

The Biggest Gig Of Your Life

If your professional goals include college or university training, you'll need to audition. At many schools the audition determines if you'll be accepted into the program and serves as your scholarship audition. At other institutions, the scholarship audition is a separate performance. Either way, the scholarship audition may certainly be the biggest gig of your life!

With tuition rising every year, it's not uncommon for a state school to charge \$10,000 per year (or more) for tuition — especially for out-of-state students — and many private schools charge twice that amount. Once you are awarded a scholarship, it's usually yours to keep as long as you continue to meet the requirements (enroll in lessons, play in major ensembles like bands or orchestras, keep a certain GPA such as 3.25, and not be convicted of a felony). With four years of scholarships, you could end up with an award valued at \$40,000 or more. Remember that this scholarship may not be paid out to you as cash, but awarded as a waiver against your tuition. Even so, that's 40 grand of tuition that you won't have to pay for your education.

So, with this much riding on the line, how can you best prepare? Here are a few hints:

1) Do your homework and talk to the percussion faculty at the schools you would like to attend. (It's a good idea to audition at more than one school.) Ask the professors what they want to hear for an applicant to be considered for a scholarship. Is the repertoire up to you, or do the schools require specific literature? Do they need letters of recommendation? Is chart reading required for drum set players?

2) Begin your preparation early — six months in advance is not too much time to prepare.

3) Study with a teacher who has had university training and can help you plan and practice for a good audition. Taking lessons will be a great investment for your scholarship chances.

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Tips For Surviving College Auditions

- 4)** Once you've narrowed down the schools you'd like to attend, arrange audition dates. This will force a timeline to your goals.
- 5)** Even if the schools don't require a specific repertoire, play real literature, not exercises, during your audition. For example, a composition written for marimba may better represent your abilities than the 16-bar exercise required at an all-state audition.
- 6)** Perform a variety of percussion categories, such as drum set, snare, keyboard percussion, timpani, multiple, and hand drums. However, pick categories that will show your strengths rather than weaknesses.
- 7)** While practicing, think about your rhythmic accuracy, note accuracy, touch, tone, shaping, phrasing, and style.
- 8)** Remember that you don't have to play like a seasoned professional in order to get an award. Yes, scholarships are competitive, but faculty wants to see a combination of technical ability and musical sensitivity, along with the potential for future success. By offering a scholarship, they are making an investment in you and your career. They also want to get a feeling that you will work well with the other students in the studio.
- 9)** Most auditions have a time when the faculty may ask the student some questions about his or her career goals. Think about what questions a percussion faculty member might ask you at the audition, and prepare your answers. This is also the proper time to ask any questions that you may have about the studio and the program of study.
- 10)** Have a good time at your audition. Express yourself and make music. Since you've done your homework and are prepared, show 'em what ya got!

—Norman Weinberg