

An Orchestra Audition Preparation Handbook for Bass Players.

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved March 2011 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2011

ABSTRACT

The following project is an audition preparation handbook for double bass players. The materials and techniques included are designed for use by advanced collegiate bass players seeking work as freelance or contracted musicians. Subjects ranging from finding an opening, becoming mentally and physically prepared, and developing the skills and experience necessary to be successful will be examined. The most frequently requested audition excerpts are included in this document, carefully extracted from the original orchestra parts and notated with efficient fingerings. Elements of style and performance are discussed. Each of the excerpts is recorded on the enclosed CD, performed by the author as examples to the readers. It is the hope of the author that the study and use of this text will prepare the readers for entrance into the working world of the music industry. Ideas, processes, and materials that are often neglected in a degree program are examined with the hope that students will be better prepared to audition for, and win orchestral positions.

DEDICATION

To the many musicians with whom I have had the pleasure of playing, in many different styles, and many different venues: Thank you. The musical soul you have helped me develop could never be replaced.

*“The life I love is making music with my friends,
and I can’t wait to get out on the road again.”*

Willie Nelson

To my biggest supporter, my mom, for the years of believing in me: Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the faculty of Arizona State University, especially the members of my committee, Thomas Landschoot, Dr. Jody Rockmaker, and Dr. Timothy Russell, for helping to guide me through the final years of my education. Without your input, this project and my education would not have risen to the level it reached.

Special thanks to Catalin Rotaru. Words will never express the gratitude I have for everything you have taught me about being a bass player, being a musician, and being a human being. The words do not serve justice, but I will say them just the same: Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With each passing year colleges and universities release more and more graduates into a declining economy where positions are disappearing rather than being filled. “Competition for limited orchestra jobs is severe.”¹ It is not uncommon for large numbers of people to apply for a single job. Out of that group, only those the committee feels are qualified are asked to audition, and from those selected, only one will win the job. “Auditioning is, after all, the music world’s chosen method of natural selection.”² Even with an exhaustive education, students are often unprepared, or at least unaware of what they must do to find, and win a job in the professional orchestra industry. This subject matter seems to have been relegated to the venues of trade journals, magazines, and conferences, rarely finding a place in the curriculum of major universities. Sources are available to discuss the topic, but are scattered in a variety of areas often making them hard to find without access to internet research systems such as those subscribed to by university libraries. The objective of this project is to prepare bass players for the audition circuit by assembling a large number of these smaller sources, and reducing them into what could be considered a more comprehensive approach to the audition process, making the information easily accessible to anyone. Topics discussed will pertain to any audition, whether for full time professional symphonies or regional orchestras, such as mental and physical preparation, finding and applying for an opening, audition procedure, practice methods, and excerpt preparation.

¹ L. Tony Brandolino, “Pre-professional perspectives – winning an orchestral audition: advice from the pros (concertmasters Samuel Thaviu, Linda Thomassen, and David Halen).” *American String Teacher* 49 (May 1999): 29.

² Stewart Collins, “Trial by jury (auditioning tips).” *Classical Music* n635 (June 26, 1999):30.

The information in this project is drawn from a variety of sources: Articles from trade journals and magazines have been incorporated from many publications with a variety of target readers ranging from bassists (such as the *Bassworld Journal*, published by the International Society of Bassists), flutists (*Pan*, published by the British Flute Society) as well as those intended for any musician (Such as the *International Musician*, published by the American Federation of Musicians). While bass journals contain valuable information, there are many words of wisdom a bass player can take away from an article written about auditioning for a job as a trombone player, or a vocalist. This information is often overlooked or difficult to find, but has been included here. A great deal of information has also been incorporated from discussions with professional musicians, as well as the author's experiences in the audition circuit.

The excerpts included are typical of a regional orchestra audition, such as those that perform one concert a month and belong to the Regional Orchestra Players Association (ROPA).³ Bassist can expect these excerpts to be on any audition, including full time top tier orchestras performing new repertoire weekly, and belonging to the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM).⁴ Larger orchestras will include many more excerpts than those included in this study, and the lists will be far less specific as to the sections of pieces that will be part of the audition. A great resource for auditioning musicians is found in the OrchestraPro series, published by Summit Records. This series assembles the most frequently requested orchestra excerpt for various instruments, discusses them, and includes a CD of a professional musician

³*Regional Orchestra Players Association, A Conference of the American Federation of Musicians*. N.d. Web. 30 March 2011. <http://www.ropaweb.org>

⁴*International Society of Symphony and Opera Musicians*. N.d. Web. 30 March 2011. <http://icsom.org>

performing the excerpts. While this series is a great resource, there is no OrchestraPro publication for the Bass.⁵ This project will fill the gap left by Summit.

⁵ *Summit records, Inc.* 2010. Web. 30 March, 2011. <http://www.summitrecords.com>

CHAPTER 2

POSITION VACANT

The manner in which a musician finds orchestral job openings has changed drastically with the widespread use of the internet. Once the only way to find openings was to subscribe to the union news letter, or to hear by word of mouth. While the union newsletter remains a valuable source and often contains announcements not found anywhere else, the internet has changed the search process for ever. An online search for symphony orchestras in any city will yield the web sites of area organizations. If there are openings, they are usually posted. One of the greatest resources available to a musician is the web site www.musicalchairs.info which contains listings of orchestra jobs all over the world. Simply click on the country or area of interest, and then on the instrument, and the web-site will display a list of current openings. Often the listings include links to the orchestra's web-page with application instructions, and a list of required excerpts. The applicant should be prepared to find a variety of listings. "Some lists will be long and unspecific and list an entire symphony when only a short excerpt from one movement may actually be required. Other lists are short and so specific that the audition music is sent out with the required passages marked."⁶ The author observes that in most cases the longer and less specific the list, the higher the caliber of the ensemble.⁷ If the orchestra does not have a web site, the phone number and mailing address will be listed so the applicant can obtain the required audition information. Musicalchairs.info is not an all inclusive listing, but it is a good place to start. It is updated by user submissions, including orchestra personnel managers, as well as network

⁶ L. Tony Brandolino, "Pre-professional perspectives – winning an orchestral audition: advice from the pros (concertmasters Samuel Thaviu, Linda Thomassen, and David Halen)." *American String Teacher* 49 (May 1999): 29.

⁷ See Appendix A for examples of lists.

administrators, so listings found in most other sources make their way to the site, usually within a few days of its publication in other sources.

CHAPTER 3

APPLYING FOR A JOB

Orchestras with web-sites may have an on-line form to fill out or an e-mail address where those interested will be instructed to submit a resume. If an orchestra does not have email capability, the required materials will need to be mailed along with a letter of intent if requested. A musician who is serious about finding a job should have a resume prepared, and be ready to submit it at any time. A resume and letter of intent are the first impression the personnel manager and the audition committee will have of applicants' history, background, and personality. "(Resumes) are a huge giveaway, so making yours clear and concise so that it explains in seconds exactly what you've done is a huge benefit."⁸ If the materials are sloppy and poorly written, the applicant will appear to be disorganized and uneducated. The applicant should use a computer program to help create a quality resume. The templates included in most word processing programs will not ensure applicants have the experience the orchestra is looking for on the page, but will help the writer seem organized and look good. If the resume is sent via e-mail, it is best to send as a Printable Document File (PDF). This format can be opened by both PC and MAC users, and eliminates issues caused by the use of different word processing programs. As is the case with any written document, scrupulous editing is imperative.

It is important to know the difference between a resume and *curriculum vitae* (CV) as either could be requested. If an orchestra asks for a resume, be concise. The document should include educational history, as well as any orchestral experience. Work as a section member or substitute in a professional orchestra should be listed at the top of the work history section. Some orchestras will request only a one page resume, or to list primary instructors. The applicant should follow the instructions carefully. Make sure

⁸ Chloe Cutts, "Making it (career tips)," *Double Bassist* n25 (Summer 2003): 17.

the resume accurately and efficiently represents important accomplishments and experience.

Should an orchestra request a CV, applicants should be thorough, including every award or honor received, no matter how long ago, or how insignificant it may seem. Any item that shows the progress and dedication invested in music should be part of this document. With both a CV and a resume, place your name, contact information, and instrument at the top of the page. If the personnel manager reads nothing else on the document, they will need to see those items. List all items in chronological order, starting with the most recent accomplishment. Be clear and truthful with all items. If an audition for an orchestra's substitute list has been played, and the result was approval for use, list it as a sub position. If no audition has been played, but the orchestra calls for work, list the position as an extra musician. Orchestras can and will check with the personnel managers of the orchestras listed on a resume. Any exaggeration or misleading information could be considered unprofessional behavior, and could result in disqualification from the position. Some orchestras will ask for audition history, but if it is not requested, leave it off.

Some orchestras request recordings be sent by all applicants. Others will only request recordings from applicants the committee feels do not have enough experience to audition. The objective of this request to see the level of performance the applicant has achieved. "If you are even slightly unprepared, you should not make a tape."⁹ Artists have a limitless amount of time to make a perfect recording. The committee will assume that the recording is an accurate representation of an applicant's potential, so make sure it is flawless. The orchestra may include a list of what they would like recorded, or just ask

⁹ L. Tony Brandolino, "Pre-professional perspectives – winning an orchestral audition: advice from the pros (concertmasters Samuel Thaviu, Linda Thomassen, and David Halen)." *American String Teacher* 49 (May 1999): 29.

for a recent recording. Some will ask for an unaccompanied recording of solo literature, while others will insist on piano accompaniment. Other orchestras will not call for solo literature, and will ask for recordings of excerpts only. Some orchestras will go so far as to specify how far away the microphone should be, and if there should be track splits between excerpts or if all excerpts are to be recorded on one track without stopping. While a recording of a live performance is good, a clean, professional quality recording is best. Take the time and energy to make a high caliber digital recording. Keep the master copy, and be ready to make copies should one be requested for an audition. This process has become easier with digital technology. A digital recorder, a sound editing program, and a CD burner can make a good quality recording. Digital editing raises further debate. With modern technology a computer can be used to fix everything from an out of tune note to an entrance that was rushed. Be sure not to over edit the recording. It must remain an honest representation of a person's capabilities. While the computer may produce a recording that will permit a person to audition, if the quality of playing is not reproduced live an applicant will not have a successful audition.

If the committee feels the applicant is worthy of audition, they will be invited to play in person. If the committee feels the applicant is not ready, they will advise the candidate not to play the audition. An applicant may still feel they deserve an audition. It is the applicant's right to do so, and the orchestra committee's obligation to hear them. This situation is especially true of orchestras with contracts negotiated by the American Federation of Musicians. "More than once a job has been won by someone who was not initially invited to the audition and had the determination to persist."¹⁰ Even if the

¹⁰ Michael Rosen, "At the orchestral percussion audition." *Percussive Notes* 37 (Aug 1999):15.

applicant is cut in the first round, the preparation for the audition and the experience will better prepare the candidate for future opportunities.

If a person is unable to find openings in their region and relocation is not an option, contacting personnel managers in their area to see if a sub-list audition can be arranged can still be an effective way to find work and gain experience. Substitute auditions are often much less formal, and not nearly as pressured. Should a person be accepted as a sub the resulting work could help better qualify them for future auditions.

CHAPTER 4

NON-MUSICAL PREPARATION

The candidate preparing for an audition must be in good physical health. An audition is very strenuous. If a person is not prepared for the physical pressure, he will not play his best. “Make exercise part of your physical game plan of performing well at an audition. Many researchers are firm in the findings that physical exercise will enhance the mental process for the best cutting edge performance.”¹¹ In an audition, a person’s heart rate will increase. If their body is more accustomed to situations of elevated pulse, they will be able to better deal with the increased strain. By maintaining a regular exercise routine, a person’s resting heart rate will drop, along with their elevated or excited heart rate. If a person’s body stays calm, they can keep control of their fine motor skills and play better.

Working on the most difficult excerpt or the most challenging passage of a solo without properly warming up will be detrimental to audition preparation. Muscles need to stretch before they are ready to move at lightning speed, and blood capillaries need to open. Many players stretch their muscles before they even pick up the instrument. The easiest and most efficient way to warm up is to go back to the basics. Slow scales and long bow strokes will get a person’s muscles moving, and help reinforce intonation. As a warm up session progresses, play faster scales, and different bow strokes and combinations. A musician should never let preparing for an audition prevent them from practicing technical exercises that will build skills necessary for a job. Playing the double bass is a physically strenuous activity. If a bassist warms up properly, he will be able to play for hours. Improper warm up results in shorter practice sessions and heightens the risk for career-threatening injuries.

¹¹ Larry D. Snider, “Auditions- the mind game” *Percussive Notes* 37 (Aug 1999):49.

An issue of debate in the orchestra world is whether or not it is appropriate to borrow a professional instrument to play an audition. Some feel it is inappropriate because the instrument determines so much about the tone quality and projection of a player. That sound is a part of what the committee will be judging, so to be accepted to an ensemble on an instrument other than the one that would be used for the job can be seen as dishonest. A simple solution would be to buy the instrument that helped get the gig. Owning a suitable instrument is important. The serious applicant must have access to equipment that will help get and keep a job.

There is also a debate about whether an extension is necessary. Whether an applicant needs an extension depends completely on the search committee and music director.¹² Some orchestras will not consider a player without one (e.g. the Milwaukee Symphony), but some will not judge an applicant one way or the other (e.g. the Saint Louis Symphony or the Detroit Symphony). Some orchestras will stipulate on the audition announcement that if the winning applicant does not have an extension, they will be required to have one installed before the start of the contract (e.g. the Seattle Symphony or the Louisiana Symphony Orchestra). In a survey of frequently played orchestral literature conducted by the author, the following statistic was observed. Overall, 147 of the 191 symphonies, instrumental suites, and tone poems examined contain notes in the contra range. This is approximately 77 percent of the literature, and makes a clear statement as to the necessity of an extension to be a successful and effective orchestral musician. If possible, have an extension installed. It will allow a player to reproduce the composer's desired sound better. Applicants should have an extension installed as far before an audition as possible. Some excerpts which use the

¹² Molina, Stephen, Assistant Principal Bass and Personnel Manager of the Detroit Symphony. Interview by the author, July 2009.

extended range, but have been played by moving passages up an octave will need to be learned with the lower octave used. Applicants must be sure to have played the excerpt with the extension enough times that they do not fall back into the old way of playing an excerpt at the audition, or worse, trip over their own hands fumbling between the two ways of playing the excerpt. Proper use of an extension will never hurt a person's chance of winning an audition, and will increase the possibility of success in many circumstances.

CHAPTER 5

MUSICAL PREPARATION: THE SOLO, THE EXCERPTS, THE SIGHT READING.

Most orchestras have a three-part audition, each with its own challenges and objectives. First is the solo portion. Applicants choose a solo with which they are comfortable, and perform it for the committee with or without accompaniment depending on the orchestra and the audition round. Second is the prepared excerpt portion. This section will be the most important part of the audition since it pulls excerpts from a list of requirements compiled by each orchestra. Third is sight-reading. A person will not encounter this challenge at every audition. It can be part of the general audition process, or it can be used to break a tie or split decision, and find an audition winner.

The subject of appropriate solos an applicant should prepare was examined and presented at the 1999 International Society of Bassists convention by Larry Hurst, Professor of Double Bass at Indiana University.¹³ This study covered everything from the purpose of the solo portion of an audition to what solo should be prepared. The conclusions are most valuable to an auditioning musician.

The solo gives the musician a chance to show off his personal musicianship. The confines of excerpt playing can limit a musician's free expression. By presenting a solo applicants try to set themselves apart from the pack using their musicianship and individual interpretation skills. The solo also allows the committee to gauge the candidates overall effectiveness, and allows the candidate to acclimate himself to the room. Lastly, the solo helps the player to shake performance anxiety, and to warm up before the excerpt portion of the audition.

¹³ Laurance Hurst, "Different Strokes: What will you play? A survey of opinions regarding solos used at professional auditions." *Bass World Journal* 23 (Fall 1999): 52+

The character of the applicants' solo does affect how it will be received by the committee. It is important to find a piece that blends both technical and lyrical passages. Candidates usually have only chance to perform a solo at an audition, so both issues must be addressed. Some solos are thought to carry a bias (positive or negative) when used at an audition. In general, avoid 20th century works. Select a piece from the standard repertoire, but avoid solo Bach unless it is specifically requested. According to the Hurst survey, the most effective solos are: Vanhal Concerto, first movement; Bottesini Concerto No. 2, first movement; and the Koussevitzky Concerto, first Movement. Over performance at auditions has created a bias against these pieces, so do not think of them as the only options. Any piece that shows technique as well as musical and interpretive skills will be a good choice, as long as it is played well.

Excerpts must be a regular part of a musician's practice whether they have an approaching audition or not. "You need to know the literature really well. If you start to learn it on the day you get the audition list, it's too late."¹⁴ Many of the people competing for the same job will have played the excerpts for years, and possibly performed them many times in an audition or with another orchestra. For a successful audition, the excerpts must be flawless without exception. "The balance of the audition is heavily tipped in favor of how the excerpts are played."¹⁵

"Learn about the composer, the era, and the composition. Learn when the composer lived, the musical style of the era, and apply this knowledge to the audition."¹⁶ Knowledge of the music is a very important step in the interpretation of the excerpts. A

¹⁴ Mary Stolper, "Master class: preparing for auditions." *Windplayer: for woodwind and brass musicians* n60 (1999):37.

¹⁵ Nicholas Vallis-Davis, "Getting to grips with auditions". *PAN, The Journal of the British Flute Society* 20 (September 2001):12.

¹⁶ Donald Peck, "Audition Time," *Flute Talk* 21 (September 2001):5.

Mozart *forte* and a Holst *forte* are very different, and that needs to be reflected in the audition. Also be aware if excerpts by a particular composer contain elements that need special attention, such as the dynamic scheme used by Beethoven. Beethoven generally uses only four dynamics in his symphonic works, *pianissimo*, *piano*, *forte*, and *fortissimo*. With this in mind, a *ff* in a Beethoven symphony is played much differently than a *ff* in a Mahler symphony. Mahler, and many other composers, will go as far as quadruple *forte* or quadruple *piano*. With that in mind, a Beethoven *ff* is played much stronger since it represents the maximum volume, while in a Mahler symphony, *ff* represents a strong volume, but still with room to grow louder. Musicians should also be aware that the Beethoven *piano* and *forte* are closer together, otherwise the dynamic gap between the two would be quite large. Awareness should also be given to how dynamics are used across the orchestra. Many composers, especially in the Classical Era, will have one dynamic level across the entire orchestra. As the Romantic Era takes over, composers will often have one dynamic in some areas of that orchestra, but different dynamics in other instruments. Players should be aware if this is the case, and be sure not to play too loudly and cover a melody line that has been given a lower dynamic. Often the quieter dynamic is being used to help a player establish the character of a piece, even if the line is a solo and needs to be heard clearly. As with a solo, start slow! If a musician hasn't used the slowest setting on their metronome, they haven't truly started slow. Practicing an excerpt with errors is a waste of effort, so learn it right the first time. "It is always in your best interest to practice from original parts to avoid errors that seem to appear in reprints of excerpts in method books."¹⁷ With that in mind, the excerpts included with this document are designed to simplify locating of the excerpts, and to facilitate

¹⁷ Michael Rosen, "At the orchestral percussion audition." *Percussive Notes* 37 (Aug 1999):13.

discussion of each excerpt. Performers interested in auditioning for orchestras should obtain the full part, rather than just excerpts. The orchestra literature collections edited and published by Oscar Zimmerman (former principal bass for the New York Philharmonic) are collections of actual bass parts edited by Zimmerman. Should a bassist have any trouble with a passage, references like the Zimmerman orchestra parts are a great place to get ideas for fingerings or alternate bowings that can simplify an excerpt.¹⁸

“Orchestra excerpts are especially difficult because they are very short, incomplete, they don’t sound very good on their own, they are no fun to practice, and they present all sorts of technical difficulties.”¹⁹ When learning excerpts, be aware of the details. If it is rhythmically complicated, chances are it was picked to test rhythm. If it has a number of difficult shifts, it is being used to test intonation. If it goes from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, chances are the committee is trying to see how wide a dynamic range the applicant can produce. A musician should utilize his metronome while preparing for an audition. “The number one skill you need to get into an orchestra is good rhythm.”²⁰ Stylistic and intonation problems can be solved by spending time playing with an experienced section. Issues of tone or projection can be solved with improvements to equipment. A good sense of rhythm is something that is much more difficult to achieve as a musician, so make every effort to play with accuracy. “Every note should be exactly in place, without any *smearando*.”²¹ A mini-disk recorder or other

¹⁸ Zimmerman, Oscar G. *The Complete Double Bass Parts, Volumes 1-7*. Interlochen, Mi: Zimmerman Publications

¹⁹ Mariko Anraku and others, “The Orchestra Audition.” *World Harp Congress Review*. 8 (Fall 2003):15.

²⁰ John Bruce Yeh, “Clarinet Master Class: preparing for orchestra auditions,” *Windplayer* n65 (2002-2003); 36.

²¹ Donald Peck, “Audition Time,” *Flute Talk* 21 (September 2001):5.

personal recording device is an incredible tool when learning excerpts. Listening to a recording of a practice session will help a musician find errors in their playing while resting their hands. Record an excerpt with the metronome on, and then without. Go back and listen to both versions, and try to line up the metronome with the version recorded without. This process will tell musicians what sections they are rushing or dragging, and where they are keeping accurate time. This process will also help musicians to determine if they are stretching and condensing time within the phrase. In the words of Scott Parkman, assistant music director of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra: “Become very good friends with the inside of your practice room and your metronome when preparing for an audition. And say goodbye to all your other friends and family.”²²

“After you have all the right notes, rhythm, dynamics, and intonation, the work really begins.”²³ One of the keys to learning an excerpt is to have the big picture in mind. “Listen to recordings of any of the excerpts listed that you may not have heard in full orchestral context. It will not do your chances much good if you are playing the excerpt with great confidence in your audition, blissfully unaware that the piece usually goes twice as fast!”²⁴ Even if a musician is familiar with a piece, they should listen to recordings. Be sure to acquire recordings by recognizable ensembles such as the Chicago Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Saint Louis Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the London Symphony, and the Vienna Philharmonic or another high caliber ensemble. Also look for well known conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Daniel

²² Parkman, Scott. Masterclass – 2003.

²³ Donald Peck, “Audition Time,” *Flute Talk* 21 (September 2001):6.

²⁴ Nicholas Vallis-Davis, “Getting to grips with auditions.” *PAN The Journal of the British Flute Society* 20 (September 2001):12.

Barenboim, Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, Carlos Kleiber, Kurt Masur, Seiji Ozawa, Simon Rattle, George Solti, and Robert Shaw. These ensembles and conductors are widely accepted in the musical community as quality musicians. The interpretations of a piece may vary from ensemble to ensemble, but all would be acceptable in the performance world. A person would not want to learn an excerpt using the interpretation of an unknown conductor with a less than adequate orchestra. If possible, acquiring recordings by the orchestra with the job opening, or by other orchestras led by the conductor of the orchestra. Often these recordings can help a player achieve the stylistic elements sought by the audition committee, and could lead to a more successful audition. The objective of listening to recordings is to learn the traditions and apply them to the excerpts. Applicants should learn the traditions, but be prepared to move away from them if requested. Some traditions are in place for questionable reasons, and if the music director asks for an excerpt to be played in another way, applicants for a position must be prepared to do so. It would also be advisable to look at scores of the pieces required for the audition. If the bass section is in unison with the cellos, knowledgeable musicians will know it. If the basses are the only section with a given line, it is important to be aware as well. Also look for doublings in the winds, such as tuba or bassoon in unison with the bass section. This realization can help determine how hard to attack a note, how strong to sustain, and what duration a note should have as the articulations across the ensemble need to match. Lastly, take every opportunity possible to attend or participate in live performances. Nothing helps a musician to know the feeling and power of a piece like hearing it played live. “The best players give you a sense that you can hear the rest of the orchestra around them.”²⁵ This is the true big picture, and should never be forgotten.

²⁵ Peter Kogan, “Auditioning for the Minnesota Orchestra.” *Percussive Notes* 37 (August 1999):21.

Some orchestras will have sight-reading as part of the audition. This often does not come up until the semi-finals or finals, but still must be expected. Preparing for sight-reading is no easy task. To prepare for sight reading, read as much music as possible. Buy an etude book, and set it on the stand. Set a timer for 20 minutes, and start playing. No matter what happens or how bad it sounds, do not stop. Train to push forward no matter what, maintaining as accurate rhythm as possible even if the specific notes get left behind. A season schedule for the symphony in question may be valuable. Quite often the sight reading for an audition comes from the previous season's music. If the parts are available, spend some time with them. The sight reading may go smoother even if the specific spots they ask for have not been meticulously learned if you have the big picture in your mind. As is the case with prepared excerpts, the more recordings a person has listened to, the better prepared they will be for sight reading.

CHAPTER 6

AUDITION PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

The actual audition process is something that often remains a mystery to young players until they experience it. Being prepared mentally means knowing how an audition will be run, and what an applicant can do in the last minutes to help their chances. Some items discussed below are intellectual concepts; others describe physical preparations. This section describes the usual procedures encountered during an audition, but every audition will be slightly different. “If any single item has come forward as a ‘rule of thumb’, it would be to never say never, and never say always with regard to audition procedures.”²⁶ Many of the policies and procedures governing an audition are based on the *Code of Ethical Practices for National and International Auditions* written, monitored, and accepted by both the American Federation of Musicians, and the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians.²⁷

As the audition approaches, an applicant must decide as to if they are truly ready. If a musician has prepared properly, and they know the material well, they should take the audition no matter what. “If one really can’t manage, it is better to cancel a few days before an audition”²⁸ If a musician is not ready for the audition, it is always better to cancel than to play poorly. Even if the player does not win the position, an adequate audition can lead to sub gigs, which will help establish experience and personal contacts. A sub-standard audition can give the committee a bad impression of a musician’s

²⁶ Jerry A. Young, “Instrumental audition processes and procedures in selected orchestral and military settings.” *National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Journal* 47 (Fall 1998):5.

²⁷ *International Society of Symphony and Opera Musicians*. N.d. Web. 30 March 2011. <http://icsom.org>. See Appendix B.

²⁸ Mariko Anraku and others, “The Orchestra Audition.” *World Harp Congress Review*. 8 (Fall 2003):15.

capabilities. This possibility can be harmful in any field, but it is especially dangerous in music where so many opportunities become available based on reputation and recommendation. There will always be another audition at a later time, but a bad first impression can never be reversed. Be committed to making a good first impression.

Before the audition is played, every player must determine if they really want the job. If the answer is no, cancel the audition. Apathy will show in performance, and will not be appreciated. “Really and truly believe that you want the gig – or else you’ll play badly.”²⁹ This is also a courtesy to the audition committee. If the audition winner refuses the job offer, the process must start over. This scenario wastes a great deal of the orchestra’s time and money.

A musician preparing for an audition should stay home the week before as much as possible. Avoid alcohol, and be sure to get adequate sleep. Musicians should practice, but not so much that an injury occurs. This balance of rest and practice is unique for every person, and every musician needs to find their own balance to be successful. If the audition will not require travel, a person has an advantage over some applicants. If the audition will require traveling be financially prepared for the journey. Flying with a bass can be expensive. Plan on at least \$400 in oversize and overweight fees from the airline, plus the cost of buying or renting a flight case. In some nightmare cases, bassists have been denied checking their instrument on a flight, even if published airline regulations permit it. Driving to the audition can lower costs, but at the loss of valuable practice time, as well as loss of sleep, and relaxation time before an audition. Musicians should arrive in the city of the audition the day before or more. Do not go sightseeing upon arrival. There will be plenty of time to see the city when the audition is done, or should a person

²⁹ Billy Ward, “Everybody Auditions: an old pro offers s few tips,” *Modern Drum* 27 (January 2003): 142.

win the position, after moving. It is best for the applicant to relax in his hotel room and quietly play through the excerpts the night before the audition. It is advisable to go to bed early, and wake up long before it is necessary to leave for the audition. “A 25 minute walk up to two hours before an audition can significantly reduce physiological symptoms by lowering the heart rate and blood pressure.”³⁰ Anything that can help calm a musician’s nerves should be welcomed. A nice walk would be a smart way to start the morning. Some musicians recommend taking medication to help control nervousness. If nervousness has been a major obstacle, applicants could consider it, and should consult their doctors to see if their health and situation would allow a prescription.

Some orchestras will specifically dictate what time candidates should arrive, and what door of the building they should enter. Be sure to follow the instructions exactly. Warm up space is often limited, so if all applicants arrive too early the warm up room will be overcrowded. This situation is a disservice to everyone who is auditioning. If arrival time is not stipulated, be sure to arrive at least an hour before the audition. If more time is needed to warm up, do so at home or in the hotel room before leaving. Specifying what door to enter is often done to ensure there will be no contact between the audition applicants and the members of the panel. If there is any contact with a panel member, a positive or negative bias could be created, intended or not. In some orchestras, this can be grounds for dismissal from the audition. Don’t be asked to leave before playing a note!

Upon arrival, check in with the personnel manager, or someone that has been hired to help with the audition. Applicants will be shown to a warm up room, or simply told where it is. The warm up routine should be the same as it is every day, with slow controlled motions, gradually increasing in speed. Quite often all audition candidates are

³⁰ Gabriel Gottlieb, “Nice work (if you can get it); How do you make sure you get the job you’ve always wanted?” *Double Bassist* n21 (Summer 2002):17.

put in one large room to warm up (often referred to as the “cattle call”). Applicants should not try to show off, and should not be intimidated by the other players. All musicians hear things in other players they like and dislike. Other applicants will likely play the excerpts differently from one another. This is not cause for alarm. Each candidate surely will have researched and listened to recordings before settling on an interpretation. There will always be different ways to play an excerpt, and many will be considered correct. It is likely there will be various speeds taken for solo literature. Tempo is not the most important aspect of a solo. Audition committees are impressed by more than just speed. Musicians should stay relaxed, and not try to make any changes from the preparation they put into the audition. Stay focused. Do not give the room a cold shoulder, but do not spend too much time talking with the other players.

At some point each candidate will be issued a number. Some orchestras will assign numbers before candidates arrive, while other will have everyone draw numbers from a hat or a bundle of numbered pencils. If specific audition times have not been assigned, these numbers will also determine the order of auditions. Usually, the audition committee will know applicants only by their number. This is to help keep the process unbiased.

“Expect your audition time to be delayed as much as several hours.”³¹ If all applicants are told to arrive at eight in the morning before individual audition times are determined, some people will need to wait several hours before playing. If required to wait several hours before playing, take a nice walk, have a light lunch, and try to relax. It would be ill advised to play for five solid hours before playing an audition. Physically

³¹ Michael Rosen, “At the orchestral percussion audition.” *Percussive Notes* 37(August 1999):14.

exhausting one's body before auditioning would be counterproductive to a successful performance.

Shortly before auditioning get a drink of water and take a few deep breaths. The personnel manager or room monitor will call numbers, and guide candidates to another room one at a time for five to ten minutes of private warm up. At this point the orchestra may inform candidates what specific excerpts will be played, and in what order. Don't be alarmed if the hardest excerpts are on the list. Everyone is there to prove they are capable, and that will not be done by playing easy material. Applicants will then be escorted to the stage door, or to the door of the room in which you will be auditioning. (This area will be referred to as the stage for the duration of this paper.) The personnel manager or an audition proctor (this will be abbreviated "personnel manager" for the duration of this discussion) will instruct players not to speak while on stage. Should there be a question or concern during the audition, whisper to the personnel manager who will answer the question, or ask the committee on behalf of the candidate. The personnel manager will remain on stage for the entire audition. The stage can be ten to fifteen degrees hotter or cooler than the warm up room. In one case experienced by the author, all auditioning players were required to walk outside to a separate building from the warm up area in 100 degree heat. Instruments, especially those made of wood, will swell or contract as a result of the temperature change, and may go out of tune. It is usually permitted to play a few notes after setting up on stage. Use this time to check tuning, and adjust for the temperature change. Be subtle with what sounds are created. Flashy or obnoxious tuning methods will not reflect well on the applicant. Remember, these tuning notes are the first sounds the committee will hear. Tune quickly, quietly, and carefully. Listen to how the sound passes through the hall. If it is a very large hall, it will reverberate more than most players might be used to. Sound will likely respond better on

the stage. Applicants will generally hear themselves better than in their usual practice area. Try not to get caught up in the sound or let the echo (if there is one) distract.

“He went to the audition one day early, went into the room where the audition was to be held, and played through the entire audition presentation as if it were the real thing. He learned the following:

1. What the room sounded like.
2. What the room felt like.
3. What he felt like after and during the process.
4. What it felt like to play before a pretend committee.
5. What it felt like to wear the same audition clothes.”³²

If everyone could have this kind of experience, auditions would be much easier.

If this is an attainable option, seize it, and thank whoever makes it possible. Otherwise, the few seconds of set-up time will be the only chance to acclimate to the stage.

The audition committee will sit out in the hall or on stage during the audition. In either case, there will usually be no visual contact between the committee and the candidates. “Discrimination, consciously or not, still exists.”³³ Large screens will be placed a few feet in front of the committee. While this does slightly affect the aural perception of every applicant, this is a necessary measure to ensure there is no bias because of age, sex, race, equipment (“German and French bowing systems are often regarded as mutually exclusive.”³⁴), whether musicians sit or stand, or any other reason anyone might think of to judge on anything other than a person’s performance. Women are encouraged to wear shoes that are non-gender identifying, such as high heels. Some orchestras will have all applicants remove their shoes before they go on stage. Other orchestras will lay a carpet path from the stage door to the music stand to avoid sounds identifying a person’s gender. Gender has been one of the most prevalent factors of

³² Larry D. Snider, “Auditions – the Mind Game” *Percussive Notes* 37 (August 1999):49.

³³ Michel Debost, “My thoughts on auditions,” *Flute Talk* 23 (February 2003):2.

³⁴ Hans Roelofson, “Out of sight, out of mind (blind adjudication as a means of overcoming institutionalized prejudice.” *Double Bassist* n23 (Winter 2002):61.

discrimination in the orchestra world. Many orchestras will ask that candidates make every effort possible not to clear their throat or cough since even these sounds can give clues to gender. Every precaution possible is taken to be sure the committee knows nothing about the applicants while they play.

The committee will be composed of five to twelve people. The group usually includes the principal of the section (or acting principal if the audition is for the title chair) as well as other members of the section. The committee will also include members of other sections in the same instrument family, often cellist for bass auditions, as well as a few individuals from other areas of the orchestra such as brass players or percussionists. If the audition is for a principal chair, section leaders from other parts of the orchestra will likely attend. The assistant music director or director may be present for the first round of auditions.

CHAPTER 7

ROUND ONE

The personnel manager will announce each applicant as they arrive on stage and in some cases the solo selection if required in the first round. “Whenever you are ready” will be heard from behind the screen, or from the personnel manager. Take a deep breath and begin. “Speed is often NOT the objective. Rather than attempting a new speed record, concentrate on making a musical statement.”³⁵ Aim for a tempo that feels slightly slow. Heightened nerves mixed with effort to slow down will usually yield a fair, balanced, controlled performance. “The committee will accept your tempo, but they will be counting at this tempo so you must count too.”³⁶ As mentioned previously, rhythmic integrity is extremely important. Do not expect to get more than two minutes into the piece, but always be prepared to play the entire movement. At some point, usually at the end of the exposition, someone will say “Thank you” from behind the screen. The voice will likely be confident, and slightly louder than one might hope to hear while trying to remain calm. The committee chairperson must speak loudly to be sure they are heard through the screen. Be sure to stop immediately.

If the order of the excerpts is known, get the music ready (if not playing from memory). If the order has not been made known, the first excerpt will be announced. Some orchestras will have music on the stage while other orchestras will expect each player to have their own copies. If the orchestra provides parts, be prepared to see bowings and fingerings in the part different from those in the practice parts. Hopefully the applicant has learned the material well enough to play the excerpts as practiced even

³⁵ Joseph D. Goble, “On audition & contest preparation for wind instrument performances (the unwritten rules).” *International Tuba Euphonium Association Journal* 29 (Winter 2002):80.

³⁶ Donald Peck, “Audition Time,” *Flute Talk* 21 (September 2001):5.

if there are different markings on the page. If an applicant suspects this will be a problem, he should bring and use his own music even if parts are provided. Before starting the first excerpt take a moment to think about the character of the piece. Mentally sing through the first few bars to settle on a tempo. "Playing too fast is a sure indication of an inexperienced player."³⁷ If an excerpt is played too fast and poorly, the chances of a successful audition are greatly reduced. If it is played too slowly, but played well, the committee will either accept it as a different interpretation, or ask that it be played again faster. Hopefully the months or years of preparation will pay off and it will be effortless to play through the excerpt. When finished, stop and wait silently. Be prepared for the chairperson to stop the performance before playing the entire excerpt. Remember, being stopped does not mean the excerpt has been played poorly. It simply means the committee has heard what they wanted from that particular excerpt. Applicants will be instructed to play the next excerpt, or told "thank you, that will be all". "It is not always easy to go from one (excerpt) to the other, and be right away in the right mood and in the right tempo."³⁸ If another excerpt will be played, go through the same process of mentally imagining the character and tempo of the music at hand. If instructed to do so, leave the stage quickly and quietly.

Do not be discouraged if an audition lasts only a few minutes. The first round of an audition is used to filter out as many applicants as possible, with the shortest audition possible. "I believe this cruel selection process will also restrain the inflation of applicants, many of whom would be better advised to practice a while longer and apply at

³⁷ Michael Rosen, "At the orchestral percussion audition." *Percussive Notes* 37(August 1999):14.

³⁸ Mariko Anraku and others, "The Orchestra Audition." *World Harp Congress Review*. 8 (Fall 2003):15.

a later time.”³⁹ Return to the warm up room and relax. If there will be a long wait before results are announced, pack up all equipment, and put it in an out of the way place. As a courtesy to those who have not yet auditioned, leave the warm up room. If the second round will take place on the same day, return well before the results are announced so that you may warm up to audition again. It is usually not predetermined who will go first or last in the second round, so be prepared to play immediately.

If not advanced to the second round, pack up and head back to your hotel room or home. Make sure to maintain a positive attitude. If selected to move on, be gracious in the success. If the second round will be another day, get the needed information from the personnel manager, and leave. If it is the same day, the audition order will be randomly selected, or announced as determined by the personnel manager for the next round.

³⁹ Michel Debost, “My thoughts on auditions,” *Flute Talk* 23 (February 2003):4.

CHAPTER 8

THE SEMI-FINALS

The second round of an audition is often referred to as the semi-finals. Making it to this level will often secure musicians a spot on the sub list if they live locally, and the audition should be considered a success. The number of people that move on to this level can vary greatly. For most orchestras, the second round is also conducted behind a screen. Time slots for the second round of auditions tend to be longer than the first round, but could still be only a few minutes. The committee will be drawn from the same pool of people as in the first round. Applicants may or may not be asked to play the solo again. If the solo is repeated, expect to get further into the piece than in the first round. Players may be asked to present an excerpt more than once in this round. Do not be discouraged if this is the case. “Members of the committee would ask the candidate to replay certain passages differently. A symphony job requires great flexibility in style, sound, and tempo, convincingly played on request. The ability to adjust quickly is very important to conductors, and can be a determining factor in the final rounds.”⁴⁰ The committee chairperson or assistant music director will usually make a few comments before an excerpt is repeated. They may ask that dynamics be exaggerated, to change the articulation of a passage, change the bowing or bow stroke to a higher or lower *spiccato* stroke, or to play it faster or slower. “When you repeat the excerpt, be sure to make it different!”⁴¹ Whatever they ask, be sure to adhere to their request. “Be prepared to have

⁴⁰ Peter Kogan, “Auditioning for the Minnesota Orchestra.” *Percussive Notes* 37 (August 1999):20-21.

⁴¹ Michael Rosen, “At the orchestral percussion audition.” *Percussive Notes* 37(August 1999):15.

someone conduct you while you play a few excerpts.”⁴² This will likely be the assistant music director, but could also be the music director, and will help the committee to determine if you are able to follow, and take non-verbal artistic input.

Once the committee has heard enough, they will again say “thank you, that will be all”. As before, leave the stage and wait for results. If asked to play the finals, be happy. The potential to win the spot is in sight. As before, if the finals are on a different day, get all necessary information from the personnel manager and head back home or to your hotel. If they are the same day, prepare to play again.

⁴² Michael Rosen, “At the orchestral percussion audition.” *Percussive Notes* 37(August 1999):14.

CHAPTER 9

THE FINALS

If the finals are the same day, there will likely be a short break, and then auditions will resume. If they are on another day, some orchestras will compensate finalists for travel and lodging for the final round, while others will not. In the final round the screen will most likely be removed. Some orchestras leave it up for the entire process. At this point, the music director will join the committee if not present for earlier rounds. His word will welcome the new member into the orchestra or thank applicants for their time. In most cases, there will not be many players in this round of the audition.

An audition in the final round can last a very long time. Each finalist will likely play their entire solo, possibly with a staff pianist. The most difficult and obscure excerpts will be requested. As before, each candidate may be asked to play material multiple times, and different ways. The conductor himself may even guide candidates through an excerpt to see how they adapt. At this point, technical perfection and the most musical playing are imperative. “(There may be) a few more obscure sight-reading passages thrown in for good measure, to find out how you cope under pressure.”⁴³ Many orchestra musicians do not get their parts until a few days before the first concert. Playing the parts adequately at first sight, and learning them completely within a few days are essential skills for orchestral players. Since it is a necessary job skill, sight reading is often an included part of an audition, especially in the finals. Should the field be narrowed to only three or four players, the committee may ask for a “playoff”. All remaining candidates will go to the stage together and play the same excerpt one after the other, allowing the committee to get a direct comparison between the remaining candidates. This process is often a tie-breaking technique for the committee.

⁴³Nicholas Vallis-Davis, “Getting to grips with auditions.” *PAN The Journal of the British Flute Society* 20 (September 2001): 11.

At this point in an audition a bit of bias may be used to help choose a winner. Orchestra committees may break a tie with experience. If one player does not have any playing experience, and another player is a veteran, the veteran will win the audition if the orchestra is looking for a seasoned player to help lead a section. If the orchestra is looking to get younger players into the sections, a younger player might have a slight advantage.

Some orchestras will offer a one year probationary contract to the winner that day. Others will have the selected finalists (usually two or three) each spend a week playing with the orchestra in order to see how well the finalists fit in with the other players. This is not just about playing well with the other members of the section, but musically blending with the ensemble, and showing the highest standards of professional behavior and musical preparedness. Even after this complicated process, the selected winner may be offered only a one year probationary contract, especially if it is a union orchestra. If this is the case, the committee will review the winner's actions over the one year contract, and decide if the new player will become a permanent section member, or if they will have to re-audition for the chair.

CHAPTER 10

KEEPING THE JOB

The most important factor of keeping an orchestra job or getting called for a sub position again is doing all the things music teachers have impressed on their students for their entire musical training. Be early for everything. Learn the parts quickly, and learn them well including awareness of the stylistic elements of a piece. Pay attention to the details on the page. Watch the conductor, and listen to every word he or she says, marking notes in the music with a pencil. Above all, keep a good attitude at all times, and behave in a professional manner. “During the first couple of seasons, it’s prudent to keep your mouth closed and your ears open.”⁴⁴ This is not to say new members should sit silently and not get to know any of the other members of the orchestra, but try not to be overly assertive, musically or otherwise. Learn how the ensemble works with the conductor, and how the section functions. Orchestra musicians are not soloists. Play as part of the ensemble or the position may not last. “Obligations include to play well, to listen to colleagues, accompanying well, breathing with the wind players, taking time for the string players, knowing the phrase of the music. LISTENING and TIMING!”⁴⁵ Questions about the music should be addressed to one of the senior section members of the orchestra, or the section leader. They will always rather have someone in the section who asks questions over someone who is unaware of how musically inappropriate their playing is, however, those questions must come at appropriate times. Ask questions, and learn from those around you. “Above all, be nice to people. In some instances, you will be spending many years with these people – they will be your other family. Treat people

⁴⁴ Mariko Anraku and others, “The Orchestra Audition.” *World Harp Congress Review*. 8 (Fall 2003): 14.

⁴⁵ Mariko Anraku and others: 16.

with respect and be helpful and you will make their lives and yours much happier. Shut your mouth, play great, smile a lot... and listen!”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Fraser, Robert. Ensemble Etiquette: Group Dynamics and music, “Playing well is only part of it.”:1.

CHAPTER 11

RECOVERING FROM A LOSS

“Daniel Katzen won the position as second horn of the Boston Symphony after taking forty-seven auditions.’ In order to land an orchestra job, you must not only be prepared, but also extremely persistent.”⁴⁷ Chances are good musicians will fail miserably at their first audition. Be prepared for this reality. Know that there will be other auditions and other orchestras later in life. Do not think of an unsuccessful audition as a waste of time and money, but as a trial run for a successful audition. Music is a business where players must always look forward. Think of a bad audition as a botched rhythm in the tenth bar of a piece. No-one will be thinking about it when you nail the finish. Perseverance, hope, hard work, experience, and musicality are the factors that push musicians to their goals.

Even if a player didn’t win the position, a well played audition can still yield work. “Always think, even if you don’t win, you’ll remain in the minds of the committee and the orchestra members as a good player.”⁴⁸ Calls for work as a sub or an extra musician can be a result of a well-played audition. Quite often the principal of the section determines who is on the sub list, and in what order they are called. A few lessons with an established section member can demonstrate a player’s true potential, and help them to learn exactly what a particular orchestra looks for in a player. “Ringing up for consultation lessons with the principal of a section is another great way of getting work.”⁴⁹ If lessons with the principal are not possible, try to study with any experienced

⁴⁷Tony L. Brandolino, “Pre-professional perspectives – winning an orchestral audition: advice from the pros (concertmasters Samuel Thaviu, Linda Thomassen, and David Halen). *American String Teacher* 49 (May 1999):31.

⁴⁸ Mariko Anraku and others:15.

⁴⁹ Chloe Cutts, “Making it (Career Tips),” *Double Bassist* n25 (summer 2003): 17.

member of the section. “Word of mouth can be an effective way of getting on the extras list.”⁵⁰ One way or another, maintain a working relationship with the members of the section. It will pay off down the line.

⁵⁰ Gabriel Gottlieb, “Nice work (if you can get it); How do you make sure you get the job you’ve always wanted?” *Double Bassist* n21 (Summer 2002):17.

CHAPTER 12

WHAT IF?

Many young players ask a variety of “what if” questions that deal with issues that could arise.

What if a string breaks during an audition? As unlikely as this is for a bass player, it is possible. If a string does break, remain calm and silent. If the personnel manager does not immediately notice what has happened, turn the bass toward him and point. The personnel manager will inform the committee what has happened, and you will leave the stage. The day may not be over! Most orchestras will issue you a new audition time, as well as new number. Time will be given to rectify the situation, and there will be another chance to audition. Not carrying extra strings could cause the end of the audition day. Finding a music store in a strange city, especially one that carries quality bass strings, could be difficult. Experiencing a more catastrophic situation such as a broken bridge or a toppled sound post during transport could take a person out of the audition process unless an alternate instrument can be used, or an alternate audition day is available.

What if an applicant is late to the audition? Some orchestras include a phrase on the application such as “any candidate not showing the highest of professional standards will be released at the orchestra’s discretion”. In short, if an applicant is late because of oversleeping or traffic, the job is lost. Orchestras understand some situations, such as a delayed flight. If this is the case, contact the orchestra personnel as soon as possible. Situations beyond the candidates control may be understood and will be accommodated if possible, otherwise be sure to be early, and plan for issues like traffic or getting lost.

What if an instrument goes out of tune during the audition? Is it permitted to tune during the audition? YES! As mentioned above, temperature can vary quite a bit

from a warm up room filled with 50 bass players to the stage and can be detrimental to the instrument. Should the instrument go out of tune, fix it. The committee will appreciate attention to intonation, and the overall sound will be better.

What if the orchestra doesn't take anyone from an audition? As unfortunate as it is, this situation does occur.⁵¹ If the orchestra feels none of the applicants are up to the standards of the ensemble, they can reopen the search. All candidates will have the option to reapply, and audition again. The audition committee may be unable to come to a consensus of a winner, and will begin the search again. A third scenario is less common. "Despite obsessive measures to ensure fairness, (an audition) is often anything but impartial."⁵² If the music director has a particular person in mind for the spot, and that person doesn't make the finals, the music director may say the process needs to start over. This bias costs all the applicants time and money, as well as unneeded stress. This circumstance costs the orchestra money as well, since they need to pay all the committee members, as well as the operational staff of the hall. Often the person the music director or audition committee has in mind is someone who has subbed successfully with the orchestra.

"There have been orchestra auditions where there was no intention of picking a winner, or where a winner had already been chosen, or in its most common form, where the orchestra simply wished to dispense with the mandatory audition so that its leadership could proceed to fill the vacancy in its own preferred manner. For want of a better term, we shall refer to these as 'rhetorical auditions.' Such regrettable occurrences usually happen when an organization has decided to audition/appoint a specific player, or wishes to listen to or choose from a specific group of players. In the interest of satisfying certain statutory requirements usually related to orchestra labor agreements, a standard audition is held for the sake of appearances; then, after no winner has been named (surprise!) the 'favored' player or small group of players is invited to audition. Rhetorical auditions do not represent a common occurrence in

⁵¹ Stevens, Thomas. "Suppose they had an orchestra audition and nobody won?" *Brass Bulletin* n111 (2000): 106-21.

⁵² Tamara Bernstein, "Trials be Audition." *The Double Reed* 23 (n3 2000):75.

the orchestra world, but they do exist even though many people in the orchestra business vehemently deny it.”⁵³

What is the solution to overcoming this bias? If possible, take sub gigs with orchestras that may have upcoming auditions. It would be of questionable standards to deliberately establish bias in favor of winning the spot, but take advantage of sub spots if at all possible. This bias is why some orchestras keep the screen up for all rounds of audition.

What if you take too many musical liberties during the audition? Personal musicality is an integral part of winning an audition, but know when to let it out, and when to keep it reigned in. “Rubato ... sure!! But like a good spice, it is always best when used sparingly.”⁵⁴

⁵³ Stevens, Thomas: 112.

⁵⁴ Tom Gibson, “Thoughts to ponder: auditioning – a view from behind the screen.” *International Trombone Association Journal* 23 (Summer 1998):20.

CHAPTER 13

THE EXCERPTS

The Real Get a Job Book is a one volume, 316 page collection of excerpts from 48 orchestral compositions.⁵⁵ While this book is an immensely valuable resource, it is hardly realistic to think a person, especially a young musician, could have all 316 pages perfectly prepared and ready for an audition. The excerpts discussed in this publication are some of the most commonly requested, and will likely include music needed to take an audition with regional or per-service orchestras. These excerpts and the experience gained from playing with smaller orchestras will build the groundwork needed to obtain a full-time position. Another valuable resource is the web site www.IMSLP.org.⁵⁶ This web site contains scanned parts and scored for public domain works for all instruments. Quite often a full orchestral part can be downloaded and printed from the site at no charge. The only downfall of the site is that anything still under copyright is not available to view or print.

The basic content of the excerpts included in this paper, such as notes, dynamics, and stylistic markings, were extracted from the Zimmerman orchestra books, and published full-orchestra parts and scores. The Zimmerman books are carefully notated orchestra parts published by the former principal bassist of the New York Philharmonic, and are a valuable resource that should be purchased by any bass player with an interest in orchestral performance. The bowings included here, while similar to those written by Zimmerman in some cases, are the work of the author. Some fingerings and bowings in this publication are the same as those in the Zimmerman parts, and many are adapted by

⁵⁵ *The Real Get a Job Book. The One Volume Double Bass Audition Repertoire.* (Tampa, FL:1995).

⁵⁶ Guo, Edward. *Internatoional Music Scores Library Project.* N.d. Web. 30 March, 2011. www.IMSLP.org

the author to a more modern sound, accommodating the use of metal strings since the Zimmerman publications were first released when gut strings were the only option available. The action can be set much lower with metal strings, allowing more efficient fingerings. The faster response of metal core strings allows more economical bowings, and an expanded dynamic range. The fingerings may not be comfortable for everyone, and there is no single way to play each excerpt. If the fingerings are not comfortable, readers should find or create some that are. Either way, be sure to be consistent with the fingerings used. All dynamic, tempo, and stylistic markings from the parts are included below. Tempo markings are printed only if indicated by the composer or editor. In the case of the Beethoven excerpts, metronome markings are those of the composer. In the case of the Mozart excerpts, metronome markings are those of the publisher. In all cases, there is a range of tempo that would be acceptable as long as a steady tempo is maintained, and the character of the excerpt is accommodated by the tempo.

Symphony No. 5

Movement 3, Minuet

L. Van Beethoven op. 67

Allegro $\text{♩} = 96$ *poco rit.* *a tempo*

1 1 4 2 2 4 2 1 2

pp

9

1 4 2 2 4 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1

sfp

17 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

2 1 2

f

24

f

33

sf sf

42

sf sf dimin. pp

51 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

1 1 4 2 2 4 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 4

59

2 1 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2

cresc

67

75

84

93

f

sf

sf

dimin. pp

The third movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is in two sections, a Minuet and Scherzo. Each part will be discussed separately as the challenges and demands of the two sections differ.

The most important element to successfully perform part one of this excerpt is to think smooth. Even when the large slurs are broken by bow changes, players should connect the line as much as possible. Execute the string crossings smoothly and quickly, but be sure not to cut any notes short in an effort to get to the next string. The dynamics are important. Be sure not to crescendo unless it is indicated, and maintain the new dynamic with the same care. The dynamic range for this excerpt is from *forte* to *pianissimo*. This contrast should be exaggerated by playing out in the *forte* sections slightly more than usual. This will help the quiet sections seem more sensitive, and show a wide, expressive dynamic range. The *sforzando-pianos* must be treated carefully. If they occur in a section that is *pianissimo* (such as measure 13) they should not be articulated with the same force as in a *forte* section (such as bar 38). This technique is

known as playing the articulation within the context of the dynamic, and can give away an inexperienced player if executed improperly. The *poco ritardandos* leading into the *fermatas* will be an identifier of whether a player has listened to a recording. *Poco ritardando* means a little slower and should not be overdone. Prepared musicians hear the horns finishing the theme during the *rit*. Singing the horn part while practicing will help the pacing of the *ritardando*.

Symphony No. 5

Movement 3, Scherzo

L. Van Beethoven op. 67

Allegro $\text{♩} = 96$

128 *pp cresc* *f* *ff*

136 *p* *f*

142

149

156

162

168

174

181

188

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for the Scherzo movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. It covers measures 128 to 188. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 96 beats per minute. The score includes various dynamic markings: 'pp cresc' (pianissimo crescendo) at measure 128, 'f' (forte) at measure 131, 'ff' (fortissimo) at measure 134, 'p' (piano) at measure 136, and 'f' (forte) at measure 141. There are several accents (marked with a 'V' symbol) and slurs throughout the piece. Fingering numbers (0-4) are provided for many of the notes, particularly in the right hand. The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 128, 136, 142, 149, 156, 162, 168, 174, 181, and 188 marking the beginning of new systems.

195

201

206

212

216

p

f

dimin.

p

sempre piu piano

Theodore Karp's Dictionary of Music describes a scherzo as "a work of light, humorous, or vigorous nature. The scherzo is more rapid and forceful than the Minuet and often uses prominently the element of rhythmic surprise."⁵⁷ It is important to keep this definition in mind while preparing the excerpt. Playing light and vigorous can be a challenge, but is possible. Keeping a slight amount of space between each eighth note while playing with a strong tone will produce the sound desired. Space should also be present during quarter-note passages. The *staccato* markings over the quarter notes should not be taken too literally. This technique is described as playing the articulation within the context of the duration. An eighth-note *staccato* should be played shorter than a quarter-note *staccato*. Be sure to count very carefully. The third-beat entrances (such

⁵⁷ Karp, Theodore, *Dictionary of Music*:348.

as bars 140 and 162) must be made with confidence, as they represent the rhythmic surprise characteristic of a *scherzo*. As is the case with all excerpts, respect the dynamic markings, and be sure not to play too quickly. The rhythmic pulse is what matters, not the tempo.

Measures 128 through 140 are part of the Minuet that precedes this excerpt. An audition panel will listen for the transition between the contrasting styles. Be sure to maintain the *minuet* characteristics as discussed earlier, and switch to the new character immediately. Some conductors will ask that the tempo of the two sections be identical, while others will utilize a faster tempo for the *scherzo*. Be sure to practice the transition both ways.

Symphony No. 9

finale

L. Van Beethoven

Presto $\text{♩} = 96$

7

f 4 2 1 2 4 0 2 4 4 1 2 4 2 4

13 **dim.** **p** 7 **f** A G

26 **Allegro ma non troppo** $\text{♩} = 88$

4 1 4 4 2 1 4 1 4 4 2 4 1 **pp**

33 **Tempo I**

f ff 1 2 1 4

41 **poco Adagio**

dim ritard

47 **Vivace** 8 **Tempo I** 55

cello pizz **f** 4 1 4 2 1 2 2 0

59 **Adagio cantabile** **Tempo I**

2 1 1 2 4 1 2 4 **dimin** **p** 2

65 **cresc.** 1 4 2 1 1 4 4 4 1 4 1 4 2

72 **Allegro assai** $\text{♩} = 80$ $\frac{3}{4}$

ff *f*

80 **Tempo I**

f

86 **Allegro assai** $\text{♩} = 80$

p

92

97

102

cresc. *p*

107

cresc.

112

sempre p

117

122

cresc. *p*

128

133

137

This section of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 is referred to as the *recitative*, and for very good reason. The tempo can, and will, fluctuate with the freedom of an operatic *recitative*. For this reason it is of the highest importance that the tempo remain flexible in this excerpt. No two conductors will direct this passage the same way. Some will ask that it be played nearly in strict time, while others will allow the tempo to ebb and flow so dramatically the bass section will be utterly lost if the passage is not memorized, requiring the players to watch the conductor for every note. Learn the excerpt in perfect time, and also by playing along with different recordings. Practicing different interpretations will prepare musicians for whatever interpretations the audition committee may ask. The eighth notes with *staccato* markings should not be played true *staccato*. There needs to be a separation, but maintain the fluid nature of a vocal line. The *Ode to Joy* motive starts in measure 91. This moment is the first new melodic material of the movement, and has a drastic character change from the preceding measures. This section must start whisper quiet. In one case experienced by the author, a conductor threatened to have half the section air bow, so it appears they are still playing, but no sound is produced if the desired dynamic wasn't achieved. Be careful not to get louder before it is indicated, and be sure to choose a reasonable tempo. Keep the bow changes as fluid as possible, and avoid string crossings by playing higher on the D string. The style and expression of this passage are paramount, as is flexibility. Be certain to listen to multiple recordings, and practice the passage a variety of ways. In semi-final and final rounds, applicants may be asked to follow a conductor through this excerpt.

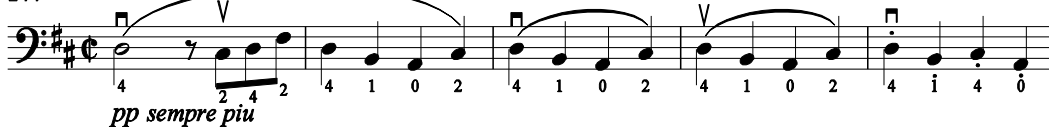
Symphony No. 2

Movement 4

Johannes Brahms, Op. 73

Allegro con spirito

244



249



254



258



262



267



271



275



This excerpt is a challenge for both the left hand and the bow. Many of the bow strokes are long, but remain quiet so they are possible since very little bow is needed for the required dynamic. If this excerpt is played too loudly, players will run out of bow, so be sure to respect the dynamics. Start the first down bow in the middle of the bow to allow sufficient bow availability for the following up-bow slur. Be sure to maintain the *pianissimo* dynamic as the melodic line ascends. The composer uses the term *sempre pianissimo* several times in this passage. Audition committees will listen for dynamic control. Starting in measure 264, play out. Playing the *forte* slightly louder will accentuate the preceding *pianissimo* by creating greater contrast. From measure 265 on, put a small space between each of the eighth notes. If played *legato* the chromatic passing tones will blur together. The *Sforzando* starting in bar 275 should be played powerfully, but not with too sharp of an attack. Try thinking or saying “Brahms” along with the accent. The attack of a “B” with a long vowel rather than perhaps a harsh “T” will achieve the sound.⁵⁸ Accents within a *forte* are a great place to show articulation control, and the power of an instrument as long as the notes are executed with good tone.

⁵⁸ Molina, Stephen. Interview.

Symphony No. 40

Movement 1

W. A. Mozart K. 550

114 **Allegro molto** $\text{♩} = 120$

p *f* 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 3_o 3 2 4 1 4 2

118

1 2 4 2 1 2 0 1 2 4 4 2 1 0 4 1 0 0 1 4 0 0 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 0 0 1

122

2 2 4 1 1 4 1 1 4 1 1 4 4 1 2 2 0

126

4 0 2 0 4 0 1 4 0 4 4 0 4 1 2 4 1 1 4 0 1 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 0 1 4

130

0 1 4 2 4 2 2 1 4 1 2 1 4 2 4 1 4 1 4 2 3_o 2 1 4 1 4 1 2 0 4 1 2

134

4

136

This excerpt tests left hand technique, interpretation, and most significantly, bow technique. The opening four bars, as well as bars 122 through 125 should be played smooth and connected. Be sure quarter notes are played full value (such as the downbeat of bar 123). The contrast produced by this smooth articulation, and the execution of the following passages are musically effective, but can be difficult to produce. The eighth note passages must be played *spiccato*, and should remain playful. The transition from the on string stroke to the *spiccato* can be awkward, so be sure to prepare the change, and switch to the new stroke directly as the new phrase begins. The tempo marking of half note equals 120 is that of Zimmerman, and is a good target tempo.

Symphony No. 40

Movement 4

W. A. Mozart K. 550

Allegro assai ♩ = 152

49

2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 1 4 1 2 1 0 4 0 2 1 4 0 2 1 4 0 1 2 1 0 2 1 0

53

1 4 1 0 1 4 1 0 1 4 0 4 1 0 4 1 0 1 4 1 0 1 4 1 0 2

57

4 2 0 4 1 0 4 1 0 2 0 4 1 0 4 1 0 4 1 4

61

1 4 1 4 1 0 4 1 0

66

1 4 1 4 1 0 4 1 0

The primary challenge of this excerpt is the tempo. While the half note equals 152 included here is the marking of Zimmerman, not of Mozart, it is a good tempo to have as a goal. This excerpt should be prepared and learned at the fastest tempo possible, but must be performed cleanly. As was stated before, a clear, quality performance at a slower tempo is better than a fast paced mess. The eighth note passages played off the string produces the second challenge of this excerpt, switching from on string articulation to off, and back again. The slurred notes (such as bars 49, 51, and 53) and the dotted half note resolutions (such as bars 56, 58, and 60) should be played on the string.

Don Juan

Allegro molto con brio

first 65 bars

Richard Strauss, Op. 20

ff 4 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 1 1 1

6 pizz. ff

12 arco

17 mf mf pizz.

23 A arco 2 1 1 4 1 1 2 4 1 4 0 1 1 4 0 1 4 1 ff

28 1 4 0 2 4 1 0 4 1 2 4 0 1 4 V V V

32 fff f

38 ff B ff

43 ff pp arco ff

49 *tranquillo* **C** *molto vivo* 4

58 *f* 1 2 1 0 4 1

63 *p* *rapidamente* *cresc.* *ff* 1 4 4 2 0 4 1 4 1 2 4 1 1 4

This excerpt addresses a variety of issues. It is fast, aggressive, rhythmically complicated, highly chromatic, contains a wide dynamic range, various articulations, changing meter, pizzicato, and notes below the open E revealing if a player has an extension. Listening to recordings will help achieve the tempo, as well as the aggressive nature. Be sure not to play too harshly, as the character of the piece is joyous. Practice the piece slowly to learn the rhythms correctly. Setting a metronome on the quarter note (rather than the half note indicated by the time signature) will allow a constant pulse through the changing meters. Slow practice will also assist in learning the chromatic passages. Be aware that *double-forte* is not the loudest dynamic. To accommodate, be sure *ff* is not treated as *forte possibile*. The *crescendos* must be very dramatic, and continue through the entire duration of the note, as is the purpose of the up bows. Be sure not to snap the string on the *pizzicatos*, and to *pizz* very lightly where indicated. Clearly articulating the passages below the open E can be a challenge, so be sure to use a firm left hand, and a shortened bow stroke.

B. Britten

62

This variation from Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* showcases and demonstrates the sound of the bass section. As a result, many of the varying dynamics, tone qualities, and effects that can be produced on the bass are exploited. For that reason this section is not just important to audience members, but also to members of an audition committee. The excerpt begins at a double *piano*, gradually becoming louder with each bar, arriving at a double *forte* in bar 8. A player must be sure to start quietly enough to allow sufficient growth to the louder dynamic. Along with this increase in volume is a gradual accelerando from a slow tempo, arriving at a brisk Allegro just in time for a sixteenth note run down the neck in bar 11. The composer adds the term *veloce*, which means fast, to make his instructions clearer. To counter this run, bar 12 contains a glissando back up, ending with a harmonic G, played with a *sforzando*. Great effect can be achieved on the high G by using a full bow and only moderate weight, lifting the bow off the string at the tip. The resulting tone will be a ringing, vibrant harmonic. Bar 28 contains quarter note triplets, but is played out of time as indicated by *rall. molto*. This rallentando leads to a nice arrival point on the fermata in bar 29, and sets up the rest of the excerpt. Starting in bar 30, the process starts again with quiet dynamics and a slow tempo, increasing in velocity and volume as the passage continues. At the *Allegro* in bar 39, Britten again marks *veloce* to be absolutely clear. The sixteenth note scalar passage ends with a flourish, glissandoing up to a high G harmonic. This move is similar to the gliss in bar 12, but is played an octave higher. Use the same bow technique on this high G harmonic for a nice bright, exciting finish.

Variaciones Concertantes
XI. Ripresa dal Tema per Contrabasso

A. Ginastera

65 Adagio molto espressivo = 56

1

Harp

Contrabass

p

Solo

3

Hp

Cb.

5

Hp

Cb.

mf

mf

66 poco precipitato rall. a tempo

Hp

Cb.

f

mf

f esaltato

9

Hp

Cb.

cedendo

p dolce

11 67 *rallentando*

Hp

pp

Cb.

pp

8va

This movement from Ginastera's *Variaciones Concertantes* features the bass section. It is set as a duet with the harpist. The entire score for the movement is printed here. A soloist must be aware of what the harpist is playing, and think of this piece as chamber music. The dynamic scope and range of pitch are both vast. The quiet moments must be played with sensitivity, but still have some presence of tone. It is better to play too quietly than over play the softer passages. Let the committee ask to have a section repeated louder if they desire. The louder sections should be played with strong tone and projection. The flexibility of tempo is important. Listening to recordings and being aware of when to move or pull back tempo is essential. The words *molto espressivo* at the top of the page are the only indication given for the mood, while more specific directions are given in the score for other sections. The first cadenza-like moment is in bar 4. This three beat sixteenth note passage should be played starting slowly and accelerating. The last few sixteenths should pull back to give a greater sense of arrival at the downbeat of bar 5. The arrival at rehearsal 66, indicates that the quarter note should stay constant as the time signature changes from a quarter note to half note beat. However, the score indicates *poco precipitato* in the score, which means a little rushed. A few beats later, there is a *rallentando*. Within that one bar, the tempo is to push forward, and then pull back again to arrive at the *a tempo* in bar 8. Bar 9 is marked *cedenzo* and *dolce*, and should be played as a sweet, simple cadenza leading into the three bar *rallentando* that ends the movement. Be aware of the three Es played in bars 11 and 12. The jump up to a high E, near the end of the fingerboard, to an E within the staff, pausing on the E in between for only a sixteenth note, is challenging. Intonation must be precise, and the transition from one note to the next needs to be as smooth as possible with very little break in the sound. The key to this excerpt is to play it not only technically perfect, but with great expression and passion. Vibrato should be constant,

and vary in frequency and amplitude in proportion to the range, volume, and tempo of the phrase being played.

Symphony No. 1 (Titan)
Movement 3
Gustav Mahler

Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen

SOLO

The musical score is written for a double bass in 4/4 time. It begins with a rest for two measures, followed by a 'SOLO' section. The first staff shows a series of eighth notes with various dynamics and articulations. The second staff continues the pattern with more complex rhythms and dynamics. The score includes fingerings (1, 2, 4, 2, 1, 4, 0, 1) and dynamic markings (p mit Dämpfer, V). The tempo is marked 'Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen'.

This excerpt is referred to as “the silly little solo that is so easy to mess up.” The melody is that of a children’s folk song, twisted into a funeral march. It is to be played with some energy, but heavy, and without a hint of dragging. While it is marked with mute, many orchestra committees ask to hear it played open. In an orchestra hall, a muted double bass may not project enough to be heard through the entire space. Be ready with your mute at an audition, but don’t be surprised if asked to take it off. It is acceptable to musically phrase this solo, but only with dynamics. Use basic rules of ascending passages receiving increasing volume. Avoid phrasing by stretching time. The timpani marks each beat as this solo is played. This is a march, and the tempo must remain constant. Be cautious with the octave shift in bars 9 and 10. There must not be any glissando between the notes. The problem is solved if harmonics are used as is indicated here.

Lieutenant Kije
Movement 2

S. Prokofiev

24 Andante, come prima
arco con sord

Solo mp

Part two

Solo (Meno Mosso)

mp

This solo from Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije* is short, mournful, and revealing. The high register will reveal a great deal about a player's intonation and tone control. While a mute is indicated, the author has been requested to play this excerpt in several auditions without the mute. One should always have practiced and be prepared to perform the excerpt either way. If not specifically told one way or the other, use your mute, and let the committee or personnel manager ask you to remove it if they want to hear the excerpt without it. While the printed dynamic remains static at *mp*, a small amount of phrasing would be acceptable using dynamics. Let the line project more as the range reaches higher, retreating to the quieter dynamic as the line goes down. The part indicates a degree of separation between some of the notes. These *tenutos* should be treated lightly. A small gap in the sound is good, but too long a gap between notes will disrupt the melodic nature of the line. The second excerpt, lasting only one bar, should be played with a drastic decrescendo, fading to almost nothing. The tempo in this short excerpt should be relaxed, and pull back to lead to the final resolution.

85 *Pulcinella Suite* **86** *Movement VII - Vivo* **87** *I. Stravinsky*

$\text{♩} = 132-138$

Solo
C.B. Solo *ff*
C.B. Orch *sub p*

sff *sff* *fff* *sempre simile*

dim.

p *sub. ff* *sub. p* *gliss*

1. *fff* *ff* *mf sf* **88**

89

90

sff

sempre ff

91

sempre simile

dolce

p

staccatiss e secco

92

p

p

sub ff

sub p

ff risoluto energico

sff

sff

This excerpt from the *Pulcinella Suite* by Igor Stravinsky is a duet played with the trombone. It is to be played at a rapid tempo, and with an intense, energetic sound. The accents are to be exaggerated, and played with a hard attack. It is important to play all notes for their full value. The melody is played by the bass. With this in mind, the excerpt must be played like a melody. Longer notes, for instance the dotted quarter notes at rehearsal 86, must be held full value. It is also important that the volume of these longer notes be maintained for the entire note. There is no *decrescendo* on the notes, so they must stay at a constant volume. The running sixteenth note passages, such as the first and second ending before rehearsal 88, should be played off the string with a hard accented *spiccato*. Be sure to aim for clarity on these notes. Sacrifice a bit of volume for clarity if necessary.

There is a sudden change in character at rehearsal 91. Marked *dolce*, the character will switch to a sweet melodic sound, providing a nice contrast to the aggressive, accented mood of the opening. Some conductors will ask that the tempo stay exactly the same, while others will ask that the tempo be allowed to relax just a little to aid the sweet feeling. Be prepared to play the excerpt both ways. After rehearsal 92, the aggressive, energetic sound returns, and leads to the end of the excerpt.

The orchestral and solo quintet bass parts are included here to allow players to see how the two parts interact, and to provide the opportunity to perform the excerpt as a duet with a friend.

Poco Più Mosso $\text{♩} = 80$
 1 soli contrabbassi a 4 corde
 Con Sordina

Otello - Act 4

Bass Section Soli

G. Verdi

2 a. C.

pp 4 a. corda 3 a. C.

tutti 1 a. C. *un po' marcato* *piu marcato* *f* *morendo* *ppp*

V 2 a. C. 1 a. C.

2a.C. 3 a. C. (error!)

2 a. C. *p* *f*

Un po' piu marcato e cresc. *staccate* 4 a. C. 3 a. C. 2 a. C. 1 a. C. *ff*

This excerpt from Act 4 of Verdi's *Otello* includes a great deal of information. While this is a section soli, it begins with a solo and adds the remainder of the section in bar 7. Verdi even specifies that the solo instrument should be a bass with four strings, alluding to the common practice of Italian bassists of the era using instruments with only three strings. This part, descending to the low open E, requires what is now our standard tuning system. Verdi even goes so far as to indicate on what string many of the passages are to be played. For most of the phrases, the recommended string works well, but players should be prepared to play parts in different areas of their fingerboard to accommodate their instrument, and achieve the best sound they can. In one case, two bars before rehearsal X, there is an indication to play on the A string. Logic dictates that this marking is a printing error, and the passage should be played on the G string. Even on the G string, this passage reaches beyond the neck block positions. To play it on the A string would require going well into upper thumb position, which on most instruments would not achieve a desirable sound. Dynamics are key in this excerpt. The *pianissimo* indicated at the start must be held until bar 9, where there is a rapid crescendo to *forte* followed by a *decrescendo* to triple *piano*. To alter the dynamics other than where indicated would obscure the effect desired by the composer. This excerpt contains a gradually increasing *marcato*. The first two phrases are to be played as smooth and long as possible. As the excerpt continues, Verdi indicates *un po' marcato* (a little marcato), *piu marcato* (more marcato), ending with a sixteenth note passage marked not only *un po' piu marcato*, but also *staccato*. This final marking instructs that the passage be played quite short, and even off the string. Accompanied by an increase in volume, it is common practice that the final three bars include a gradual acceleration of tempo.

CHAPTER 14

CLOSING THOUGHTS

It is the hope of the author that this publication, will better prepare the reader to successfully enter the professional world. No matter how proficient a player one might be, it is difficult to succeed without knowledge of how to find openings, prepare for auditions, and win jobs. The information introduced in this project will help to fill a gap often found in the educational system, and in the available publications accessed by bass players.

“Many who play all the right notes, but lack personality in their sound, rarely win auditions.”⁵⁹ Musicians must play technically accurate with pristine intonation, crisp rhythm, powerful sound, and attention to detail. None of these things matter if the performance sounds like a robot. This aspect cannot be taught; it must be absorbed. Listen to as much music as possible and attend or participate in live concerts. “Use your school ensemble or freelance orchestral gigs to build this familiarity. Playing an excerpt passage with a live orchestra is invaluable – certainly an example of a picture being worth a thousand words.”⁶⁰ Play with ensembles ranging from a duo to a large orchestra whenever possible. The musical soul that will develop can give an edge over the competition, and help players realize their dreams.

⁵⁹ Tony L. Brandolino, “Pre-professional perspectives – winning an orchestral audition: advice from the pros (concertmasters Samuel Thaviu, Linda Thomassen, and David Halen). *American String Teacher* 49 (May 1999):29.

⁶⁰ Charles Noble, “Position vacant (tips on how to impress the audition panel).” *The Strad* 110 (July 1999):39

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE AUDITION ANNOUNCEMENTS IN ORDER OF

ENSEMBLE PAY

Green Bay Symphony Orchestra

Auditions

Audition Date: March 13 & 14, 2004

Location: St. Norbert College, West De Pere, WI

Time: To Be Determined.

Excerpt List

All auditioning bassists should prepare the excerpts listed below.

Candidates will also perform a solo work of their choice.

Beethoven Symphony No. 9 4th Movement; beginning to m
139

Mozart Symphony No. 40 1st Movement; mm 114-138
4th Movement; mm 49-70

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4 1st Movement; mm 51-94

Beethoven Symphony No. 5 3rd Movement - Beginning to m
100, mm 140-218

2nd Movement - mm 114-123, mm 180-195

Verdi Otello Act 4 - scene 3, letter U to 4 before Y

WISCONSIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
AUDITION REPERTOIRE LIST
2004-2005

PRINCIPAL BASS

- I. Prepared solo: First movement of a standard concerto of applicant's choice
- II. Solo orchestral excerpts
 - A. Mahler Symphony No. 1
3rd mvt - opening solo
 - B. Stravinsky Pulcinella
mvt VII Vivo - figure 85 to 6 m. after 93
- III. Orchestral excerpts
 - A. Beethoven Symphony No. 5
3rd mvt - Trio, mm. 141-219
 - B. Mozart Symphony No. 40
1st mvt - mm. 114-138
 - C. Mozart Symphony No. 40
4th mvt - mm. 49-70
 - D. Beethoven Symphony No. 9
4th mvt - recitative, mm. 1-107
 - E. Brahms Symphony No. 2
4th mvt - 8 m. before letter L to letter M

Columbus Symphony
Orchestra

Section Bass

Audition Repertoire
August 27, 2005
Legacy Hall @ RiverCenter

Requirements:

- I. A solo of your choice, preferably the first or last movement of a concerto. A comparable piece is acceptable.

- II. Excerpts from the following:

| | | |
|----------|----------------------|---|
| Mozart | Magic Flute Overture | measure 33 to Letter B |
| Schubert | Symphony No. 9 | Mvt I – Allegro ma non troppo to Letter D Mvt IV – Beginning to Letter B |
| Brahms | Symphony No. 4 | Mvt II – measure 75 to Letter F Mvt III – Letter D to Letter F |

- III. Sight Reading

Copies of the required excerpts are available from the CSO. Contact Jeanette Ross at 706-256-3648 or email jross@csoga.org for excerpts and/or to schedule an audition time.

Auditions - Section Double Bass

THE CALGARY PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Robert Minczuk, Music Director

Announces the following vacancy commencing at the start of the 2007/2008 season.

Section Bass

**International Auditions will be held on
Saturday, March 31, 2007 in Calgary, Alberta.**
Jack Singer Concert Hall, 205 - 8th Avenue SE, Calgary, Alberta

2006/2007 wages and conditions are as follows:

- 40 week season
- Three weeks paid vacation and extensive health care package.
- Minimum wage is \$888.16 per week

AUDITION REPERTOIRE

I) Solo

One movement from a Bach Cello Suite
One Movement of a STANDARD concerto

II) Excerpts Bass parts

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Beethoven | Symphony #5: 3rd movement |
| Beethoven | Symphony #9: Recitative 4th movement at Allegro assai vivace alla Marcia (5/8) |
| Mozart | Symphony #35: 4th movement |
| Mozart | Symphony #40: 1st and 4th movements |
| Strauss | Ein Heldenleben: #9 |
| Mendelssohn | Symphony #4: 1st and 4th movements |
| Schubert | Symphony #9 (Great C major): 3rd and 4th movements |
| Brubeck | Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra: Variation H and fugue |

Sight reading may also be required.

Deadline for applications is Friday, March 16, 2007

Qualified applicants should e-mail or fax a one-page resume to:

ORCHESTRA AUDITIONS
Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra
205 8th Avenue South East

Audition Repertoire List

SECTION BASS

October 8-10, 2006

Symphony Hall



SOLO repertoire

All candidates will be asked the following, in the **final round only**:

- First movement of a standard concerto, **unaccompanied**

ORCHESTRAL repertoire

- 1) Beethoven Symphony No. 5 in c minor
2nd mvmt: letter [C] to fermata
3rd mvmt: beginning to 5 bars after reh [A]
Trio to 23 bars after reh [B] – “no repeat”
- 2) Beethoven Symphony No. 9
4th mvmt: bar 8 to bar 113
- 3) Brahms Symphony No. 2
1st mvmt: reh [E] to reh [F]
4th mvmt: beginning to 15 bars after reh [A]
- 4) Britten Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra
Variation 11
- 5) Mozart Symphony No. 35
1st mvmt: bar 13 through bar 66
4th mvmt: bar 134 to bar 181
- 6) Strauss Ein Heldenleben
reh #9 to 1 bar after reh #11
reh #40 to reh #41
2 bars before reh #61 to 3 bars after reh #65
reh #77 to reh #78
- 7) Verdi Othello
Act IV: soli

AUDITIONS COORDINATOR

1245 SEVENTH AVENUE | SAN DIEGO CA 92101 | FAX: (619) 235-0805 AUDITIONS@SANDIEGOSYMPHONY.ORG

Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra Section Bass Audition Information
2 Positions
Page 2

The preliminary auditions will be held on Monday, December 6, 2004, Tuesday, December 7, 2004, and Monday, December 13, 2004. Please see the Preliminary Audition Date Preference form for times. The preliminary auditions will be live and held behind a screen on stage at Powell Symphony Hall. The Audition Committee, **without** the Music Director Designate, will be in attendance. All candidates will be introduced by randomly selected numbers to assure anonymity.

Candidates will be informed on the day of their audition whether they have been advanced to the semi-final round of auditions, or released. Those released will have their audition deposits returned to them. Deposits for those advanced will be held until after the semi-final/final rounds of auditions.

Audition Repertoire for preliminary, semi-final and final rounds of audition will be taken from the following list.

Solo:

Applicants will be required to play one movement of a Bach Suite **and** the first movement of a concerto of choice in its entirety with cadenza if applicable.

Orchestral Excerpts:

- | | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| 1) BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 5 Third Movement: | Beginning - measure 18 measure 38 - measure 100 measure 140 - measure 177 measure 197 - measure 218 |
| 2) BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 9 Last Movement: | measure 8 - measure 29 measure 38 - measure 47 measure 56 - measure 75 measure 80 - measure 107 measure 454 - measure 525 |
| 3) BERLIOZ | Symphonic fantastique Fourth Movement: Fifth Movement: | measure 17 - measure 48 measure 131 - measure 153 upbeat to measure 241 - measure 305 |
| 4) BRAHMS | Symphony No. 2 Last Movement: | measure 244 - measure 279 |
| 5) MAHLER | Symphony No. 2 First Movement | Beginning - measure 29 |
| 6) MENDELSSOHN | Symphony No. 4 First Movement | measure 41 - measure 90 measure 261 - measure 330 |
| 7) MOZART | Symphony No. 35 First Movement Last Movement | measure 13 - measure 48 measure 134 - measure 181 |

Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra Section Bass Audition Information
 2 Positions
 Page 3

| | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| 8) MOZART | Symphony No. 40 First Movement Last Movement | measure 114 - measure 138 measure 49 - measure 70 measure 229 - measure 246 |
| 9) SCHUBERT | Symphony No. 9 Third Movement | measure 105 - measure 151 |
| 10) STRAUSS | Don Juan | Letter A - 4 measures after B Letter F - 4 measures before G 10 measures before Q - 7 measures after R |
| 11) STRAUSS | Ein Heldenleben | Rehearsal #9 - 2 measures after #11 #40 - 9 measures after #40 #51 - 2 measures after #63 3 measures after #66 - 4 measures after #68 #77 - 8 measures after #77 |
| 12) VERDI | Otello Act 4 | Letter U - 7 measures after X |

There may be sight-reading material in all rounds of the audition. There will be an accompanist for the final round only. Each finalist will have 10 minutes to rehearse with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra accompanist before auditioning on stage.

The semi-final round of auditions will be held Tuesday, January 4, 2005, behind a screen on stage at Powell Symphony Hall with the Audition Committee in attendance. Applicants will again be introduced by randomly selected numbers. Semi-finalists not advanced to the final round will have their \$50.00 audition deposit checks returned to them at the conclusion of the semi-final round.

The final round of auditions will be held Tuesday, January 4, 2005, following the semi-final round of auditions. The final round will be held on the open stage, with applicants introduced by name. The entire Audition Committee, including Maestro David Robertson, Music Director Designate, will be in attendance for the final round of auditions.

Only finalists will be reimbursed their domestic (mainland USA, closest port of entry) round-trip transportation to St. Louis for the January 4th audition date. While we do not limit the number of finalists, we do request that applicants make every possible effort to obtain the least expensive airfare. Also, because we do not limit the number of finalists, we cannot estimate when the auditions will be over. We suggest that applicants be prepared to stay until the conclusion of the audition process.

Finalists should be prepared to submit receipts for transportation reimbursement on January 4th. Reimbursements will be mailed to finalists at a later date. The \$50.00 audition deposit checks will be returned to finalists at the conclusion of the final round.

Please note:

- The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra tunes to A=442.

SEATTLE SYMPHONY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL BASS

Preliminary, Semi-Final, and Final Auditions
JUNE 19, 2007 – JUNE 24, 2007

AUDITION REPERTOIRE

Please note: anyone who accepts an offer of employment from the Seattle Symphony Orchestra must have a low C extension, or be willing to get one before the start of employment.

Audition excerpts will be chosen from the following literature.



1) Solo Requirement

First movement from either the
Bottesini #2 or Koussevitsky Concerto

BACH any movement from a cello suite

2) Orchestral excerpts:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| BACH | Suite No. 2 BWV 1067, B minor (Double and Badinerie) |
| BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 5, Op. 67, C minor, (Mvts. 2 and 3) |
| | Symphony No. 9, Op. 125, D minor (recitative plus (ode) 16 bars of Allegro assai, and letter K to 52 bars after letter M) |
| BRAHMS | Symphony No. 2, Op. 73, D major (Mvts. 1 and 4) |
| BRITTEN | Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34: Variation H |
| GINASTERA | Variaciones Concertantes (XI #65, Solo) |
| MAHLER | Symphony No. 1, D major (Mvt. 3 - Solo) |
| MAHLER | Symphony No. 2, C minor (Mvt. 1: beginning to 17 bars after #1) |
| MOZART | Symphony No. 39, K. 543, E-flat major (Mvts. 1 and 4) |
| MUSSORGSKY/RAVEL | Pictures at an Exhibition: (Mvt. 6, #56 to #58) |
| PROKOFIEV | Lt. Kije (Mvt. 2 - Solo) |
| SCHUBERT | Symphony No. 9, D, Op. 44, C major (Mvt. 3) |
| SHOSTAKOVICH | Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 (Mvt. 1 reh. #22 thru 4 meas. after #26) |
| STRAUSS | Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40 (reh. #9 to reh. #11, reh. #40 to reh. #41, 2 meas. before reh. #61 to reh. #70, reh. #77 to reh. #78) |
| STRAVINSKY | Pulcinella (Variation 2, Solo) |
| WAGNER | Die Meistersinger: Prelude (letter J to N) |

3) Sight reading

Sight reading will be an important component of the audition and may include the following:

- Other selections from the standard repertoire not listed above;
- Sight reading from other works.

200 UNIVERSITY STREET
E.O. BOX 21956
SEATTLE, WA 98111-0906
206.215.4700
206.215.4711 FAX

GERARD SCHWARTZ
MUSIC DIRECTOR

MARY ANN CHAMBERS
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



New York Philharmonic

Founded 1842

**Section Bass Audition
Master Repertoire List
*Winter 2007 and Spring 2008***

I. Solo Repertoire

- ✓ A. ONE movement of your choice from J.S. BACH *Cello Suite #3*
(Peters edition No. 238 b, edited by H.S. Sterling in G major, with no repeats). Bourées I and II count as one movement.

B. First movement of ONE of the following Classical concertos:

- ✓ 1. DITTERSDORF Concerto in F major, with Gruber cadenza

OR

- ✓ 2. VIVALDI Concerto in C major, with Gruber cadenza
(or VIVALDI Concerto in D major, with published cadenza)

C. First movement of ONE of the following Romantic concertos:

- ✓ 1. KOUSSEVITZKY Concerto, op. 3

OR

- ✓ 2. BOTTESINI Concerto No. 2 in D minor

**All solos to be played in orchestra tuning A442. Accompaniment will be provided in the finals.

II. Orchestral excerpts repertoire:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| ✓ BACH, J.S. | Orchestral Suite No. 2 in D minor (Double & Badinerie) |
| ✓ BARTOK | <i>Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta</i> (1 st movement) 1436 |
| ✓ BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 5 (2 nd and 3rd movements) |
| ✓ BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 9 (4 th movement) |
| ✓ BRAHMS | Symphony No. 2 (1 st , 2 nd , and 4 th movements) 1977 |



New York Philharmonic

Founded 1842

(Master Repertoire List Continued)

- ✓ BRUCKNER Symphony No. 7 (1st movement) 1895
- ✓ MAHLER Symphony No. 2 (1st movement – page 1; 2nd and 3rd movements) 1899
- ✓ MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 4 “Italian” (1st and 4th movements) 1831
- ✓ MOZART Symphony No. 40 (1st and 4th movements)
- ✓ SCHOENBERG, A. Variations for Orchestra, op. 31 1929
(Introduction: m. 18 - 21; Finale: m. 312 - m. 323 and
m. 328 - m. 339)
- ✓ SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 5 (1st movement) 1937
- ✓ STRAUSS, R. *Ein Heldenleben* 1897
- ✓ STRAUSS, R. *Don Juan* 1889
- ✓ SMETANA Overture to *The Bartered Bride* 1870
- ✓ WAGNER Overture to *Die Meistersinger* 1867

III. Orchestral section solo repertoire:

- ✓ BRITTEN 1945 *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (Variation “H”)
- ✓ MUSSORGSKY/RAVEL 1905 *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Samuel Goldenberg and Schatylke)
- ✓ PROKOFIEV 1935 *Romeo and Juliet*, Suite no. 2 (# 46 through # 51, upper line)
- ✓ VERDI 1867 *Otello*, Act IV, bass soli

IV. Possible sight reading from the standard orchestral repertoire.

V. Possible ensemble playing may be asked during Final audition.

The New York Philharmonic tunes to A-442.

APPENDIX B

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

AUDITIONS⁶¹

⁶¹ *International Society of Symphony and Opera Musicians*. N.d. Web. 30 March 2011.
www.icsom.org/miscellany/auditioncode.html

Purpose and Scope of Code

It is of utmost importance to musicians, managers, and conductors that auditions be conducted in accordance with guidelines ensuring competition that is fair to all who audition while providing the best results for orchestras seeking musicians. Therefore, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM), and the Major Orchestra Managers Conference (MOMC) propound the following ethical and fair audition practices to which all parties should adhere, subject to local contractual considerations.

I. Preparation for Auditions

1. Notices of auditions should be given only for genuine vacancies, including newly created positions, which the management intends to fill as a result of those auditions, with no predeterminations having been made as to who will be hired. Musicians taking such auditions should only do so with the intention of accepting the position if it is offered.
2. Auditions should be advertised in appropriate places, including the International Musician and the AFM central auditions office. Notices should be clear and complete, specifying the position intended to be filled by the auditions, the person to contact in response to the notice, and the dates that applications are due and that auditions will be held. Notices should appear far enough in advance of auditions for interested musicians to apply and to adequately prepare.
3. All applicants should be sent written responses to their applications. Invited applicants should be sent clear instructions setting forth the date, time and place of the audition, the complete audition repertoire (excluding sight-reading repertoire), and parts for announced excerpts not generally available. All parts supplied by the orchestra should be legible and identical for all candidates.
4. Applicants should be given notice that if they choose not to attend the audition they should promptly notify the personnel manager or other designated person.

11. Conduct of Auditions

1. In preparing for and conducting auditions, all participants should be aware of policies and procedures governing those auditions, including this code.
2. Although the existence and composition of an audition committee and the nature and extent of its participation in auditioning and hiring is determined locally, musicians' involvement should at least include the initial screening of applicants.
3. Applicants should not be disqualified from auditioning on the basis of information about them obtained from current or previous employers or from other institutions to which they have applied.
4. Auditionees should be given sufficient time and, to the extent possible, adequate private facilities in which to warm up and practice.

5. Parts supplied by the orchestra for auditions should be in good condition, legible, and clearly marked as intended to be played at the audition.
6. There should be no discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, creed, national origin, religion, or sexual preference; steps ensuring this should exist in all phases of the audition process.
7. There should be reasonable accommodation for the handicapped.
8. Auditionees should be given opportunity and encouragement to comment, anonymously if desired, to the audition committee and management about the audition process.
9. Auditionees should be notified of their status in the audition process immediately upon such determination. Candidates under active consideration after auditions are completed should be so notified and given an estimated time of final decision.
10. Auditionees should be informed prior to auditions of the orchestra's policy regarding reimbursement of auditionees' expenses for additional stay or travel incurred at the request of management.

Administration and Review of Code

A joint committee of representatives of the Major Orchestra Managers Conference, ICSOM, and the AFM Symphony Department shall be established to oversee and review this code periodically.