

### **Tips for a Successful Audition**

1. LISTEN! Find a video of the excerpt. Actually, find several! Get the sound of your part AND the other parts in your ear. Can you hear the rest of the orchestra while your part is going by, or during rests? WATCH the orchestra and your instrument in particular to see if you can gather any more information about how the excerpt should be played. I cannot emphasize this first step more, and it is up to you to find a performance that works--sometimes a professional orchestra MAY be too fast, a school orchestra may be too slow, or the reverse. You could always check with your teacher, and remember that ultimately your tempo should be 'in the ballpark' and not necessarily 100% the same as the recordings you are referencing.
2. Backward plan your practice. Whenever the recording is due, be sure to allow for several days to a week for the actual recording. By a week or two prior to that, you should be able to perform the excerpt nearly perfectly (or at least to YOUR best.). There may come a time when it will NOT improve anymore, but you won't know that if you're cramming. When it does plateau, your job would be to maintain that level and clean up small details. Sometimes, if it's very challenging, you may have to practice how to fake a particular section, remembering that keeping a steady tempo would be more important than nailing every note perfectly or worse--stopping and stumbling.
3. When you've arrived at the starting point of your practice plan, be sure to start SLOWLY and PATIENTLY. It may not be perfect at first. You may not even be able to play the excerpt through. That's ok. Your goal is to fix small things and use play-throughs only as a means of discovering where you're still having issues, and then work on them. Playing it through without actually fixing things (through little exercises, drills, working with a tuner or metronome) is like painting the same wall of a room over again before moving on to the next one.
4. As you near the time where you may start to actually record, allow yourself time to actually LISTEN BACK to some practice recordings. You'll be amazed what you'll hear when you're not playing. Try taking the instrument out, and after a brief warm-up, play the excerpt all the way through. Do not judge it--just see where it is when you play it 'cold.' Go back later and fix what didn't work.
5. I cannot emphasize the benefits of slow, patient, careful practice strongly enough. If you allow yourself enough time to do this, you will practice without anxiety and mindfully. Just as a dancer must train their bodies to develop the muscle memory for choreography (and like you've probably done practicing a TikTok dance move!), the musician must develop the muscle memory for performing music.

### **What do I Listen For? Solos AND Excerpt...**

TONE--is it full and rich when called for? Is it transparent when called for? Does the passage call for different sound qualities? Can the student demonstrate this on their instrument?

RHYTHM/ TEMPO--are the rhythms performed accurately, and can I tell that the student can feel a steady pulse? Can I hear that the student is mentally subdividing dotted rhythms and not merely approximating them? Is the tempo acceptable, neither too slow or too fast?

ARTICULATION--are the notes the appropriate length? There are different types of 'short' or 'staccato' notes--can you demonstrate an understanding of how they should be performed? Are legato notes connected? Do certain notes need to be released and not sustained? All of those questions must be explored.

INTONATION--this one is a life-long quest. It's also the easiest thing for a judge to hear and subtract points for (well, a judge who is a good musician--which I always certainly hire). Practice slowly, use a tuner (sparingly! Only on key notes, not EVERY SINGLE ONE. You'll go mad.) and be picky.

PATHOS/EMOTION--often referred to as 'expression'....clues are often given in the music, certainly on recordings...but can you play the MOOD of the piece? This is a very high-level and subjective piece of the audition. I rarely question the CHOICE someone makes, but rather I look for SOMETHING to be expressed. Start there. SAY SOMETHING WITH YOUR MUSIC! Make appropriately beautiful phrases.

Enjoy your preparation, and I look forward to hearing your audition!!

Mr. Woodbridge