



THE ART OF AUDITIONING

A Practical Guide To Preparing And Taking Auditions

by

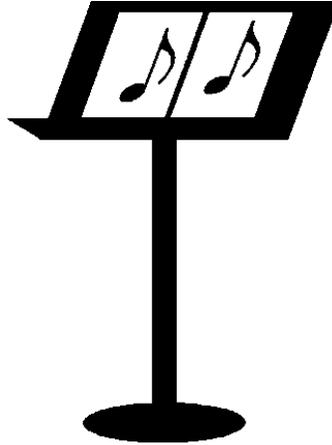
Joseph Glymph

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CONTENTS

WHAT IS AN AUDITION?	1
SELECTING OPENINGS YOU WILL AUDITION FOR	1
PRELIMINARY AUDITION THOUGHTS	2
ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE	2
AUDITION PREPARATION GUIDE	3
GOAL SETTING	3
SOLO PREPARATION THOUGHTS	4
ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE PREPARATION THOUGHTS	4
HOW TO PRACTICE AND PREPARE FOR AN AUDITION	5
METRONOME USAGE	6
TAPE AND VIDEO RECORDER USAGE	7
USE OF RECORDINGS	7
PRACTICING THE AUDITION	8
NERVOUS?	9
THE AUTHOR	10
THE CLASSICAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA and THE PROTÉGÉ PHILHARMONIC	11

WHAT IS AN AUDITION?

Probably the most difficult challenge instrumentalists face is how to prepare and take a successful audition. **THE ART OF AUDITIONING** is an innovative and practical guide to help you prepare step-by-step how to take a successful audition. Some of these ideas may seem just too simple, but many of the greatest, most successful ideas in the world were also the most simple ones. So let's get started and help you on the way to **YOUR** successful audition!

It is important to know exactly **WHAT** is involved in auditioning to prepare successfully for taking one. It is even more important to know **HOW** to prepare for taking auditions to succeed in winning a position with the professional orchestra or organization of your choice.

If you were looking for a job in any other field than music performance, you would apply for the job, then take an interview with XYZ company so they would be able to assess personally your qualifications for their advertised position.

So, let's look at auditions as just another kind of job interview. Rather than talk with an interviewer and answer questions from them, you must persuade a group of musicians (the audition committee) by playing your instrument that you are the best qualified person for their advertised position. Although this puts a great deal of pressure on the person auditioning (you), it does give the audition committee the best possible circumstances to compare all candidates and select a winner.

SELECTING OPENINGS YOU WILL AUDITION FOR

Each month, **THE INTERNATIONAL MUSICIAN**, the musician's union newspaper advertises available openings. These listings give the exact opening, date(s) and location of the audition, who to contact and sometimes the typical salary for that orchestra. You must decide if you really feel you are qualified for that orchestra and position at this point in your career, or, if your efforts would be better spent auditioning for another orchestra. Most professional musicians started somewhere else before they got into one of the Top Ten orchestras in the music field.

If in doubt, and you are still studying, ask your teacher and draw from his or her experience to help guide you. Auditions become extremely expensive with travel costs, lodgings and meals adding up, so you should set your sights on jobs you are definitely qualified for. Pick carefully what you will audition for to enhance the final success of your auditioning efforts.



PRELIMINARY AUDITION THOUGHTS

Your audition preparation actually started years ago when you first began your instrument, and it is just a matter of bringing everything you have learned into focus. You must now direct your learned musicianship and technical development towards winning a position in the orchestra you are auditioning for.

Your choice of solo will be the first work usually played on an audition and is, therefore, extremely important since it is the first, most important impression the audition committee receives. It is best to stay away from flashy, technical show pieces since they do not always display your musical maturity or rhythmic discipline.

Standard works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky or other similar composers are always well received. Works by modern composers are not as well received, unless your particular instrument does not have any concertos from these composers listed.

Whatever composition you choose, pick something you identify strongly with and play extremely well. If you choose a piece you have to struggle with, you will only show off your faults rather than your assets!

ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE

Interestingly enough, most people auditioning for professional orchestras do not give the same time and care in preparation of their orchestral pieces for the audition as they do for their concerto. Your solo composition shows your musical personality and flair in certain ways that you cannot in the orchestral repertoire. In many other ways, orchestral repertoire does not always lie "*under the hand*" the same way a solo piece does. This awkwardness requires intense preparation on the same level as any concerto.

Obviously, working on orchestral excerpts throughout your training will give you a solid foundation for later auditioning for a professional orchestra position. There are many excellent books of orchestral excerpts which are really a must for you to own and study on a daily basis. These excerpt books give you a "*taste*" of that composition, the style of that composer or particular work and broaden your musicianship.

It is very helpful to know in advance the compositions most often asked by professional orchestras for your instrument at auditions. The American Symphony Orchestra League publishes an excellent book: "***FACING THE MAESTRO: A Musician's Guide To Orchestral Audition Repertoire***".* This is a wonderful, comprehensive

listing of audition works listed by instrument and frequency of request; composer and instrument with accompanying composer index; and music sources publisher index. Since 34 North American orchestras helped supply the necessary information, and it was compiled and edited by top people in the field, it is an important reference work for serious instrumentalists looking for an orchestral position.

AUDITION PREPARATION GUIDE

The following is a step-by-step organized guide towards successful audition preparation.

GOAL SETTING

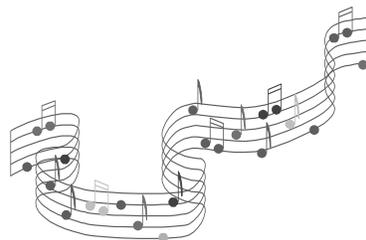
It is vitally important that you set very clear goals in preparation for your winning a position in a professional orchestra. The sub-conscious mind is an incredibly powerful tool in shaping your future career and properly trained will help your dreams come true.

As children, we were always told not to daydream. As adults, our dreams and goals become the strongest, most important influence on the direction both our lives and careers will take. If your dream or goal is to become a member of a professional orchestra, you must wish this with all your might and take the following steps to make your dream come true.

Set your **LONG**-range goal of becoming a member of a professional orchestra. Write it down, read it daily and put a timetable on when you wish to get there. A specific deadline for your goals will become an important progress measuring device for you.

Set incremental **SHORT**-range goals for preparing the necessary material for a successful audition. Write these down and read them daily also. This step-by-step process builds confidence and it is easy to make corrections in your preparation as you go along. Each day, ask yourself what you are going to do today that will lead you one step closer to the attainment of your goal. Then, go to work!

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SOLO PREPARATION THOUGHTS

In preparing your solo for a professional audition, certain concepts and ideas should be kept in mind regarding what will make an audition committee sit up and take notice of you. In order to perform your best, you must prepare your best! If you were going to play your solo in a recital or with an orchestra accompaniment, you could take certain liberties for a more dramatic or musical presentation that should be avoided at an orchestral audition.

You must demonstrate your consistency with rhythms and tempos and show a pulse that is easily followed during your audition. Retards and accelerandos should be very smooth and consistent from start to finish. You can easily show your flair and soloistic personality within that structure, but you must prepare in advance for that control to happen during your audition. Without adequate preparation of these qualities, your nerves and insecurities may take over during the audition resulting in tempos that fluctuate to accommodate difficult passages.

ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE PREPARATION THOUGHTS

RHYTHM, PULSE, TEMPO, DYNAMICS, CLARITY AND STYLE!

These important qualities are what every auditioning committee looks for and are easy to prepare if you consistently keep them in mind during preparation for your audition. They should be part of your daily goals in order to train your thoughts towards these professional orchestral concepts.

Practice carefully and as regularly as possible the "big" orchestral repertoire for your particular instrument. The selections that almost everyone asks for should be part of your daily practice routine in order for you to become comfortable and secure with the styles and demands of those particular pieces.

If you have an audition set up, order the entire individual part for the pieces that you will be performing. Orchestral repertoire books have many of the difficult passages from music listed in the book, but it is just a "taste" of the style and demands of those pieces. If a certain work is listed for the audition, you are expected to know it from the beginning to the end. Orchestral repertoire is full of difficult little passages that are not in the excerpt books because of lack of space.



HOW TO PRACTICE AND PREPARE FOR AN AUDITION

Since you are definitely going to spend vast amounts of time in preparation for an audition that will last only a few short minutes, it is vitally important that you make the best possible use of your time. In other words, you must know how to practice and prepare effectively.

WHAT IS PRACTICE? Obviously, you must repeat a passage over and over again until you have perfected it. However, most musicians do that and only **SOME** of them will finally perfect the passage so they are able to perform it flawlessly each time they pick up their instrument.

if you are not careful, it is quite easy to slip into a routine of "*mindless*" practice with little attention paid to the necessary monitoring and evaluation process that must be a constant element of "good" practice habits. In fact, if you do not pay careful attention to what you are producing, you probably will repeat your **MISTAKES** over and over again making them all the more difficult to shed.

The end result of "good" practice is such a high level of comfort and security with the passage you are performing that it just feels right and effortless when you play it. In "*good*" practice you are training special musical coordination, endurance and strength performance skills to a very high level of development along with specialized knowledge of style and taste that makes Beethoven sound like Beethoven and Tchaikovsky sound like Tchaikovsky.

In developing your practice habits, be sensitive to the amount of time you can concentrate before you start getting tired. At that point, you need a short break since further practice will be of little use and probably detrimental to your further development. A short break of 5 or 10 minutes will refresh and revive you so that when you come back, you can start with renewed concentration and a revitalized approach. Most people have an effective concentration span of about 40-45 minutes. Without a break, productivity goes down quickly.

Break down difficult passages into a series of little problems. If you attempt to simply play the passage without solving each problem, you will not get results that are clean and fluid in your final performance of that particular passage. Once each problem is individually solved, the entire passage seems much easier since your approach to learning it was from many different angles.

Practice slowly and carefully! How many times have we all heard -that one! However, there is an amazingly simple reason for teachers the world over saying this to their students. Both the mind and the muscles require time to retain the physical and mental procedures new to them. Learn them slowly and perfectly first so that speeding up the passage later will be relatively simple. You do not want to learn your mistakes at a faster and faster rate of speed, so practice **SLOWLY** and **PERFECTLY** at the beginning!



METRONOME USAGE

The metronome is the most wonderful and simple invention ever invented for acquiring perfect performance of complex rhythmic passages. Most people who go into music have a "good" sense of rhythm, however, most have an undisciplined sense of rhythm until they have worked extensively with the metronome. All musicians must learn how to instantly and accurately divide any beat into different equal parts. Metronomes that feature sub-divisions provide the most productive use of practice time for rhythm.

Daily practice with a metronome is of vital importance since the end result will show at any audition. Counting out loud with the metronome is a strong learning tool since the ear can easily detect whether or not the results are even or just imagined in your own mind. Transferring that same evenness to playing rhythms on your instrument is then quite simple since your ear can easily judge the evenness of your performance against that of your counting.

Practicing solo and orchestral repertoire passages with the metronome daily will **NOT** make your final performance mechanical. Rather, it will give you the ability to make the most wonderful retards and accelerandos that sound smooth and flowing because of your artistic control of rhythm. An artist must be able to play any tempo, whether it is slow, fast or otherwise. At the same time, an artist must slow down or speed up with perfect control. An auditioning committee will not want to hear passages get the best of a player because of lack of rhythmic control.

We have all heard how to use the metronome to slowly speed up a passage until attaining the desired tempo. It is important to be able to play a passage with the metronome faster than is required for higher levels of control, so plan on attaining a speed a few notches higher than the music calls for. On the other hand, it is equally important to slow down a passage notch by notch as it is being learned which relaxes both the muscles and the mind and allows for more complete mastery of passages as they are being learned.

On some days, start at the highest speed obtained the previous day and gradually work slower. Once you have gotten to a very slow speed, gradually work it up to a fast speed again thus giving you more complete mastery of the passages you are working on.

By practicing slowly with the metronome, you can take the music apart note by note, correcting each mistake as you go and hear the actual sound of **EACH** detail. With slow practice, each technical and musical problem can be thoroughly analyzed and corrected for the highest level of performance perfection.

TAPE AND VIDEO RECORDER USAGE

Even a very inexpensive tape recorder will be a practice aid of great importance and help you to evaluate what you sound like to other people. You can easily hear your intonation, rhythmic pulse, style, clarity and sense of phrasing for use in the next day's practice. A video recorder is even better since you can also see how you appear to an auditioning committee giving you the opportunity to correct any annoying habits you may not even be aware of while you perform.

USE OF MUSIC RECORDINGS

With the exception of a new composition, records, cassettes and CD recordings of most compositions are readily available. Yet it is amazing how few musicians spend daily time listening to recordings or going to concerts to hear how orchestral literature is performed. With even the least expensive record or cassette player, you have the availability of an incredible amount of the world's finest performances within reach.

LISTEN TO AS MANY RECORDINGS AS YOU CAN!

Why? Because you need to learn the style of that particular composer or particular work and the likelihood of your having performed the wealth of orchestral literature needed -to be a highly successful orchestral musician will only come after years of being in the profession. Listening is just as important as the daily practice on your instrument. In addition to the obvious elements you learn from recordings, it is also quite easy to hear how your part fit into the entire symphonic work.

Several years ago, I had a young cellist as a private student who wanted to play in The Classical Symphony Orchestra. He was only in 8th grade, and I was not sure he would be able to keep up with the older orchestra members. However, he promised to work hard, and I felt I had to give him a chance. As time went on, I was amazed that he not only knew his parts better than anyone else, but also knew how his part fit in with the rest of the orchestra and he subsequently ended up as one of my best players for the season. I later found out that he listened every day to recordings of the music we were performing, practiced his part diligently and played along with the recordings each day. Four years later, he was invited to The Julliard School of Music by Leonard Rose, the late world famous cellist.

Do not underestimate the value of listening to recordings of music you are performing and even playing along with the recordings to get a feel for the composition, how your part fits in and the tempos various conductors take. Recordings are a very inexpensive and wonderful musical lesson that should not overlooked.



PRACTICING THE AUDITION

Dress in the clothes you will wear to the audition. Usually, a suit and tie or a dress are more restricting than normal casual wear and under the pressure of an audition can affect the way you perform.

Ask several musician friends to listen to your "mock" audition and write a critique of your performance. Have them ask you to play orchestral literature passages several different ways to get you used to the required flexibility needed for a successful audition.

Before you start each passage, think carefully of the tempo, style, sound and phrasing so you are in the right frame of mind and have a chance to reflect on the practice you have done on this passage. Start with control because you think of it instead of just plunging into the playing and trying to work out difficulties that could have been avoided by pacing yourself.

Tape record or video record your "mock" audition. You will want to compare the critiques made by your "mock" auditioning committee with what you hear or see of yourself from the recording.

If you make any mistakes, let them go and concentrate on playing everything else to the best of your ability. An audition committee will be much more interested in your ability to continue with control than any little flaws that happen to everyone.

Concentrate on keeping a steady tempo with a strong pulse. Just about the single most important thing audition committees look for is your rhythmic discipline. This includes rests or measures of rests. Count the rests since they are just as important as the notes and come in exactly at the correct moment in the music.

Do not stop even if you make a mistake! The members of the audition committee are just as human as you and only want to see if you will recover quickly without losing the pulse when a mistake happens. Whatever mistake you may make, don't think about it since it will get in the way of the rest of your performance and call attention to your lack of concentration and focus.

NERVOUS?

Join The Club! Expect to be nervous since everyone gets nervous to some degree. You must simply learn not to let it affect you too much and control it by focusing on the music and your playing.

The first rule is to practice so well that even if you are nervous you will still be able to play with control. After you walk out to the audition area, take several deep breaths and concentrate on relaxing. Don't rush into playing, since this will not give you a chance to show the audition committee the quality of your playing. You have earned the right to be there for this audition; since it is your time, get acclimated to your surroundings before you start!

When performing the orchestral repertoire selections, you must make the music come to life by yourself. This is not the same as sitting in a section and performing with everyone else around you. Dynamics, tempo and phrasing become more important than ever since you are playing the entire symphony by yourself and must convey an impression to the audition committee of what the music is all about.

If you have to travel to an audition, do not arrive just before you have to audition. It is much better to arrive the night before, have plenty of time to rest and warm up before your audition without being panicky about getting to the hall on time. Do not let other players psych you out during your time in the warmup room. Practice things slowly and concentrate on **YOUR** playing. Do not panic and try to run through all of the difficult passages you have already prepared. It will just make you more nervous and your focus will be in the wrong direction.

Play to the audition committee even if they are behind a screen as you would an audience. Even if behind a screen, they are still people who really want to hear you perform. Try to be as comfortable as possible, hear your tempos that you have practiced first and then have fun!

GOOD LUCK!



THE AUTHOR

JOSEPH GLYMPH

A violinist, **Maestro Glymph** has been a member of the Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, Guest Concertmaster of the Beloit Janesville Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin, Assistant Concertmaster and Concertmaster of the Rockford Symphony Orchestra, Assistant Concertmaster of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and Concertmaster of the Northwest Symphony Orchestra. He studied violin under the direction of Shmuel Ashkenasi and Pierre Menard of the famed Vermeer Quartet, Edgar Muenzer of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Adolph Ghertovici.

His conducting study has been with Crawford Gates, Margaret Hillis and Jon Robertson. In August, 1989, **Maestro Glymph** made his Far East conducting debut in Taiwan and Japan while on tour with **The Classical Symphony Orchestra** to the Fifth International Youth Music Festival in Kumamoto, Japan to collaborate with other musical organizations from all over the world. In August, 1994, he conducted the Central Opera Theater Orchestra in Beijing, China in 2 concerts before 4,000 people. In March, 1995, **Maestro Glymph** made his European conducting debut as a guest conductor of The Honored Symphonic Orchestra of The Ukraine State TV & Radio in Kiev, Ukraine. In August, 1995, while on tour to China, he conducted the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Beijing Symphony Orchestra in 2 "standing-room-only" concerts in each city. In August, 1997, **Maestro Glymph** delighted audiences when he conducted a standing-room-only concert with members of the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Kiev, Ukraine. **Maestro Glymph** appeared as Guest Conductor at the internationally renowned Sewanee Summer Music Center in Sewanee, Tennessee in July, 1998. In August 1999, Maestro Glymph conducted a joint concert of **The Classical Symphony Orchestra**, **The Protégé Philharmonic** and the Beijing Symphony Orchestra in Beijing, China.

A graduate of Northern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Music degree in Violin Performance, further graduate studies and then completing all educational requirements for teaching, **Maestro Glymph** taught in the public schools as a high school orchestra director and then became a member and manager of the Arcturus String Quartet for several years. For over a decade, he was a faculty member of the internationally renowned Sewanee Summer Music Center in Sewanee, Tennessee. With former students in orchestras around the world, **Maestro Glymph** has long been considered one of the most prominent private teachers of violin, viola, and cello in the Chicago area where he has been on the faculties of The Merit Music Program, The American Conservatory of Music, North Park College, Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago in addition to extensive private teaching.

Maestro Glymph is the recipient of the Lakewood Music Society Service Award for his outstanding work with The Classical Symphony Orchestra and The Protégé Philharmonic. Maestro Glymph was also awarded the 2001-2002 Teacher Recognition Certificate from the National Foundation for Advancement of the Arts for his students who have been recognized for their exceptional artistic achievements. He is included in the 2002 Edition of "Who's Who of America's Teachers" as well as "The International Who's Who in Music" and "The International Men of Achievement." Maestro Glymph was awarded the prestigious "Gold Baton Award" for 2008 from the League of American Orchestras for "*instilling a passion for orchestral music, a commitment to excellence, and for helping to grow the musicians, audiences and fervent community advocates of tomorrow.*" Joseph Glymph was named *Outstanding Alumnus for 2008* by Northern Illinois University in recognition of his achievements and contributions as a music educator and a professional musician. *Joseph Glymph was awarded the honor of being a "Citizen Musician" by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in recognition of using his talents and passion for music to enhance the quality of life in our communities.*



THE CLASSICAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & THE PROTÉGÉ PHILHARMONIC

Offering spectacular literature and awesome performances, The Classical Symphony Orchestra and The Protégé Philharmonic present the finest advanced orchestral training with the widest range of repertoire available on a once-a-week rehearsal basis in the Chicago Area and are considered one of the best youth orchestra programs in the United States! Both orchestras are incredible opportunities for young players looking for intensive, regular orchestral experience at an extremely high level. Audition for either orchestra and experience the power of our orchestras!

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