being tethered to the textbook's approach

SKIP IF LOW ON TIME.

4. MAKE A HANDOUT

- Name on handout
- Activities are numbered
- Composers are identified (bonus: outside the canon)
- Instructions for each activity are written out
- Variety of activities

SKIP IF LOW ON TIME.

4. MAKE A HANDOUT

SAMPLE HANDOUT

I. Part writing. Dictate the outer voices, and analyze with Roman numerals.

Blanks show students where to expect chords.

I. Dictation/part writing blended exercise. Students began by dictating the progression I gave, then part-wrote the inner voices. Controlled possible correct answers for faster grading and greater success rate.

4. MAKE A HANDOUT

SAMPLE HANDOUT

II. Josephine Lang, "Gott sei mir Sünder gnädig," mm. 5-8 (modified)
Analyze with Roman numerals. Then, add passing tones wherever possible!



G:

Modify examples to avoid distracting points of confusion.

4. MAKE A HANDOUT

SAMPLE HANDOUT

III. Clara Schumann, "Le Ballet de Revenants," *Quatre pieces Caractéristiques*,
Op. 5, No. 4, mm. 44-47. Label all embellishing tones.



4. MAKE A HANDOUT

SAMPLE HANDOUT

IV. **Error detection.** Whoever completed these exercises was not very careful about avoiding parallels. Find the errors in these examples.



4. MAKE A HANDOUT

SAMPLE HANDOUT

- V. **Figured bass.**
- Realize the following short figured bass.
 - When you're finished, raise your hand so I can check for parallels.
 - Afterward, add as many passing tones as possible, without adding any errors.
 - You may also add one neighbor tone.



Explicitly ask students to engage you.

5. REFLECT YOUR TEACHING STATEMENT

- Did you say you promote diversity with your musical examples? Do that!
- Did you say you use freewriting as a prep activity for discussion? Do that!

with your musical examples? do that
-did you say you use freewriting as a prep
activity for discussion? do that
etc

This is your chance to follow through on all the big game you talked in your letter and your teaching statement. Not all of it will be possible—for example, I talk about how much I love model compositions in my letter, and this is a long project not suitable for a teaching demo—but anything that is should manifest in your demo.
-did you say you promote diversity

6. SHARE YOUR LESSON PLAN

- Do a trial run with mentors, colleagues, and/or people who know a bit about music theory but not too much
- At least email your materials to other people
- Find people that might know the school's environment:
 - people that used to teach there
 - people who went to school there

-ideally, do a full teaching demo for a trusted audience before you go
-failing that, at least email your lesson plan and materials to other people
-try to find people that somehow know the environment at the school—
people that used to teach there,
people who went to school there, etc.
I got my best advice that way.

FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:

LINK EVERYTHING TO PERFORMANCE

- Don't get bogged down in our music-theoretical task
- Tie your micro-level theory topic into strategies for performance, education, and/or music production

it's easy to get bogged down in our music-theoretical task for each lesson, but theory for theory's sake is not very interesting to undergraduate students. make sure to tie your micro-level theory topic into strategies for performance, or just a broader listening experience.

+6 chord example

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:

USE WRITING AS A TEACHING TOOL

- Begin class with a quote you've pulled from the reading assignment that encapsulates the gist of the reading
- Give students 5 minutes to freewrite their thoughts on that quote before starting discussion
- You can call on shy students without putting them on the spot by asking them to share what they wrote down

freewrite on that quote before starting discussion. That will let them pretend they've read the article when they haven't, and help all your discussion go over more smoothly.

grad lessons usually revolve around a reading of some kind. it's a fact of life that some people will not have done the reading. to smooth over the awkward pauses that can ensue when many people haven't done the reading, give them an out. begin the class with a quote you've pulled from the reading that encapsulates the gist of the reading, and give Ss 5 mins to

CONCLUSION

- Six tips for teaching demonstrations
 1. Embrace the awkwardness
 2. Make music right away
 3. Vary your activities
 4. Make a handout
 5. Reflect your teaching statement
 6. Show your lesson plan to others
- Connect to music
- Use writing

recap each tip

CONCLUSION

- Six tips for teaching demonstrations
 1. Embrace the awkwardness
 2. Make music right away
 3. Vary your activities
 4. Make a handout
 5. Reflect your teaching statement
 6. Show your lesson plan to others
- Connect to music
- Use writing

most importantly, get help from mentors. almost none of these ideas are really my ideas—it's all wisdom passed down to me from people who've been at this for a long time!

The Dynamics of the Job Interview - part 2

—
Michael Callahan, Michigan State University

My Background

- At MSU since 2010, area chair of music theory since 2014
- Chair of theory search committees (2015, 2018)
- Member of other search committees
- Served on Dean's Advisory Committee

Show of hands. Here's my background. [slide]

At MSU since 2010, so a candidate in the still-not-terribly-distant past

Have been interviewed---over the phone, over Skype, and on campus---many times. Some of these were successes and others were learning opportunities [slide]

Have chaired two searches including one currently underway, [slide] and been on other search committees, so my most recent experience with interviews is from that perspective. [slide]

By serving on our college's faculty advisory committee several times, and as area chair, I also have some insight into how administrators and the institution as a whole think about faculty hires. [slide]

Outline

1. The teaching demonstration: preparation, in the classroom, and afterward
1. The formal interview: general considerations, common questions
1. The interview as a whole

The Teaching Demonstration: General

You get one topic, and one class period, to show how you teach in general.

What are your priorities?

What types of work do students do in your classes? (writing, analysis, improvisation, discussion, listening, singing, composition)

First, [slide] the teaching demo is a token. It's one instance that has to represent your approach, your philosophy, and your skill as a whole. [slide] Make sure it is obvious to the search committee what your priorities are as a teacher. And make sure they can imagine, vividly, what it will be like to be inside your classroom. [slide] What types of work will students be doing in your classes? (writing, analysis, improvisation, discussion, listening, singing, composition)

The Teaching Demonstration: General

You get one topic, and one class period,

It's also your only chance (2 clicks)

The Teaching Demonstration: General

You get one topic, and one class period, to show your whole range of skills as a teacher.

Musicianship

Clarity, Multimodality

Interactivity, Designing for Active Learning

Avoid lesson plans that deny you the opportunity to show all of your strengths.

To show as many of your pedagogical skills as possible.[click]

Your musicianship: singing, functional keyboarding to illustrate and highlight. If you're a pianist, go ahead and show that, too.[click]

The clarity of your teaching: along the lines of Universal Design for Learning, show your skill at representing ideas in multiple ways---through verbal explanation, through visual illustration, through musical sound, through diagrams, through metaphor, etc.[click]

Responsiveness. Some big questions that I ask when watching teachers are: "Does it matter that the students are here? Is the class about them, or about the teacher? Are students active? Do they spend the time working, thinking, and participating, or just listening to the teacher talk?" More on this in a moment.[click]

So, avoid lesson plans that hide any of these skills. For example, a typical class period in my undergraduate course has students working intensely in groups on an activity that I tee up for just a few minutes at the start of class. I walk around and coach them. I wouldn't do this for the whole class period at a job interview, however, even though it would be representative of what I do---I wouldn't have a chance to explain, to demonstrate, to use the keyboard much, etc.

The Teaching Demonstration: Preparation

Get information that will allow you to teach these students **as if they were your students**.

1. **Institutional** context: syllable systems, textbooks, etc.
2. **Curricular** context: how this lesson fits in with recent work, preparation, and upcoming work
3. **Students**: what does “relevance” mean to them?
4. **Classroom**: what is (im)possible?

Preparation [click]

The more you can do to make it seem like YOUR class, to make them seem like YOUR students instead of a group of strangers inside a fishbowl, watched by the intimidating eyes of the search committee, the better impression you'll make. So, get information that will help this to seem like your class, and your students.[click]

First, obviously, get the lay of the land. Which syllable systems and textbooks do they use? Speak their language.[click]

Second, ask about the curricular context: What have studnets just learned (so you can build upon their prior knowledge)? What, if anything, will they be asked to read or do as preparation for your class (so you can build on it, or initiate class with a student-led review)? What do students need to be prepared to do by the end of your class (so you can refer to it at the end of youru lesson)?[click]

Third, learn about the students so that you know what “relevance” might mean to them. Are they mostly classical performers? Are many of them aspiring music educators? Are there jazz majors? Composers? Music-industry students? Non-music majors at a liberal-arts college? Know what target you're trying to hit.[click]

Fourth, know as much about the classroom as you can. Is the seating fixed or flexible? What technological options exist? Etc.

The Teaching Demonstration: Classroom Behaviors

1. Learn students' names before class starts and call on them by name.
2. Demonstrate musicianship.
3. Study pieces, not just topics.
4. Use a small amount of tasteful humor.
5. Ask meaningful questions

There are as many different ways of teaching well as there are good teachers, so I won't advocate for my own brand of teaching: teach how *you* do, not how I do. What I've done instead is to compile a list of teacher behaviors for which I have heard search committee members express appreciation, and behaviors the absence of which I have heard search committees lament. Here are the ones I've heard most often.[click]

Learn students' names before class starts and call on them by name. It's the effort that matters here, not the result. Even if you're constantly saying, “Remind me of your name?”, it's still a good idea.[click]

Demonstrate musicianship. Sing. Use the piano. Teach in recitative. Prioritize music making by you and by the students.[click]

Study pieces, not just topics. And if repertoire is presented merely as a way of demonstrating a music-theoretical principle, a class can fall flat, even if all of the other items on this list are met.[click]

Use a bit of humor---never sarcasm, never at anyone's expense, and always inclusive---it can diffuse the inherent awkwardness of the situation and demonstrate confidence. It also can help you to connect with a room full of strangers within a short timeframe.[click]

And finally, ask meaningful questions---that is, in contrast to yes/no questions or questions that simply ask students to fill in a single word in the instructor's train of thought, questions that reveal what students know and don't know. [click]

The Teaching Demonstration: Classroom Behaviors

How to get a room full of strangers to participate and offer answers:

1. Start with volunteers and validate their participation.
2. Be okay with ten seconds of silence.
3. "Cool" calling, Think-(Ink-)Pair-Share
4. Start with a show of hands.

But this can be challenging in a room full of strangers.[click]

Here are some strategies I've seen work very well.[click]

One: start with volunteers---there will always be at least one or two---and validate their participation. "I'm glad you asked that question, Sean." "As Lydia told us earlier..." And so on. Others will follow once you demonstrate that it's safe and appreciated for them to participate.[click]

Two: embrace a bit of silence. Ten seconds of silence is excruciating for the teacher, but it's not even slightly awkward for anyone else in the room. So often, we ask a question, see no immediate volunteers, and answer the question ourselves before anyone has had time to formulate an answer. Give everyone time to think, and they might answer.[click]

Three: even better, give everyone time to think, write, and share informally with a neighbor before participating. If everyone has had this chance to prepare, it's perfectly reasonable to call on someone who hasn't volunteered, and ask them to share their thoughts.[click]

Four: a backup plan that always works, ask interesting questions of the whole group and ask for a show of hands. Who thinks this sounds like two phrases? Who thinks it sounds like one? Then, once they've expressed an opinion in an unthreatening way,

ask for one volunteer from each side to articulate their reasoning.

The Teaching Demonstration: General

So, set clear goals for what students will learn to do with this one topic...

But keep your sights broader than this as well.

In sum, teach the assigned lesson well, but set your sights higher, too. Show what you do as a teacher, and show what you can do as a teacher.

The Teaching Demonstration: In the Rearview Mirror

Reflection

A quick note: if you have the chance, reflect on how the class went and share your thoughts with the search committee. Did anything surprise you? What did you learn? Is there something you'd do differently? (Of course, be only complimentary about their students.) Demonstrate you're a reflective practitioner and that you care whether the students got what they needed out of the class.

The Formal Interview

With regard to the formal interview, I'd like to consider five common questions from the perspective of the search committee. By focusing on what a committee might be hoping to learn from each of the questions, I hope to offer some implicit guidance about how to answer the questions well. But first, one general suggestion for interviewees.

The Formal Interview: Both...And

1. Both **PAST** and **FUTURE**: highlight your accomplishments and your experiences, and also make clear what you will do **at this institution**
1. Both **STRENGTHS** and **GOALS**: what you'd bring on day one, and also how you'd grow
1. Both **IDEAS** and **OPEN-MINDEDNESS**: you can fit into what they do, but you also would help to steer what they do.

Really strong interviewees---whether phone, Skype, or in person---strike three kinds of balances in their answers.[click]

First, they balance discussion of the past with discussion of the future. They emphasize their accomplishments as a scholar and teacher, but they take every opportunity to highlight what these would allow them to do **HERE**. And this is challenging because none of your past work has been at this institution: so, learn as much as you can about the place and the job itself so you can make this translation for the committee. Don't expect that they'll do it all on their own.[click]

Second, they balance strengths with goals. They outline what they would bring to the job on day one, which is certainly important, but they also demonstrate curiosity, humility, enthusiasm, and a growth mindset, all of which predicts that they would continue growing as a scholar, a teacher, a colleague, and so on---which is just as important.[click]

And third, they balance their own ideas and convictions with a demonstration of open-mindedness. Of course, a search committee needs to find someone who can do the posted job well, contribute to the department or school or college, and play a role that is at least partly defined in advance. At the same time, every search committee I've been part of has been searching for someone who would mix things up---add to what we do, and have ideas for doing it differently.

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

With this in mind, here are five common interview questions translated into what a search committee member might be hoping to learn from the answers.

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

“Outline your research agenda.”

Is this person going to be productive?

“Outline your research agenda.” This is in large part a question about productivity, so don’t stop at just your research interests or even just your recent accomplishments. Lay out a *plan* for the next several years. Which lines of inquiry will you pursue? What pieces will you aim to publish? Do you have specific journals or publishers in mind?

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

“Report on a setback or challenge you’ve faced professionally, and how you responded to and learned from it.”

Is this person persistent, reflective, and growth-minded?

“Report on a setback or challenge you’ve faced professionally, and how you responded to and learned from it.” A great answer to this question can make a huge impression on the committee, but it requires discussing something that actually was a failure or a mistake, and how you think/teach/work differently now as a result. Merely humblebragging won’t do it. “It’s been really hard to live up to the very high standards that I always set for myself.”

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

“What are your highest priorities as a teacher?”

Is this person student-centered?

“What are your highest priorities as a teacher?” I’ve gotten this question many times in interviews, and often multiple times within the same interview, just dressed up differently. My strategy was to expect that most of the questions would be about “teaching,” but to plan that none of the answers would be. I talked about “students,” and about “learning.” In my view, a strong answer to a teaching-related question talks about students, not about teachers, and about learning, not about teaching.

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

“What strategies do you employ to reach students of different abilities, experiences, identities, etc.?”

Has this person thought deeply about inclusion and equity? Can this person articulate a commitment to it beyond just the sound bite?

“What strategies do you employ to reach students of different abilities, experiences, identities, etc.?” It’s challenging for me to imagine a great statement of teaching philosophy that doesn’t address issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity. When given this question, it isn’t enough to talk about how you’ll reach both brass players and vocalists. How do you create a learning community to which each of your students feels a sense of belonging? What do you do to support students who struggle, or who haven’t had access to good preparation? How has Universal Design informed your approach to making the course accessible to all learners?

The Formal Interview: Common Questions and What a Search Committee Might Be Hoping to Learn

“What questions do you have for us?”

What does this person care about?

“What questions do you have for us?” Ask questions that show you’ve researched the institution, but also ones that reveal what is important to you. If you ask how travel funding works, it shows that you intend to present often at conferences. If you ask about student research projects, it shows you are passionate about mentoring. If you ask about opportunities to collaborate, it shows you enjoy working as part of a team. If you ask what the goals, vision, and challenges of the department currently are, it shows you see the position as dynamic rather than static. And so on.

Conclusion: The Campus Visit Overall

I’ll close by saying good luck—I know that job interviews are stressful, on top of which, for a peg-the-needle introvert like me, truly one of the most socially exhausting experiences I’ve had. I also want to share with you the biggest difference between how I thought about job interviews 9 years ago, as a candidate, and how I think about them now, as a search committee member. When I was first on the job market, I uncomfortably wondered whether the search committee members spent my entire visit looking for flaws—for reasons to remove me from their list and make their decision a bit easier. That is, I thought they might be trying to identify reasons *not* to hire me. I know that Impostor Syndrome is very real, and I know first-hand that getting onto the plane for your interview can feel like the first step into a gauntlet, the sole purpose of which is to reveal the many flaws that had been concealed by the plate armor of paper applications and phone interviews.

But, from the other side of the table now, I realize I could not have been more wrong about that. Now that I’ve been on several search committees, I know that committee members are looking at, and looking for, the strengths, not the weaknesses, of candidates. They want nothing more than for every candidate to blow them away at the on-campus interview. If you get to that point in the search process, the committee already knows that you’re well qualified for the job—the institution wouldn’t commit the resources to bringing you to campus otherwise. As they watch your research talk, your teaching demonstration, your interview, and the other less formal parts of the visit, they’re imagining you as their colleague. Teaching their students. Serving on committees with them. Solving problems together, either scholarly or mundane. And

there's nothing more exciting professionally than new colleagues. So my overarching advice is to help them with this imagination game by acting the entire time like you are their colleague already. Over lunch, learn about their program and brainstorm with them. In your teaching demo, be excited with and for the students, just as if they were yours. In short, act like you belong there. Because you do.

The Dynamics of the Job Interview - part 3

Phil Duker - University of Delaware

What perspective do I offer?

Searches at the University of Delaware (med sized university with dept of music)

- Chair of a Theory search conducted last year
- Member of six search committees over the past 8 years

Was on the job market from 2007-09

Job-search document

When does the on-campus interview really begin?

A. At the first scheduled event on your itinerary.

A. Only really during your scholarly talk and teaching demo.

A. The moment that anyone meets you in person (at the airport, or hotel, etc).

Preparation

Rehearse your 1-, 3-, and 5-minute speeches.

Practice answering some generic questions with colleagues.

Have questions about the department/school/university.

Know who is on the committee and find out some things about them

Classroom teaching demonstration

Research talk

Arriving with Authenticity

Be yourself and try to enjoy meeting the new faculty and students.

Awkwardness abounds, but everyone* wants you to do well.

Be curious - figure out what questions you have

Had a flub? Shake it off and keep going....

Fit is key

How would you “fit” into this complex environment?

What are the most important roles that need to be filled in the job?

How does the search committee value teaching and research?

How do your strengths and weaknesses mesh with the rest of the department/area?

Would you be happy in this situation, and likely to stay?

Have Questions

Most conversations will give you the chance to show that:

1. you have taken some time to learn about the institution.
2. you have a realistic understanding of the job.
3. you have some well-thought-out questions specific to this job.
 - Committee and future colleagues
 - Chair
 - Dean

Teaching demonstration - background

Know what topic you will be teaching. Verify this 2-3 weeks out.

Classic situations: Chromatic predominant, small forms, hybrid with AS

Initial Reconnaissance: Textbook/workbook, solfege system, Roman Numeral case, Cad. 6/4, figured bass w/ RNs or separate, formal terminology (Caplin vs. H&D vs. other), etc..

Class size and classroom environment (board, piano, projection, sound)?

How are the seats/desks arranged - allow for group work?

What if they call it a I 6/4 or other MT heresy?

A. "You better ... run-run, run, run, run, run, run, run away."

A. "Why don't you ... think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it."

A. "A rose by any other name, would smell as sweet."

Temptations (Message from a Black Man by Norman Whitfield-Barrett Strong)

Lesson planning

Scaffolded and flexible

Make a handout

Bring in real music at various points (Accordion Structure + diversity of exs.)

Demonstrate your musicianship

Active learning - not just lecture

Not really about how to teach “X”

How do you present yourself to students (do they trust and respect you)

How do you structure the learning environment

What do you emphasize: step-by-step approach, music making, abstract vs. specific, relevance

Are your main points clear

Remember - everyone wants you to do well!

People will look for positive things (even if you focus on the negative ones on the plane).

Sometimes “Fit” isn’t really about you

One interview does not sum up your value as a theorist/instructor/researcher

The Dynamics of the Job Interview - part 4

—

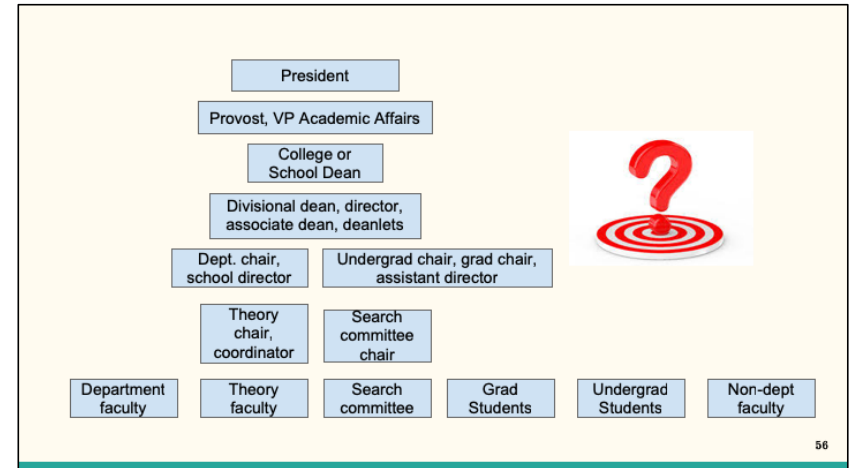
Elizabeth Sayrs, Ohio University

Background

Searches primarily at Ohio University (large public, with School of Music in a College of Fine Arts)

- Chair of theory area for several years at two universities; served on and chaired multiple theory searches
- Served on other music faculty search committees, deans and President search committees, co-chaired Provost search committee
- Haven't been a candidate since 2004

- Have been on and chaired numerous search committees, both as faculty member, music theory area coordinator, and as an upper administrator
- Currently Dean of University College and Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, but also have served as a long-term interim dean of the college of fine arts, and I just finished a seven-month stint as interim executive vice president and provost, so I will talk mostly from administrative perspective (been 10+ years since interviewed)
- Caveats: most of my administrative experience is context bound by large public, Carnegie high research, but with comprehensive music school with focus on undergrad teaching as well
 - Why does this matter?



[slide with ridiculous fictional hierarchy example]

- Things organized differently at different institutions, often related to size, and that means who has input into a search process, and who has decision making power, varies by institution as well
- Who participates may be mandated by faculty union contract or handbook, or may be based on the whim of how involved a dean wants to be in searches
- Who makes the decision: could be search committee? Search committee chair? Department chair or school director? Dean? Provost? (I even interviewed at a small college once where I met with the President!)
- Varies by type of position as well; for an adjunct or visiting position, may be a full search process or may be scaled back
- **Thus when you interact with different levels, they each have different roles and interests in the search and in the institution's priorities, and this will be reflected in your interactions with them.**

As a faculty member, search committee member or chair:

1) Meaningfully engaged with students

1) Intellectually and musically curious

1) Future colleague vs. graduate student

57

Teaching demo and interaction with search committee, students, other faculty

- Well covered by colleagues on the panel
 - Add that as a faculty member on a search committee, was really interested in a few key things:

1) Engaged with students

- Was the teaching demo about the candidate or the students? Yes, candidate being judged, but always ultimately about student learning. Or even a step further: about how learning emerges from relationship between student and instructor = magic.
- Did the candidate demonstrate knowledge of different ways of teaching (standing at the piano for 50 minutes vs demonstrating variety of techniques)
- Did the candidate demonstrate significant ability to communicate musically with students? [not just demonstrating their own musicianship, but being able to communicate the musical importance or relevance of what they were teaching: examples: playing/singing/performing in class,

linking to musical meaning, explaining why what they were teaching mattered to all musicians] – start with the why of what we are doing;

- Did the candidate interact equitably with students? Or at least address is with search committee if couldn't correct on the fly
- If outside classes: often meet with group of students in unstructured way for pizza lunch or similar: was candidate prepared? Good questions: what was the most impactful thing you experienced in a theory or aural skills class? What is one thing you would change? How has analysis/theory informed your own performance/study? On your own time, what music do you listen to and why?

2) Intellectually and musically curious

Was the candidate intellectually curious? And did that come through in their teaching of core issues?

* teaching core theory like it is the stuff you learn before you can do interesting musical things is a deal breaker for me: are you teaching something I am going to have to unteach because you haven't thought deeply about teaching the way you have about research –

- e.g., one candidate who included a lovely hypermetric analysis as part of their research presentation also told an intro theory class that in 4/4, the quarter note always gets the beat;
- another claimed that augmented sixth chords only occurred in the Romantic period, and we had no idea where their names originated, and then used a Bach example that – you guessed it – had an augmented sixth chord in it
- another said that figured bass and inversion symbols were the same, and students didn't have to worry about the difference between them
- I'm sure those of you who have taught for any length of time have your own list of these types of experiences

* not expectation that a candidate has everything figured out, but looking for evidence that has a dynamic relationship with received knowledge, and that this curiosity and deep musical inquiry extends to teaching every level of student as a critical foundation for how theorists think

- What are you saving it for? (Dick Killmer)
 - Did the candidate demonstrate knowledge of different literatures? - is the candidate dynamically engaged with music that speaks to a broad range of people? How did they approach that while teaching?
- 3) Approach interview as colleague vs student
- Did the candidate demonstrate significant ability to communicate musically other faculty members, including/especially non-theory faculty [socially, in job talk, in interview, etc. – will other faculty members be able to collaborate in the future]
 - Did the candidate interact equitably with faculty?
 - Was there evidence of future mentorship in interactions with students, both undergrad and grad?
 - Was the candidate themselves? (Was interview a reliable indicator of how the candidate would be in the role?)

Purposes of Administrative Interviews

1) Informational

1) Evaluative

1) Recruiting

• Admin:

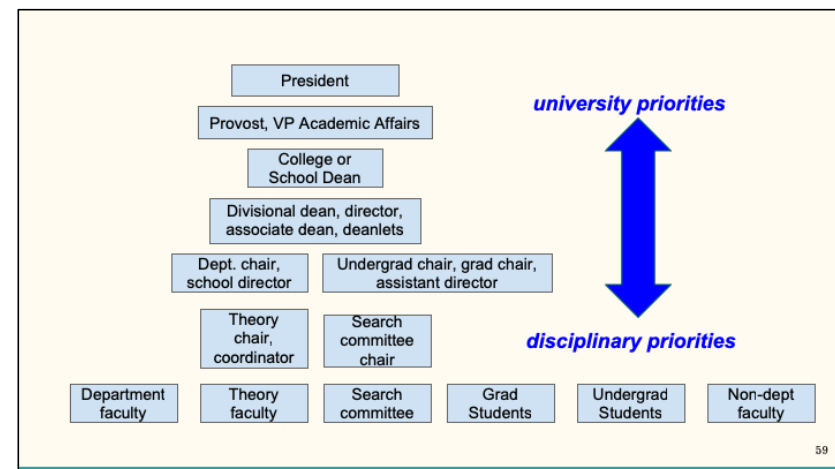
For any long-term contract or tenure track position, and many visiting positions, you'll have some kind of meeting with an administrator or two. Most often this is the department chair or school director, and an associate dean or dean, but varies by institution.

Here is where understanding that different levels may have different levels of input in the search can help guide you through these interactions. Meetings with administrators will typically have some combination of three components: an **informational component**, an **evaluative component**, and a **recruiting component** where they try to "woo" a candidate. Depending on the structure – who makes the actual hiring decision — one of these components might be more stressed than other. For example, if the decision is made at the department/school level, then the discussion with the upper admin is primarily to provide information and woo you, and to secondarily act as a check/balance. It's also important to understand in most healthy and functional environments, an administrator will only overrule a strong committee preference if there is

a really good reason. There are some cultures in which a search committee does not indicate a preference, but only indicates whether or not a candidate is viable, and each candidate's strengths and weaknesses; in other cultures, the entire department will vote on each candidate. I'm going to focus on the evaluative interviews, because that has the biggest impact on hiring, but I also want to emphasize that if it sounds like an administrator is giving you the hard sell and recruiting you, that doesn't necessarily indicate that they want to hire you. They may not be the one who makes the decision, and they want to make sure each of the candidates will be interested if they end up receiving the offer.

Understanding which component of an administrative conversation you're in can help you navigate the types of questions and discussions that are likely to come up. (Don't suggest you ask, but know these are in play.)

- Remember that depending on the institution, an administrator you meet with may not be a music theorist – they may not even be a musician, if it's in a college of fine arts; and it may not even be someone from the arts at all if the position at a university where the music is in a college of liberal arts or liberal arts and sciences. You need to think at what disciplinary level to talk.
- [Binder example] -- not in his discipline, and we're a sustainable campus so getting a gigantic binder full of paper documents was awkward.
- Interviews with administrators are a little different from search committee interviews, because they're typically more of a conversation than an interview, usually one-on-one (sometimes small group);
- Because this in an individual interview, questions are harder to predict.



[Convolved fictional hierarchy again]

Administrators also often have a different lens on the criteria for hiring—not that they have completely different criteria, but that as you move up the hierarchy, the focus can shift from departmental or disciplinary priorities to university priorities.

• Personally, when started dean roles, perspective shifted

- Really brought home what a significant investment all hires are, not just tenure track hires – à faculty time, administrative time, student time, the time it takes to ramp up and develop a new faculty member (and impact on student's learning through that process), and then if tenure-track/tenured or long-term teaching contracts, potential multimillion dollar lifelong relationship (and asking faculty member to make that commitment, too!); if it's an adjunct position, they are often teaching critical core courses that impact long-term student success and even continuation in the discipline. Hiring really is one of the most important decisions a department can make.

- So, what is an administrator really looking for in an evaluative interview? Again, this is framed through my institutional lens, but can extrapolate to different contexts:

- In addition to the potential for outstanding research and a strong commitment to teaching excellence, I'm really looking for the next generation of leaders (in discipline, department, college, university, outside the university) with possibly lifelong contribution potential way beyond the first five years

Possible questions *from* administrators

- Institutional alignment: Why this position?
- Image of candidate growing in the profession: Where see yourself in 5-10 years?
- Beyond basic qualifications: What unique aspects would you bring to the position?
- Understanding of critical nature of excellent teaching:
 - SOTL
 - Critical curricular issues
 - Engagement outside the classroom

60

- This leads many admins to ask questions that try to determine:

• Larger institutional alignment, ability to understand mission of institution (e.g., research vs. teaching, rural vs. urban, conservatory vs comprehensive, selective vs. access, public vs private) [examples of good and bad answers]: **Why this institution?** This is the “fit” question – have to be really careful about implicit bias around the fit question—we tend to define fit as those who are most like us, which skews white and male and music theory—so it’s really about seeing whether a candidate is interested in understanding the future of where the unit wants to go and becoming a part of that, rather than finding someone who already fits the status quo

Example: we have grad programs but also a focus on undergraduate teaching, with about 1/3 of our students are first generation across the university, and a growing minoritized student population: Candidate with excellent research who I could not get to talk about undergraduate teaching, no matter how many questions I asked to try to invite the

candidate into that conversation

- Image of themselves growing in the profession – has a place to be in 5-10 years, dissertation wasn't just a hurdle [examples of good and bad answers]

Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years? [Comprehensive answer is better than a research only answer] -- careful of cultural capital bias here, but try to elicit long term view of themselves

- Beyond basic qualifications: **What unique aspects would you bring to the position?** So many excellent candidates – how understand what makes you different.
- Believes in the critical nature of excellent teaching and engagement with students – could include questions like:
 - is aware of the research literature on teaching in and beyond discipline (SOTL), online teaching, interdisciplinary teaching
 - have an understanding about significant curricular issues in the discipline
 - How do/can they engage students outside the classroom? (e.g., undergrad research, study away)

Possible questions *from* administrators

- Diversity and Inclusion
 - Not just what you know, but what have you done?
- College or University specific priorities
 - Interdisciplinary work
 - Outreach
 - Community engagement

61

- There will be some questions that explore whether the candidate understands how their own actions impact **diversity and inclusion**: Know those can be fraught words – inclusion can imply assimilating into what already exists. I heard this definition from a candidate who was interviewing for a position that inclusion means that everyone feels expected. (Nice interaction with the idea of universal design)
 - whether through teaching, interactions with colleagues, beliefs about the history and purpose of the discipline, the literature they choose to use, experience working with students of color or first gen or students with disabilities, and so on – not just words, but what have you actually done or experienced? How make sure everyone feels expected in academia?

- You may get questions about College or University specific interests/priorities – will vary by institution
For example, for my institution:
 - Are they interested in interdisciplinary work? What does that mean to them?
 - Are they interested in outreach? Community engagement?

Possible questions *from* administrators

- National Landscape
 - Issues challenging the arts
 - Issues challenging higher education
 - Communicate to those outside field? Non-academics?
- What are you reading?

62

• Some question about the candidate's understanding of issues beyond their discipline:

Does the candidate:

- have a glimpse of the issues impacting the arts more broadly
- have a glimpse of the issues impacting higher ed more broadly [give examples – e.g., Me, too movement, demographics, debate about the value of higher education]
- Can they communicate to academics not in their field? Non-academics?

When a majority of a party nationwide doesn't believe that higher education is "worth it," it's critical that some future academics be able to speak to non-academics.

ULTIMATELY:

Can I picture them as long-term productive, engaged, collaborative members of the university and community (even if this is through productive discomfort)?

Possible questions *for* administrators

GOOD:

- College/university funding for research/travel/special projects
- Release time policies
- Promotion and tenure processes at the college/university level, including support for promotion and tenure process (e.g. guidance, portfolio reviews)

63

The questions that the candidate asks at this level are important, too, because they indicate not just the level of research a candidate has done, but their possible level of future engagement. **Not the time to negotiate.**

Good/typical baseline questions:

- college/university funding for research/travel/special projects; (ask for specific examples of projects that have been funded)
- release time policies;
- promotion and tenure processes at the college/university level, etc.; support for promotion and tenure process (e.g. guidance, portfolio reviews)

Possible questions *for* administrators

BETTER:

- Role of your discipline in the overall goals of the unit?
- Orientation of new faculty and college/campus professional development opportunities (e.g., faculty learning communities, mentoring programs, workshops)
- Questions about trajectory and focus of unit

64

Possible questions *for* administrators

BETTER:

- What are current or future college/university initiatives that might pertain to me?
- How does the unit collaborate with others across the university?
- “What are the opportunities for....”

65

Better (show interest in long-term engagement)

- orientation of new faculty
- role of your discipline in the overall goals of the unit;
- college/campus professional development opportunities (e.g., faculty learning communities, mentoring programs, workshops)
- questions about trajectory/growth focus of department:

- what are current college initiatives that might pertain to me
- how does the unit collaborate with others across the university? (e.g. interdisciplinary options)
- “What are the opportunities for....”
- can sometimes be a safe space for questions about the department (but be careful reading the room) if you have noticed tensions or got a weird question

Finally, admin interview is a really important indicator *for the candidate* of the values and culture of the institution. For example, if it's an adjunct position, I talk about how research indicates that regardless of the excellence for the teacher, student outcomes are better if adjuncts have the support they need to be fully included in the life of the department. No matter the position, I always cover our preferred pronoun policy, and that we expect faculty to use preferred pronouns with students. I've asked questions about both teaching and research, as well as community

engagement and interdisciplinary work, so that the candidate knows these are important at my institution. I talk about our parental leave and domestic partner benefits for both same and opposite sex partners. I indicate that I'm aware that underrepresented faculty are often overburdened with both official and unofficial service work, and talk about strategies we use to mitigate that (and that we're not yet as successful as we'd like). I try to explicitly convey the values of the institution for the benefit of the candidate.

Also one of my favorite things that I do as an admin: want you to succeed, get to hear interesting, engaged future faculty, who, regardless of whether they are offered or accept the position, will continue to be colleagues in the future.

The interaction of the candidate and admin is a two-way street: while many of us do not have the luxury of turning down a position, by fully engaging in dynamic conversations, both formal and informal, with a wide range of people, you'll have a better chance of not only being offered the position, but of knowing how best to situate yourself if you accept the position.

Thank you