

Getting Ready for an Audition

Dr. Michael Stewart

Like most young musicians, we will most likely have the need to take an audition for inclusion or seating within a group. This can be very nerve-racking, especially if we are unsure of our abilities or if we get nervous when speaking or performing in front of others. We have all felt these feelings, but here are some ideas that can help make your next audition a more successful one.

When you go in for your audition, make absolutely sure that you have all of the music needed. You are solely responsible for this. It is never the judge's fault (and rarely that of your band director) if you do not. Prepare all of the music to the best of your ability. Hoping that the judge will not select certain parts of the song seems to almost guarantee that those are indeed the sections they ask you to play. Always bring your own neat of the music copy with your personal markings on it. Occasionally, you will not be allowed to use it, but be prepared to help yourself as much as possible. Also, practice some with a "blank" copy of the music, so if this happens, you will still be prepared. Lastly, do not bring any music that is not needed for the audition. If you happen to drop

your music or something gets misplaced, you will certainly get more nervous trying to find the correct pages.

If at all possible, arrive well before your scheduled audition

time. This gives you extra time to register or sign in and to find the rooms in which you are to warm up and perform. Arriving "just in time" will create more tension and nervousness for you. Once you've arrived, warm up for at least ten minutes before you play and then rest for at least five minutes before you play. Mentally going through

each song is also a great way to prepare. When you go into the audition room, ask to play a few notes before you start the actual audition material. As you start to play your selections, always empty your spit valves before each piece. You may really know a song well, but if your sound is "gurgling," it

will be very distracting to you and the judge.

An audition is your chance to make a good impression. While the music is the most important part of this, the way you behave

and carry yourself also plays a role. Greet the judge when you enter the room and let him know who you are. Stand tall and act (even if it really is just acting!) like you are confident in what you are about to do. It is important to dress appropriately. That doesn't always mean wearing a coat and tie or dress, but casual nice

clothes are the norm. Shorts and gym shoes, tattered pants (even "pre-ripped") and t-shirts are rarely the best choice. You want to be seen as positive, so don't complain about your day, being unprepared, or not knowing what was expected. These are, again, all your responsibility.

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Many young people don't realize how much they can be affected by what they do just before auditioning. Getting a good night's rest is particularly helpful, especially if you have an early performance time. Drinking lots of water the day of your audition is great. This will help keep "dry mouth" from hurting your performance. Also, brush your teeth after your last meal (or snack) before you play to prevent any stickiness inside your mouth or on your lips. Chocolate and pop/soda drinks are both very bad for your chops. It's important to be physically alert when playing, and doing some simple stretching exercises can help wake and loosen you up. Avoid running around before your audition. Being short of breath makes it very difficult to play.

Lastly, it is vital that your instrument is in good working condition, especially the valves. The judge can only go by what he hears, and faulty valves will make things very hard on you. If you have more than one, make sure you bring the right instrument and mouthpiece. Don't use your marching band horn just because you didn't want to carry the extra weight to school. Try to make it look nice by at least wiping off any dirt and water marks from the bell. If you have time, take your horn to a repairman to remove any dents. Do not complain about your instrument. Like the music, the judge has no control over the condition of your horn. It's up to you to have it working.

Dr. Michael Stewart is a trumpeter, composer, and arranger in the Chicago area. In addition to private teaching, he leads a high school jazz ensemble, is an active big band lead trumpeter, and directs his own group, the Deep Blue Big Band. He is also the founder of StewMuse Publications, which produces arrangements and original works for brass solos and ensembles, and TrumpetFish Publications, an on-line site that provides free sheet music downloads and lessons for younger and beginning trumpeters. He may be contacted at lamb95stew@wideopenwest.com and by visiting <http://www.stewmuse.com>.