

Dear Pembroke Muso Freshers!



I'm Katrina, and I'm just about to start my second year of music at Pembroke and as subject rep I'm writing to welcome you warmly to the muso family and hopefully give you a little bit of insight as to what to expect next year.

Pembroke has a reputation for being a very pretty, friendly and quite chilled out college with a great Junior Parlour (JP)/ bar to relax after a day's work. One of the great things about coming to university is also the variety of people you'll meet (particularly in freshers' week!) so whatever your interests are, you'll no doubt find people who share them!

So, a little bit about the course. Last year I had six modules: nineteenth-century music; cultural and historical topics (which was divided into the slightly odd mix of eighteenth-century opera and twentieth-century music...!); analysis; harmony and counterpoint I (Palestrina counterpoint and song accompaniment); harmony and counterpoint II (fugal exposition and a choice between string quartet/ ground bass/ variations); and finally practical musicianship skills (sadly not performing but rather aural and keyboard skills).

Assuming that things haven't changed too much for the coming year, there are a few things you could do to ease yourself in – though not something to worry about if the rest of your summer is already jam packed! For the first module, a great book to read is Dahlhaus' *Nineteenth-Century Music* which is a general overview of the period and no doubt one that you'll repeatedly refer to for essays throughout the year (or at least I did!). Also for the nineteenth century, a familiarity with Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> symphonies and their historical context/significance may prove useful – I distinctly remember referring to at least one of them in most of my essays! The book (or rather its first few chapters!) that I found very helpful for the opera course was Roger Parker's *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* which is very readable and covers pretty much everything you need to know. For twentieth-century I would suggest just listening to a variety of music and thinking about what the composer is doing or better still why. (For starters perhaps explore some Schoenberg, Berg, Stravinsky and Stockhausen.) Analysis was the module I was most unfamiliar with when started (by which I mean it took me a whole two terms to work out what musical analysis even is... but not to fear, I promise the penny will drop at some point if you find yourself in the same position I was!). The book that I used for most of the year was William E. Caplin's *Classical Form* and whilst it's not the kind of book you would probably want to read cover to cover, it's definitely a good one to have a flick through and familiarise yourself with some of the terms. What may also be a good idea is to familiarise yourself (just play through them without worrying about anything analytical!) with book I of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* as this will be your set work for the exam. For the remainder of the modules, they are very much things that you'll be introduced to and develop over the year by way of lectures, supervisions and classes, meaning preparatory work is limited. That said, do perhaps have a go at score-reading through the slow movements of some Haydn or Mozart string quartets and harmonising some melodies (Paul Steinitz's 100 tunes for harmonization is a great place to start) as you will have an informal test on these two things at the start of the year. Similarly you'll have a short aural test. But these are nothing to worry about as they just help to put you in the right group to make sure you get the right level of teaching. I certainly learned a lot and really enjoyed my time in the bottom aural class!

An additional point, rather than suggesting it as preparatory reading, is that it may be worth investing in the last three volumes (or even all five if you're feeling keen!) of Richard Taruskin's *History of Western Music*. Definitely not something to read cover to cover, but possibly the resource I found the most useful over the course of the year as you will quickly find that Taruskin has something insightful and helpful to say on virtually any topic on which you may have write an essay!

Right, so how on earth am I taught this multitude of disciplines I hear you ask? As mentioned, your week will consist of a mixture of lectures, supervisions and classes. Especially for the historical and analytical modules, the lectures are really helpful to cover all the basic grounds, often in quite broad terms. The work you are set by your supervisors (perhaps one or two essays a week, a piece of analysis and some harmony and counterpoint work) is what builds up then your skills specific areas of knowledge. What I found really great about this system is that between the balance of being taught and independent learning, there was always the opportunity to ask questions about anything I didn't quite understand or discuss an idea I'd had in response to a particular writer. And although the work-load is considerable, if you keep yourself organised, there will always be the time to enjoy whatever other activities you may be interested in! (At this point – with my organ scholar's hat on – I would like to invite you both to audition for the college chapel choir at the beginning of the year, as it's the heart of college music activity and a great way to know people from other years and subjects!)

I know I've only scratched the surface and there is much more that could be said but I hope this whets your appetite for what will hopefully be a wonderful year! Please don't hesitate to get in touch ([kf319@cam.ac.uk](mailto:kf319@cam.ac.uk)) if you have any questions whatsoever or if you're worried about anything.

Looking forward to meeting you soon! ☺

Love

Katrina Faranda Bellofiglio