

# Desirable Characteristics of the Students Admitted to Study Western Music in Higher Education

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## Abstract

Regarding admitting students to study music in higher education, it is necessary for students to have a good preparation both in musical theories coupled with musical skill development and general knowledge on current education situations. This article entitled desirable characteristics of students admitted to study Western music in higher education is aimed at presenting the guideline and method in developing the desirable characteristics of those who want to study Western music by means of a process conducting a study, researching for related documents, literature and texts, including exchanging ideas and experience with experts on music at the tertiary level. The desirable characteristics could be summarized into three headings, namely: 1) basic Western music theories; 2) operational skills on Western musical instruments; and 3) other academic studies.

**Key Words:** Desirable Characteristics, Admitted to Study, Western Music, Higher Education

## Introduction

In higher education, Western music is offered in both government and private universities; therefore, Western music education in higher education is for building people with knowledge and expertise on music for their career in the society, and elevating musical profession to be progressive and equivalent to other occupations. As to be in line with education reform, Western music education needs a counselor to give suggestions, including participating in various learning experiences in order to learn and practice musical skills rightly. What cannot be missed is organizing musical activities for students to participate in as creators, actors, and listeners.

With regard to the entrance examination to study Western music, it is necessary for the students who wish to take the examination to have a good self-preparation as to pass the selecting criteria. The criteria selecting students to study Western music require the students to have knowledge on theories on Western music, history of Western music, and Western musical instrument performances. In particular, Western musical instrument performances require pretty much time preparation for rehearsal of instrumental techniques, drills, and song performances until having good- enough skills necessary for admitting to study in higher education. Joseph Bowman (2016, p. 2) Has stated that preparation for taking the examination to study music in a university that currently Thailand has 76 universities offering a bachelor's

degree in music, and that many places have offered a master's degree and doctor's degree. As Thailand has entered the ASEAN community, it has affected musical occupation to rapidly expanded. Thai musicians have opportunities to show their work and perform music widely. This has interested people to study music more.

With reference to the objective of studying music in a university, it is aimed at self musical skill development up to a professional level. If this can be accomplished, it means that one can make enough incomes for oneself and family. He has also stated that although universities have their own ways of admitting students, most regulations pertaining to the entrance examination are similar. This means that to pass the examination to study music in universities is not only limited to playing good music, but also learning musical skills on other aspects

As the aforementioned, the persons who wish to continue their study on Western music in higher education should realize how they should prepare themselves as to be able to study music in the tertiary level. A good self preparation has ways and steps for learning the contents on musical theories and self preparation for rehearsals of the musical instruments they favor and other instruments included in their study.

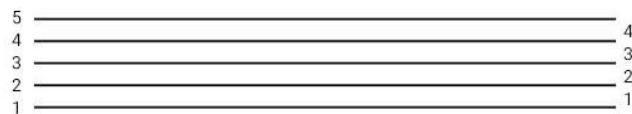
However, the writer will present some guidelines for the development of the desirable characteristics of the persons who want to study Western music at the tertiary level. To develop such characteristics, it is necessary to develop learning of musical theories along side with developing musical instrument performances. Based on a document investigation and a study by the writer, musical skill development could be divided as a guideline for self preparation for those wanting to study music in higher education as follows.

## **Basic Western Music Theory Skills**

### **Learning and Skill Rehearsals on Western Music Theory**

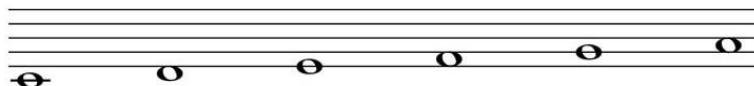
Basic Western music theory skills are necessary to study and practice to create good understanding and apply the knowledge on theories in using musical instruments rightly and appropriately. Natcha Sokatiyanurak (2006) has stated in his text "Music Theories" that studying music theories should be like music practicum. That is, learners should have an idea that music theories are skills that require rehearsals in order to create understanding and agility, because the right thinking while doing exercises is very important. The learner should do the exercises in order to have skills. The course music theories will be the most important basis in studying other courses in music related courses. The contents on basic Western music theories required for the learner are as follows:

1. Staff. This is a group of five horizontal straight lines staying apart from one another with four lanes or channels for recording song notes based on the sound level which can be shown with the height level of the notes appeared on the staff. The method of counting begins from the lowest line up until the fifth line, and the counting of the lane also begins from the lowest. The note can be recorded on the line or in the lane between the lines, above or under the line. Figure one shows an example of the staff.



**Figure 1:** the Staff

2. Note. It is a kind of symbol recorded on the staff for the five lines to show level of the sound. It is in the oval form slightly leaning to the right with its size varying with the size of the staff. It is composed of two parts, namely note head and note tail. Its main function is to convey not only the sound level but also show the value of the note (time duration). There are two methods of recording the notes: on the line and between the lines, as in the example.



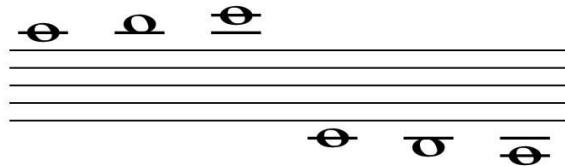
**Figure 2:** The notes recorded in the staff

3. Rest. Rest is a symbol used to represent a music sound meaning stop, a symbol for a quiet sound or stop while playing the music. It has a look like this.

ลักษณะตัวโน้ต	ตัวหยุดโน้ต	ชื่อภาษาไทย	ระบบเมริกัน
•	—	ตัวกลม	Whole Note
♩	—	ตัวขาว	Half Note
♪	—	ตัวดำ	Quarter Note
♪	—	ตัวเข็ปต ๑ ชั้น	Eighth Note
♪	—	ตัวเข็ปต ๒ ชั้น	Sixteenth Note
♪	—	ตัวเข็ปต ๓ ชั้น	Thirty Second Note

**Figure 3:** Symbols of Rest and Names

4. Leger Lines. There are some limitations of records on the staff of five lines and four lanes while a need of a note recording of each music instrument is much more. Therefore, there must have a thing called “Leger Lines” or little lines which are short horizontal lines, but a little longer than the music note, to extend recording above or below the staff. The note added with the Leger Lines will be read in addition to the staff, as in the following example.



**Figure 4:** Record of Note on Leger Lines

5. Clef is a symbol to convey the range of the sound level of the note; without clef on the staff, the note cannot be read, and only the difference of sound level can be conveyed. There are three types of Clef as follows.



**Figure 5:** Three types of Clef

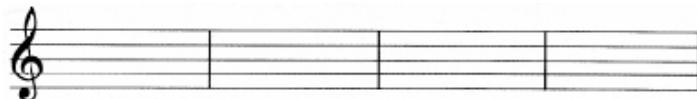
6. Calling the Note. There are two systems of how to call the music notes.

6.1 Sol-Fa System. In a Sol-Fa system, a note is called according to the sound level, from low to high, namely: Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti...

6.2 Letter System. In this system, a note is called according to the sound level, from low to high, namely: A – B – C – D – E – F – G ...

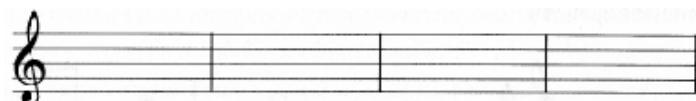
7. Bar Line. It is a vertical straight line across the staff to divide the staff into rooms for the note according to the rhythm specified by the symbol.

### 7.1 To divide song rooms



**Figure 6:** Bar Line

### 7.2 To divide the end of section or end of song part by using Double Bar Line



**Figure 7:** Double Bar Line

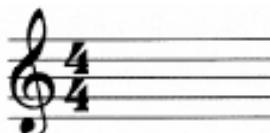
## 8. Adding Value of Note and Rest can be made as follows.

8.1 Dot. Adding a dot on the right of a note or rest will make the note higher half the note.

8.2 Tie. The symbol Tie is used with the note with the same sound level which will make the note to be equal two notes. The first note will be played first and then the sound will be drawn till the end where it is marked with the Tie symbol.

8.3 Use the Fermata symbol or half circle with a dot in the middle. It is recorded at the head of a note to add value of the note. The first note will be played first and then the sound will be drawn till the end where it is a note to be drawn longer with no limit depending on the player's satisfaction.

9. Time Signature. This refers to two number digits written back of the key similar to fractional numbers but without a line in the middle. The number above conveys how many rhythms are there in a room, and the lower number conveys a note with one rhythm, for example.



The top 4 numbers are 1 music room with 4 beats.

The bottom 4 digits represent the black note value.

 = 1 stroke

**Figure 8:** Recording of Rhythm Symbols

10. Time. Time refers to rate of rhythm which is a symbol that convey the rate of rhythm of a note and number of rhythms in each room. Time is a group of notes with the same beating rhythm in each room, making the pulse rhythm with heavy or light rhythm. Time group has three characteristics.

1) Simple duple time. This means that there are two beating rhythms in each song room, for example.



**Figure 9:** Simple duple time

2) Simple triple time. This means that there are three beating rhythms in each song room, for example.



**Figure 10:** Simple triple time

3) Simple quadruple time. This means that there are four rhythms in each song room, for example.



**Figure 11:** Simple quadruple time

## Practical Skills on Western Music

Western music has a variety of ways and details of skill practices depending on types and methods of playing musical instruments, but the major principles are as follows.

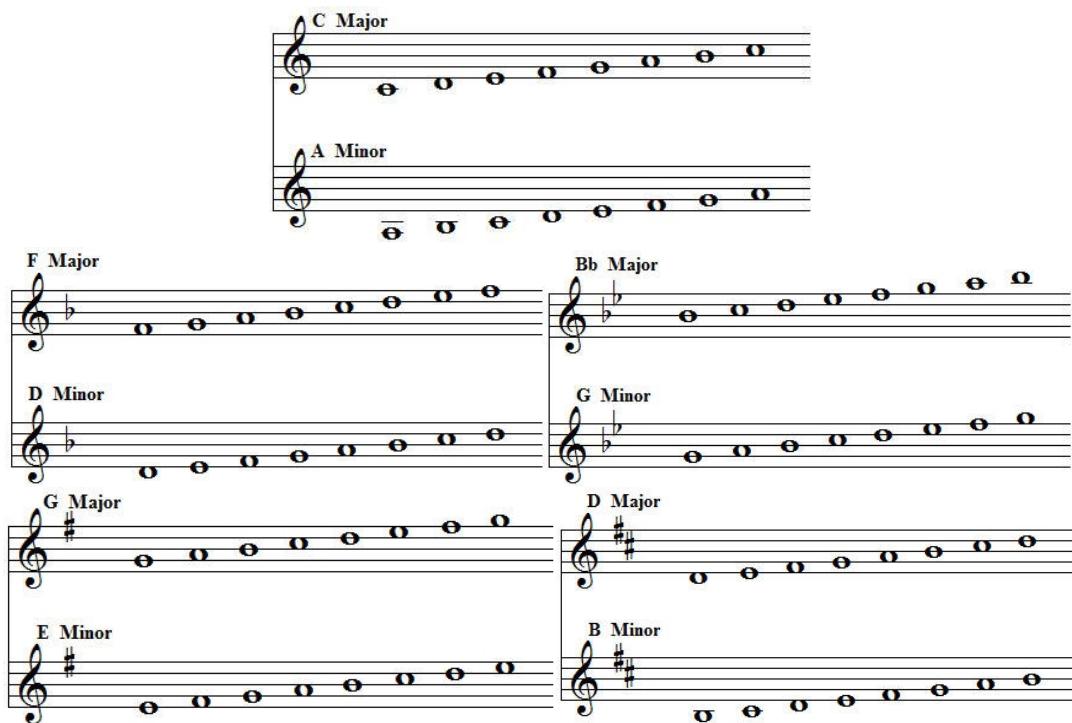
1. The instructor in charge of the instrument. We have to look for a good instructor or a good model in rehearsals. That is, finding an instructor who is knowledgeable, capable and has expertise in using the instrument will help us to have the right way to practice and be able to use the instrument effectively. Joseph Bowman (2016, p. 2 – 15) has said that one-to-one learning with an instructor knowledgeable and capable of musical instrument (including singing), a student has to spend a private study with the regular instructor of his major instrument in order to develop his performance. In this regard, the instructor will teach how to prepare one's self and the right way how to rehearse, practice musical scales, develop different techniques, and develop knowledge how to give the right instrumental performance, as well as

choosing standard exercises for the student's rehearsal. A private study usually takes at least 30-60 minutes per week; if it is not convenient, it can be planned to do it two times a month or as appropriate. However, a private learning should be regularly made so that the instructor can see how the student has developed his skill and be able to give suggestions and solve problems arising correctly and promptly.

2. Exercises and songs play vital parts because if we choose good exercises and songs it will lead to a right way of rehearsal and result in efficient practical skills on musical instrument.

3. Setting Timetable. Besides finding a knowledgeable instructor, having good exercises and notes, planning a timetable for rehearsal is also important. If we have a good time plan, we will be able to rehearse continuously and it will be advantageous for our musical performance. Apichai Liamthong (2002) has stated that a musician should begin from setting the goal for the rehearsal, ordering significance of objectives such as wishing to learn about the song or new technique not being to do, not good or solving a specific technical problem for musical performance, or reviewing the songs or techniques already well-done, or rehearsal for a concert, a competition or a skill test, or rehearsal to review a song in order to interpret it in a different way from original, for instance. Later on a plan should be made in advance about the time range and duration for rehearsal each day, each week or in a long term as appropriate for personal situation. As the time being, a musician should give time for rehearsal the most depending on individual differences, beginning from checking the daily life activities, and cutting unnecessary activities most. Musical rehearsals for progress and skills are a kind of training muscles in order to control playing techniques which require regular training and strict disciplines to follow the set plan, so that effective rehearsals and the set goal can be achieved.

4. Scales. Practicing scales should do both major and minor scales because they are the foundation for playing various songs, particularly the entrance examination to study in universities usually requires examinees to have a practical test on music scales. Generally, universities require the examinees to be able to perform music in the following scales.



**Figure 12:** Popular Scales Used in Entrance Examination

5. Sight Reading. This refers to reading the music note without prior rehearsal. If the student has sight reading skill, it shows that he has knowledge and understands music theories pretty much. Therefore, prompt sight reading of the note is very important for the student preparing to take the entrance examination has to realize and regularly rehearse.

6. Piano Lessons. It is necessary for the student leaning music has to take piano lessons because it will help us have skills in reading the notes with two keys, enabling us to understand structure of chords and chorus better, and helping to strengthen good listening skills. It can be seen that Western music programs in universities require the students to study piano as a secondary instrument and also Western music theories along with the primary or major instrument so as to understand and be able to learn various principles relevant to sound so that they can be applied in studying various courses of Western music.

## Other Academic Skills

Apart from learning skills on theories and practices of Western music, it is necessary for those who want to continue their study in higher education to have knowledge on others, namely:

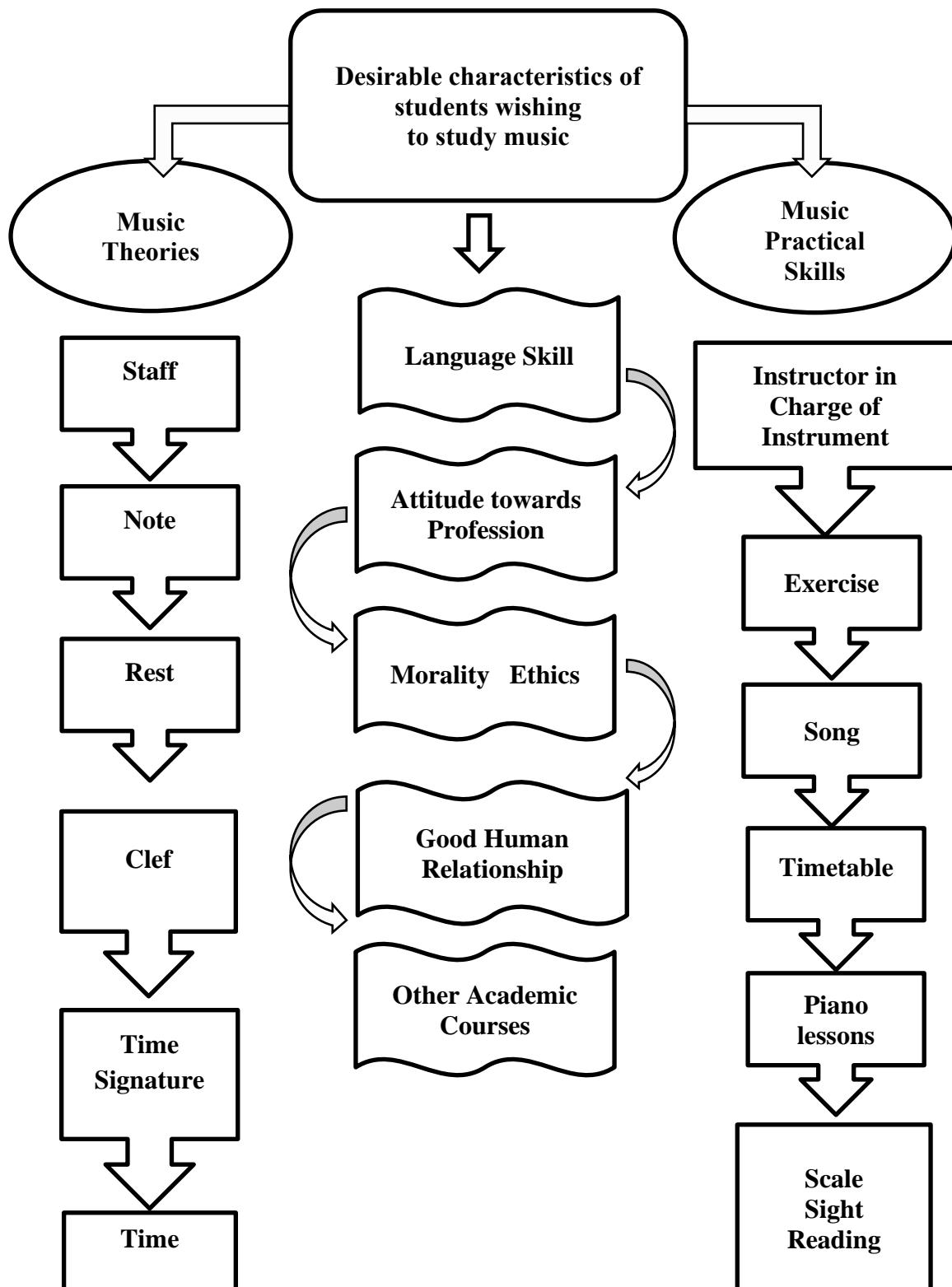
1. Language skill and good attitude towards musical profession. Language skill is very important for music studies since it is used for interpersonal and group communications. A good language skill affects good communication to follow, especially English skill in case we have an opportunity to co-work with foreigners or go to play music in a foreign country, we have to communicate in English with those foreigners. Additionally, attitude toward

profession is also important. If we have ideas in a good way toward musical profession, we will be determined to study well and be able to take music as profession in the future.

2. Other Academic Courses. Taking other academic course are also important because it will strengthen music study to be more efficient such as time management for rehearsal and studying other subjects, building studying and responsible characteristics, taking notes and reviewing lessons, and prescribing the life goals and hopes, for instance.

3. Health. Good mental and physical health affects people on doing various functions and duties. If we can keep good health both physically and mentally, it will give good effect on our music study. That is, if we lose any part physically, it will directly affect studying of music because music skills requires several parts of the body. The same is true mentally since physics and mental are closely related. If we are not ready mentally, we will not be likely to rehearse our music. Therefore, good health is an important aspect for the musician to better strengthen music rehearsal and learning. and rehearsals.

In conclusion, the way for the development of desirable characteristics of students who wish to be admitted to study music in high education institutes, the students need to have knowledge and understanding on basic music theories, be able to well perform major music instrument, have good skill in reading music notes, do sight reading, have skill in both major and minor scales, have language skill-- English in particular, have good morality and ethics, and good attitude towards musical profession, including good human relationship and be able to work with others. Besides, they need to skills in other academic subjects along with studying music. If they have self preparation and training by following the aforementioned information above, they will surely have readiness to pass the entrance examination to study in higher education institutes both inside the country and in a foreign country. This can be graphically summarized as follows.



**Figure 13:** A graphic showing guideline for the development of desirable characteristics of students wishing to study music in higher education institutes

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