

AUDITION TIPS for students preparing for College auditions by Katherine Borst Jones, with help from my colleagues

Your preparation has already begun, as you have been practicing and performing for many years. Your selection of schools to audition for should come from an extensive study of information about the teachers, programs, school and community where the school is located. Attend career days at various schools as well as master classes and performances of the teachers with whom you wish to study. If you take pre-audition lessons with teachers, realize that this lesson auditions both of you!

Prepare appropriate materials based on information obtained from the school's website and promotional materials. Find out if an accompanist required and/or provided? Do you need to bring additional copies of the music? Do your homework about the school and the teachers you will audition for. Choose an audition date that fits your schedule and allows you appropriate preparation time. If a regularly scheduled date doesn't work for you, request a special date. Learn before you go about financial obligations and opportunities. Make sure you adhere to all deadlines.

Choose repertoire with your teacher that shows you off at your best. Love the pieces you play and prepare them to the best of your ability over the course of months. Find out background information about the composer, and the style and form of the piece. Practice performing for family and friends. Always play from an original score, never a photocopy. Prepare performance strategies that include relaxation, warm-up, mental rehearsal, visualization and concentration techniques.

Check and recheck the schedule of the day and your audition time. Reschedule if you are sick!! Dress professionally in business casual attire with comfortable shoes. Practice in this attire to make sure it is appropriate.

If you must drive more than an hour to the audition place, consider arriving the night before. Travel only with those people who are supportive and helpful. If you arrive the night before, take a tour of the facilities so you may visualize and mentally prepare for your audition. On the day of the audition, find the audition room and warm-up rooms so you can properly plan your personal schedule. Bring along a water bottle and some snacks and a hand warmer.

Arrive early to the audition room, warmed-up ready to perform. Be patient. Unfortunately auditions don't always run on time. Practice strategies for the waiting time, concentration and relaxation exercises. Enter the room with confidence. Remember that your audition begins the moment you are first seen. Have your instruments ready with all appropriate music, reeds and other equipment needed. Do not bring your cell phone or many bags into the room. Do bring three copies of the list of repertoire you have prepared, presented in the order that you would prefer.

Walk into the room when invited, with a smile on your face and a positive attitude. Be courteous. Introduce yourself to the committee. Don't offer any excuses ahead of time.

Be prepared with an order of material that you wish to present. The professor asks, "What would you like to play?" Be prepared with a quick answer listing your pieces. "I would like to start with the first movement of the Bach *Sonata in Eb*". Play your strongest and most favorite piece first. Only offer to play what is totally prepared. While difficulty of material is measured, it is the quality of what you play that counts. Be prepared to play the entire piece, but do not be surprised if you are stopped before you finish. Listeners want to hear a variety of styles and techniques, so we may sample some of each piece. We may also ask you to change something, or work with you. Respond to instructions the best you can. Ask a question if you don't understand the instructions.

Be prepared to play scales. You may be asked to sight-read, you may be asked to match pitches and other singing activities.

Once in the room, take a minute before you start to play. Mentally hear what you are about to play. Make sure you are ready. You may adjust the music stand. Don't apologize if something does not go the way you expected. Breathe well and take your time. We want to hear you at your best!

Consider memorizing at least the opening of your first piece so you open with confidence. First impressions are lasting. The judges will be writing down impressions and information about your audition. Maintain your focus and think about the music, not what the judges are thinking or writing.

After you have finished playing, you may ask a few questions. Make sure the question isn't something already answered in published materials. Know about the school and the teacher before the audition. As you leave the room, thank the committee and make sure you take all of your belongings.

Remember that the judges want you to do well and are ready to listen to you. Audition at more than two schools so you will have a choice. Send thank you notes to the primary professor. Good luck. Enjoy your preparation!

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