



YOUR VOYAGE TO SUCCESS: A MUSICIAN'S GUIDE TO CRUISE SHIP OPPORTUNITIES

This ebook is your essential guide to success in the maritime music industry.

- DETERMINE IF A CAREER AT SEA IS RIGHT FOR YOU
- EXPLORE THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER ENSEMBLES IN THE MARITIME MUSIC INDUSTRY
- DISCOVER THE SECRETS TO RECORDING A STANDOUT DEMO THAT WILL GET YOU NOTICED
- LEARN WHAT TO EXPECT ONBOARD
- DISCOVER A WEALTH OF OTHER INVALUABLE TIPS



Your Voyage to Success: A Musician's Guide to Cruise Ship Opportunities

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1. WHO WE ARE

The agency was founded by Darek Mural, who, as a seasoned pianist himself, boasts a wealth of experience performing in various settings, including luxury cruise lines and yachts. With a decade of hands-on experience in the cruise industry, his musical talents and industry insights played a pivotal role in shaping the company's inception.

ADM STARS Entertainment agency began operations in 2013, initially specializing exclusively in river cruises. Our dedication and experience over the past decade have paved the way for us to collaborate with the finest companies offering river cruises. However, our journey has also steered us into the world of popular oceanic cruise companies. Today, we proudly partner with top brands in both river and oceanic cruising, providing musicians with exciting opportunities on these diverse vessels.

2. SETTING SAIL

The passenger ship industry is a vast and dynamic sector within the broader maritime and tourism industries. For musicians seeking employment on these vessels, it represents a unique and thrilling opportunity to combine their passion for music with a global adventure.

This industry truly is enormous, offering a wide spectrum of vessels, from colossal ocean liners to intimate river ships, transporting guests to destinations around the world. It is in a state of constant evolution, driven by the increasing interest in cruise vacations that provide exceptional and all-encompassing experiences.

However, it's crucial to recognize that with the industry's growth, the expectations for musicians have been elevated. Companies now seek musicians who not only sing or play well - which is, of course, undisputed - but also bring new energy and a genuine entertainer spirit to the shipboard experience.

This is why we've decided to provide you with some guidance. We want to ensure you're well-prepared for the evolving recruitment process, understand what makes the perfect demo, and know what to do (or not to do) to increase your chances of securing a job offer. We'll also give you insights into how the entire process works.

With that said, let's explore whether a career at sea is the right fit for you in the next chapter.

3. PURSUING A CAREER AT SEA: IS THIS THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOU?

In this chapter, we'll delve into the world of music careers at sea. We'll explore the various positions that cruise lines are looking to fill and provide you with a glimpse of what to expect in such roles. Whether you're an experienced musician or just starting your journey, understanding the opportunities and conditions onboard is crucial. So, let's set sail and discover if a career on the high seas is the right path for you.

Musicians and musical ensembles in highest demand on ships typically include:

Showband Musicians

(including pianists, bassists, drummers, guitarists, trumpeters, trombonists, and saxophonists, who are also proficient in flute and clarinet): These versatile musicians are the heart of the ship's entertainment, performing in various styles from jazz to rock to support production shows and guest artists. Sight-reading skills are a must for this role, and before joining the ship, you will go through online auditions to assess this ability.

Piano Bar Entertainers:

These pianists perform solo, playing without the use of backing tracks or accompaniments. They create a lively atmosphere in the ship's piano bars, taking requests, singing along, and interacting with guests. Proficiency in English is a must for this position. As one of the select few, it allows for official tips from guests.

Piano Entertainers:

This role can be divided into two types:

- A) The Piano Entertainer position differs from that of a Bar Pianist in that playing with backing tracks is not only permissible but necessary. It involves entertaining people in various settings, such as clubs, where you play in the background to enhance their experience and encourage them to dance. Performances can take on the character of afternoon tea – in such cases, it's best if you play exclusively on the piano, acoustically, perhaps even without singing. Additionally, there are evening sessions like cocktail time, featuring easy-listening music, standards, etc. The aim of the evening sessions is to invite guests to the dance floor and entertain them with more up-tempo music, including well-known international tunes. This position is often in high demand on river cruises.
- B) The next position is commonly known as the Cocktail Pianist or Lounge/Lobby Pianist. This role typically doesn't require playing with backing tracks; solo acoustic piano is usually sufficient. However, depending on the cruise line, singing may or may not be a requirement. A Cocktail Pianist typically provides background music, performing easy-listening pieces for the guests' enjoyment. A Lounge/Lobby Pianist may also be needed, one who sings and presents a diverse repertoire to ensure that guests not only enjoy their time but are also encouraged to dance.

Both of these roles offer flexibility depending on the cruise line's preferences.

Singer Guitarist

This role can be split into two categories. The first involves playing with backing tracks, similar to the piano entertainer position mentioned earlier. The second type focuses on acoustic performances without backing tracks. In the latter case, using loops is allowed, but it depends on the specific cruise line's rules. Both roles require good entertainer skills and engagement with guests. Repertoire Pop/Rock mainly.

Contemporary Duo

This is a duo performing with backing tracks. It can be a setup where one person plays an instrument while the other sings, but increasingly, cruise lines are paying more attention to duos that both play and sing. Such duos have a distinct advantage over those where only one person sings or plays. The repertoire must be highly diverse, ranging from old well-known hits from the '60s to contemporary tunes. And when it comes to the keyboard player, they've got to really play, not just put on a show ... Depending on the cruise line, the keyboardist might also take the spotlight solo on the piano, maybe during a classy afternoon tea.

Mainstream Duo

This setup doesn't need any fancy backing tracks. It's got two singers and two instrumentalists, and that's what makes this duo shine. The diversity in their repertoire is also a standout feature, much like in the case of the Pop/Rock Duo.

Classical Ensemble

Depending on the lineup, different combinations of classical ensembles are sought after, with the most common configurations being a trio or a string quartet consisting of instruments such as the violin and viola. Offers for duets are also prevalent, featuring combinations like classical guitar and violin or violin and piano. Some cruise lines require solo violinists and cellists, who can join a band or show cast. At times, versatility is essential, requiring musicians to not only play classical pieces but also delve into pop/rock styles based on well-known music. A broad and diversified repertoire is advantageous, enhancing collaboration opportunities and, consequently, improving the chances of securing work. These ensembles often find themselves performing in venues such as lobbies or main lounges. Follow our social media channels to stay updated on opportunities as they arise.

Female/Male Vocalists

As ADM STARS, we typically do not deal with production singers, but occasionally, we are in search of vocalists who can join a ready-made cover band on a cruise ship. Such vocalists should possess a very broad repertoire, and a wide vocal range, and be prepared to undergo an online audition, which usually takes place directly through the company. If selected, you will be requested to perform live (video) renditions of specific songs. Upon qualifying, you become a part of the band, starting with rehearsals and eventually performing on the cruise ship.

Rock Band Musicians

This position is for professional musicians forming the aforementioned band. Musicians in this role must be professionals capable of adapting to various musical genres. While reading sheet music is not required, having a broad repertoire is essential. Reading skills are necessary but not at the high level expected of orchestra musicians.

Cover Bands

It is a group of musicians that specializes in performing cover versions of popular songs, rather than creating original music. Typically, cruise ships seek out 4 to 5-member bands with a diverse repertoire. This lineup often includes bass, drums, guitar, piano, vocals, and occasionally a saxophonist for larger ensembles. Having two lead vocals or backing vocals is a huge advantage and may be key in the hiring decision. The primary goal of a cover band is to entertain the audience, encourage dancing, and create a lively atmosphere. These bands are versatile, catering to a wide range of musical tastes, making them a staple for onboard entertainment.

Country Bands

This ensemble, similar to a cover band, consists of 4 to 5 members, but sometimes a trio is sufficient. The repertoire should primarily focus on classic and contemporary country styles, but not exclusively limit itself to this genre. A significant bonus is when more than one person in the band contributes vocally. Demos should ideally showcase multiple vocalists, even if it's just backing vocals. This adds dynamism and enhances the overall performance, making the band even more appealing to cruise ship audiences.

Jazz bands

A musical ensemble primarily focused on jazz music. Certainly, the musicians must be professionals who embody the essence of jazz through their performance. The repertoire typically consists of jazz compositions, ranging from sophisticated pieces to well-known jazz standards that will be recognizable to guests. Additionally, there is a demand for jazz bands that can also play pop/rock repertoire on certain cruise lines. The most commonly sought-after lineups are trios and quartets. Instruments often include piano, double bass, drums, guitar, and lead vocals creating a harmonious blend that captures the authentic spirit of jazz.

Important note:

Usually, musicians need to bring their own instruments (orchestra musicians). Pianists and vocalists aren't obligated to bring their own equipment.

The ensemble needs mentioned above may vary depending on demand. Stay updated with us to see who we are currently seeking.

4. EXPLORE THE CAPTIVATING WORLD OF WORKING AS A MUSICIAN AT SEA. SUCCESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE JOB ON A PASSENGER SHIP.

Embark on a musical journey like no other as you discover the unique and exciting realm of working on a passenger ship. Not only is it an opportunity to earn a substantial income, but it's a chance to **save** as well, given that the essentials – accommodation, meals, and medical care – are all provided on board. Your spending and savings depend entirely on you, granting you financial freedom.

Imagine getting paid to do what you love – **playing music** – while also having the chance to see the world for free. Some ships even offer complimentary excursions for crew members during their off-duty hours, a fantastic way to delve deeper into and explore foreign countries. As a musician, you can enjoy the perks of this lifestyle and truly immerse yourself in the music you adore.

Moreover, think about the **countless people you'll meet** from around the globe. On a ship, you'll encounter individuals of various nationalities among both the crew and the guests. It's an opportunity to learn about their cultures, forge lifelong friendships, and, if English isn't your native language, **enhance your skills by conversing with native speakers**. The ship provides an unparalleled language-learning environment.

Working on a ship is undoubtedly a unique experience. Joining a ship's crew is not just a job; it's a remarkable adventure waiting to unfold.

5. LEARN THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL DEMO



Immediate catchiness.

What makes it so? Well, it's a blend of **good sound quality, visuals, upbeat music**, and, importantly, a live recording. In today's era of possibilities, you must prove that you handle live performances just as brilliantly as your studio recordings. Your recording need not be studio-produced, as home conditions are acceptable, but remember to maintain quality and professionalism.

No recording in slippers, and definitely no ashtray with a cigarette on your desk ;-) Ensure a pleasant, distraction-free background and good lighting. **Remember, you're applying for a job**, and though artists have their own rules, always keep that in mind.

No music stands or stools.

Engaging with the audience becomes incredibly challenging when your face is buried in a music stand. During live performances, the discreet use of music stands and sheet music is acceptable. Do not sit on a stool while recording the video unless you are part of a classical ensemble. When it comes to promotional videos aimed at potential clients, making a strong first impression is crucial.

Keep your demo under 5 minutes maximum.

Make it captivating and entertaining from the very beginning. Avoid too many slow songs, especially at the start. Some demos go on for 3 minutes with only ballads, and we strongly advise against it. Show yourself as an entertainer, not someone putting people to sleep.

Don't play entire songs

The best demos often come in the form of a **medley**, a mix of various songs and musical styles. Showcase as much **diversity** as possible within a few minutes. If you play multiple instruments – flaunt them! If you're in a duo and sing only backup vocals – showcase it!

Stick to your purpose

If applying for a cover band position, don't play solely Latin music in your demo, or else you'll be perceived as a Latin band, not a cover band. If you're aiming for a singer-pianist role, demonstrate your vocal abilities. If you have plenty of live performance recordings that you believe are suitable, great! Combine all your videos into one (maximum 10 minutes) and upload it to YouTube, your website, or another accessible platform.

Don't recommend sending links via social media platforms (Instagram or Facebook)

It's not the best way to showcase your talent to cruise lines. Ensure your portfolio is **easily accessible online**, making it convenient for potential employers to discover your work.

Important Note:

Never send your demo as email attachments. Always use links. Don't send photos, CVs, or song lists until requested. You don't need to say anything or introduce yourself at the beginning of the video – let your music do the talking. Do not put your contact information on the video if you want to be represented by the agency.

6. HOW TO APPLY TO US: APPLICATION, AUDITIONS, AND QUALIFICATION INTERVIEWS

Submit Your Application

Start your journey by submitting your application through our website:

<https://admstars.com/apply-now/>

Provide essential details such as your name, nationality, age, the musical position you're applying for, ship experience, and your proficiency in English or sheet music reading (if you're an orchestra musician). Don't forget to attach a link to your demo.

Await Our Response

After submitting your application, await our response. If you haven't heard from us within two weeks, it means either you didn't meet our expectations, or there's no suitable offer for you. We typically respond within a maximum of 3 days, though during periods of high submissions, it may take up to 2 weeks. We thoroughly review each application, and sometimes, even if the demo isn't exactly what we envisioned, but we see significant potential, we'll reach out to provide guidance.

Next Steps - CV and Additional Information

If you receive a message from us, we'll likely request your CV (to get to know you better), a promo picture, song list (at least 200 songs, please note that this requirement does not apply to solo orchestra musicians.) and our internal form to add you to our database for future reference. In further conversations, we may introduce you to cruise lines, arrange online auditions, discuss conditions, and more.

Orchestra Audition with us

Initially, you'll receive detailed instructions and a comprehensive overview of what to expect during your interview from us. We'll coordinate a specific date and time for our meeting. When the designated time arrives, we will send you the music sheets, and ensure you have them ready for the audition. You'll be responsible for recording the materials yourself (offline) and promptly returning them to us (by sending a link to your recording).

Following the conclusion of your audition, we'll carefully evaluate your performance and consider potential opportunities for you. It's essential to keep us informed of any changes to your schedule. Rest assured, once a suitable job becomes available, we'll notify you promptly.

Success Doesn't Guarantee Immediate Placement

A successful application doesn't guarantee immediate job placement. It signifies that we see potential in you and, with your commitment, will make every effort to present you in the best light to cruise lines for your dream job. While some musicians may secure an immediate position, in other instances, you might need to wait for job openings. Additionally, cruise lines may express interest in getting acquainted with potential candidates. In such cases, we organize online meetings to facilitate introductions.

Language Proficiency is Essential

It's crucial to emphasize that a communicative level of English proficiency is necessary. You don't have to be a native speaker, but effective communication is vital for your daily life on the ship and, more importantly, for your safety.

Job Offer and Onboarding Process - Document requirements

Upon receiving a job offer from us and accepting it, we initiate the onboarding process. We'll review the documents you already possess and assist you in obtaining any necessary ones. The primary and most crucial document is a valid passport. You may also need a C1D visa (maritime crew visa). We'll provide instructions on obtaining visas, STCW certificates, medical certifications, background checks and more. The preparatory process for joining a ship may not be the quickest or easiest, but with our guidance, it becomes a seamless journey.

Long-Term Validity of Documents

Importantly, the newly obtained documents are valid for several years, and some can be utilized for other cruise lines in the future. This ensures a lasting benefit from the efforts put into the documentation process.

Important Note:

It's crucial for us to maintain clear and open communication. Please remember to inform us about any exclusive contracts you may have with other agencies. If we are in the process of introducing you to cruise lines like "X" or "Y," and you are aware of prior representation by another agency, kindly let us know.

Respecting each other's time is paramount. The time invested in reviewing your demo is valuable, and being transparent about your current affiliations ensures that we can efficiently match opportunities to your profile. If you have been presented by us to a cruise line and have subsequently entered into a new contract or agreement, please inform us promptly. This helps us avoid the complication of double submissions and ensures a smooth and respectful process for everyone involved.

The music industry is a close-knit community, and honesty is the foundation of successful partnerships. If there are any changes or developments in your professional engagements, let us know. We value the integrity of our relationship and appreciate your openness. Even when challenges arise, we strive to address them with transparency, and we expect the same level of communication from you.

Let's work together to create a harmonious and fruitful collaboration. Your trust and openness contribute significantly to the success of our shared musical endeavors.

7. LIFE AT SEA - SOME INFORMATION AND TIPS

Embarking on a journey to live and work on a passenger ship is an exciting and unique experience. Here are some general information and tips to help you prepare for life at sea:

Contract Length

Most contracts typically range from 4 to 6 months in duration. However, in some cases, as a resident musician, you may even receive offers for shorter durations, such as a month. This ultimately depends on the cruise line and various factors like emergencies, among others.

Flights and Hotel

Flights and hotels are provided by the cruise line for both inbound and outbound travel. In some cases, for river ships, you may need to purchase flights independently, but these expenses are reimbursed.

Pack Wisely

Keep in mind that space on a ship is limited. Pack all essential musical equipment, clothing, and items that will make your stay comfortable. Check the itinerary and the ship's requirements. Most likely, you need to be prepared for casual, elegant, and formal nights, so make sure you have all those clothes ready. Some cruise lines may require a uniform for you, such as a shirt, but this usually only applies to orchestra musicians, and it is provided by the ship onboard. To move around public areas of the ship, you must wear a name tag at all times.

Safety First

Certainly, musicians may be assigned specific safety-related responsibilities while working onboard a cruise ship. One notable task involves their participation in the compulsory safety drill conducted at the commencement of each cruise, lasting approximately 30 minutes. This drill is obligatory for all crew members and guests on board. Familiarize yourself with safety procedures and the ship's layout. Pay attention during safety drills, and always adhere to safety protocols. Your well-being is a top priority.

Communication Skills

Effective communication is crucial. English is often the primary language, so ensure you have a good command of it. Clear communication fosters positive interactions with both crew members and guests.

Performance Schedule and Working Hours

Typically, 3 or 4 sets are performed, though this can vary depending on factors such as the ship's schedule and the preferences of your immediate supervisor. The maximum working hours usually total 5, with short breaks between sets. However, on many cruise lines, 3-4 hour nights are standard.

Additional Responsibilities Beyond Music Performance

Apart from the safety drills mentioned earlier, which are mandatory for all, you may also be asked to assist during embarkation or disembarkation, although this depends on individual cruise lines. Additionally, you may have the opportunity to earn extra tips by helping out various departments. It's entirely up to you whether you want to do this or not.

Cabin Etiquette

Depending on your musical position, you may have a solo cabin or share one with another crew member. It is most likely that your roommate will be another musician. Respect the shared living space. Shared cabins feature bunk beds, a bathroom with a shower, a desk, and storage space including closets and cabinets for both you and your roommate. Keep your cabin tidy, prioritize hygiene, be mindful of noise levels, and maintain a harmonious environment with your cabinmates. It's essential to note that under no circumstances are crew members allowed in guest cabins – this is a universal rule across all cruise companies. Violation of this policy often results in termination of employment, so always keep this in mind! Smoking in the cabin is strictly prohibited. There are designated smoking areas on the ship.

Financial Matters

As a rough estimate, house band musicians usually earn between \$2200 and \$2800 per month, while duo, trio, and party band musicians typically make between \$2400 and \$3000 per month. Soloists can expect to earn anywhere from \$3000 to \$4000 per month or sometimes even more.

Singer Pianists on river ships can expect to earn €2200-€2700. You may be employed under a Swiss-style contract or work as an independent musician.

Your salary may be paid in cash onboard, and some ships have their own ATMs available. Alternatively, payment can be made via direct deposit to your designated account. The taxation process varies depending on your nationality. It is advisable to consult with an accountant from your own country for personalized guidance.

Access Guidelines for Musicians Onboard

Musicians have full access to all ship lounges and areas, provided they are dressed appropriately. There may be areas where crew members are restricted, such as spas or pools, but this depends on the specific cruise line. The same applies to dining in guest restaurants; some ships extend this privilege to crew members.

Eating Arrangements Onboard

Most often, you will have your meals in a crew mess, served buffet-style. Depending on the cruise line, you may also have the privilege to eat in a guest area.

Onboard Wi-Fi Access

There is Wi-Fi available onboard, accessible in most areas of the ship. However, it is not complimentary; you'll need to purchase an internet plan.

Behavioral Expectations and Consequences

Engaging in drunkenness, drug use, fighting, stealing, harassment, or intimate relations with a guest can result in immediate contract termination

COVID Vaccination Policies and Other Vaccination Requirements

As of today, in 2024, while many cruise lines have relaxed their COVID-19 vaccination requirements, some still mandate them, often including a booster shot before commencing work. However, certain river lines have already waived this rule. Details regarding other required vaccinations, such as yellow fever, MMR, and others, will be provided during the onboarding process.

Family on Board

Unfortunately, you cannot permanently bring your children or spouse with you to work due to limited cabin space and ship policies. However, you can invite your family for a cruise with a special crew discount. This privilege typically applies to crew members who have completed more than one contract or a specified period, as outlined in the company's policy, which you will become familiar with once onboard.

Crew Relationships

Build positive relationships with fellow crew members. Creating a supportive network makes the experience more enjoyable and helps you navigate challenges together.

Work-Life Balance

Maintain a healthy work-life balance. The nature of ship life can be demanding, so find ways to relax during your downtime. Take advantage of onboard facilities and activities.

Explore the Ports

Seize the opportunity to explore the ports you visit. Immerse yourself in different cultures, try local cuisine, and take in the sights. It's a unique aspect of life on a passenger ship.

Health and Well-being

Prioritize your health by using onboard fitness facilities, consuming balanced meals, and ensuring adequate rest. Remember, free medical care is provided onboard, but it's crucial to take preventive measures.

Cultural Sensitivity

Be culturally sensitive and open-minded. You'll be working and living with people from various backgrounds, so embrace diversity and foster a welcoming atmosphere.

Learn and Grow

Use this experience as an opportunity for personal and professional growth. Learn from the challenges, acquire new skills, and make the most of the unique environment you find yourself in.

Adaptability is Key

Life on a passenger ship is dynamic and ever-changing. Cultivate adaptability to different schedules, living conditions, and the diverse mix of people you'll encounter.

8. ADDITIONAL TIP - EFFECTIVE PROBLEM RESOLUTION

In the vibrant and dynamic environment of life at sea, addressing challenges promptly is crucial. If you encounter any issues onboard, consider these steps for effective problem resolution:

Initiate Onboard Resolution

Endeavor to resolve any challenges directly on the ship. Some situations are beyond the agency's control, and the onboard team is often best equipped to address them. Engage in open communication with your immediate supervisor or relevant personnel.

Speak to the Onboard Supervisor

Communicate with your onboard supervisor. Discussing concerns at the initial stage can often lead to quick and efficient solutions. Open dialogue fosters a positive work environment and can prevent minor issues from escalating.

Contact the Agency

DO NOT HESITATE TO REACH OUT TO US!

We are here to support you! Whether it's a contractual matter or a work-related concern, our team will work collaboratively with you to find the best course of action.



We hope this eBook has provided you with valuable information and insights. Drawing from our extensive experience in the entertainment industry and working on passenger ships, we aimed to equip you with practical guidance. We trust that this will make the recruitment process smoother, help you receive job offers more quickly, and allow you to embark on the wonderful adventure of working as a musician on passenger ships. Wishing you the best of luck on your journey!

Sincerely,

The ADM STARS Entertainment Team

