

TEEN STRINGS

TIP SHEET № 2

IDEAS, NEWS & FUN FOR STUDENTS OF
VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS & FIDDLE

NOVEMBER 2014

PREPPING FOR AN AUDITION? ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, RELAX!

To study music at the university, college, or conservatory level, your admission depends in part on an audition. And to prepare for that, you'll want to start getting ready during your sophomore year of high school. Before outlining what you need to compete, here's some wise auditioning advice, courtesy of Mimi Zweig, professor of violin at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and also a member of the school's audition committee.

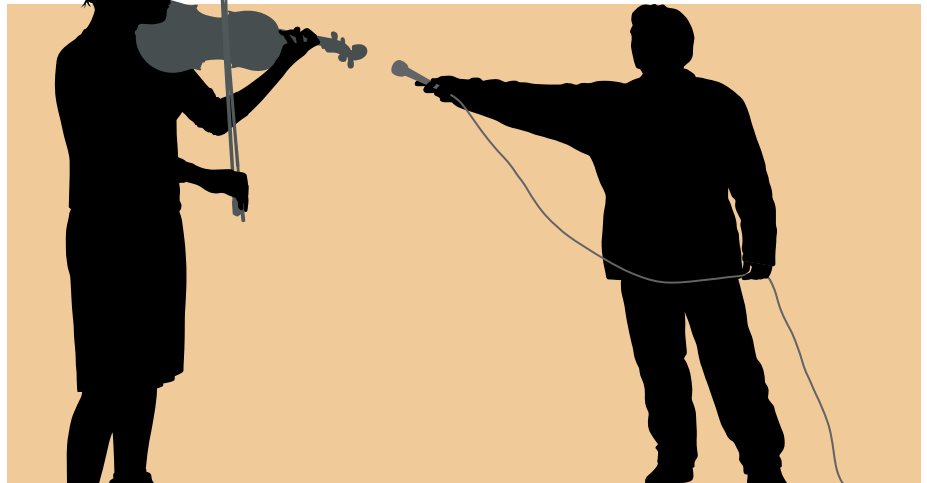
1 Select a repertoire within your skill range, so you play beautifully from beginning to end. **Audition committees do not expect you to know everything**—teaching you everything is the school's job.

2 Practice your repertoire so it becomes second nature. Ignoring point No. 1, Zweig says, is the most common mistake students make, and it can prevent you from achieving point No. 2.

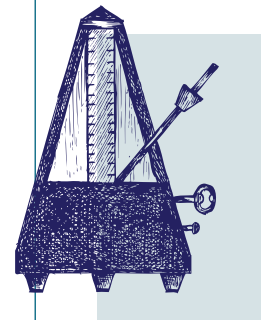
"We often accept a young person who shows a lot of potential, but maybe hasn't had the opportunity to develop that potential," Zweig says. "We're looking for students who show aptitude and are dedicated to learning. Be sure you select a repertoire you can achieve. And don't worry. The audition committee is trained to hear your potential."

Stacia Spencer, senior lecturer in string pedagogy at Northwestern School of Music and a private teacher experienced in helping students prepare their audition repertoire, agrees completely. "Selecting music outside your reach is asking for disaster," she says.

"This is not the time to show off. Trust me, if you play something beyond your true capabilities, the audition team will only hear mistakes. On the other hand, if you select an easier piece but something you play beautifully, the audition team will only hear your terrific vibrato, your musicality, and your skill. Then the committee begins thinking about where they can take you . . . as their student. This is a good place to be. It's where you want to be!"



Turn Practice Time into Real Quality Time



Sheer time is not necessarily good; what's good is the quality of the practicing. If somebody's really serious, five hours a day is almost too much; no more than that. After five hours, the body

doesn't absorb any more. When I was growing up I didn't practice more than three hours a day. And when you practice, it's got to be 50-minute hours, with 10 minutes of rest. —Itzhak Perlman



Did You Know?

During the first part of its meteoric career, the violin was played in public by formally trained professionals, servants, and illiterate folk musicians.

Ladies and gentlemen, when entertaining themselves in private circumstances, preferred the elegant sounds of

viols and lutes to the raucous power of brash fiddles.

The violin appears first to have entered "polite society" as a consort instrument.

[Source: Neil Zaslaw, *The Italian Violin School in the 17th Century*, 1990]



BRIT TEEN LANDS A STRAD

Violinist **Roberto Ruisi**, 18, played a \$1.25 million Strad, dating from the 1680s, when he toured recently with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

Celebrated violinist John Ludlow was moved by the similarities in their lives: Ludlow also hails from Edgbaston, attended the same King Edwards School as Ruisi, and taught at the Royal College of Music, where Ruisi will study. "It's been amazing to play on such a remarkable instrument," Ruisi told the BBC.

"To me, the Strad is not just a violin, but is an extension of myself, allowing me to communicate all my musical ideas." Ludlow, who bought the instrument in 1965, said: "Robbie already plays the fiddle far better than I ever did, and has a really fine future ahead of him."



How to . . . Protect Your Bow

What do a violin and a lawsuit have in common? Everyone is happy when the case is closed . . . No joke: most damage to bows comes from being careless.

Never leave your bow lying across the violin in an open case—the lid can and often does fall. The bow almost certainly will end up with serious damage, and it can also injure the instrument in the process.

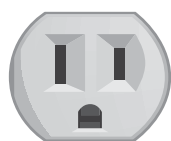
Securing the bow and closing the case is an excellent idea, anyway. Bows have an alarming ability to disappear—they are easily transportable and to any but the practiced eye, they all look the same.

Zip the case while you're at it—you might forget that you haven't and pick it up, and then the instrument will come tumbling out.



Plugging In? Read This Tip!

Mark Wood, a prominent string educator, recording and performing artist, and violin



manufacturer, offers this crucial tip:

Be mindful of your tone.
Buy an amplifier that can

process a transducer-type pickup; not a magnetic pickup, like a guitar. Crate and Blond amps, for instance, are excellent. I've also found that a good keyboard amp gives me a rich, clean sound, and then I can kick in my distortion and effects, jumping around easily without sacrificing tone. If you use electric-guitar amps, the rule of thumb is turn down the treble knob. Screechy tones define the

cliché beginner electric tone. So, turn down the treble! Listen to and record yourself so you can listen back to not only your playing, but also your tone. Listen to professional electric violin players as much as possible to develop a good sense of the varieties of tone. And, remember if your "clean" sound is beautiful, then any effects pedal will sound that much better.

How to Install and Care for Strings



When trying a new type of string, reserve judgment for a few days. Most brands take time to settle in and reach their peak. After that, take them off and try something else.

It may take some experimenting to find the string best suited to you. Keep in mind that synthetic-core strings

lose some of their quality when they are taken off an instrument and later reinstalled. When you need to change an entire set of strings, do not remove all of the old strings at one time—you could lose the correct bridge placement or even collapse the soundpost. Instead, remove one string at a time and keep all the others up to pitch.

STRINGS

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