

## Academic Music Education in Five Years

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*Planning for the future is a skill that all professionals practice. **Looking five years ahead** is both exhilarating and sobering, especially at my age. Since I primarily work with young, talented pianists who are beginning their professional journeys, I am accustomed to devising career development plans—plans that are inevitably linked to the rapidly changing technological landscape. However, since I am not well-versed in technological matters, I will focus on what I know best: the human element.*

### Some frightening statistics

A few weeks ago, I came across statistics on students who had completed their studies at the *Paris Conservatory*—the finest music school in France, with the most talented students and virtually unlimited financial and material resources. The most shocking revelation was that in the first year after graduation, 80% of these students - *changed professions*.

This raises significant questions: What are these highly gifted individuals doing in the next four or five years, and what is causing them to abandon a musical career? Since there is no doubt about the competence of either the teachers or the students, where does the problem lie?

### The key to teaching music

In my opinion, the key to teaching music - or any subject, for that matter - is the teacher's ability to instill a deep love for the music, the instrument, and the art of melody itself.

Students should develop such a profound passion for music in all its forms that they cannot imagine doing anything else. Music must become a way of life, encouraging individuals to refine their talents to the highest level. This mindset fosters a proactive approach—one that focuses *not on scarcity* (such as the limited number of teaching positions or performance opportunities) but rather on creating opportunities in as many ways as possible – *the notion of abundance*.

### High levels of anxiety

I know that as my students approach the end of their academic journey, they experience great anxiety. Many are tempted to extend their studies for another four years simply to delay confronting the fundamental question: *How will I support myself?* As teachers, we bear the responsibility of guiding them toward various career paths with as much practical advice as possible.

## **Dynamic and evolving paths**

Having taught at the *École Normale de Paris* for 43 years, I have seen my students flourish in a wide variety of musical fields. Many have built fulfilling careers, not just as solo performers but also in chamber music, accompaniment, vocal coaching, choir conducting, concert organization, festival management, and administration. Most follow a dynamic and evolving path that allows them to lead productive and meaningful professional lives.

## **What does each musician have to offer others**

Despite technological progress and the rise of social media, the essential question remains: *What does each musician have to offer others? More specifically, what problems do they solve, what experiences do they provide, what value do they bring to their audiences, and at what cost?*

*In my view, the troubling dropout rate among Paris Conservatory graduates stems from their reliance on a “pay check-at-the-end-of-the-month” mindset. Yet, even in challenging economic times, people always need music. There are millions of individuals longing for beautiful music, eager to be inspired, moved, and entertained by passionate musicians. The tools for communication, production, and outreach are constantly evolving—now more than ever. But above all, success in music still depends on the artist’s love for their craft and their ability to share that love with the world in a realistic and professional manner.*

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