

# Tips for Taking an Audition

Prepared for the KMS Band

## **Get good sleep/rest the week of the audition!**

It's important to get a good night's sleep the night before the audition. However, to be truly rested, consider going to bed at a reasonable hour 3-5 days before your audition so your body has time to get fully rested. A rested body is in peak physical condition to perform at its best!

## **The food you eat can affect your performance!**

Sugar and caffeine stimulates the nervous system, and though they can temporarily make you feel more awake, they can also make you feel much nervous in an audition. To ensure that your body is properly fueled for your performance, follow these simple tips:

- Avoid foods high in sugar and corn syrups. Soda, candy, and cereal all have high levels of refined sugars and can add to your performance jitters.
- Avoid all caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant and overloads the nervous system. Naturally, it will make you feel more nervous in your audition.
- Eat a wholesome breakfast with whole foods such as eggs, wheat toast, and milk. Eat a banana with breakfast to help with nerves. Bananas have natural beta-blocking qualities and have been proven to lower performance anxiety.

Consider eating well 3-5 days in advance of your audition. Caffeine and processed sugar can stay in your body for several days at a time, and though you may not feel the effects, they can still affect your performance. Fuel your body with quality food so that it is ready for a great audition!

## **Maintain your instrument before your audition**

In addition to having a body that is properly rested and fueled, your instrument needs to be in tip-top shape! Follow these tips to make sure your instrument is ready for action!

- Brass Players
  - Oil your valves and grease your slides a few days before your audition. Repeat the oiling if your valves are still moving slow the day before the audition.
  - Use your polishing cloth or an old white t-shirt to carefully shine your instrument. When your instrument is shiny it resonates better because the lacquer on the outside of your instrument is designed to resonate for improved tone quality. It also serves as a self-esteem boost because you will feel great about your clean instrument!
- Woodwind Players
  - Make sure you have several good working reeds in your reed case. Start selecting your favorite reeds a week before the audition and save them! Don't wear them out practicing days before the audition or waste them in band class (this is the one time it's ok to play on less than your best reed in

- band). Make sure you know on the day of your audition which reed is your first, second, and third choice reeds. It's also ok to use two different reeds for your etudes if you feel like you need a different reed for a different etude.
- o Reed players should never use a brand new reed on the day of an audition. A good reed should have 3-7 days of use. Anything older than 3 weeks is too old for an audition!

## **Don't over-practice the night before the audition!**

Playing a musical instrument is just like a sport. The muscles in your embouchure need time to rest the day before a big performance. Don't over-practice the night before the audition. Here's an analogy for your consideration: *If you were running a marathon tomorrow, would you do 2 hours of sprints the night before?*

Here are some guidelines for pre-audition practice:

- 2 weeks before the audition – This is when you should be doing your heaviest practicing. The skills you set now are what will stick with you through your audition. Take time to work out difficult passages and work slowly and methodically fix errors. Don't just play through music!
- 1 week before the audition – Continue practicing and fixing errors but start doing more run-throughs so that you are confident with your ability to play even if you make an error in your audition. Don't let errors bog you down or stop you.
- 3 days prior to the audition – Focus on full passage run-throughs and fix any small details
- The night before the audition – Practice no more than 20 minutes on this night. Do some long tones and fundamental exercise to keep your embouchure flexible. You can do a little bit of work on the music, but take it easy. Be cautious with full tempo run-throughs, you don't want to create any "new mistakes."
- The morning of the audition – Do a short 10 minute fundamental warm-up (long tones, lip slurs, harmonics, etc.) at home before leaving for the audition. This will guarantee your embouchure will be more flexible at the actual audition.

If you over-practice the night before the audition, you may fatigue your embouchure and find that you have more endurance, response, and tone problems the next day. Take it easy the night before. You want your embouchure to be in peak condition!

## **Tips for the audition day**

- Don't warm-up too much in the warm-up area. Many students make the mistake of over-practicing in the warm-up room and then they have fatigue and tone problems in their audition. If you already warmed-up at home before the audition then you should only need to play 3-5 minutes in the warm-up room to be ready.
- Don't be fooled by the "warm-up room phenomenon." The "warm-up room phenomenon" is the strange phenomenon where when you go to the warm-up

room you will be able to hear every other person who plays your instrument. They will all seem to be very good and they will all seem to be playing very fast. Trust me when I say that they are not as good as you think they are, it's just that the room is noisy and you might be feeling nervous so you hear the other players as better than they actually are. Stay strong!

- Reed players need to monitor the soaking of their reeds. Don't let your reed get too dry or too wet while waiting for your turn to play.
- Don't bring your cell phone into the audition. Leave it in your case on silent! A ringing or vibrating cell phone can negatively impact your audition.
- During your audition, don't face the bell of your instrument at the judges. Always face diagonally to the side at about a 45-degree angle. The sound that comes directly from your instrument is much harsher when it is heard directly.
- Adjust your chair and stand for your height, don't just use it the way it was left from the previous player. There is time to adjust the chair and stand!
- Don't talk in the audition. If you have a problem, raise your hand and the monitor will address your concerns. You don't want the judges to hear your voice. It could reveal your identity and you may be disqualified for talking.
- You may not use a metronome during your performance. However, if you would like to use a metronome to check your tempo before you start, make sure the metronome is on silent, turn it on and use the light or visual to help you get the tempo and then turn the metronome off. If the metronome makes sound you could risk being disqualified. Be careful when using your metronome.
- Brass players don't forget to empty your water before you play!
- You can play a test note before every selection as long as the test note is the first note of whatever you are playing. Use those test notes to your advantage, they can show off your great sound and potentially gain you more points!

## **Still feeling nervous?**

Guess what? Everyone is nervous! Performance anxiety (nervousness) is a natural part of the human experience. Whether it's a performance, a big game, or a job interview, you will always be dealing with some element of nerves. Stay strong and remember that everyone is going through the same thing, no matter how tough they may look!

To help you get better at overcoming nerves, here are some thoughts for your consideration. The best remedy for nerves is preparation. Most people get extra nervous when they feel like they haven't done enough to prepare for an event. Help battle nerves by being so well prepared you are ready for anything! Have you ever had a *playing test or academic test that you didn't prepare enough for, and you were more nervous than normal?* Usually this is because deep down you knew you should have prepared harder!

Bring a bottle of water with you to the audition. Take a small sip of water (don't drink too much or you'll have to go to the bathroom) just before you start playing. The water gives you time to collect your thoughts and it refreshes your body. This is common practice for people when taking a job interview!

Play everything 5% slower than you think you should. When you are nervous you are prone to playing too fast. Intentionally slow down all your tempos before you play by a small amount so that you are comfortable during your audition.

Don't let small mistakes bother you. It's not about "if" you make a mistake, but more like "when" you make a mistake. There will always be something you wish you had done better. As a professional musician, I have never had a 100% flawless performance. There was always something I wish had gone better. Sometimes it was something small like a dynamic or articulation. Other times it was something big like playing a wrong note! Don't make a big deal when you make a mistake. Just keep playing and recover! Judges value recovery and often times will reward you for a good recovery.

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Everyone is just as nervous as you, probably more than you! Remember that this process is about the growth you have shown as an individual and a musician. Whether you feel like you are well-prepared or not, there is something you can learn about your own performance and preparation that can help you become better in the future, and the ultimate goal is not whether or not you make the cut, but what you learned about yourself through the process.

Practice regularly, prepare thoroughly, and take care of your mind, body, and instrument and you will have a great audition!

# *Repetition is the Key to Practice*

## *Practice Makes Permanent*

*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then,  
is not an act, but a habit.*

*- Aristotle*

**EVERY DAY YOU DON'T PRACTICE YOU  
LOSE TWO DAYS OF PROGRESS.**

*Some people dream of success, others  
wake up and work hard at it.*

*Happiness does not come from doing easy work but from the  
afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of a  
difficult task that demanded our best.*

**When you're not practicing,  
someone else is...**