

## Entrance Audition Tips

Audition season is rapidly approaching! You have been practicing diligently for months, you have selected the schools to which you want to apply, your plane tickets have been purchased, and your accommodations have been booked. Now all you have to do is play!

As you zero in on the big day (days!), I wanted to offer you a few tips from the audition panel's perspective, which I hope you will find helpful.

Please know, first of all, that we all want you to do your best and we are rooting for you. We are not harsh judges waiting for you to make a mistake; rather, we are open-minded (open-eared?!) listeners, hoping to meet joyful, thoughtful, talented, well-prepared musicians, who are eager to share their expressive gifts with us and who might fit in well to our musical communities. So, as you continue to prepare for this experience, please try to remember this and to access your love for the music in every note that you play. We will get it and be thrilled if you let yourself do it!

You have prepared a large amount of repertoire, but at most schools, you will only have 15 minutes to show your stuff. Because time is of the essence, you want to be certain to be as organized and efficient as possible during the audition, so that you can maximize your presentation. This means having your music organized in such a way that you can access the pieces requested very quickly. Most panels will ask you to choose your first selection, and then they will choose the subsequent repertoire from your list, so do be ready with the piece that feels best for you as an opener and then be ready to play anything else from your list in any order. I suggest to my students that they do mock auditions prior to their audition trips, opening with the piece of their choice, and then asking their listeners to choose selections from their repertoire lists in random order thereafter. It can feel unnatural to have to switch gears quickly, so just knowing your pieces well will not necessarily make you feel comfortable; you need to have practiced jumping between sections and stopping and starting, as this will most likely happen at the audition, given the time constraints.

Please do be fully prepared with entire works, if indeed this is required on the official web site of the school you are visiting. The panel might ask for anything you say you have prepared, and of course it makes a better impression if you really do have it all ready to go!

If possible, be tuned and warmed up before entering the audition room.

We all appreciate it if you greet us when you enter the room, but you do not want to waste any of your precious playing time by chattering unnecessarily. Be polite and open, answer any questions the panel might have for you, but get down to business as quickly and as calmly and confidently as possible. This includes avoiding the diffident apology if you make a mistake while you play; it is not necessary as of course the panel knows the repertoire and its pitfalls. There is no need to highlight such things, and it can seriously interrupt your momentum!

If your repertoire includes any non-traditional works, please do bring multiple copies to the audition, so that the panel can follow along. If you are unsure what falls under that category, err on the side of caution and bring extra copies.

Bring extra strings, just in case.

If you are visiting a school in a very different climate from where you live, you want to be sure your instrument and you have enough time to acclimate to the new environment, so again, arrive early to the audition site if at all possible. If you are coming from a moist warm climate and are going to a cold climate where heat is blasting, having a humidification system in your case or having a dampit in your viola until right before you play can be very helpful in keeping your instrument happy.

While you do not need to don formal concert attire for an audition, you do want to present yourself professionally, so your choice of clothing is important. You want to look professional, and you also want to be comfortable, able to move freely and to play without discomfort from your wardrobe. For women, it is a good idea to avoid wearing excessively high heels to an audition. High heels have a detrimental effect on your balance and prevent you from feeling well-grounded.

And finally, while it is always important to take good care of yourself, auditions and the travel associated with them can be very stressful, so it is especially important to up your self-care game as you go through this process. This means doing your best to eat well (bring snacks and water with you to the audition in case you are kept waiting), sleep well, stretch, and exercise gently in addition to practicing.

Wishing you all the best as you begin this very exciting process to determine the venue for the next stage in your education!

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