

Audition, Competition, and Chair Seating Preparation Tips

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Excerpt/Audition Material Preparation

- Strong mentally and physically
 - Like an athlete, we must train and maintain a healthy lifestyle
 - Diet
 - Exercise
- Mindful, effective, efficient, slow practice
 - Changing rhythms, meters
 - Taking frequent breaks during practice sessions
- Establish a routine
 - Physical warm-up
 - Big muscles - body
 - Small muscles - embouchure, hands, etc
 - Long tones, scales, etudes, excerpts, pieces
- Create a week by week timeline in advance
 - How many weeks do you have until the audition
 - Make checkpoints to ensure you learn material thoroughly by the audition date
- Uncontrollable variables
 - Audition/Competition time
 - Practice at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, night)
 - Room
 - Dry room, live room, boomy, small, large
 - Distractions
 - Loud radio, TV, people talking
 - Practice with people stopping you (sometimes the judges ask you to proceed to another excerpt before you reach the end)
 - Order of excerpts
 - Practice them in different orders (choose from a hat, ask someone to pick from the list)
- Practice in front of different audiences
 - Family, friends, colleagues (same and different instruments)
- Build endurance

- Practice your audition several times in a row to build endurance
 - You will be amazed how much easier one single run is for you and your focus

The 3 Cs

➤ Composer

- Time period - stylistic traits (trills, etc.)
- Country
 - Where is the composer from
 - This will influence the style, articulations, and dynamics
- Style of the composer
 - Each composer writes in a different way
 - Bring out the composer's voice
 - Make it different from other composers

➤ Context

- Where does the excerpt fall in the piece?
 - Is it a transition
 - Is it a focal point
 - Is it in one movement out of a multi-movement work
- Who is playing with you?
 - What is the texture? (thick, thin, transparent)
 - Do you have dynamic freedom, or need to project
- What is the harmony content?

➤ Consistency

- Establish YOUR sound
 - This is what will help set you apart from others
 - Display your personality
- Stay consistent to the writing and to yourself
- Clarity of articulation, dynamics, technique, ideas, and character
- Play to your strengths

Extreme Practice Techniques

- To emulate a fast heart rate, practice after running around the house or block then playing the audition
- Set an alarm to wake up in the middle of the night and play through the audition (only if you won't disturb others)

- Some people feel sick to their stomachs before an audition. Don't try anything new right before an audition. Some people will choose to fast or go on a liquid diet in order to avoid getting sick. You are the only one who knows what's comfortable. You can experiment with foods that give you energy, but do not make you sick
- To emulate cold hands, you can place your hands in a freezer for a few seconds, or hold an ice pack, then play the audition material

At Auditions

- Get to the venue early
 - If you can, see if you are able to check out the audition room ahead of time
 - If there is piano accompaniment, see if you can get a rehearsal with the performance instrument
- Experiment with when to eat a snack or meal before an audition to have energy, but not disturb your body
- Hydrate at least a week before the audition date. If you wait until the day of, you may still experience dry mouth, or other symptoms of not hydrating enough
- In the warm-up room, you may hear many other people also warming up and practicing their audition material.
 - Try not to listen to others - we cannot control who shows up to an audition
 - You have prepared and practiced hard, trust your practice
 - If you play your audition material, play it slowly, so you make no mistakes.
 - Personally, I have found that if I play through the material at tempo and make a mistake, chances are that I will focus on those mishaps during the performance. Thus, I only play through the material slowly right before an audition
- Wear professional clothing, but make sure you still feel comfortable and can breathe easily
 - Avoid wearing heels if you are not used to them
 - Practice in the clothes you plan to wear to the audition/competition
- Use your established warm-up routine
 - Long tones, scales, etc.
- Bring a jacket, gloves, etc. in case the venue is cold

Judge's Perspective

- They also listen for the 3 Cs (composer, context, consistency)
- Informed interpretation
- Musical Maturity
- Character
- Clarity
- Communication
- Recovery
 - We are all human, when a mishap occurs
 - Do you stay focused
 - Do you maintain the musical character
- Appropriate repertoire (if given the choice)
 - Choose pieces that display your strengths
- Take more time between excerpts
 - Most of the time the judges are writing or mentally comparing
 - Take time to prepare for the next excerpt and think of the new style
 - It may feel like a long time for you, but for many judges it's only a few seconds

Remember

- Try not to preoccupy yourself with what you have no control over
 - Sometimes you won't win the competition or audition or the chair you want. Sometimes the judges hear something in someone else. Sometimes we have a great day, sometimes we have a bad day, sometimes we play our absolute best and the results are not to our liking.
 - The journey is what is important
 - The time, effort, and dedication you put in, have improved you as a musician and a person
 - There will always be another competition, another audition, another seating test
- Have good sportsmanship

- The music world is quite small. Chances are you know, or will meet the people at a competition, or audition, again
- Accept commentary
 - Every audition and competition is a chance to grow
- This is a snapshot of a moment in your career and life. It is not a reflection of you as a complete person
- If someone compliments your playing, say thank you. Be gracious. Even if you don't feel like accepting the compliment, remember, the audience hears things differently than you do, as a performer.
- Just like practicing your instrument, the more auditions and competitions that you do, you will know yourself in greater detail to avoid pitfalls and to perform to your highest expectations