



Audition Advice

BEFORE THE AUDITION

- **Start early.** Waiting until the last minute is a good recipe for a very rough experience. A little preparation each day goes a long way - break it into manageable chunks. Today: chromatic scale. Tomorrow: first excerpt. The week after: something else. Steady, consistent work beats a last-minute cram session every time. It is better to practice 10 minutes a day for 6 days rather than do a 60-minute session once a week.
- **Preparation is the antidote to nerves.** The single biggest source of audition anxiety is not feeling ready. The more thoroughly you know the material (correct tempos, styles, articulations, notes, and rhythms) the calmer you'll feel. The goal is to practice until you literally cannot play it wrong.
- **Use your resources.** Don't know what a musical term means? Google it. Not sure how an excerpt is supposed to sound? Look it up on YouTube or Spotify. Need to check your tuning or tempo? There's an app for that. Unsure about your scales? Plenty of free resources online. There's no excuse for going in underprepared when so much help is right at your fingertips. Give yourself every advantage. If you fail to prepare, be prepared to fail.
- **Know your scales.** Work on all of them, including the chromatic scale. While most auditions only require major scales, knowing your minor scales as well is a smart investment. Memorize them. Don't just "kinda know" them. And then practice them until you can't play them wrong any more, because your muscle memory is assisting you in the process.
- **Arrive early and warmed up.** Check that your instrument and reeds/equipment are in working order before you walk in. And leave your case outside the audition room.
- **Record yourself while you practice.** You'll be amazed (and sometimes horrified) by what you hear. Recording forces you to listen objectively and catch issues you might miss in the moment (rushing, flat long tones, clipped note durations, etc.) Make it a regular part of your preparation.

DURING THE AUDITION

- **Dress the part.** It sounds shallow, but how you look genuinely affects how listeners perceive your playing. Dress sloppily and they'll subconsciously pick out your mistakes. Dress professionally and you will feel more confident, and that confidence will show. You don't need a suit or a fancy dress. Just look like you take this seriously. Flip flops and a shabby t-shirt are not the vibe.
- **Aim your instrument thoughtfully.** If you play a directional instrument (trumpet, trombone, etc.), don't point it directly at the judges. Aim slightly to the side. If you play a non-directional instrument, give some thought to how you are going to stand/sit for your audition.
- **Keep going.** If you make a mistake, do not stop, do not ask "Can I start over?" - just recover and keep moving. Judges are often listening just as closely to how you handle mistakes as to the notes themselves. A clean recovery tells them a lot about your musicianship.
- **No apologies, no excuses.** Don't continually apologise or call attention to anything that went wrong. It is entirely possible that the audition panel didn't even notice.

- **Nail the tempo.** Use a metronome in your practice. Don't slow down through hard passages or rush through easy ones. A steady, controlled tempo, even at a slightly slower pace, is far more impressive than a shaky one at the "correct" speed.
- **Bring your musicianship.** Don't just play the notes. Bring dynamics, articulation, style, and feeling. A "vanilla" performance with no interpretive choices is forgettable. If you're asked to prepare your own interpretation, prepare something. **Anything.** Even a simple, tasteful approach like the one below is infinitely better than playing through it like a robot.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the first movement of 'Le Roi d'ys, Overture' by Lalo. The score is written on three staves of music. Above the first staff, there is a circled letter 'A' and the title '1 Le Roi d'ys, Overture - Lalo'. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text: 'Craft an interpretation of this excerpt that represents your most mature musicianship, including choices such as tempo, articulations, dynamics, phrasing, etc.' The score is heavily annotated with handwritten notes and markings. These include: 'President' and 'win to 42' written vertically on the left; 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and 'more grace' written below the first staff; 'HERE!' written below the second staff; 'correct' written below the second and third staves; 'P' (piano) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte) written below the third staff; 'almost staccato' written above the end of the first staff; 'push' written below the first staff; and 'rit.' (ritardando) written below the second staff. There are also various slurs, accents, and other performance markings throughout the score.

- **Mind your rests.** In general, rests should be observed at their full written duration without altering the tempo. If a section has a long rest and you're unsure how the judges want you to handle it, it's perfectly fine to ask before you begin.
- **Hold your notes.** Pay close attention to note durations, especially at the ends of phrases. If you have a dotted half note, the judges expect to hear three full beats, not two and a half, not *almost* three. Three beats. No more, no less.
- **Take a breath before you begin.** Before you start playing, take a moment to visualize the mood, style, and character of the excerpt. A brief pause to gather yourself also gives you a chance to breathe intentionally, which can genuinely lower anxiety and help you play more freely.
- **Make eye contact with the panel.** A quick, confident look at the judges before you begin communicates poise and readiness. You don't need to stare them down, just acknowledge them. It's a small thing that makes a real impression.

AFTER THE AUDITION

- **Breathe.** This is not life or death. You may take many auditions over the course of your career, and each one, regardless of the outcome, is a chance to grow. Nerves are completely normal and expected. We know. It's okay. Seriously.
- **We're not looking for perfection.** We're looking for players with potential: people who are good now and will keep getting better. Mistakes and rough spots can be forgiven if we hear talent, drive, and a genuine willingness to work. Show us that, and you've done your job.
- **Reflect on it.** No matter how your audition goes, take a few minutes afterward to honestly assess what went well and what you'd do differently. Jot it down. That self-awareness is what separates musicians who improve quickly from those who plateau and never improve.



- 1 CHROMATIC SCALE** - Starting on any preferred pitch, perform a **two-octave** chromatic scale (**one** octave for non-majors); articulated on the way up, and slurred on the way down.
- 2 SCALES** - Play at least **four** scales (**two** for non-majors) with arpeggios (any major and/or minor scales are acceptable). **All** scales should be at least **two octaves**, articulated on the way up, and slurred on the way down (including the arpeggio). Announce each scale before performing it.
- 3 INTERPRETATION** - Create an **interpretation** of the excerpt below that represents your most mature musicianship, including choices such as tempo, articulations, dynamics, phrasing, etc.

Symphonic Dances, Mvmt. I - Sergei Rachmanninoff youtu.be/V3uWZFJ6EOI?t=210

- 4 EXCERPTS** - Play any **three** of the following four excerpts (non-majors may play two of the excerpts). Those who wish to be considered for a **principal/1st chair** position should play **all** of the excerpts.

Aegean Festival Overture - Andreas Makris youtu.be/4Fic_iogy58?t=351

(♩ = c. 84)



Ensemble Auditions, FALL 2026 - Saxophone

Symphony in B-flat, Mvmt. II - Paul Hindemith

youtu.be/GpgXXcAcNQ4?t=400

Andante grazioso (♩ = c 56)

Musical score for Saxophone, Symphony in B-flat, Mvmt. II by Paul Hindemith. The score consists of four staves of music in 2/2 time. It features various dynamics including *mf*, *p*, and *mp*, and includes slurs, accents, and triplets.

Sea Songs - Ralph Vaughan Williams

youtu.be/S8qoOMyg5_0?t=65

Allegro (♩ = 124 - 132)

Musical score for Saxophone, Sea Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The score consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time. It features a dynamic of *pp* and includes slurs and accents.

Postcard - Frank Ticheli

youtu.be/oMt7E_aA0Is?t=99

Presto (♩ = c 160+)

Musical score for Saxophone, Postcard by Frank Ticheli. The score consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. It features a dynamic of *mp* and includes slurs, accents, and a final dynamic of *f*.