District Audition Prep Tips

by Dr. Tabatha Easley

It's that time of year again, when we dust off our scales and learn an etude!
It can feel stressful with limited time, so here are a few tips to maximize prep time:

Make a Plan

We are used to cramming at the last minute because that can work for passing tests, but doesn't translate as well to audition prep. With a little planning, you can reduce stress, manage expectations, and feel like you have plenty of time! Example: if you have ten days and your etude is 5 lines long, learn 1 line per day so you still have 5 days to polish the dynamics and speed it up rather than barely learning notes and rhythms a few days before.

Focus on Specific Parts

We like to play what we know, however this doesn't promote efficient practice (though playing for fun is good at other times!). I put a bracket around the measure or measures that are trickiest. Then I play those and work up the tempo before I do the other parts or run it. Peak Performance Psychologist Don Greene outlines a red, yellow, and green light system of prioritizing what to focus on when preparing for an audition, if you want to consider a more in depth strategy.

Note: If you would like additional tips or a free practice audition, email me at tapeters@vcu.edu!

Practice Audition

If you don't have a private teacher (or even if you do), it's a good idea to play for others. If you play for someone who makes you nervous, you can see what your physical symptoms might be before the audition. Shallow breathing? Shaky hands or lips? You can learn how to box breathe, or research other techniques. Even if you play for someone who doesn't make you nervous, it is always good to get positive feedback to boost your confidence!