

Thoughts on Making Audition Recordings

Stage #1: General Audition Prep

- Set goals early, and start working on repertoire as soon as it is announced
- Learn the music once correctly; don't waste time practicing mistakes
- Use as metronome and tuner 90% of the time
- Record your music daily and critically listen to it as well; make constructive notes to yourself for the next time you practice
- Listen to recordings as much as possible (Audition "Mixtape" is great for excerpts)
- Play for anyone who will listen to you
- You know that you are prepared when you can play an excerpt five times in a row perfectly

Audition "Mixtape"

- Find your favorite recording of each excerpt. The recordings should be free of all errors, unusual tempi/style, and they should demonstrate a neutral but beautiful horn sound. The goal is that you will completely imitate this person's way of playing the excerpt.
- Buy a DRM-free copy of the piece. I like buying music through Amazon, but DO NOT buy this music through itunes, as you cannot edit it
- Save the piece as a .wav file by right-clicking it
- Open it in Audacity
- Highlight the excerpt, along with several measures before and after it
- Paste in to a new window
- Highlight the several bars after the end of the excerpt and select "fade out" This adds a nice touch.
- Export as a .wav or .mp3 file and put in to iTunes or your preferred music program
- Listen to these recordings every day (in the car, at the gym, walking to class, etc.), so that every time you play the excerpt, you can hear the orchestra parts before and during the excerpt in your head

Stage #2: The Actual Recording

- Reserve the hall/ necessary equipment far in advance, and try to book as many sessions in the same hall as possible
- Try to use a hall that has some reverb, but not too much.
- The best time to make your recordings is when there are as few people as possible in the building and also when outdoor noises are minimal

Using a professional sound engineer

Pros

- MUCH better sound quality
- Can compensate for using a dead room
- Some have studios for you to use
- Can cleanly splice

Cons

- Can be quite expensive, e.g. \$250+ for minimum of 3 hr session, and editing time on top of that
- They are probably busy and will take time to edit and get your recording to you, which can be problematic if you are very short on time
- Coordinating schedules can be difficult

Your own equipment: I recommend getting a Zoom Q3HD (around \$300). This device has fantastic sound quality as well as an HD camera. If this is out of your budget, use a USB microphone (about \$100.) Unless you have preferred audio software, I recommend Audacity (free).

Day of the Recording:

- Double-check the repertoire for the audition; sometimes it changes at the last minute!
- Be well rested
- Do not consume: alcohol, spicy foods, excessive caffeine, too much salt—anything that will dehydrate you or irritate your lips
- DO consume satisfying, protein-rich foods and hydrating liquids
- Do not tire yourself physically, mentally, or emotionally that day
- Warm up comfortably
- Get to the hall early
- Hang signs on all doors that specify the times that you will be recording that day so that you will (hopefully) not be disturbed
- Try different microphone positions, and listen to the tests
- Be sure to test the microphone for static and other noises, as well as sound levels of the horn
- Turn off your cell phone, the AC, alarms, etc.
- Take a lot of time to record, and stay relaxed; if you have booked plenty of time in the space, there is no need to panic
- Listen to the takes in between recording excerpts to make use of rest time
- Be sure to empty your horn frequently
- If you can't play something after three tries, save your energy and come back another day

- Generally, you should not send in a recording unless it is your absolute best, so do many takes on many different days

Stage #3: Polishing the Recording

- Be very critical of recordings, and make sure everything is perfect or near-perfect
- Save the tracks separately so that there are just a few seconds of silence before and after each excerpt
- Make sure that the files have clear title and album names, as well as your name in the artist field
- Use a quality, printed label for the CD **and case** *presentation is VERY important
- Make sure you triple-check the repertoire for the audition
- Test the CD before you send it
- Mail it early so that there is no risk of it not getting there on time. There is nothing worse than working hard on something only to have it be rejected for lateness.

Special Considerations for DVD's

- For auditions that require everything to be in one take, make sure that you practice the music frequently in the required order and without stopping
- Wear a conservative, but nice outfit and hairstyle. Dr. Morrell suggests that if you keep these the same, it might be possible to re-use parts of recordings. Plus, presentation is very important
- Make the DVD menu clear and easy-to-navigate