

# What to read and listen to before starting a postgraduate degree in Music

Published by Nao Toyama  
2/07/2024

**MA Music** student Nao gives some helpful suggestions of how to prepare for a postgraduate course in Music.

In this article, I would like to share what and how to prepare for the postgraduate degree in Music—what to read and what to listen to.

## What to read?

Musicology is a discipline which contains various topics and has multiple perspectives; as long as it

is connected to music, it could be a part of “musicology”. However, it is important to know what kind of topics and directions are being studied within musicology.

British musicologist, Nicolas Cook’s book ‘Music: a very short introduction’ gives us a good insight into musicology with his unique humour.

This work encourages us to reflect on the diverse forms of music and the values we attach to them. It explores various genres like classical, jazz, rock, and folk, each with its own cultural context. Cook advocates for a more inclusive approach to understanding music, emphasizing the roles of performers and listeners. The book challenges traditional views of music by examining its personal, social, and cultural significance, offering a framework for deeper appreciation. Overall, it’s a concise and accessible guide to thinking critically about music.

Christopher Small’s masterpiece, ‘*Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*’ gives us an important perspective. Small deals with the concept of music as an act of performance, not a thing. He emphasizes the importance of performance and every single relationship which exists in music-making.

## What to listen to?

As well as musicology, knowledge of art would help you to enhance your ability to contemplate music critically. A podcast “[Art & Ideas](#)” (BBC Radio 4); it covers various range of art-related topics. In my opinion, musicology study is not only necessarily to be about “music” itself. Knowing various topics might give you uncountable opportunities to connect some topics even there come from different context. In addition to this, if you are an international student, getting familiar with British accent by listening the real English conversation via Radio will help you to improve your English listening skills. it will surely help you to understand the lectures and get involved with some discussions.

I hope my recommendation would guide your preparation for the beginning of your postgraduate course. Although these suggestions are not the only useful sources, I can recommend you read and listen to them.

