



## UNIVERSITY OF UTAH SCHOOL OF MUSIC



### PERCUSSION AREA AUDITION TIPS

#### **BEFORE THE AUDITION DAY**

- **MOCK AUDITIONS**
  - Simulate / Practice performing under pressure
  - Play for 3 types of people - see blog @ [www.mikesammons.com](http://www.mikesammons.com)
  - Little things that you may have overlooked will become apparent, like forgetting to turn off the snares, how to arrange your mallets, or perhaps how many music stands you will need
  - Build your **CONFIDENCE**
  - Video tape them so you can watch / listen back and take notes
- **SLEEP**
  - Get several evening's worth of good night sleeps

#### **TRAVELING TO THE AUDITION**

- Arrive Early
- Allow time to do things in a relaxed manner.
- If traveling a long distance, arrive the day before. Take a campus tour, meet with the faculty, observe rehearsals, meet current members of the percussion studio.
- Ensure a **SLOW**, stress free warm-up.

#### **AT THE AUDITION SITE - WARM-UP**

- Use Warm-up Room (not floor outside the room)
- Have a routine for each instrument
- Warm-up / Preparation
  - Stretch / Breathing Ex
  - Visualization
- Play difficult passages from your pieces **SLOWLY**
- Play nothing at tempo
- Sing through pieces more than actually playing them

#### **THE AUDITION ROOM**

- Say hello and introduce yourself
- Set up all instruments, mallets, tray table and music stands with music
  - Use stick towels or stick bags as necessary. It is most professional when you do this
- Make sure all instruments are at the correct height
- Pre-tune Timpani

- Have a folder of your music (copies or originals if you have music memorized). Give it to the faculty panel.
  - You might also include a Resume or Letter stating your career goals and why you are interested in the University of Utah
- Know what order that YOU want to play your pieces in. Announce each one and proceed
  - I recommend starting with your strongest piece.
- HAVE FUN PERFORMING - PUT ON SHOW / RECITAL. Forget about an audition!
- No matter what happens, keep going and end each piece as though you were performing in front of a packed concert hall. SMILE!
- If you make a mistake, show that you have the maturity and poise to forget about it and go on with confidence.
- When leaving the room, thank the audition committee for their time

### **BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- Have your own thoughts about your future goals as a musician. Know WHY you are auditioning and be able to articulate that in a clear and concise manner. Take time to write these thoughts down and even practice saying them out loud to yourself, family or friends. This will bring clarity not only to your WHY but also your delivery.
- Be ready to discuss your aspirations with the people for whom you are auditioning. You will make a much better impression if you have given some serious thought to what you want to accomplish.
- What are your career goals in music and percussion?
- What is your ideal job / gig?
- Why are you interested in the University of Utah?
  - *WHEN ASKED WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN AUDITIONING, DON'T REPEAT VERBATIM (OR RE-ORDER SENTENCES) FROM THE WEBSITE*
- By answering these questions, you will also reveal the following:
  - Are you organized?
  - Do you have long-term goals?
  - Do you have some intellectual curiosity?
  - Do you have a positive attitude?
  - Will you be a good fit with this school?

### **BE PREPARED TO ASK QUESTIONS**

- In asking questions, be careful not to assume that you are admitted.
- If accepted, with whom will I be taking lessons?
- What playing opportunities are available to me?
- What are the school's percussion graduates doing currently?
- What degree program is suited to your goals?
- There are no bad questions so long as they are asked with a good attitude. If there isn't time to ask questions at the audition, find another opportunity. You need all the information you can get to make intelligent decisions about your future.

### **AFTER THE AUDITION**

- Congratulate yourself!
- A few details may remain in your mind, but the overall presentation has been strong and you have done your best.
- Send an e-mail to the professors thanking them for the opportunity to meet and play for them.

**DEMEANOR / PROFESSIONALISM**

- Dress - business
- Have a good selection of appropriate and well-cared for sticks and mallets. Do not expect them to be supplied at the audition site.
- Organized music (binder)
- Mallets laid out on tray stand or organized in a bag such as:
  - <http://www.freerpercussion.com/freer-vertical-stage-soft-case-cvs/>
  - Other cheaper options readily available at: <http://www.steveweissmusic.com/>

**PERFORMANCE TIPS**

- Don't go too fast between pieces / instruments
- Sing a little of the piece in your head to establish tempo.
- Be sure not to stop once you have begun to play. If you stop or say "I'm sorry," you will have broadcast the fact that something went wrong.
- If you need to stop, that's ok (we all have memory slips). Just pause, take a moment and find a good starting point. DO NOT start at the beginning again.
- Keep internal commentary INTERNAL
  - "I am not as prepared as I want to be", "Oops..", etc...
  - No Deep Breathing, Over the top breathing before starting piece.
- If you make a mistake, show that you have the maturity and poise to forget about it and go on with confidence.
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**WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR**

- I am looking for the right person *FIRST*, musician second and percussionist third
- More specifically, I look for individuals that make mature decisions about sounds on all percussion instruments and who demonstrate a good sense of time and rhythm
- Not always about the most difficult repertoire - quality over quantity
- Students that I believe will work well with others
- Teachable
- *IT'S ABOUT YOUR FUTURE POTENTIAL*, not necessarily where you are at right now!
- *THE REAL AUDITION*
  - This is the mini-lesson part of the audition where I spend a few minutes working with the auditioning student on their piece. I might ask them to phrase something differently or offer some suggestions on a certain passage. I will often ask about the structure of the piece or theoretical questions. I usually ask creative questions such as "what are you trying to musically or emotionally convey in this section or overall in the piece?" This is where you see if the person can adapt and are creative, what their cognitive musicianship skills are and most of all, if they are teachable.