

*Interviewer:* Okay. Today is April 28th. This is \*\*\*. I'm here with \*\*\*.

*Interviewer:* Semester's almost over. Graduation's almost here.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Are you excited?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I'm excited.

*Interviewer:* What's next for you after graduation?

*Interviewee:* Grad school.

*Interviewer:* What kind?

*Interviewee:* Violin performance.

*Interviewer:* Oh my goodness.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I'm a music major here.

*Interviewer:* Wow. Where are you going?

*Interviewee:* I'm going to [University] in Chicago.

*Interviewer:* Oh. That'll be awesome.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I'm really excited.

*Interviewer:* I hear [University] is a great place.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Good, very cool.

*Interviewee:* All my friends [inaudible 01:15] from there, so it's gonna be nice too.

*Interviewer:* Oh. That's even better.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Even better when you don't have to start over from scratch.

*Interviewee:* Right.

*Interviewer:* That's fantastic. What an exciting time.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Is it gonna be a Master's of Fine Arts?

*Interviewee:* Master's in Music—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* - in violin performance.

*Interviewer:* Cool. Wow. That's impressive, especially on violin. It's a popular instrument.

*Interviewee:* It's competitive.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I played flute. I understand competitive instruments [*chuckle*].

*Interviewee:* Yeah [*cross talk 01:40*].

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I'm not that good [*chuckle*]. I'm always really impressed when I hear about people who play flute and violin and trumpet.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* The things everybody plays. I'm like, "Whoa."

*Interviewee:* Well thanks.

*Interviewer:* [*Inaudible 01:57*] awesome. How long have you been playing?

*Interviewee:* Since I was five, so—

*Interviewer:* Oh, wow.

*Interviewee:* - 17 years.

*Interviewer:* Wow, my goodness.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, pretty much my whole life.

*Interviewer:* Wow. That's incredible. Well, thank you again for meeting me today.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* We're gonna talk about your experiences with writing here at the University of Michigan, and how you've developed as a writer. We'll start with some really general questions about how you see yourself as a writer.

We'll think about the experiences you've had in your courses here, in the courses you've taken that were specifically about writing and other courses as well. Then we'll talk a little bit about from the perspective of someone who's about to graduate and looking back from your freshman year all the way through 'til now. That'll be it.

It definitely won't take more than an hour, more than likely probably less than that. It's just really informal. Nothing real serious or anything—

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* - as much as I'd like to be like Oprah Winfrey.

*Interviewee:* Yeah [chuckle].

*Interviewer:* A super serious interview. My first question is pretty broad. How would you describe yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* In terms of what I like to do or just anything pretty much?

*Interviewer:* Anything.

*Interviewee:* I mean more of a personal writer I guess like journaling. I like to do personal essays probably the most out of any type of writing. Yeah. I haven't taken a science a class, so no—

*Interviewer:* No scientific writing.

*Interviewee:* - scientific writing. Yeah, responsive.

*Interviewer:* Is that primarily—when you saying personal writing, is that primarily for school or is that primarily—

*Interviewee:* Yeah, primarily for school but occasionally just on my own too.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. How would you have described yourself as a writer when you began here at [the University of Michigan]? When you started—I assume you started here as a freshman?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* When you started as a freshman, how would you have described yourself as a writer at that point?

*Interviewee:* Probably the same.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I haven't really taken too many writing classes. The ones I have taken I feel like I—well, it was just the freshman writing required course. I took the one the one a fiction-based writing course.

Everything other than that has been writing related to music like music history. It's all been stuff I'm interested in, which is good. I probably haven't done a ton outside of just essays and responding to prompts and things like nature.

*Interviewer:* As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself as a writer looking forward?

*Interviewee:* I mean I always hope to get more fluent and be able to have a broader vocabulary. Just clarity of writing and what I'm trying to say. I mean in my future I could definitely have grant proposals in my future or definitely just program notes, things. Just being able to be as effective and creative as possible in my writing.

*Interviewer:* As you think about the writing experiences you've had, sounds like in—was it [English course] you took?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* In your upper level writing requirement course or courses. Some people take more than one. What do you think it means to write well?

*Interviewee:* I think to write well you have to be convinced of what you're saying so that it comes through that you're really convicted or know what you're talking about. You should be educated about what you're writing about. Be able to hear a personality in the voice or in the writing. Obviously be able to write correctly with punctuation and grammar and spelling and all that good stuff.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I know you mentioned the music writing course you took. Was that your upper level?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I did [an] upper level musicology course that also counted as my upper level writing. For that, we did blog posts, which was the first time I've ever done that type of writing. I think we did response to articles or readings that we were assigned. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What affect did that course have on you as a writer? What do you feel you really learned as a writer in that course?

*Interviewee:* Well, the blog posts you had to have a different sort of not voice, but it wasn't as formal. It was a different style of writing that I'd never done before. We definitely had to—it was a shorter form, a couple paragraphs or a page or something.

It was interesting to just think about how you have to change your writing for a different audience. You had to be really effective in a short amount of time so you could grab people. Online you're not gonna spend 20 minutes reading a blog post.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think that was interesting to think about and learn about and practice that a little bit in a semester.

*Interviewer:* Do you still make use of what you learned there? Thinking about audience and how to grab your audience. Do you still make use of that now?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think it's definitely a good thing to think about that I hadn't necessarily really done before. My audience was always just a teacher or something. Yeah. I definitely do keep in mind who I'm writing for if I do different kinds of writing now outside of an essay.

*Interviewer:* I know you mentioned earlier things like program notes and that kind of thing. Is that something you do a good bit of now or do you anticipate doing that more in the future?

*Interviewee:* No, probably more in the future. Obviously, I write my own bio and things like that. I've done program notes as an assignment for a class once in college. Then I did it once for my recital in high school. I've only really done it twice writing program notes.

I've actually done a fair amount of press releases because I've done a bit of marketing. I did the Performing Arts Management minor. I've taken some marketing classes. Most of my writing outside of school essays would probably be press releases actually, which is actually a really helpful thing to do. Because I'll probably have to do them for the rest of my life to promote myself.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Are you looking to be a professional violinist? Is that your goal?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. My goal is to play in an orchestra. I wouldn't necessarily have to do too much self-promoting with that. You definitely do a lot of different things as a musician. I'll probably have private students and have to publicize myself as a teacher. Market myself that way and create a website and all that stuff. Freelancing.

*Interviewer:* That's a good bit of writing actually.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* All those kinds of materials. Have your music management courses—you said music management is that right?

*Interviewee:* Performing Arts Management.

*Interviewer:* Performing Arts Management. Have those courses prepared you to promote yourself in those ways?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. I think so.

*Interviewer:* Did they teach you to build a website or talk about—

*Interviewee:* Not necessarily building a website. I'm currently exploring [Wix, a website creator] on my own right now. Luckily, my roommate knows a bit about it. I mean the classes are mostly geared towards theater students right now. The same basic principles apply to all people going into the arts.

I have done many assignments, balancing a budget for a nonprofit. We actually had to create our own nonprofit organization simulation.

*Interviewer:* Oh, wow.

*Interviewee:* I feel like I've gotten a broad base of knowledge for how nonprofits work, which is definitely a really good thing to know. Even if I'm not on the administrative side. With orchestras going bankrupt and everything these days.

*Interviewer:* It's a tough time to be in New York that's for sure.

*Interviewee:* I think it's really important that I be educated about the business side of it too. I think the classes here have actually really helped me with that.

*Interviewer:* Was that required or did you just think that was important and decided to take it?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean the minor I just decided to do on my own. I mean partially as I feel like this will be really important and useful knowledge for me to have. Partially because if I need a fallback plan, I could work for a nonprofit.

*Interviewer:* That's smart.

*Interviewee:* I did a semester internship marketing with UMS [University Musical Society], the organization here. I have some experience. If worst comes to worst and I can't make it as a performer, then that's a fallback.

*Interviewer:* It's always good to have a backup plan.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Always a good idea.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I have a couple of friends who are professional musicians. One of them is like, "If I break my hand—

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* I'm like, "You need to insure those things."

*Interviewee:* Oh my gosh. My biggest nightmare [*cross talk 12:01*]. A lot of people do. I probably should eventually.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. He's actually a professional organist. He can't break a hand or a foot.

*Interviewee:* Right.

*Interviewer:* He's got no [*cross talk 12:11*].

*Interviewee:* [*Cross talk 12:13*] an organist. It's been fun getting—I didn't realize how crazy that instrument is.

*Interviewer:* It's insane.

*Interviewee:* You use all of your limbs all the time.

*Interviewer:* Constantly, all at the same time. I'm not coordinated enough for that.

*Interviewee:* No. It's crazy.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. It's a crazy instrument. He's like, "I can't break anything."

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* He has a teaching certificate as his backup plan.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. No, it's a tricky business to be in.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Sounds like it's a smart idea to get that business—

*Interviewee:* Yeah. A lot of people do actually end up—a lot of people who go to under grad for performance end up doing administrative stuff just because the reality sets in. I'm not giving up yet.

*Interviewer:* No, nor should you. It's good to be smart about it.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* You shouldn't give up for sure. As you think about let's say the last two years, so junior/senior year. What kinds of experiences, both maybe in and outside of the classroom since it sounds like you've had some experiences writing outside of the classroom, have had an effect on your writing?

*Interviewee:* I think just—I mean I've only really been in one academic class per semester in the past two years and none this semester. I haven't had a ton of classes. Between the internship for marketing and I took my upper level writing, that musicology course junior year, and I've taken American culture class. It was a survey of art history but not really. It was more outsider art and stuff.

I guess just the different kinds. Each one of those classes and my internship included have required me to write different kinds of responses. The blog posts, like I mentioned, which were the main source of writing in the class. Then responding to art work and what we think about art in different articles we've read about it. How society views the arts.

More personal responses for the class I took first semester this year and then the press releases. I guess just getting exposed to different kinds of writing in the past two years has probably made the most impact on what I think about when I'm writing.



*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Has that had any effect on your writing process at all? What you actually do when you sit down to write?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean I've never been a huge outliner. That's probably a bad thing.

*Interviewer:* Lots of different ways to do it.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I don't know. I mean I think not so much the preparing part. Just what I think about when I'm writing or what I'm trying to include in my writing I think has probably been the thing that's changed the most or been affected the most. Yeah, just what I'm thinking about when I'm writing and trying to include.

*Interviewer:* If I used the term reflective writing, what does that mean to you?

*Interviewee:* I would think it means reflecting on either an experience that you've had or drawing on knowledge that you've maybe gained from a different area and applying it to something else. I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. Have you recently used reflective writing in your own writing process?

*Interviewee:* I think I'm always trying to pull from different sources of knowledge like the different classes I've taken. That I feel like each class I've taken that involves writing makes me just think about it a little different. Think about writing a little differently or how I write. I think I'm always tryin' to just be more active about that and including that in my writing.

*Interviewer:* What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses, so any kind of peer review, collaboration? Those are the only two things I can think of off the top of my head. I'm sure there are others ways that people work with other writers in their courses.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think recently probably not. It's all been independent responses. I mean when I write press releases I will send them—even for student orgs if we're tryin' to promote something, I'll send it to another person on the executive board and have them look it over. Bounce ideas off that way. In terms of like school assignments probably not since freshman year in my freshman writing course when we actually were required to do peer reviews.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. *[Inaudible 18:18]*. I got a little distracted. I'm sorry.

*Interviewee:* It's *[inaudible 18:21]*.

*Interviewer:* What just happened? Now that you're about to graduate, what advice would you give to college students about writing? What things should they think about as they begin writing papers or other kinds of texts?

*Interviewee:* I mean if you have a choice choose something obviously that you either want to know more about or already do know a fair bit about just to make it more enjoyable. If you don't have that choice, then just try to become as educated as possible. Doing as much research on the topic as possible so you really feel like you can do more than just site facts or something.

Internalize what it is you're writing about, so you can have more of a clear voice and opinion. Be able to defend what you're writing about if that's the type of writing you're doing I guess. I think just not worrying about so much like, "Oh, I'm gonna try to make this really interesting." If you let your own voice come through, it'll probably be more effective that way.

*Interviewer:* That's good advice. Mm-hmm. I know you mentioned you'd been writing a blog for one of your courses and had to do blog posts. I imagine you had to respond to other student's blog posts?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I probably did.

*Interviewer:* It's been a while I'm sure.

*Interviewee:* I think we did. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Have you had any other experiences since you've been here at [University of Michigan] with new media writing? Blogs are one example. Writing websites, making electronic portfolios or digital portfolios.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think the blog was my only experience with that type of writing. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* When you were talking about it earlier, it sounded like that really helped you think more about audience.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* What other effects has that experience writing the blog had on you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I think it did help with feeling more free to just let your own personality shine through a little bit more. You don't have to feel so formal.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* I think if I continued to do more of it I think it would help find my own voice as a writer and the style and personality that my writing would show through. Because I think on a blog you can feel like you can just really be yourself. Not have to worry about necessarily what you're going to be graded on or stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Sounds like that was a really useful experience for you.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* You mentioned you're looking through [Wix, a website creator]. That's just on your own right?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* How is that—I've seen a lot of people use [Wix]. How's that going?

*Interviewee:* I mean I think it's a great free tool to build a website. It's pretty user friendly. You can choose a different template and customize it with your own background pictures, your font, your colors, all that stuff. Add whatever pages you want.

I mean I need new headshots. I can't really make too much headway until I get those done. Getting my recordings and stuff on there. Yeah, it's been fun. I like doing it.

*Interviewer:* It sounds like an interesting process.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* I know you've been uploading some pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools [learning management system]. How has that process been going for you? Have you had any problems with the technology or getting things uploaded or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* Hm-mmm. It's been pretty easy.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Good. As you were uploading those things, how did you choose the pieces you chose to upload?

*Interviewee:* Well, I think there were different guidelines and requirements for each one. That was like—I know this last one was choose something that you feel like represents a lot of what you've learned over your four years. I feel bad because I don't actually have an academic class this semester. I couldn't really

submit an academic piece. I did submit one of the essays I wrote for my grad school applications, which it was—

*Interviewer:* That's a lot writing, the grad school application.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean for music it actually wasn't that bad. I submitted the one that—it was the only school that actually gave you a prompt and had you respond to it instead of just a personal statement and where do you want to go with your career.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* That's why I submitted that one because it wasn't just, "Oh, here's my goals for my career." I think the prompt was if you're handed a plane ticket, where would you go and why. It was very—it was a random thing to be asked on a music application. They wanna get to know you more personally I guess. It was I think two pages or something, not very long. I submitted that one.

*Interviewer:* What about other semesters? It's probably been a while, so I know it's awful of me to ask this. Can you think back to the other semesters when you've chosen pieces? Was it just the pieces you had on hand or the most recent pieces or pieces you were particularly proud of for some reason?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think it was pieces that I just felt I put the most time into and felt the most proud of or that represented me the best as a writer.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. As you were looking back over your old writing, I know there was a point at which we emailed you guys and asked you to upload a piece from your [English course].

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* What was it like looking back over your old writing and uploading some of that for the study? Did it make you think differently about it? Did you have a different perspective on it?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. It was interesting to go back and read it. I think I was actually pleasantly surprised. I was like, "Oh, this wasn't as bad as I thought it would be." Because I was probably doing a lot more writing then than I am now.

I don't think I necessarily gotten better or worse in terms of writing essays. I mean I guess I have gotten better in some ways in terms of how I think about it.

*Interviewer:* What about your non-essay writing? These press releases your write. That kind of thing. Do you feel like that has changed over the course? The

program notes that you wrote in high school versus the ones you wrote for your class.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think in terms of my musical knowledge obviously I've learned so much over the past four years. That's what most of my classes have been. I definitely feel like I could write a more educated and informative, interesting program notes or things on musical topics. Just because I feel I've learned a lot more and know a lot more than I knew in high school.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that's the primary difference in having that extra content knowledge?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think so. Just knowing more and even just having the experiences of playing, learning the new—all the music I've learned in the past four years. Not necessarily just reading about it but playing it.

I've done a lot of playing student compositions or just new music in general which I didn't really do any of in high school. There wasn't really the opportunity for it. Just getting to learn by playing the different kinds of music just informs me also. Just gives me more to talk about.

*Interviewer:* That's great. My last big question is what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? What should we be thinking about? It's a big question.

*Interviewee:* In terms of what we would want to learn as students?

*Interviewer:* Sure.

*Interviewee:* I mean I think sometimes just doing a lot of it is really helpful. I feel like I did in my freshman writing course. It was probably six papers of decent length. I think that—sometimes you complain about it at the time, but it's actually really good for you just to be forced to do it a lot. Things to be thinking about when teaching? That was the question right? Do you want to [cross talk 28:07]?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. What should instructors be thinking about as they're teaching writing to undergraduates? Is there something you wish you had learned or something you wish your teachers had mentioned or you wish you'd had practice with?

*Interviewee:* Hmm. I mean I think getting feedback is always good. I didn't always necessarily get feedback on all the writing that I did. Sometimes you just submit it and get a grade. I think feedback is good.

I actually remember getting a lot feedback from my freshman GSI [Graduate Student Instructor]. That would write questions in the margins or be like why or

because of what. Just that makes you further your thinking process and ask yourself, “Oh, what am I really trying to say here or maybe these aren’t clear.” I think just getting good detailed feedback is always helpful.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. That’s all I can think of right now.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. That’s great. That’s really helpful. Do you have any other comments or questions or things you thought we might talk about but we didn’t?

*Interviewee:* I don’t think so. I think I feel like we covered a lot of different areas.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Well, thank you so much for your time.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. No problem.

[...]

*Interviewer:* It was so nice to meet you.

*Interviewee:* Thank you. You too. No problem.

*Interviewer:* I enjoyed our conversation.

*Interviewee:* Yes. Good luck with the rest of your interviews.

*Interviewer:* Thank you. Have a wonderful afternoon and congratulations on graduation.

*Interviewee:* Thanks. Yeah. Bye.

*Interviewer:* Bye.

*[End of Audio]*