

All-State Auditions: Practical Ways to Prepare for Auditions at All Levels

by Dr. Carol Jessup

A number of students have earned positions in All-State bands and orchestras with help from the following ideas. They are shared as practical ways to prepare audition materials, which may be new or simply affirm methods already in use.

1. The slow etude is very important.

- a. Play the slow etude with a beautiful sound.
- b. Exaggerate all dynamic levels
- c. Work for large contrasts in different dynamics.
- d. Recognize that a number of players will perform the fast etudes well.
- e. Paying attention to detail on slow etude will "stand out" in an audition.

2. Prepare tempos that enable the fast etudes to be played well.

- a. It is very important to practice fast etudes slowly in order to learn finger patterns.
- b. Fingers have a "memory" - a pattern played correctly three times in a row helps fingers retain patterns; miss once and the fingers will be unsure.
- c. When technical patters are "under the fingers," it's easier to play fast etudes well.
- d. Focus "moving your eyes" ahead of where playing - looking ahead and looking at groups of notes enable strong technical playing.
- e. An etude played accurately at a slower tempo produces better results than playing faster with a number of mistakes.
- f. "Think/sing" tempo before beginning to play.
- g. Choose a tempo, then drop a few beats in order to compensate for nervousness (tempos may be faster than realized when nervous).
- h. Work to play fast etudes musically as well as technically.

3. Always play musically.

- a. Use many different dynamics (printed in the music and other).
- b. Work to play appropriate musical style.
 - 1. Consider length of articulation (tonguing).
 - 2. Observe legato versus staccato.
- c. It is especially important to play with even rhythm and sound.
 - 1. Work to feel subdivision of beat (especially on the slow etude).
 - 2. Produce notes with same quality of sound whether playing loud/soft or high/low.

4. Be mentally prepared on the day of the audition.

- a. Focus on playing personal best.
- b. Do not be distracted when hearing extremely fast tempos in warm up room (warming up in this way often leads to many mistakes in the audition room).
- c. Area auditions are similar.
 - 1. Focus on playing as well as at Region auditions.
 - 2. Area auditions are not more difficult, but do include other strong players.
 - 3. Playing your personal best produces positive results.

5. Preparation for auditions benefits all areas of playing.

- a. Thoughtful preparation produces positive results.
- b. Working toward goals enables growth in musical skills and confidence.
- c. Positive experiences are fun and rewarding for all.

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