

Hints for a Successful College Music Audition

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Private Study

Most successful applicants to college music programs have studied music privately. Although performing in high school and community ensembles is advantageous, there is usually not sufficient individual instruction available to move students to their highest potential. If you have not studied privately you are strongly encouraged to obtain some private lessons with a successful teacher before you audition. Some schools offer a complimentary lesson with the specific applied instructor either before and/or after the audition.

The Audition

The audition is the single most important factor in deciding which students will be accepted. It is also how the music faculty decide who they will recommend for talent scholarships. Here are several things you can do to improve your chances for a successful college audition.

- Select and develop audition repertoire as far as possible in advance of your audition. Your junior year of high school is not too soon.
- Be sure to observe the audition requirements. Most requirements are similar but some have very specific criteria and format.
- Choose repertoire that demonstrates your ability to perform in a variety of styles and tempos. Fast movements that demonstrate your technical abilities as well as slow movements that demonstrate good tone quality, intonation, and vibrato (if appropriate) would be a good combination.
- Record yourself and critique your performance. Have a knowledgeable musician/teacher also help with this evaluation process.
- Choose repertoire that is appropriate to your level of expertise. An easier piece played well will be more successful than a more difficult piece played poorly.
- Practice performing mock auditions for your music teacher(s) and your friends.
- Get recordings of the repertoire you will be performing. Recordings of most repertoire can be found online at websites such as Amazon, iTunes, YouTube, Spotify, etc. Listen to each recording many times while you follow your music.

Try to perform along with the recording. All of these things will help you to “internalize” the music until it feels comfortable to you.

- Choose something to begin your audition with which you feel comfortable. You will probably be most nervous at the beginning of your audition so begin with your most confident work
- Some music schools have requirements beyond just solo works. Be prepared to play several scales and perhaps some sight reading material.
- Submit all application materials as far in advance of your audition as possible. Observe all deadlines carefully. For example, The College of Saint Rose deadline for Talent Awards is February 1 and is absolutely firm.
- Practice a sight-reading routine so you will be able to sight-read effectively at your audition.

Be sure to schedule your audition as far in advance as possible by the modes indicated by the individual colleges. Remember, most colleges require both an acceptance into the music unit as well as the college /university prerequisites.

Tips for Your Audition Day

- If you live a long distance from try to arrive the day before your audition so you can get a good night’s sleep.
- **Most schools have a general meeting for both parents and students the day of the audition.** Plan on getting to the location at least one hour before this meeting so you have plenty of time to warm-up and get used to the surroundings.
- Don’t “over practice” in the days immediately preceding your audition. You want your “chops” to be at their strongest.
- Remember that your audition begins the moment you enter the audition room, not just when you begin performing your audition repertoire. Dress professionally, speak confidently and respectfully, smile and make eye contact with the adjudicators.
- Don’t worry about minor mistakes during the audition. The adjudicators are not expecting a perfect performance-they are mainly interested in your future potential and a good match with the school.
- You probably won’t get to perform your audition repertoire completely from the beginning to the end. The adjudicators may ask you to play only certain sections of your music.

- **General Music Audition Requirements for Most Colleges**

An audition with members of the Music Department faculty is required for everyone who wishes to major in Music. For possible examples of appropriate audition repertoire, please consult the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) manual, Levels V-VI or the equivalent manual from another state music education association.

The ability to read music notation is required for all instrumentalists and vocalists at accredited schools. All students may be asked to demonstrate their sight-reading abilities during their audition.

String and Wind Instrumentalists should prepare at least one solo, a minimum of five-seven minutes in length, with at least two contrasting sections from the standard repertoire for their primary instrument.

Guitarists and **bassists** are encouraged to audition on acoustic instruments due to the required repertoire.

Percussionists should demonstrate skills on at least three of the following percussion units: snare drum, timpani, keyboard percussion, multiple percussion, or drum set. The ability to read keyboard percussion is mandatory at many institutions

Pianists are expected to demonstrate knowledge of scale and arpeggio routines, and perform at least two contrasting solos from the standard repertoire.

Organists will perform a solo organ selection, play a hymn, and demonstrate manual and pedal technique.

Vocalists should be prepared to present two solos from memory. One solo should be in English and the second in another language. Most schools provide accompanists for the audition should a student not be able to bring his/her own.