

The Percussion Audition

As a percussionist, your audition will differ from those of other musicians. First, although you might bring your own snare drum, you will not be able to bring in other instruments such as timpani and mallet instruments. Second, because you cannot bring all the instruments you need, you may not be able to practice all of your pieces in the warm-up room.

At least one month before your audition day, you should begin to work on the pieces you have chosen. Use your music teacher and private instructor for advice about music choices. In general, you should select pieces that best exhibit your skills on snare drum, timpani, and mallets. One week before your audition, perform your pieces for your instructor in order to receive a valid evaluation. You may also wish to perform your pieces in front of friends and family members to gain confidence. In this way, you will be fully prepared by the audition date.

On the day of the audition, bring the following materials:

- extra copy of music for the auditioner
- practice pad
- stick or mallet caddie
- timpani pitch pipe (or pitch fork, if applicable)
- metronome
- snare drum sticks
(2B, Firth SDI Generals, or similar weight)
- timpani mallets (variety of hardness)
- keyboard mallets (variety of hardness)

If possible, you might also bring a snare drum and a stand. If you do, however, make sure the drum is in good working order. For example, the heads must be tuned equally from one tension rod to the other; the snares should allow the drum to sound crisp, yet not too tight or choked; and the drum should resonate. If your snare drum does not meet these standards, plan to use the one provided.

You should select professional clothing to wear for your audition. For gentlemen, wearing a tie is preferable. Your clothes, however, should not restrict movement during performance, especially during your timpani and mallet pieces.

When you arrive at the audition site, find a relatively quiet place to set up your pad. Warm up in a slow, relaxed manner using an appropriate snare drum method book and your metronome. Next, you may wish to perform your snare drum piece a few times, using your metronome to check tempos. If the audition site host provides timpani and/or mallet instruments in the warm-up room, feel free to use them; however, be aware of the needs of other percussionists who may have audition times earlier than yours.

Arrive at the audition room ten minutes early. Do not bring family members or friends into the audition room with you. After introducing yourself to the auditioner, experiment briefly with various timpani and keyboard mallets to choose the ones that sound most appropriate for the pieces you intend to perform. As for the order of pieces, most students prefer to perform their strongest piece first. Like all musicians, take your time before performing in order to relax and set an appropriate tempo.