

How to Audition by Hugh Partridge, Artistic Director

In order to take a successful audition, you must understand what your adjudicators are looking for. Whether it's a Youth Orchestra or a professional audition, the requirements are the same. You are judged on your intonation, rhythm and tempo, sound, dynamics and nuance. You must be prepared. You must make the required material yours. Yes, memorize it! (Playing by memory is not required at most auditions. But, if you want to be successful, memorize your audition.)

How to practice: If you don't have a metronome, get one. This is required to successfully prepare for an audition. Start by practicing the required material with your metronome set so slowly that you cannot make a mistake. Make certain that each note is in tune and that all the rhythms are precise. Then speed up a little each day, just a little at a time and don't forget to use that metronome.

Scales: Scales are fundamental and their importance cannot be stressed enough! Use the scales to develop your intonation, rhythm and tone production. But, the most important thing is to practice scales everyday, not just before the audition.

Skill Sheet: We have replaced the "Solo" with "Skill Sheets". This is so that the adjudicators will hear everyone play the same material. The emphasis of Skill Sheet One is lyrical ability, Skill Sheet Two, technical. Do not distort the rhythm! Being flamboyant is not good or "exciting" music making, especially in an audition. The adjudicator must know where every beat is. It must be in tune, have precise rhythms, with dynamics and nuance as the music calls for.

Excerpts: Excerpts of music you may play in the ensemble you are auditioning for are usually required and available before you audition. Listen to a recording of the composition, if possible. Understand what the composer is trying to convey emotionally. Make certain each note is in tune and that the rhythms line up with the beat and are accurate, use that metronome!

Sight-reading: Do a little sight-reading at the end of every practice session. Pick something easy and use the metronome to check yourself. One of the best ways to improve your sight-reading is to play a little easy chamber music with your friends at least once a week.

Practice taking your audition: Once you feel you have learned the material, you need to play your audition for as many people as possible. Play your audition for members of your family, your friends, your dog, cat, even play it to the trees outside. Just as in the real audition, do not stop! Play a scale, your solo, the excerpts and eight measures of sight-reading without stopping to repeat what didn't go well. Make a mental note of what you need to improve. Ask for helpful suggestions from all who will listen to your mock audition. Then go work on the spots that need improvement.

A successful audition: is when you have put in the time to do your very best. On any given day there is always the possibility that someone may play a "better" audition. After all, you are a human being and none of us are always perfect. Be prepared and do the best you can on the day of your audition, learn from the experience and use that knowledge to improve your playing. Don't worry about your placement or your score; don't make excuses. There is always another day, another audition. And isn't the most important thing making music anyway?