



Being a Musicologist/Music Historian

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All recent graduates get the same old question, "What did you study?". Upon hearing the answer, the questioner will have a variety of responses: "Wow, that's interesting!" or "What made you want to do that?". My answer of "Music History" often initiates the response "What will you be able to do with that?". The answer may surprise you.

When I was deciding what career path I wanted to take, I was convinced that the only profession within music was education. I took my first step into my scholastic career in the Bachelor of Arts in Music Education program at Marywood University; however, my heavy involvement with various

clubs, organizations, performing groups, and independent studies began shaping my true career aspirations. At first it was in the form of orchestral conducting; my independent study in conducting was a little more intensive than just private conducting lessons. Aside from suggesting that I take up string lessons, my professor assigned homework in history and theory relative to the piece we were working on for my conducting portfolio. I found myself focusing more on the history assignments over baton practice, and I became known as the "Music History Guy". My students' eyes glazed over when I tried engaging them in the history of the music I was teaching them, and that put a huge damper on my desire to continue teaching. By the end of my junior year, I realized what I wanted to be. It was too late to transfer schools into Music History programs, and because of some minor setbacks in my previous three years, my Music Education degree was going to take me a minimum of five years. Careful consideration ignited my decision to change to Bachelor of Music in Music Performance. By being a performer, my schedule cleared up to focus on the history, philosophy, and theory behind each of the works I performed, and my senior recital morphed into a lecture-recital.

So, what can one do with a degree in Music History? My answer, of course, is relative to my own experiences and opportunities, but I have dabbled in enough skills to know just what I can do with my degree. While obtaining my Master of Music in Music History, I began working for the ticketing agency for the resident companies of Philadelphia's incredible Kimmel Center. My knowledge enhanced the ticket buying experience of several of my customers by simply being familiar with each of the works on each of the companies' seasons. A similar situation arose when I joined the staff of Opera Philadelphia's O18 Festival; however, these positions are far from what I can really do.

As a musicologist/music historian, you are an expert of a specialized sub-field(s) (for me it is Russian Romantic music, as well as opera and ballet music). There is an incredible amount of potential with that knowledge. You can write articles, books, blog posts, program notes, and/or any other written documentation of your personalized research. These written documents can also have visual media counterparts. Before I started my Masters degree I was already attempting a vlog on my Instagram page that did fairly well. It grew a little more after I graduated and started giving it a little more attention. That vlog recently expanded to blog posts like this and additional written short posts on Facebook and Twitter.

If you're considering being a musicologist or music historian, you don't have to limit yourself to those things. The moment that finalized my desire to be a musicologist and music historian was at a pre-performance lecture given at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The gentleman who sat on the stage in front of me was enamored with the music he was discussing and left me in complete wonderment. That was in 2013; to this day that is still my career aspiration, to use my stage presence experience and share my excitement about the astounding world of classical music. I, of course, also love to write. It allows me to extend my interest to more people with the beauty of being able to edit.

An expertise in musicology or music history is useful for library and archival work. While it may be beneficial to have a Library Sciences degree or several years of experience working in one of these institutions, being the expert on the music you work with is similarly advantageous like the aforementioned customer service/front of house path. For me, being a performer boosted my skills working in both Marywood University's orchestra library and the Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music at the Free Library of Philadelphia. I have seen music in both the performer's and the scholar's point-of-view. Music history adds a pinch more of clarity to comprehending the composer's intentions with their work.

While I talked a lot about what I have accomplished as a musicologist (and more specifically as a music historian), the lesson I am trying to teach is: If you desire to pursue a career in music history, don't limit yourself. Of course, you can become a professor at a university and inspire students like your professors did before you, but take it from someone who tried and steered away from that route. There are other roads to travel, even if you have to make one for yourself.