

Anchorage Youth Symphony Check List

Below you will find a detailed list of what you can expect, a timeline, helpful hints and a check off list of items you will need.

1 TO 6 MONTHS BEFORE AUDITION DATE:

- ___ Remember: the earlier you start to work on an audition the better the audition will be.
- ___ Find out the date of the audition and coordinate that date with your schedule: can you do it?
- ___ Sign up as early as possible to assure yourself of a time that is convenient to you
- ___ Write the date and time on paper and tack the paper up where you will see it (refrigerator door, etc.). Enter the date in your pocket calendar
- ___ Practice general material (scales and arpeggios) that are inevitably on the auditions
- ___ Consult with your teacher well in advance and make them aware of the upcoming audition. Ask for their help.
- ___ Find out if an accompanist is required and/or provided. Make arrangements if needed.
- ___ Find out if memorization is required. Even if it is not, try to memorize as much of the music as possible
- ___ Do not assume that you will do well simply because you do well in school or on previous auditions.

PRACTICING THE REPERTOIRE

- ___ There are two elements to auditioning: the mental and the physical. Are you thinking about the repertoire, your playing, and your attitude as much as you are physically practicing it?
- ___ Find out the specific repertoire for the audition. If you are unclear about the repertoire, then ask questions: no one I know thinks that there is anything called a "stupid question" - rather, it is stupid not to ask a question.
- ___ Practice all of the specific repertoire.
- ___ Choosing your repertoire: most auditions have works of your own choosing. Choose a work with which you are comfortable and that you play well. Do you really love the piece?

___ Be flexible. For example: if the requirement is to play the "F major scale" at a certain tempo, practice it not only at that tempo, but also faster and slower, using different bowings/articulations; if you play a transposing instrument, practice both in concert pitch and in the pitch of your instrument.

___ If possible, listen to professional recordings of the repertoire. This will give you a good idea of style, tempo, and technique. Recordings are available commercially or perhaps through your local library.

___ In addition to your Orchestra/Band teacher and/or private teacher, ask anyone that you think can help you: they will tell you if they don't feel qualified or have time. Most will feel flattered that you asked.

___ As you get closer to the audition, practice all of the material for the audition at once, so you are used to playing it in any order, can work on your endurance, and so on.

___ If appropriate for your instrument/situation, practice standing up - most auditions are given that way.

___ A good technique is to record yourself. Often this will help you to deal with nerves: you are your own worse critic.

___ As you come closer to the audition, you may want to play the audition for colleagues, teachers, or parents. These are good things to do, to get you used to playing in front of people. The people you play for need not be musicians.

THE DAY OF THE AUDITION

___ If the audition is in a distant city arrive with enough time to get from the airport to the place of audition with plenty of time to spare. As you know, planes are often late. You may consider arriving a day early.

___ Do nothing special on that day. Get up at the same time, do your chores, errands, and so on as if you did not have an audition.

___ Do rest well the night before - don't sleep in, but don't stay up either.

___ Do not practice any more or less than you usually do on that day

___ Do not make any changes in your repertoire: changing this fingering or that bowing will not help you, and will upset your concentration.

___ In addition to thinking about the audition, also think about what you will do afterward no matter if you play well or otherwise (life goes on!).

AT THE AUDITION

___ Unless otherwise stated, wear neat, comfortable clothes. For women, a dress, or a nice blouse with a skirt or slacks; for men, slacks and a nice, button down shirt. No tennis shoes, jeans, or

tee-shirts!

___ Arrive early enough so that you can warm up, but not so early that you will tire yourself out by warming up too much, or so late that you feel rushed and "cold". Remember to give yourself enough time to sign in.

___ Work on your attitude as much as your music: have fun! Remember that you play music because you like to and because you love music. So, love to play music - even at an audition!

___ Be kind to other auditioners; they are just as nervous as you are. Do not show off.

___ Generally stay away from other auditioners - even friends. If another instrumentalist tries to play a "head trip" on you, politely but firmly walk away, and move yourself to another corner of the building. Don't allow others to show off to you.

___ Bring extra copies of music for the judges. Do not ask for the use of a copying machine, even if one is available.

___ Get in the habit of keeping all of your audition music in one place so you don't have to worry about it.

___ Remember: the judges at your audition have a job to do. They are not out "to get you". They simply want to listen to you doing your best under the circumstances. Most of the time they are friendly, but

don't assume that they are your friend. Treat them with the respect they deserve.

___ There may be times of silences during an audition. Do not read anything into it-it may be that the judges are simply getting themselves organized.

___ The judges may not (and often do not) listen to your whole repertoire. Do not read anything into it - they have heard enough to judge your playing

___ Do not ask special privileges from the judges: they are trying to be as fair as possible.

___ Be prepared to answer questions from the judges.

___ Often the judges will record an audition for their records. Do not be alarmed by this.

___ Do not hesitate to ask questions of the judges if something is not clear - unless this is prohibited by the audition committee. Do not try to "chat" with the judges - keep your questions brief and to the point.

TAPED AUDITIONS

Taping can be a nervous experience: the pressure to do well on tape is often greater than in a live audition. The microphone can be brutally honest; every tiny mistake and mechanical sound that may be missed in a concert hall will most likely be picked up and amplified. Trumpet players may have valve noise problems, flutists key noise, string players have "scratchy" sounds. Try to minimize the mechanical sounds through your practice or by visiting a good repair shop, or decide to go for a good clear take and make peace with the mechanical sounds.

___ Assume the following formula: one hour of set-up, taping, and editing for one minute of music. This is a time honored rule of thumb for studio work; your taping may take less time. 10 minutes of music =10 hours of work

___ Follow all of the suggestions given above for a live audition.

___ Double check the time that you are scheduled to tape.

___ Memorize as much of the music as possible.

___ Before you actually tape your repertoire, practice with a tape recorder at home. Listen for your pitch, timing, breathing, bowing, and tone quality (if the tape machine is of sufficient quality).

___ If there are tempo changes in the piece or pieces, check the metronomic markings at home and notate them. Take a metronome to the recording session (where you'll no doubt be speeding because of nerves) and check that you are starting the piece at the tempo you decided upon.

___ Photocopy your music and tape it together so there are no unnecessary page turns.

___ Bring these things to the taping session:

___ 2 copies of music (one for yourself, one for a producer/engineer, if you are using one)

___ a metronome

___ extra set of strings, reeds, valve oil, etc.

___ mutes as needed

___ pencils

___ During the taping (and in your preparations) assume that you have only one "take"; starting new "takes" saps your endurance. (Of course, you have many chances for a take, but if you assume that you do not you will be more efficient)

___ Once you have finished your taping you may have to edit the tape or choose which "take" you will keep. Using a copy of music will help you greatly - mark "take" numbers that you want to keep in the music.

DEALING WITH REJECTION

____ Judges look for many things: good intonation may be most important to one judge while good rhythm is most important to another. You will go crazy trying to tailor your playing to what you think the judges want. Be honest to yourself and the music - simply play as well as you can and prepare well.

____ There is not a musician alive who has not lost a significant number of auditions.

____ As much as it may seem, a rejection is not a judgment of your value as a human nor of your musical talent. We all have bad days. Perhaps the judges were looking for another type of player. Sometimes the reason may be as simple as that there can only be so many players in certain sections.

____ Try to figure out what you did or did not do in your preparations and change for the future if needed.

____ Be persistent. The most successful individuals in life are those that pick themselves up after failure, often surpassing their earlier goals.