
Tips for practicing in general, & preparing for the FOA All-State Audition:

- The process of working through the audition material is more important than the outcome of the audition. Let go of the idea that you have failed if you are not selected for All-State. By preparing well for the audition you have already “won” because you will be a more comfortable, confident, and skillful musician.
- Practice consistently every day, even if it is only for a few minutes. It is far better to practice 30 minutes a day 6 days a week than 90 minutes a day twice a week. The total number of minutes of practice is the same, but you will make more progress practicing for a shorter time more often.
- **SLOW, SLOW, SLOW**—What is the perfect practice tempo? Slow enough that you won't make mistakes, fast enough so that you are not bored.
- Strategies for performing under pressure: Use the psychological strategy called “self distancing” to observe yourself. You might think to yourself, “Oh, my stomach is churning and I feel sick because I'm nervous. Isn't that interesting?” Consciously remind yourself to take deep, full, frequent breaths.
- Here is a helpful website and blog dealing with performance anxiety and practicing more efficiently:
bulletproofmusician.com
- Sight-reading: First priority should be rhythm, and no matter how big a mistake you make, don't stop! Observe the key signature, especially the last flat or sharp, and do the printed dynamics. And don't stop!
- Scales: Practice excruciatingly slow, always placing your left hand finger on the next note before you move your bow. FBB=Finger Before Bow! Use an electronic tuner or drones. Don't neglect your bow arm—pull a focused, even, concentrated sound from your instrument.
- Play your etudes with musical expression—don't play mechanically.
- Orchestral Excerpts: **Listen to a professional recording** of the entire orchestra to understand how your excerpt fits in with the other instruments and the piece as a whole.
Do every single printed dynamic and articulation. It is the dream of a conductor to have an orchestra who comes to the first rehearsal already playing everything printed on the page, because then they can guide the orchestra to express the music between the notes.
- Number your measures, and practice starting in random places in the music—don't always start at the beginning and play through to the end.
- Record yourself. Use your smart phone, listen to how you sound, then be your own teacher and critique your performance. The judges for All-State will not know your name, gender, race, etc. You are assigned a number and judged entirely on your sound on the recording you make at the audition.
- Practice in front of people who make you nervous—like your friends! Ask your school orchestra teacher to hold mock auditions, or ask if you can play for them before or after school or during lunchtime to get more feedback. Your teacher wants to help you!