AUDITION PREPARATION: THE END GAME

INSTRUCTOR: KURT CIVILETTE

CIVILETT@MSU.EDU

EXCERPTS FROM A CLASS TAUGHT AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Practicing: general

- DETAILS! Make sure every minute detail of dynamics, phrasing, articulation is audible
- Learn what all foreign phrases mean
- Why are they asking for this excerpt? Figure it out and maximize that aspect
- Play other things harder than the excerpts
- Don’t slam through whole list every day.
Metronome Game

- Mandatory for fast passage that is sloppy
- Set metronome at slow, playable tempo
- Play passage
- Was it exactly right? (Y or N, no maybe)
- If yes, move up, if no try again but move down metronome slower if two no’s in a row
- Be honest, be patient, don’t cheat
Kaplan dilemma (#2)

- “I often feel I have to start over each day”
- Pattern of practicing passage several times until correct, then stopping, for example you play it 10X before success, then stop, thus 10% success rate
- Use technique of intimacy to become more familiar with the feeling of playing it right
Technique of Intimacy

- Play passage without stopping to end
- Chart successes and failures
  5 for _____ tries
- Keep going until you achieve 5 successful renditions
- When you have played it 10 times, STOP, adjust goal if less than 50% success rate
- If you get 5 successes, write as a ratio 5/9, 5/7 etc.
- Repeat 3 more days, same goal. 5/5 two days in a row = reasonable control
Technique of Intimacy

- Use technique 4 days in a row, if there is no achievement of 5/5, STOP
- Example: day 1: 5/9, day 2: 5/7, day 3: 5/7, day 4: 5/5. In order to measure progress you must know proportion of success in past.
- 3 to 5 consecutive days of practice to store success to memory
“I played it perfectly before, but my performance let me down.”

- 2 differences between practice and performance
  
  1. You perform at a precise pre-arranged time, no matter how you feel
  2. You get one try
First Try technique

- Perception that you played well in practice is usually memory of “best” rendition over a practice session.
- First-try technique replicates performance conditions
- Use technique of intimacy to get excerpts to “ready” status, then utilize First-try technique
First Try technique

- When the work is ready, use technique to test readiness seven days in a row
- Set alarm, play when it goes off, tape it
- Write down impression, % of success, parts needing work, acceptable Y/N
- Listen to tape and write observations
- Do 7 days in a row, realistic to expect average of previous 4 days
- 4 days in a row = reasonable expectation of success
# Technique of Intimacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>excerpt</th>
<th>day 1</th>
<th>day 2</th>
<th>day 3</th>
<th>day 4</th>
<th>day 5</th>
<th>day 6</th>
<th>day 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Petrushka</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>5/8</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

# First Try Technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>excerpt</th>
<th>day 1</th>
<th>day 2</th>
<th>day 3</th>
<th>day 4</th>
<th>day 5</th>
<th>day 6</th>
<th>day 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>example: Heldenleben</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## DEGREES OF CONTROL

Summary of moving up the ladder with a challenging passage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Control</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through years of study, you can play excerpt at an acceptable audition level that will not knock you out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can play it exactly the way you want, but not with high percentage of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technique of intimacy to increase percentage, achieve 5/5 several days in a row to feel secure on a passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can play passage with high percentage success rate, nearly all the time, but not always on command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 1st try technique 7 days in a row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to play it on command in practice, but falls short in pressure situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use taped rounds and mock auditions to get used to more pressure, perform well even when you have less control of situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to play it at acceptable audition level in audition setting. There is nothing overtly wrong, nobody can play it better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Auditions—the end game

- Randomize excerpts and play down lists. ALWAYS RECORD IT.
- Play mock auditions for friends. RECORD.
- Get out of your regular space, try different halls
- Slow practice 2/3 of the time on tricky things
- Push dynamic limits and tempo limits, be flexible
- Taper down practicing—you can’t play well on stiff chops. EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!
- Final week: 1 hour practice sessions 24 hours apart
Don Greene: FOCUS

- 95% of audition success determined by preparation
- Other 5% is your ability to FOCUS and play optimally under pressure
- Practice putting on the pressure through mock auditions and recording yourself. Try to replicate the anxiety.
- The fundamental source of your confidence will be your preparation.
If you have clear intention for each excerpt there is higher chance of success.

Write down word or phrase on a post-it for each

Focus keenly on that ONE thing. Practice this during mock audition rounds.

Basketball freethrow study: players who concentrated on a VERY specific aspect had higher percentage. It didn’t matter what the specific thing was.
Final days and hours are the hardest part
Reprogram your negative self-talk
Write down positive affirmations to reassure yourself
Mantras to get through it
• Have a plan to deal with mistakes
• Know that mistakes are inevitable. How we deal with them can make or break audition
• Accept mistakes, move on
• Stay in the moment
What’s so terrifying about auditions?
Dealing with pre-audition anxiety

The terror of having to put oneself on the line and face rejection can cause mental distress varying from mild stage fright to total emotional and physical collapse.

To audition is to take a RISK and loosen your grip on the known
Loss of control

- People who have difficulty taking risks have intense need to control the outcome
- You can’t control the outcome of an audition
- THUS:
- Inherent anxiety situation

- Consolation: The risk taking process is the same for everyone. Just because they seem composed, it’s still the same—nobody gets a pass on this
Pre-audition anxiety management mantras

- Confidence: “you can do it”
- Focus on immediate next step or task at hand
- Fear is natural, but you can keep in under control
- It will be over soon
- It is not life and death
- You can’t control the outcome, all you can do is play your best
- Don’t obsess about other people: Compare=despair
Arrive the night before the audition.

Traveling the same day is too risky, too much time and preparation is at stake

Too tiring, stressful

Audition travel
Audition day

- Warm up easy before you get to site, 15 minutes in hotel?
- Dress nicely, not overly formal. How would you dress at a rehearsal for this group?
- Arrive early, check in, find a quiet place, bring earplugs
- Get list ASAP, study materials, it may help to write down thoughts and feelings
- Forget about everyone else
- Don’t play too much, it’s too late to practice
Finally there!

- You’ve tapered down, you have good chops
- You’ve practiced playing under pressure
- Take your Beta-blocker about 1 hour before you play, no more than 10mg
- Don’t overblow. Halls are usually live spaces. Julie Landsman credits her audition success to learning not to play too loudly at auditions.

- Sneak in a recording device if you can.