

AUDITION TIPS for students preparing for college auditions

Katherine Borst Jones, professor

Your preparation has already begun — you have been practicing and performing for years!

SCHOOL SELECTION

Your selection of potential schools should come from extensive study of the music program and faculty, university and surrounding community. Attend university and music school visit days as well as master classes, performances of the teachers with whom you wish to study and student ensembles. Often performances are available via livestream or on the school's YouTube channel. If you take pre-audition lessons with teachers, realize that this lesson auditions both of you! Send a thank you note!

UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS

Study all application instructions carefully and follow them step-by-step. Often, application to the university is separate from application the music school. Learn before you go about financial obligations and opportunities. **Make sure you adhere to all deadlines.**

SCHEDULE YOUR AUDITION

Choose an audition date that fits your schedule and provides appropriate preparation time. If a regularly scheduled date doesn't work for you, request a special date. If providing a video audition is an option, consider carefully the pros and cons. If you are across the country, that might be the best choice. But a live audition provides the opportunity to interact with faculty. Weigh your options.

AUDITION PREPARATION

Prepare appropriate materials based on information from the school's website and promotional materials. Find out if an accompanist is required and/or provided. Do you need to bring additional copies of the music?

Choose repertoire with your teacher that displays you at your best. Love the pieces you play and prepare them over the course of months. Learn the about the composer, the style and form of the piece. Practice performing for family and friends. Play from an original score, never a photocopy. Prepare performance strategies that include relaxation, warm-up, mental rehearsal, visualization and concentration techniques. Consider memorizing at least the opening of your first piece so you open your audition with confidence.

AUDITION DAY

Check and recheck the schedule of the day and your audition time. Reschedule if you are sick!!

Dress professionally in business casual attire and wear comfortable shoes. Practice in this attire to make sure it is appropriate.

If you must drive more than an hour to the audition location, 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 audition day, find the audition room and warm-up rooms so you can properly plan your personal schedule. Bring a water bottle, some snacks and a hand warmer.

Arrive early to the audition room, warmed-up and ready to perform. Instruments should be assembled before you enter the room.

Be patient. Unfortunately auditions don't always run on time. Practice strategies for the waiting time include concentration and relaxation exercises. Enter the room with confidence. Remember that your audition begins the moment you are first seen. Have your instrument(s) ready with all appropriate music, reeds and other equipment needed. Do not bring your cell phone or many bags into the room. Do bring a copy of the list of repertoire you have prepared, presented in the order that you would prefer, but also be prepared to perform in a different order, if requested.

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

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 favorite piece first. Only offer to play what is totally prepared. While the difficulty of material is measured, it is the quality of how 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 they may sample some of each piece. They 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, match pitches and other singing activities.

We want to hear you at your best! First impressions are lasting. The judges will be writing 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, you should 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 after each audition. **Good luck. Enjoy your preparation!**

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PREPARATION • PRESENTATION • POTENTIAL

Prepare to be a music student — start years in advance

Take lessons. Attend live concerts. Listen to recordings.

If not your primary instruments, consider at least a few years of piano lessons and take some voice lessons.

Study music theory — take the theory course your school offers, or find other resources. Ask your music teacher(s).

Participate in recitals, contests, honor ensembles, chamber experiences, and more.

Prepare your audition

- Listen to numerous versions of your audition pieces.
- Know what is required:
 - Reference the Audition Requirements of the school you are auditioning for. Probably on their website.
 - How many pieces, scales, sight-reading, memorization, piano accompaniment?
- Choice of material: Be sure to “like” the selections you will play and that they reflect various styles.

Strategies:

- Record your music. Practice playing straight through and starting at different places. You may be asked to skip portions.
- Practice mindfully.
- Use mental rehearsal to visualize the situation and place. Hear the piece the way you want to perform it.
- Practice relaxation/concentration exercises.
- Practice mental skills; be your own confident self coach
- Know your present state of mind and find exercises to get to your desired state of mind.
- Take care of your body and mind; sleep and eat well.

Presentation

- You are both auditioning and being auditioned.
- Your attitude, dress and stance send a message of professionalism — be comfortable but professional.
- Original music only — no photocopies.

- Find the audition and practice rooms ahead of time. Plan your warm-up.
- Make sure your instruments are good in working order and out of the case. Be prepared to begin as soon as you enter the room.
- Start with your favorite piece.

- Be confident with your body signals:
 - Pay attention to your posture and comfort level
 - Be your own positive self-coach (inner talk positive.) Yes, you are nervous; because you care and are excited.

- Acknowledge and thank the collaborative pianist provided for your audition.
- Have informed questions. Show interest.
- Send a thank you note to the primary faculty member after your audition.

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