

A Sabbatical Report  
Spring Semester, 1998

Audition Processes and Procedures in  
Washington, D.C. Military Bands and Choruses  
and  
Selected (Civilian) Professional Orchestras and Choruses

Jerry A. Young, Ed.D.  
Professor of Music  
The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

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Eiji Oue

Henry Charles Smith III

Musicians

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## Preface

An unexpected turn after my sabbatical leave was half past was a rather sudden family decision to build a new house. My wife equates this experience to our musical profession. First time home building is like giving a concert without having a rehearsal. Those best at home building are likely those new homeowners who have just completed the process and are not likely to repeat it soon. This description is also apropos to sabbaticals, I think. The further I progressed into my project, the more I sincerely wished that I could turn the calendar back to the earliest interviews and ask the interviewees more or, in some cases, entirely different questions. Further, what has emerged as a final product from my research is somewhat different from what was proposed and very different from my expectation. (Fortunately this wasn't the case with the house!) All that said, to say that I am very pleased and happy with the results of the project would be to considerably understate the case. The product that has come into being is, I believe, going to be quite useful to students and colleagues here at The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire and to music students and colleagues (both educators and performers) around the country. I hope it is also useful to the numerous participants - who are, in fact, the true owners of this research, as their gracious cooperation and donation of time and effort have made the study possible.

My sabbatical proposal was to deepen and broaden my knowledge of audition repertoire for euphonium and tuba and to become a more effective teacher of that repertoire through working with individuals who deal with it on a daily basis as both performers and teachers. It quickly became evident that the various "new" or "surprise" selections that have been appearing on audition lists in recent years have been principally one-time anomalies. I did, in fact, observe many lessons and discuss literature and pedagogy with my colleagues, per my original proposal. Summaries of interviews with colleagues are included in the appendices. However, in order to gain maximum benefit for the profession from this time and effort, I considerably broadened my project to emphasize audition processes and procedures (which was actually a smaller portion of the original proposal), and this became the focus of my work. The end in view was and is to assist educators in better preparing students for auditions, as well as to help the profession to re-examine audition procedures. This topic is of such broad interest that I was invited to do several presentations on the results of my work during the sabbatical semester, and I continue to meet with colleagues and students to discuss these issues as time permits. The overwhelming number of requests for copies of the summation document which constitutes the body of this report led to the development of this web document. Obviously, the data is too cumbersome to print and/or mail on an individual by-request basis. Additionally, I broadened my coverage to include auditions for choral ensembles where choral ensembles existed.

What follows is a presentation in which I have attempted to interpret the large body of data I have gathered. For those who love raw data, summaries of the various interviews that provided the data for my study and reflection are included in the appendices. I realize that some of my interpretations (and opinions) will be controversial to some readers. So many matters relative to the audition process are subjective, therefore we may have to agree to disagree about some points. Nevertheless, the thoughts written here are the result of considerable reflection on the considered opinions of many individuals who have extensive experience in dealing with auditions as audition committee members or as individuals with hiring authority. I hope that

the reader finds my thoughts useful or, at worst, a catalyst for further thought and discussion on this most fascinating topic.

NOTE: This web site is appearing on-line more than six years after the completion of my research. The reader should be aware that audition thought and procedure is constantly evolving. While I stand by my conclusions and suggestions for organizations and educators, some statements made by interviewees regarding specific audition procedures for particular organizations may no longer be true or in practice. I did my best to report the status of audition procedures and thought on auditions at the time the interviews took place. The only thing that will never change about audition practice and procedure is change.

## Introduction

Ralph Curry, cellist and personnel manager of the Cleveland Orchestra, stated in an interview that: "Auditions are a legacy for any performing organization. Auditions play an important role in helping the organization to maintain its artistic identity and integrity." In interviewing many individuals associated with several organizations and observing auditions in many settings during the spring of 1998, Mr. Curry's statement has rung very true. Each of the organizations and individuals I interviewed has rather passionate feelings about auditions and about the unique way auditions are conducted for vacancies in their organizations reflecting a special pride in the musical achievements of their ensembles over time. My interviews and observations have taken place over a period of nearly three months. During that time I have had opportunity to read and re-read summaries of my interviews and to reflect upon the varied practices that professional performing organizations employ in auditions, as well as the commonalities that exist. In this summation paper, I will describe the common features which seem to exist in almost all audition settings, then I will discuss issues relative to the audition process that, as a result of my observation and reflection, I feel need to be more closely examined by the profession. These issues will include the use of taped pre-preliminary and preliminary auditions, codification of audition practices, composition of audition committees, discussion among committee members during the audition process, objectification of assessment, and completing the assessment cycle. In closing I will offer some suggestions that the profession might consider for strengthening the audition process, discuss the issue of fairness, and suggest issues that educators need to consider in preparing individuals for auditions.

An additional introductory note for the non-musician reader

Positions in professional orchestras and choruses and military bands and choruses in the United States are highly contested. It is not at all uncommon to have hundreds of applications for any vacancy (particularly for the premiere military bands or any prominent national or regional orchestra), and a considerable number of those individuals indeed meet the basic requirements to fulfill the duties of the advertised position. Even positions wherein the salary does not constitute a full-time living wage, there are usually a large number of candidates seeking an initial position which can be used as a "stepping stone" to a better position with a more prominent organization in the future.

## The Audition Process: Common Practice

### The application process

The basic application process for most organizations is very simple. A brief cover letter and resumé are sufficient. Most military organizations also require a full-length photo, as appropriate physical condition and appearance are requisite for employment with those organizations. The letter should be in a standard business format and should meet the standard requirements for any business or other communication wherein one wishes to make a favorable first impression. The resumé should include only information and experience that is pertinent to the position for which one is applying. Candidates should be very sure that name, address, and instrument or voice character are clearly indicated at the top of the page. Although a proper resumé is certainly important for any position, it is most critical for orchestral positions wherein a limited number of applicants will be accepted for audition and no taped audition is involved.

The pre-preliminary tape is standard application fare for civilian auditions for The U.S. Army Band and The U.S. Air Force Band (vocal and instrumental). Persons are selected from the taped round to come to Washington, D.C. for a live preliminary audition. The U.S. Marine Band and The U.S. Navy Band will review tapes prior to live auditions, however, anyone may come to an audition for those organizations. None of the orchestras I interviewed require tapes as a matter of course for vocalists or instrumentalists (some do use taped pre-preliminary auditions for instrumentalists on particular occasions - in those instances, qualified candidates receive specific requests for tapes). Most orchestras will review tapes upon applicant request in order to advise candidates of likelihood of success.

### At the audition

Although there was some variance of opinion about this issue, the consensus opinion of interviewees was that it is advisable for candidates to dress and groom in a manner that shows respect for the organization and position for which one is auditioning. Some committees may be swayed (to disfavor a candidate) because of poor personal appearance.

In some settings candidates enter the building where auditions take place by a special entrance to avoid any contact with audition committee members. Generally, specific audition times are assigned upon arrival at the audition site. After times are assigned, candidates generally go to a communal warm up area for general warm up. Anywhere from ten to fifteen minutes before the actual audition, candidates are usually taken to a private, quiet area to gather thoughts and prepare alone. The proctor for the audition will generally escort candidates to the audition site. When the audition is a screened audition (which is the case for most, but not all, preliminary instrumental auditions), the candidate must not speak during the audition. Great measures are taken to preserve anonymity in cases where anonymity is desired. Many instrumental organizations even carpet the audition area and require candidates to remove shoes (in order to protect against potential gender bias). Music is provided, and generally the proctor is present throughout the audition to assist with any problems. Candidates are usually informed regarding promotion to subsequent rounds or dismissal at regular intervals. Vocal auditions are not, as a

rule, so heavily regulated with regard to anonymity. Screens are only very rarely used in vocal auditions.

### The performance

In almost every case, the audition performance consists of excerpts or complete parts from the standard repertoire for the ensemble. In a few instances for instrumentalists solos are required - sometimes chosen by the auditionee and at other times by the organization. Vocalists are always required to present solo selections. Sightreading is a significant portion of the audition (usually in finals only) for military bands. Orchestras rarely, if ever, use true sightreading in auditions. Common practice is to only ask for sightreading when reaching a final decision is difficult and even then "sight reading" will generally consist of music from the standard repertoire that was not on the initial audition list. Choral organizations have widely varying policies regarding sight reading, but most who do use it use it more as a measure of overall musical skill than as an ultimate deciding factor in the audition.

### Adjudication

Adjudication of auditions varies widely from organization to organization in terms of the make-up of audition committees and the manner of voting. Some organizations have elected committees that represent a cross section of the performers across the orchestra while others rely on "experts" (i.e. brass players listen to brass auditions, strings to strings, etc.). In almost all cases, the audition committee, regardless of its composition, is joined by the music director or commander (in military situations) for the final round. (In only one instance among the organizations I interviewed did the conductor listen to both preliminary and final auditions.) A very few organizations have on-paper, objective assessment instruments to score candidates. Most simply take a yes/no vote (some by secret ballot, others by show of hand) on each candidate with a simple majority granting promotion to the subsequent round. For one organization, a single yes vote from the committee is sufficient to pass a candidate to the final round. In most organizations, discussion among committee members during the preliminary rounds is either forbidden or highly discouraged. Even in the final rounds discussion is usually held to a minimum where possible, at least until all finalists have performed. The absolute common ground for all organizations interviewed is that, in the end, one person is responsible for the hiring decision. In the case of the military bands, the commander of the organization makes the final decision, and for orchestras, the music director makes the final decision. In most cases (there are definite exceptions), the commander or music director follows the advice of the committee.

In Washington, D.C. military band auditions there is always an interview either during or immediately after the final round. As a general rule these interviews are much like standard job interviews, except that some very personal questions are asked to assist the organization in determining that a potential audition winner will qualify for White House security clearance.

## Critical Issues

### 1. The pre-preliminary or preliminary tape as part of the application process

For many years the taped preliminary audition has been a fixture in American musical culture. Whether for admission to a music camp (or even a music school), for a solo or mock audition-type competition, or for a military band, “making the tape” has been a fact of life for most serious musicians, whether a vocalist or instrumentalist. One thing that is a constant up to the present day is the assumption that the tape sent to a potential employer must be as nearly perfect as is possible. Prior to the advent of digital technology, judging “an honest tape” was not terribly difficult for audition committees. If a committee listened to tapes on reasonably good audio equipment, “splices” could usually be fairly clearly heard. Very few individuals would have had access to a recording studio, let alone enjoy the prospect of owning high tech recording equipment themselves. As a result of that situation, successful candidates generally spent many hours over an extended period of weeks or months putting together performance tapes that were as perfect as possible using whatever equipment might be available to them. On the whole, a reel-to-reel or cassette tape could be considered to be a reasonably accurate representation of what a candidate might do in the live performance setting (within liberal margins).

Digital technology has radically altered the assurance of truly accurate representation of a musician’s abilities in almost every imaginable way. When a recording is made using a DAT machine and that person has access to digital editing equipment, the editing possibilities are staggering. A person who knows the way around digital editing software can alter anything from a single pitch (either by changing the pitch or adjusting the intonation) to the tone color of the voice or instrument. Although some individuals that I interviewed believe that committee members can detect digitally edited performances, I would doubt that that is actually the case. Most performances that we hear on compact discs, whether a popular music group or a symphony orchestra, are digitally edited, and I seriously doubt that even the finest ear can identify alterations or “splices.” This technology (like most technology) is going down in cost. Many individuals now own DAT recorders, and many universities have digital editing equipment that is available for student use either in open music technology laboratories or through student government financed recording and broadcast facilities. Basic digital editing software can even be purchased for use on a home computer. For those who do not have access to such equipment, the cost of making a tape in one of the many small recording studios around the country is not entirely beyond the reach of an average person.

The crux of the matter is that, while the technology is generally available, some individuals have easy access to it and others have little to no access to it for a variety of reasons ranging from financial to geographical. It is entirely possible for individuals who are less qualified to reach “the next step” in the audition process over more qualified candidates because of the advantage of digital recording and editing. Although I am without data or other material forms of proof, I am certain that this has already happened numerous times.

My observations during the course of this project with regard to this matter lead me to the following conclusions/suggestions:

1) Some broad forum should be established to discuss this issue. Organizations, whether professional musical organizations attempting to fill vacancies or educational organizations seeking students or competition contestants, need to come together to discuss alternatives to taped auditions or the establishment of a code of ethics to which applicants for positions, awards or events will agree to adhere when recording application tapes.

2) With reference to the above statement (alternatives to taped auditions), perhaps professional organizations could develop sophisticated application forms that would also serve as a substitute for the resumé and then heavily screen those forms. Without doubt, this could be an expensive and time consuming process, however the existing mechanism is also expensive and time consuming, both for applicants and organizations. (NOTE: intense resumé screening has been the sole primary method to find preliminary candidates for the Cleveland Orchestra for many years, and it appears to be quite successful for that organization.)

3) Until such time as a code of ethics is established and as long as taped auditions are used, candidates should (in my opinion) without fail utilize digital technology to the fullest extent possible in preparing audition tapes. "Perfect" audition tapes are being manufactured by individuals across this country and around the world. Based on what I have seen and heard, anyone who is seriously pursuing a position had best be one of those individuals unless he/she wishes to place themselves at a considerable disadvantage..

## 2. Audition procedures

### 2.a. Established procedures

While the procedures described at the outset of this presentation are more or less standardized, there are as many dissimilarities in audition procedures as there are similarities. Every organization has procedures that seem to basically work for them and all concerned are always seeking ways to improve the situation for both audition candidate and audition committee. After rather extensive discussion of audition procedures with so many individuals in so many settings, it seems to me that the variance in procedures from organization to organization is not at all a bad thing. Each organization must use procedures that allow it to maintain its peculiar musical and organizational integrity. Again, having looked at so many different circumstances, it does concern me somewhat that there is quite a lack of consistency within some instrumental organizations from audition to audition. In an age that is as litigious as is ours, I would encourage all organizations to be as consistent as possible in audition practices and procedures throughout the organization and to carefully codify those practices and procedures. I have included as an appendix to this paper the new audition operating procedures for the United States Air Force Band. (My special thanks to Colonel Lowell E. Graham for allowing me to include this document with this report.) While anyone may choose to agree or disagree with the practices and procedures described in that document, the clarity regarding audition policies, practices, and procedures both from the viewpoint of the institution and from the viewpoint of a candidate is absolutely inarguable. This document is "state of the industry." I encourage all who read this paper to carefully examine that document and to consider encouraging their institutions to codify their practices and procedures as carefully. The format is irrelevant, but the careful thought that went into producing this document is not. Doubtless, the formulation of

such a document may produce some heated debate, but the heat of the debate should temper the quality of the final product.

## 2.b. The audition committee

The data from the interviews indicates that there is quite wide variance in the makeup of audition committees from organization to organization. Some instrumental organizations base eligibility for service on audition committees on rank or experience, while others simply elect audition committees from the ensemble at large. Still others restrict audition committees to “like instrument family” members of the ensembles (string players are on string audition committees, etc.). Vocal ensembles (as a rule) are at one of two extremes: either the conductor (and perhaps the associate conductor) hear auditions and make decisions or virtually the entire ensemble listens as a committee. Each of these methods of selecting audition committees have supportable thought and reasoning behind them, and any informed reader of this document could probably articulate the reasons each method might be chosen.

After discussing all these situations, observing auditions, and reflecting on the matter, I would ask the profession to consider the following:

1) Committees of any nature in any organization are as successful as the members of those committees are committed to the assigned task. This basic reality needs to be taken into consideration when designing contract language relative to audition committee membership in the civilian world or when considering military audition committee assignments. Only those individuals who are committed to the task should be elected, appointed, or assigned. The election system apparently often drafts individuals with little interest in auditions into positions of great responsibility that will affect both the ensemble and the lives of individual auditionees. In some groups, those individuals seem to spend considerable time seeking out others to fulfill their elected responsibility - which probably often places other individuals somewhere they would rather not be. Perhaps individuals in any professional organization should have the opportunity to indicate to management and colleagues interest or lack of interest in serving on audition committees.

2) The notion of having persons on an audition committee from outside a section or instrument family in which a vacancy occurs seems to be a sensible one to me. Choral ensembles virtually never have only sopranos listen to sopranos! Certainly, expertise relative to the performance skills of a given instrument (or voice) must be represented on an audition committee and should likely even have a majority voice in making recommendations, as those persons will be working most closely with the eventual employee. However, the person(s) whose expertise does not lie primarily in the performance area being auditioned can add a great deal to the audition through their ability to detach themselves almost entirely from technique and focus primarily on musical skills, particularly intonation and time. (This is definitely not to say that it is not possible for any musician to recognize quality or lack of quality in all facets of performance. My statement is simply acknowledging that we are all capable of becoming obsessed with technical aspects of music making in our particular performance areas.) Having representatives of other areas is simply a sensible control that might assist in helping to find the best possible musician.

3) Several instrumental organizations make an issue of having only the audition committee present during auditions. While the orchestral choral ensembles interviewed have only members of their administration in attendance (with the possible exception of a union representative), most of the military choral organizations invite their entire ensemble to participate in the audition process, a practice that exists in many European orchestras. In several European orchestras, in fact, the entire orchestra votes on the finalists to determine the recommendation to the Maestro - who is in many cases bound to their vote. I would encourage instrumental organizations to follow the lead of the military vocal organizations in this country. All the organizations involved in this study are comprised of some of the world's finest musicians. Allowing them to (at least at a minimum) audit auditions provides the opportunity for more ears to hear and more input to come to the committee that is charged with making a recommendation. A few written comments passed to a member of the committee from auditors may bring up points that could be of considerable assistance and importance. While it's true that "too many cooks can spoil the broth," more opinions can certainly be beneficial if properly managed.

#### 2.c. Committee discussion during auditions

Policies regarding committee discussion during auditions very much surprised me. Once again, since orchestral vocal organizations involve so few individuals in their audition process, this isn't truly an issue in that setting. Military vocal ensembles seem to encourage discourse all through the audition process, while almost all the instrumental ensembles either highly discourage or outright forbid conversation among committee members. An audition is certainly not the place for extended conversation, for the candidate deserves to be heard by each committee member to the fullest extent possible. However, very brief, judicious comments during an audition by any member of a committee might draw attention to important positive or negative factors while those factors are still sounds in the air. Further, a two or three minute break between candidates for discussion could be very beneficial to a committee in accomplishing its work. Both Zubin Mehta and Henry Charles Smith in their comments to me indicated that discussion among committee members - even heated discussion - is important to reaching the best decision. Among the various interviews I conducted with audition committee members, several could recall instances where candidates who should have been finalists were dismissed, and the entire committee came to the realization that this should not have been the case too late to recall them. This situation might not always be rectified through discussion, but it would likely occur with less frequency (at least in my opinion).

To avoid any appearance of total naiveté, I should say here that I understand the particular problems and circumstances that exist in military situations wherein persons of different ranks may be working together in audition situations. For the information of those not familiar with military rank and protocol, it is possible that senior individuals on an audition committee may be responsible for evaluating overall job performance of junior individuals on the committee. (Those evaluations affect both retention and promotion.) In some branches of the military, discussion in auditions is discouraged or forbidden in order to negate the possibility that a senior evaluator might develop some prejudice against a junior evaluatee because of disagreement or that the junior member simply might not express an opinion at all because of fear of prejudice. This is indeed an unfortunate circumstance that I would encourage military organizations to

study and, if possible, change where it exists. The inability to have an open discussion, per the Mehta and Smith comments, can most certainly inhibit the ability of a committee to come to the best possible result. Trained musical ears and informed musical opinions (even when they are at variance) know no rank. The audition situation should be a setting where the heat of combined musical intellect forges a product that will strengthen the ensemble (without burning any of the participants!).

#### 2.d. Objectifying assessment in the audition

While the science of assessment has made significant advances in the past half century, musicians (at least in the performance part of the profession) have by and large managed to strategically avoid knowledge of or involvement with those advances. In the audition setting in particular we tend to hide behind the notion that adjudication of performance is very subjective, a matter of taste, etc. As a performing musician who has done a good deal of adjudication, I am not entirely out of sympathy with those feelings. At the same time, there are definitely some things that happen in auditions (or any musical performance) that we are absolutely capable of assessing objectively. All the technical aspects of “basic” good playing are readily observable: intonation, rhythm, time, tone quality, and so on are items that can be specifically observed and assessed by any competent musician. Matters of overall musicality and appropriate interpretation of a given work are indeed subjective and arguable items. Nevertheless, in the interest of entering into discussion in the most informed manner possible and achieving the best possible and most accurate result, I believe that some sort of instrument that allows audition committee members to rate and comment on objectively observable aspects of the audition performance and also to add comments on the more subjective aspects of the performance to be very valuable. In addition to providing a reference for discussion, the obligation of using such an instrument more or less forces each committee member to be very involved in really listening to each auditionee.

While it is most true that professional performing organizations are not in the business of educating individuals who aspire to membership in their ranks, some attempt to keep at least simple records of auditions (perhaps just rating instruments as described above) and making it possible for at least the finalists to receive some comments regarding their audition performance could possibly make a difference at some future audition - for both individual and committee. Some military organizations do attempt to provide some assistance to finalists via verbal discussions at the conclusion of the audition, however, written assessments would add more authenticity to the evaluations. The Chicago Symphony Chorus actually keeps audition assessments on file for both successful and unsuccessful auditionees and is able to use those records to assist unsuccessful auditionees with information regarding audition weaknesses, which they might bolster to improve future auditions. This is definitely an ideal to which other organizations might aspire.

Audition assessment instruments are used by the Chicago and Cleveland Symphony Chorus and the U.S. Air Force Band. These instruments are used very successfully by these organizations and are not overly complicated, nor should they be intimidating to any committee member. Any instrument is, of course, only as good as the observer using it, but most of us in the professional music field are, by the very nature of what we do, excellent observers.

Obviously, what we do in auditions determines the entire course of many lives. Anything that we can do to be able to quantify and justify the decisions that we make relative to those lives should both strengthen us as a profession and enable us to better cope with this tremendous responsibility as individuals.

### 3. Getting the best possible results: some suggestions for improvement

In the course of conversations with conductors and ensemble members, a few topics came to the fore repeatedly, and all of them dealt with areas that are not commonly evaluated in the audition process. Here I would like to comment on the three items that came up most frequently. Two items were common to both military and civilian organizations, while the third is a factor only for the civilian groups.

The first issue is concerned with evaluating finalist candidates' ability to follow what is happening from the podium. Apparently candidates are hired from time to time who are indeed fine players but are not sufficiently able to respond to the language of the baton. Almost needless to say, this situation creates considerable tension not only between the player and the podium, but also between the player and colleagues. It seems strange that we assume so much about such a fundamental skill and so seldom evaluate it in the audition setting. Perhaps a very brief (two minute?) trial wherein the finalist candidates perform audition passages that are conducted by the music director could provide at least a minimal idea of the performer's ability to "follow." Vocalists are often required to do this, either in the context of an ensemble rehearsal, a chamber group rehearsal, or sometimes as an individual. Instrumentalists should consider following their lead.

A second issue is another that is of extreme fundamental importance to the sound and success of any ensemble - the ability of candidates to blend with colleagues in the section. Particularly when the audition has been narrowed to two or three candidates, it would seem to be a wise thing to hear the candidates perform (at the least) three or four brief passages in the context of the section with which they would be working. This should assist the committee and music director immeasurably in determining whether the person is a "musical fit" for the section and the ensemble. In situations where all members of a section are not participating on the audition committee, it also would/should provide all section members the opportunity to provide input to the final decision and perhaps create the best chance of having the new employee walk into a very inclusive, positive political atmosphere. The only better situation might be to have the individuals participate in a rehearsal with the entire ensemble, although that possibility might be logistically and financially prohibitive in many instances. Most of the military vocal ensembles accomplish all this inside their audition procedures, and it makes a large difference for their ensembles. The Minnesota Orchestra has final candidates play with their section when possible and has found the practice to be very worthwhile.

The third issue has less to do with musicianship and more to do with personality and values. How can an organization know that a person is going to "fit in" with the philosophy of the organization, colleagues, and administration? Military musical organizations are able to ascertain the answers to those questions up to a point, because each military organization conducts a formal interview with potential audition winners. In almost any business one must

prove one's ability to fulfill the duties of the job, however, one must also be able to show the ability to fulfill those unwritten duties that go along with any position. Does the person have a personality that will promote harmony within the organization? Does the person possess the intellect to make sound decisions? What kind of image will this person present to the public? The list of important questions is endless. The most wonderful musician at the audition might also be the person who could be a source of dissension or unhappiness that could take a large toll on the success of an ensemble. In this writer's opinion, those who ignore these possibilities allowing the sole determination of audition success to be musicianship/performance ability may be doing so to the detriment of their organization. In today's incredibly competitive musical profession, why not hire the most complete candidate possible? In a recent conversation with a colleague, I learned that the St. Louis Symphony is investigating these kinds of personnel issues prior to the audition. Interested parties might wish to contact that organization for more information.

#### 4. Are auditions fair?

In the course of my interviews I talked with many, many individuals associated with (at least) ten different organizations. When the subject of fairness was broached, in every instance the intent of the organization and its audition committees to be fair was very intensely and vigorously defended. In some interviews, audition situations wherein lack of fairness either might have been perceived by some candidates were described. If another action had been taken in most of those situations, a different group of candidates would have likely perceived that action as being unfair. As in so many "real life" situations, sometimes there is no solution which will either have the appearance of being (or in fact be) fair to everyone. As an impartial outside observer, I must say that I strongly believe that each of the organizations I interviewed is going to the furthest lengths within its resources to be as fair as is humanly possible inside the procedures they have laid down for auditions - and I believe this is the case throughout the industry. I am certain that there are isolated instances of unfairness in auditions, but I am just as convinced that those instances are very rare.

Auditionees must remember that professional auditions are not contests in the same sense as a solo competition. A performance organization's audition is an "interview" as well as a demonstration of performance ability. The organization must select an individual whose musical qualities match the needs of the ensemble most closely. Over many years I have listened to incredulous stories told by individuals who have played or heard an audition which they deemed to be absolutely fabulous, but the auditionee either was not advanced to a final round or was not selected as a winner in a final round. Generally the story teller has been outside the particular work environment where the audition has taken place. Before leveling accusations of unfairness against an organization, one must always remember that fairness in a job interview situation lies in being given the best opportunity to show one's wares to the best of one's abilities. I believe these organizations "bend over backwards" to provide that opportunity for every auditionee. The hiring decision is based on the organization's needs, musical philosophy, and character. Relative to this entire matter, auditionees should heed the advice of Gene Pokorny, principal tubist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra: "Do not base your happiness on the decisions of an audition committee. Go for a much bigger goal: becoming a better musician. Judge yourself by the progress achieved, not the changeable winds of an

audition committee.” One can be a great musician and a great performer and maybe even be able to give the most perfect performance at an audition and still not win. This does not mean that the audition or the audition process is unfair. It simply means that a given individual is not the right person for a particular work situation, and that determination is one that only the potential employer can make. Perseverance is a very important quality on the audition circuit.

### Implications for Educators

At the outset of this project, the primary intent was to gather information that would assist educators in preparing students who intend to audition for professional positions. The information presented thus far should certainly be of assistance to educators. The points that follow are in some cases simply a review and re-emphasis of previously stated information and in other cases information that could only be presented appropriately here.

1) Be certain that students who are aspiring performers are fully aware of what the term “professional standard” means relative to an audition. The student should be aware that only spending time in a practice room (although this is a necessity) is not enough to qualify one for a professional audition. Getting ninety-eight percent (plus) of the notes, rhythms, intonation, etc. correct is a given for someone who is qualified to win a professional audition. One must also demonstrate outstanding musicianship, and that must be developed through listening to and observing live professional concerts, as well as through listening to recordings. The sounds one hears (both musically and technically speaking) in those settings represent the standard one must meet in order to be competitive. Students must understand that, although perfection is not usually attainable, audition winners are generally close to perfection while demonstrating outstanding musicianship. (Note: listening to and observing non-professional concerts of all kinds can be just as important in guiding an aspiring professional’s development.)

2) To the best of our ability as educators, we should inform students of the full responsibilities that go with a performance position. One of the consistently evident truths that came forth from interviews in all settings is that even those who are successful in auditions have virtually no idea of “the big picture” with regard to the position that has been won. Most young people hold a vision of professional band or orchestral performance that includes only practice, performance, and going home. Practice and excellence as a performer are simply the basic expectations. It is each musician’s responsibility to make the work environment as productive as possible. Toward that end, conscious development of human relations skills and a sense of personal responsibility for “taking care of business” in all its aspects (always being prepared and on time, properly groomed, etc.) is crucial to success. As a profession, we need to impress upon future auditionees the fact that, in virtually any position, one is going to be asked to participate in the life of the larger organization. Most organizations have a governance structure in which musicians should take an active part. This might include volunteering to participate in committees, especially those wherein one has special interest, experience, or expertise. Explaining political awareness is a difficult task, however, we need to at least provide an introduction of the reality of the need for political awareness.

To carry this issue one step further, aspiring performers should actively cultivate the ability to speak about music in general and about what they do (both broadly and specifically) with

fluency. No organization told me that the ability to present oneself well verbally would (at this point in time, at least) “make or break” an audition. In orchestral situations, one doesn’t even have the opportunity to demonstrate any verbal presentation abilities. However, in this time of declining budgets wherein fund raising has become tantamount to organizational success, the ability to present oneself well in public verbally as well as musically can literally double one’s value to a musical organization. This may be a key “collateral responsibility” for the well-prepared musician of the future.

3) Have students learn and prepare the repertoire expected for auditions. It seems that, in truth, many individuals come to auditions who do not even know all the “standard excerpts” for choral, band, or orchestral auditions, let alone actually having learned the repertoire. As expressed earlier in this presentation, “knowing the excerpts” is only a beginning. We must do a much better job of having our students “learn the repertoire” and be sure that our students truly understand the meaning of the phrase. This means more time spent in lessons, master classes, and outside assignments with scores and recordings doing intelligent, analytical listening. This should also imply the need to encourage our students to give much more serious and intent attention to their studies in music history and form and analysis courses. According to Eiji Oue of the Minnesota Orchestra, one should even know the movements of works wherein one is tacet!

I am not advocating forsaking the study of technique or solo repertoire. The former develops and establishes command of the voice or instrument, and the latter develops and refines the musical skills that are necessary to performance in any setting. If we are educating students whose goal is performance in a professional choral or instrumental ensemble, however, we must provide a balance in the training that includes the repertoire for audition situations and work with that repertoire seriously and regularly.

4) Inform and prepare students for audition peripherals: stage presence, appearance, and interviews. Although I chose not to include in this summary statement the numerous (quite humorous, unfortunately) stories regarding audition stage presence, appearance, and interviews I heard during my travels, the existence of such stories in impressive numbers holds an important message for educators. None of us want one of our students to be the main character in one of these tomes, but often the steps aren’t taken to prevent it. I believe that most of us can accomplish the basics for our students with one master class per year (or even just part of a master class) on these topics.

As implied in the description of common audition practice at the beginning of this presentation, not many people were willing to actually say that personal appearance is a factor in winning or losing an audition, however, one doesn’t have to “listen between the lines” very intently to understand that we should be encouraging our students to have a thoroughly professional appearance, whether behind a screen or not.

When there is no screen, candidates should project an air of polite confidence. One personnel manager told me that it is possible for a candidate to lose the audition between the stage door and sitting down at the stand - before a note is ever played. In one audition described to me, a candidate came on stage with such an air of obnoxious overconfidence that the committee

virtually immediately and unanimously decided that this was a person with who they did not wish to work. “Pleasant confidence” was terminology that was presented more than once.

Currently the military bands are the only place one can actually count on an interview, however, at least one orchestral music director I spoke with does like to interview final candidates before making the hiring decision. Interviewing skills in any of these settings are no different from interviewing skills in other job settings, but are we sure that our students are learning those basic job interview skills somewhere outside our studios? I fear that most university music curricula relegate mock interview situations only to music education majors. Exploring interview skills with performance majors or liberal arts majors interested in performance positions would seem to be as appropriate as setting up mock auditions and, in the case of preparation for military band auditions, simply complete the preparatory experience.

5) Be certain that students understand the hardships of the audition circuit (time, money, inconvenience). Over the course of the past three months I had the opportunity to talk with people who are currently seeking positions. After describing my project to them, several requested that I include the following comments to educators.

In dreaming the dream of winning a professional position while sitting in the practice room or learning scores while listening to recordings, it is very easy to romanticize and even to convince oneself that one will walk into the first audition that comes along and win the committee’s ears and hearts. It has happened, but only very rarely. Many individuals who eventually win a position go through many auditions before meeting with success. I believe that, in our enthusiasm for the most talented of our students, we as educators are sometimes susceptible to being swallowed up by that dream, too. We need to be sure to keep a sense of practicality and infuse that sense in our students. Many people pursuing professional music careers must have a “day job” that allows for practice, study, and preparation. When auditions come up, often that means giving up work obligations and salary and adding plane fare and hotel bills to the budget. Those factors are always a strain on the pocketbook, but also can be a strain on family and personal relationships. As educators we are obligated to give as complete a picture of “the real world” as is possible, and the truth about the arduous audition trail is yet another part of the picture that unfortunately ends up being a bit of a surprise to many young people.

### Final Thoughts

This presentation is most certainly not “the final word” on any of the topics covered. I hope that it does serve as a useful point of departure for discussion within and between professional musical organizations and among educators as the audition process continues to evolve. All opinions expressed here are just that, but they are indeed based upon the factual information that I have gathered over the past three months. Perhaps my comments and opinions can serve as a basis for further investigation by other members of our musical community.

The articles I have prepared for the Journal of the National Association of Wind and Percussion Instructors, The American Choral Director’s Association, and the ITEA Journal together with the summaries of my interviews are included in the appendices of this report. Hopefully, those items will provide answers to questions the reader may have.

This project suggests (at a minimum) the following possible future projects for other researchers:

- 1) Investigation of audition processes and procedures in orchestras on the east and west coasts of the U.S. with comparison and contrast to my findings.
- 2) Deeper investigation of audition processes and procedures for the non-Washington, D.C. military bands.
- 3) Investigation of audition processes and procedures internationally. Here I would recommend a series of studies focusing on geographic regions: continental Europe, England, Scandinavia, the Far East, etc.

It is my sincere hope that this work has been meaningful to all concerned. I welcome questions, comments, and further input from all participants in the study, as well as from any readers of this document.

## Appendix I

### Military Organization Interview Summaries

#### U.S. Air Force Band

##### Instrumental

###### A. Positions are advertised:

Inside the Air Force, International Musician, instrument-specific journals, university/college/conservatory educators. NOTE: A separate “Blue Suit” audition is held for qualified Air Force personnel prior to the advertisement of a civilian audition.

###### B. Tapes and resumes:

Solo representing best playing, band excerpts provided by the USAF Band. Qualified Air Force personnel do not need to submit a tape. Resume should summarize musical experience and background and include date of birth.

###### C. Audition routine

- a. sign-in
- b. large warm-up area
- c. private warm-up area shortly before audition
- d. audition: preliminary audition is behind a screen, finals are not behind the screen.
- e. typically, top three finishers are interviewed (general interview and determination of suitability for White House security clearance.)
- f. ceremonial band finalists also demonstrate marching ability (with and without playing)

###### D. Live Audition Repertoire

Consists of prepared repertoire sent to candidates in advance (no solo performance) and sight reading, as well as major and all forms of minor scales. Ceremonial Brass candidates must also memorize a portion of a march (provided in advance of the audition).

###### E. Audition adjudication

a. 6 member audition committee: concert band superintendent; brass/perc. or ww superintendent; gaining section principal; 2 other members of the gaining section; 1 member from other sections of the band. (NOTE: appropriate adjustments take place for “one deep,” i.e. harp, etc., sections.)

b. Committee uses a scoring worksheet. Candidates are rated 1-5 on areas such as tone quality, intonation, articulation, technique, rhythmic accuracy, time sense/tempo, range, musicality, dynamics, scales. String players are also rated on bow technique. Finalists auditioning for positions in the Ceremonial Brass are also rated on marching ability and military bearing.

c. NO DISCUSSION is allowed in real-time among committee members during the audition process to insure fully independent opinions of each committee member throughout the process.

d. Each candidate is rated by each adjudicator as either “qualified” or “unqualified” immediately upon the conclusion of each individual audition.

- e. The committee is joined by the Commander of the Band for the final round.

#### F. Post-audition information

After the audition generally the top three finalists are interviewed (see C.e. above) in case the audition winner might not be able to accept the position or might be disqualified for some reason. The job is offered to the winner by the Commander and Conductor of the USAF Band. If the primary winner is unable to accept the position, the position is offered to the first runner-up when appropriate. The winner of the position must then report to his/her local recruiter and enlist in the Air Force after which they report for recruit training. Upon completion of recruit training, they join the Band.

#### G. General comments

The procedures described here are essentially a summary of extremely detailed USAF Band document (USAF Band OI 36-1) that outlines procedures for all internal and external auditions.

In the screened audition round(s), candidates may be asked to remove shoes before entering the audition room in order to reduce incidence of unintended gender bias.

A comment about tapes: remember that some auditors may not play your instrument. Choose repertoire that will be appealing/interesting to someone who might not be familiar with the latest contemporary repertoire for your instrument.

Tubists: Tuba positions in the U.S. Air Force Band require proficiency on contrabass tuba first and foremost. You should plan to audition accordingly. If your best representation as a soloist is on bass tuba, you may wish to play your taped solo on bass tuba, however, plan to audition in Washington, D.C. on contrabass tuba.

#### Vocal

##### A. Positions are advertised:

Inside the Air Force, ACDA, other vocal journals, university/college/conservatory educators.

##### B. Tapes and resumes

Resume should include date of birth and summarize musical background and experience. The tape should include an opera aria or art song in a foreign language, a pop selection, and a Broadway or jazz selection. Candidates should try to demonstrate good fundamentals of singing and (as much as is possible) the characteristic color of the voice. The number of candidates invited to any given audition is flexible and dependent upon qualifications and experience of applicants.

##### C. Audition routine

- a. sign in
- b. music theory test (basic)
- c. solo presentation (prepared material of candidate's choice per tape instructions)
- d. quartet singing (prepared material provided in advance - both traditional and pop styles)
- e. sight reading (very straight-forward material)  
(total audition time is about twenty minutes)

#### D. Audition adjudication

- a. Theory examinations are objective material and are graded accordingly.
- b. Each candidate is rated on adjudication forms on the areas described in audition routine by a subcommittee of the Singing Sergeants. The entire ensemble listens to the audition.
- c. A short discussion is held after each candidate.

#### E. Post audition information

- a. Finalists are interviewed. Candidates must be able to obtain White House security clearance, meet Air Force regulations for weight, etc. NOTE: Candidates should have no tattoos.
- b. A recommendation is made to the Commander of the U.S. Air Force Band regarding the committee's decision. If the Commander concurs with the recommendation, the job is then offered by the Commander.
- c. The winner of the position reports to his/her local recruiter and enlists in the Air Force after which they report for recruit training. Upon completion of recruit training, they join the Singing Sergeants.

#### F. General comments

In quartet singing, remember that your job is to blend with a group - this is not a continuance of your solo singing audition.

In sight singing, your goal is to show your ability to be able to "think on your feet." Perfection isn't expected, but continuity and recovery is. Being able to see/hear/sing intervals accurately is paramount to success.

**OVERALL NOTE:** Everyone in the U.S. Air Force Band (all units) is assigned collateral duty. Performance in collateral duty is very much tied to promotion.

### U.S. Army Band

#### Instrumental

A. Positions are advertised: in the International Musician and to instrumental organizations appropriate to the vacancy. The Army generally does NOT advertise to music schools. NOTE: most openings in The U.S. Army Band are into the Ceremonial Band, not the Concert Band. Promotions are usually made from the Ceremonial Band to the Concert Band.

B. Tapes: should be a reasonably difficult solo or solos played extremely well. Musicality is what impresses them the most, although the performance should certainly be as flaw-free as is possible. Taste in repertoire seems to be the most permissive of all the bands - any genre or style is acceptable as long as it is played well. Recommended to try to demonstrate lyrical and technical abilities. **NO BAND EXCERPTS!** Be sure to use the accompaniment if it's part of the solo. An accompaniment played below standard is better than no accompaniment at all (in most cases). **DO NOT "excerpt" solo performances** - leaves doubts. Who listens to tapes varies from section to section. Only the section leader might listen, or several members of the section might listen. Sometimes the concert band and ceremonial band section leaders will listen along with some others. **BE SURE THE FIRST TEN BARS ARE DYNAMITE!** Around eight semi-

finalists are selected from the tape round. The Army pays all expenses for those individuals to come to Washington, D.C. for the audition (the only branch that does this).

The Army requires a full-length photo and resume be included with the tape. A very complete, multi-page (if needed) resume is encouraged. Who are you? While musical experiences are most important, they want to know if you are a well-rounded person. Have you been involved in your community? Do you have interests outside music?

#### C. Audition routine

- a. arrive at Fort Meyer and sign in.
- b. orientation session describing the job in very “black and white” terms.
- c. preliminary round: may or may not be behind a screen. If there is a possibility that there would be even the least appearance of race or gender bias, the screen will probably be used.
- d. final round: usually involves two or three players and is more of the same. May or may not be screened depending on circumstances.
- e. finalists qualified to enter the Band are interviewed following the finals round. The interview is a general personal interview, but also includes questions relative to one’s ability to obtain White House security clearance and general suitability to the military.
- f. the winner of the audition is offered the position by the Commander of the Band.

#### D. Live Audition Repertoire

Includes a solo of the candidate’s choice - the entire work will probably not be heard - and prepared excerpts sent to the candidate in advance. The excerpts will include band music, brass quintet music, etudes, etc. Sight reading will be taken from the standard repertoire and from “stock” U.S. Army Band arrangements or original compositions. The candidate should be familiar with all styles of standard band playing (especially marches), but also pop/jazz styles.

#### D. Audition adjudication

- a. Committee membership is inconsistent from audition to audition. Usually the preliminary round committee will include the auditions officer, the section leader where the vacancy occurs, and E-8 and E-9 (Senior Master Sergeants and Sergeant Majors) personnel from the section. The finals round will add the Officer-in-Charge of the ensemble where the vacancy occurs and possibly other individuals by invitation. Others may listen.
- b. No forms or other objective instruments are used in adjudication. All the standard criteria are used in adjudication (tone, rhythm, time, overall musicianship, etc.), and candidates are discussed as/after they play.
- c. Sight reading is considered to be very equal in weight to prepared material. Remember not to stop in sight reading - “you will be set up to fail.” Composure in that situation is critical. Can you keep going/fake/maintain composure?
- d. Personal appearance (neatness, presentation) is a factor in the audition and interview.

#### E. Post audition information

Everyone finds out who the winner is on the day of the audition - or if no winner has been selected. Non-winners should plan to remain after the audition to ask questions about their performance and to receive advice about improvement looking towards the next audition. The winner will report to his/her local recruiter to enlist in the Army and will undergo recruit training prior to reporting to Fort Meyer for duty.

## F. General comments

For tuba players, the Army is generally looking for contrabass tuba players. It is permissible to play a bass tuba for the solo performance, however, one should bear in mind the fact that the entire solo may not be heard. There's nothing wrong with preparing a solo on contrabass tuba and bringing only one instrument to Washington. All sight reading WILL be done on contrabass tuba, and some of the other prepared material WILL be required performance on contrabass tuba. Size of instrument is less relevant than how you play it. Recent winners played PT-6, Mirafone 186, Rudi Meinl 3/4, Hirsbrunner 4/4.

Check with your recruiter to be sure that you meet the physical/medical requirements for service in the Army.

## Vocal

A. Positions are advertised: in the International Musician and to choral organizations appropriate to the vacancy. The Army generally does NOT advertise to music schools.

B. Tapes: For the Army Chorale, pop/jazz/show style selection is all that is required. For the Soldier's Chorus, something in a foreign language (aria or art song) and a pop or Broadway style song. NOTE: very, very few tapes are received. Candidates are usually interviewed one at a time (literally - only one candidate would be interviewed on any given day for either group).

## C. Audition routine

- a. VERY informal!!!! (For obvious reasons) no screen is used for either organization.
- b. For the Chorale, the candidate sings a solo and sings with the group. For the Chorus, the candidate sings with the Chorus (as a member) first, then by themselves.
- c. For the Chorale, sight-reading ability is not important - all performances are well-prepared routines. Sight reading for the Chorus is done in a quartet format and generally includes (among other things) something in a foreign language.
- d. candidates qualified to be members are interviewed following the finals round. The interview is a general personal interview, but also includes questions relative to one's ability to obtain White House security clearance and general suitability to the military. If a candidate wins a position, they usually are so informed on the day of the audition.
- f. the winner of the audition is offered the position by the Commander of the Army Band.

## D. Audition adjudication

- a. For the Chorale, the entire group is the audition committee, including the Officer in Charge. For the Chorus, the section leaders, group leaders, and Officer in Charge are the official committee, however, anyone in the Chorus can listen to the full audition. Discussion is ongoing.
- b. For the Chorale, the committee is looking for the ability to entertain and move as well as the ability to sing well - the candidate will be asked to use a "prop" microphone in the audition. For the Chorus, it is important for the candidate to demonstrate flexibility ("can you sing this with less vibrato?" etc.). In sight reading (for the Chorus), "mistakes are not fatal." Second chances are there. Expect things like the Beebe Ave Maria.

c. For either organization, the candidate's attitude should be confident, but not obnoxious. First impressions are critical for these auditions, and everything one does affects perception of the committee. The audition is not about "me" (the auditionee), but about the contribution that the candidate can make to the organization.

#### E. Post audition information

The person selected for the position will be informed and will then report to his/her local recruiter to enlist in the Army and will undergo recruit training prior to reporting to Fort Meyer for duty.

#### F. General comments

The audition atmosphere for these organization is very cordial. They want candidates to be as comfortable as possible.

Generally "older" individuals are most successful because of issues relating to vocal maturity. (College graduates or older).

Note that all auditions for the Chorale and Chorus are videotaped.

### U.S. Marine Band

#### Instrumental

A. Positions are advertised: to Marine fleet bands, in the International Musician and in mass mailing fliers. Also on the Marine Band web site.

B. Tapes: are not required for this organization. Tape reviews are offered if potential candidates so desire (if one would like opinions regarding practicality/potential for a successful audition prior to investing time and money in making the trip to Washington, D.C.). Essentially, ANYONE may audition for membership in the U.S. Marine Band.

#### C. Audition routine

- a. arrive at the Marine Barracks and sign in between 7:30 and 11:30 a.m. (encouraged to arrive by 9:00 a.m.)
- b. group warm-up area in a large room.
- c. preliminary round is screened and includes prepared material and sight reading. (After every five candidates a brief discussion takes place and those five candidates are immediately notified of their status as a finalist or non-finalist.)
- d. final round is also screened and includes further performance of prepared material and further sight reading.
- e. all finalists are interviewed prior to their finals performance to determine suitability for the organization and ability to obtain White House security clearance.
- f. winner is offered the position by the Commander of the U.S. Marine Band.

#### D. Live Audition Repertoire

All live audition repertoire is provided to candidates by mail in advance of the audition. The required solo selection is included with that material.

#### E. Audition adjudication

a. The audition committee consists of the principal of the section where the vacancy occurs plus one other member of the section, the section commander (i.e. woodwind, upper brass, lower brass, percussion, etc.), and the assistant director of the Band. A player from the section where the vacancy occurs is the proctor. Anyone else from the band may listen.

b. Discussion during the audition is minimal. Some sections use forms to facilitate comments, however, there is no official numerical grading.

c. In the final round, the Commander of the Band and all principal players in the band are added to the preliminary round committee. Also, everyone is aware of who the finalists are in terms of “paper acquaintance.” The finals committee does NOT know the identity of individuals as/when they are performing. Winner determination is made by the full committee.

#### F. Post audition information

Finalists who do not win the position are encouraged to get comments from the committee at the end of the day. (Most do not take advantage of this opportunity.) The audition winner enlists in the Marine Corps at his/her local recruiting office and then reports directly to the Marine Barracks for duty. There is no recruit training for members of the U.S. Marine Band (as distinct from the Marine field bands - members of those organizations do undergo recruit training).

#### G. General comments

Tubists are discouraged from bringing small tubas. The job is to play contrabass tuba, and that’s what committees prefer to hear. ALL sight reading will be on contrabass tuba, and prepared material is provided with contrabass tuba in mind.

In sight reading, correct time, style, overall musicianship is most important - everyone misses notes. Keep going, no matter what. Music that is almost unplayable will be part of the finals - what you do with that situation is what is being observed.

Try not to be in the first two groups (the first five to ten players).

If you don’t win, by all means try again!!

Note that Fackeltanz is often on euphonium finals - also known as “the widow maker.”

Be prepared.

Auditions usually take place in the spring in order to accommodate college schedules where possible.

Superior musicianship is the bottom line - not who you studied with or where you went to school.

Fleet musicians have no advantage in auditions and they are represented in the membership of the band.

#### U.S. Navy Band

##### Instrumental

A. Positions are advertised: through the U.S. Navy recruiting command, “awareness” advertising.

Fliers/mass mailings are sent to members of instrument organizations where vacancies occur.

Candidates should always call the Auditions Coordinator at the U.S. Navy Band for accurate details.

Prior Navy service and civilian auditions take place as one audition - best player wins.

B. Tapes: Tapes are not required of auditionees. Anyone may come to the Navy Yard to audition, however, tapes are not discouraged. Tapes will be reviewed by members of the Band, and candidates who are perceived as not being qualified via their taped performance can be so advised, thus potentially saving the money/time of a trip to Washington. If you send a tape, begin with something like a Rochut etude or a standard solo. Do not send a recording of a band performance. The tape should be of reasonable audio quality. Demonstrate good fundamental musical skills and play expressively. The tapes ARE listened to and comments are provided.

#### C. Audition routine

- a. All auditionees sign in and are assigned a number.
- b. The warm-up area is a large room.
- c. Auditionees are taken to a private room ten to fifteen minutes before the audition.
- d. The first round of the audition is generally played behind a screen.
- e. The final round usually consists of five candidates who play on stage (no screen).
- f. Two or three finalists are interviewed to determine qualification for service (White House clearance, physical qualification, etc.)
- g. The Commander of the U.S. Navy Band offers the position to the winner.

#### D. Live Audition Repertoire

- a. Prepared solo (show off best qualities of playing, should represent lyrical and technical playing.)
- b. Prepared excerpts (provided in advance)
- c. Sightreading (be able to differentiate between 2/4 and 6/8 marches, be able to read “reasonable” music, euphonium players be prepared to read treble clef material.)

#### E. Audition adjudication

- a. Committee consists of the “Lead Chief” for the Band, “Dept. Chief in Charge” (i.e. upper brass, lower brass, woodwind, percussion, etc.), Drum Major, and three people from the section designated by the section leader of the section where the vacancy occurs. Any member of the band can be present and can provide input to the audition committee when appropriate. Three members of the committee are designated as “official writers.”
- b. In the first round ability to “do the job” is determined. Each committee member makes notes and discussion of each audition among committee members is permitted.
- c. Same procedure is used (with no screen) during the finals round.
- d. Officers generally do not listen to auditions and generally accept the recommendation of the enlisted personnel audition committee in hiring an audition winner.
- e. Personal appearance is important!

#### F. Post audition information

Two or three top finalists are interviewed upon completion of the audition to determine eligibility for service (White House security clearance, etc.). Although the winner is offered the job, in the event that that person is unable to pass security and/or physical examinations, the Navy wants to be able to immediately offer the position to the next finisher. All finalists should plan to remain after the finals round. Members of the committee are willing to discuss individual performances on the audition and offer suggestions for improvement for future

auditions. The audition winner reports to his/her local Naval recruiter to enlist in the Navy. Upon completion of recruit training, they report directly to the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C.

#### G. General comments

Navy personnel (on the whole) seem not to be very interested in hearing non-traditional works either on tape or in live auditions. It would seem advisable to plan to present prepared music that exhibits the kind of skills demanded in the music the band tends to play - which is largely melodic in nature.

Tubists should plan to audition on contrabass tuba primarily. One might choose to do a solo on bass tuba if his/her best possible soloistic playing is in that medium, however, the remainder of the audition WILL take place on contrabass tuba.

Sightreading will ultimately be virtually unplayable. Be mentally prepared for this eventuality. The purpose is to see the candidate's reaction. Can you keep going? Can you "fake?"

Sometimes no one is qualified and a hire is not made. Every effort is made to avoid this circumstance, however, the standard for membership in the band will be enforced.

#### Vocal

A. Positions are advertised: to the Navy fleet organizations, ACDA Choral Journal, Opera News, university vocal/choral music depts.

B. Tapes: Are required and are screened. Candidates are invited for audition. The tape should include an art song in a foreign language and something of a pop/broadway nature. The recording should be recent! The candidate should be attempting to make as good a representation as possible of the voice quality and color. Good intonation and accuracy are important.

#### C. Audition routine

a. Auditionees arrive and are assigned a number.

b. Preliminary round is screened and consists of two prepared pieces (one classical and one light). The candidate must provide the music for the audition in advance (for accompanist preparation). All sight reading takes place in the preliminary round.

c. Final round is not screened. Candidates perform solo selections again (stage presence important here). No sight reading in the final round. Candidate performs in a quartet with members of the Sea Chanters - music is provided in advance of the audition and usually consists of music like "Dark Eyed Sailor," "Hodie Christus," "When I Fall in Love," etc.

d. Finalists are interviewed for suitability for military service, ability to achieve White House security clearance, etc.

e. The winner is offered the position by the Commander of the U.S. Navy Band.

#### D. Live Audition Repertoire

Per comments above, the candidate chooses the solo repertoire he/she will perform and must provide music to the Sea Chanters before arrival at the Navy Yard so that the accompanist will be prepared. Additionally, quartet music will be provided to invited auditionees in advance of travel to Washington, D.C. Sight reading is representative of musical demands fulfilled by the Sea Chanters.

#### E. Audition adjudication

a. The entire chorus listens to auditionees and have input, however only three members of the group are “official writers.”

b. Discussion takes place after each auditionee in both rounds.

c. In addition to good fundamental musical and vocal skills, adjudicators are seeking an air of confidence and pleasant facial expression/communication from candidates. The candidate should do his/her best to portray the music where practical and possible.

d. Officers generally do not listen to auditions and generally accept the recommendation of the Sea Chanters in hiring an audition winner.

#### F. Post audition information

Two or three top finalists are interviewed upon completion of the audition to determine eligibility for service (White House security clearance, etc.). Although the winner is offered the job, in the event that that person is unable to pass security and/or physical examinations, the Navy wants to be able to immediately offer the position to the next finisher. The audition winner reports to his/her local Naval recruiter to enlist in the Navy. Upon completion of recruit training, they report directly to the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. The Sea Chanters make a point to provide a lot of support for new members while they are undergoing recruit training.

#### G. General comments

Auditions are virtually always in search of a very specific voice type, i.e. if the advertisement is for a bass voice, this is exactly what is desired - not a baritone/bass. A very specific voice quality is usually envisioned by the group as well.

This is one of the few places that one can have a regularly paid singing career with regular performing. A fine way to be able to work in the music profession and have a good family life.

## Appendix II Interview Summaries: Orchestras

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Auditions Coordinator: Jeffrey Stang

#### Tapes

CSO will hear “pre-preliminary” tapes as a service to potential candidates. A subcommittee of the orchestra’s elected audition committee will listen to the tapes and advise candidates regarding their potential at the live audition.

#### Problems with tapes submitted:

- 1) “non-conforming” selections (works that are really inappropriate)
- 2) poor recording quality. Recording studio quality is recommended.
- 3) recording-related pitch problems: use a pitch-referenced recording deck, if possible.
- 4) record in monoral mode, not stereo.
- 5) play as perfectly as possible.

#### Resume

For the CSO, the resume serves only as an application. The resume is NOT screened. It should be brief and concise: one page is fine. Be sure that your name, address, phone, and instrument are in the header!

#### The CSO Audition Committee

The orchestra elects seven members to a standing audition committee, which listens to all auditions for all instrument vacancies. In addition to the elected committee, the principal of the section wherein a vacancy occurs and a delegate from the orchestra members committee hear the audition (total of nine members). The orchestra members’ committee representative is present principally to ensure that procedures are followed and that the audition is indeed fair. While the official committee makes decisions in the preliminary round, any member of the orchestra may listen to any audition. The Maestro is added to the committee for the final round of the audition and makes the final hiring decision.

#### Audition Day Procedures

- 1) Early arrivals draw lots for order, later arrivals are assigned numbers.
- 2) Candidates warm up in a large holding room.
- 3) Generally a private warm up area is provided twenty to thirty minutes before the audition.
- 4) The audition usually takes place in Orchestra Hall. (Buntrock Hall is the alternate location.) The audition area is carpeted (control for gender bias) and is screened in the preliminary round.
- 5) An announcement is made each hour regarding promotion to finals or dismissal.
- 6) Finals are not screened (unless a current member of the orchestra is auditioning). If an accompanied solo is required, an accompanist is provided for the finals. (No accompaniment is used in the preliminary round.)
- 7) Maestro consults committee and makes the final decision.

### Adjudication

Discussion during the preliminary round is greatly discouraged. Committee members simply vote yes or no by secret ballot during the prelims after each candidate. Six “yes” votes grants promotion to the finals. Five “yes” votes are considered to constitute a “split vote.” The vote is double checked by a show of hands. A candidate receiving five votes will likely be asked to re-audition as part of another preliminary group later in the day.

### Repertoire

Simply “standard repertoire” is the requirement, although a list may be published. Any “sight reading” will be drawn from the repertoire. There will be no “declared sight reading” in the preliminary round. “Sight reading” will generally only be used in the finals as a tie break type of measure. If a solo is used as part of the audition, it will generally be chosen (in consultation with the Maestro) by the section principal where the vacancy occurs.

### Additional Note:

The Maestro can invite up to four candidates to a pre-final round for principal positions.

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Chorus Manager: Susan Reddel

Asst. Chorus Manager: Angela Grimes

Music Director: Duain Wolfe

### Membership

The CSC is a 180 member group. 105 must (by union stipulation) be “professional” members. All other members are unpaid and are designated as either “intern” or “volunteer” members. ALL members of the chorus must audition for membership. Continuing members re-audition every two years. The “bottom line” requirement for membership is a suitable choral voice, although music literacy is a must. Most members have vocal training and most “pro” members have a music degree and professional background. Again, this is a “union” organization and is paid on a “per service” basis.

### The Audition Committee

The preliminary round for the audition is heard by the Assistant Conductor of the CSC. The chorus manager is present, but only to assist with administration of the auditions. The final round of the auditions is heard by the music director and the assistant conductor, again, with the chorus manager in attendance. A union representative of the chorus may also be present if desired. The music director of the chorus makes all final decisions on hiring.

### The Audition

Positions are advertised in newspapers, postings in Chicago area churches, in the New York Opera Newsletter, etc. Candidates simply contact the CSC for information and an audition appointment (see Appendix VII). For the preliminary round two works of about three minutes duration, one in english and one in another language. An accompanist is provided. Candidates

are required to bring original (not xeroxed) music for the accompanist's use. In addition to performing the two prepared works, sight reading is required. The sight reading does not come from the repertoire, but is originally composed by the music director. Less than perfect performance on sight reading is not necessarily a disqualifier, but good reading ability is a "plus." No screen is used for CSC auditions.

The finals for new members are done together with re-auditioning continuing members. One of the two previously prepared pieces is sung in addition to excerpts from Handel's "He Shall Purify" and Brahms' "Requiem." Candidates who are potential new members or who are seeking promotion to professional status must sight read. Once again the sight reading material is originally composed by the music director.

#### Adjudication

Rating forms are used for both the preliminary and final rounds (see Appendix VI). The CSC keeps all forms and comments on file for their own reference, as well as to assist repeat auditionees. The audition-critical criteria (again, see the forms elsewhere in this document) include standard items such as tone quality, clarity, intonation, projection, breath control, range, etc.

#### The Cleveland Orchestra

Personnel Manager and cellist, Ralph Curry

#### Tapes

The CO has only recently started using tapes as part of the audition process on a very limited basis. Candidates are generally selected for live audition based on references and resumes. Potential candidates are classified 1-A (automatic invitation) or 2-A (send a tape to be further considered for a live audition). If invited to send a tape, the tape should represent the best possible playing and should be produced using the highest quality equipment possible. The people from the orchestra and administration who review the tapes are aware of technological possibilities and believe that they can detect edited products. A recent trumpet audition was the first use of tapes. There were 260 applicants. In addition to those who received automatic invitations, twelve candidates were asked for tapes - only five of the twelve submitted tapes, and none of those five were invited for the live audition.

#### Resume

Applications are severely screened. All auditions must take place in one day, so there are only around 30 candidates invited for the live audition. A cover letter and resume usually make the nicest presentation. A nice looking, organized hand written presentation is fine. The resume should include 1) school(s) where your preparation work has been done (note: this DOES seem to make a difference), 2) experiences that relate to the job, both pre-professional and professional - include summer festivals, etc., 3) references - these are not often used, but availability of the information is helpful. One big "DON'T": don't list auditions where you were a semi-finalist or finalist and didn't win the job. You should not telegraph the notion that "I wasn't good

enough for them, but I think I'm good enough for you." Communicate successes in your resume, not failures.

### The Audition Committee

The CO audition committee consists of the principals of the "larger section" (i.e. for woodwind positions, all the woodwind principals) plus the music director and assisting conductors and the personnel manager. Two members of the section where the vacancy occurs are also part of the committee. Note that the CO is unique in that the music director and other administrative personnel are present for the ENTIRE audition - not just the finals.

### Repertoire

There will be a repertoire list issued to invited candidates. (Note: RC stated that many candidates obviously do not know how to "read" a list for any audition. Look carefully at the repertoire indicated to see if there are commonalities or characteristics in the music that indicate the organization's interest in certain kinds of skills. In the CO, for instance, brass players must be able to play expressively, string players should have a great spicatto, etc.) Everything will come from the standard repertoire, but be absolutely certain that you know the entire part to everything - not just the "standard excerpts." The person who can just "play the licks" will probably NOT win. The CO hears the part, not just excerpts. Know your entire part and how it fits into the whole. Sightreading is a part of the final round, however, once again, it will come from the standard repertoire - do your homework.

### The Audition

Candidates come to Severance Hall and sign in, fill out a questionnaire, and are assigned an audition time. A "communal area" is provided for general warm up, and candidates are taken to a private area for about twenty minutes prior to the actual audition. The audition takes place in Severance Hall, and each candidate is given immediate notification of promotion to finals or dismissal. There is no variation in procedure from preliminary round to finals. The CO never uses screens at any point in the audition process.

### Adjudication

The committee engages in very little discussion during the preliminary rounds and no discussion during the final rounds. There may be minimal discussion during a given candidate's audition, but none after. A single positive or "yes" vote from any member of the audition committee is sufficient to promote the candidate to the next round. The Maestro makes the final hiring decisions and, in the case of the current Maestro, he does not always agree with or follow the committee's recommendation. (Note: the attitude of the orchestra seems to be that the Maestro should have this latitude since he must also make firing decisions.)

### Stage Presence/Appearance

Work on your stage presence - from the door to the chair and stand, as well as AT the chair and stand. You can lose before you ever play a note. For personal appearance, dress and groom yourself with respect to the importance of what you're doing. DON'T wear jeans. Look nice, be comfortable and well-groomed.

Other comment: Auditions are a legacy for any performing organization. This is the means whereby an organization maintains its excellence. A bad hire equals two years of unhappiness for the candidate and colleagues and results in a firing, which is very traumatic for all concerned. It is important to be careful.

## Cleveland Orchestra Chorus

Eleanor Kushnick, 23 years experience in administration, librarian  
Music Directorship is (as of spring, 1998) open. Immediate past music director, Gareth Morrell, recently accepted a position with the Metropolitan Opera of New York.

## Membership

The membership of the chorus consists of a very "mixed bag." The group is totally a volunteer group, and there are no upper age limits. Members range from college students to community members in their 70s. No high school students.

There are four choruses in the organization:

- 1) The Cleveland Symphony Orchestra Chorus (all adults and in force for the full Symphony season) (175 members)
- 2) The Blossom Festival Chorus (summer season only. Also all adults, some who sing only in summer and some continuing members from the CSOC)
- 3) 5-8 grade children's chorus
- 4) 9-12 grade youth chorus

Openings are advertised in the "auditions section" of the Cleveland Friday newspaper. Press releases also go to other area sources and radio announcements are made. There are generally openings most of the time. Most members come from within a 75 mile radius of Cleveland.

## The Audition Committee

The music director of the chorus is the sole auditor.

## The Audition

All potential new members must audition, and continuing members must re-audition every two to three years. (Some continuing members may re-audition sooner, dependent upon skill level.) The audition lasts about ten minutes and consists of one memorized piece (any language) from classical vocal literature, sight reading from the choral repertoire, and a test of vocal range. An accompanist is provided. New members must also fill out an application form that gives a summary of musical background, training, and experience.

## Adjudication

The qualities generally sought include: a clear vocal sound - minimal vibrato, a voice that has good blending qualities, flexibility (in terms of being able to produce a given required sound), good pitch, intonation, time, reading ability, etc. Forms (see Appendix VI) are used to rate each candidate

## The Detroit Symphony Orchestra

### Audition Process and Procedure

Interview with Wesley Jacobs, tubist and Deborah Fayroian, cellist

### Tapes

Tapes are never used. Anyone may come to audition for open positions in the DSO, however a letter of application and resume are expected to be submitted in advance.

### Resume

Candidates submit a letter of application and a resume. The resume should be only one page and should emphasize things that have impact on/relate directly to the position.

### The Committee

Audition committees are elected and are constituted of those orchestra members with expertise in the area where the vacancy occurs. The Maestro joins the committee for the final round and makes the final hiring decision. Any member of the orchestra is eligible to listen to any audition.

### Audition Procedures

Audition procedures are established by the orchestra and specified in the orchestra's bargaining agreement. The candidates and the committee are instructed to use separate doors for entrance to the building on the day of the audition to maintain the integrity of anonymity for everyone. Approximate audition times are sent to candidates in advance of the audition day, however exact times are not issued until arrival at the audition site. The standard audition procedure is observed here (large common warm up area, candidate taken to private area for a few minutes prior to the actual audition, audition takes place). Both the preliminary and final rounds are screened. After each group of four or five auditionees, candidates are informed of promotion to finals or dismissal. The audition area is carpeted to prevent potential gender bias. Each candidate is informed of standard rules (don't speak, questions should be whispered to the proctor, etc.).

### Repertoire

The standard orchestral repertoire is the only source. If "sight reading" is necessary, it will come from the standard repertoire.

### Adjudication

There is no discussion during any individual audition. Typically, if discussion takes place, it will happen after a group of four or five auditionees. Generally there is a yes/no vote on each candidate. The string section, specifically, does use an objective instrument in adjudication with numerical scoring. A candidate must attain 35 points to move on to another round of auditions.

## Stage Presence

Because of the totally screened situation, personal appearance and stage presence are not really at issue for DSO auditions. It is notable that expectations for stage appearance (dress and grooming) for members of the DSO are stated in the orchestras contract.

Other comment: The American Symphony Orchestra League should consider standardizing audition procedures throughout its membership.

## Grant Park Symphony Orchestra Summary

Interview with Fritz Kaenzig, member of the GPSO elected audition committee

The Grant Park Symphony is a unique organization in that it is a professional orchestra that functions during the summer months only. Its principal performance venue is a large, modern outdoor shell in Chicago's Grant Park.

### The Application Process

Positions and audition dates are advertised via all normal channels (International Musician, etc.). Everyone who wishes to audition is heard. No tapes or other pre-preliminary materials are required.

### The Audition Committee

There are two standing audition committees elected from the orchestra designated as "panel A" and "panel B." The "A" panel is charged with listening to auditions. When members of the "A" panel are unable to attend an audition, someone from the "B" panel is asked to substitute. This panel listens to preliminary rounds. The final rounds involve the same committee plus orchestra principal players and the Artistic Director (who makes the final hiring decision). Anyone from the orchestra may listen to auditions.

### The Audition

In the facility used, there are multiple warm-up rooms used prior to audition time. Each candidate is taken to a private "holding" room a few minutes before their audition. The preliminary audition is screened, while the final round is not screened. Material for the audition is from the instrument's standard orchestral repertoire, and any "sight reading" used is drawn from the standard repertoire.

### Adjudication

No discussion takes place in the committee during each audition. After each audition a consensus is reached regarding promotion of the candidate to the final round. In the finals, the committee recommendation to the Artistic Director is, again, a consensus decision. The Artistic Director may accept that recommendation, hire another individual, or hire no one.

## Stage Presence/Physical Appearance

May have some bearing in the audition. (Gender or race is never an issue.) Some individual prejudices may exist regarding candidate's dress or grooming.

The Minnesota Orchestra

Personnel Manager Julie Haight

Tapes

Because rules for each audition are established by the committee for each particular audition, tapes are sometimes used and sometimes not used. When they are used (which seems to be not infrequent), candidates are sent a very clear set of instructions regarding how the tape is to be prepared together with specific repertoire requirements. (See appendices for an example.) Interestingly enough, some candidates do not follow directions...

Resume

The resumé should simply follow "resumé 101" rules. Be sure that name, instrument, and address are at the very beginning and very clear. Current professional experience and (musical) professional employment experience should follow that information, then educational background and teachers. Do not list finals or semi-finals achieved when you weren't the winner!

The Audition Committee

Audition committee personnel guidelines are specified in the orchestra's master agreement. The easiest way to summarize the make-up of committees is to say that committees are comprised of "experts" from the larger instrument family wherein vacancies occur, i.e. strings listen to strings, brass listen to brass, etc. The committee will number seven and will usually include the principal, three other players from the section (where applicable), and one person from each of the other sections in the instrument family. (Example: first violin section vacancy committee: principal violin, three first violinists, one violist, one cellist, one bassist)

Repertoire

The repertoire for the audition is all specified. Again, because each audition is unique, repertoire requirements differ. Solos may or may not be required. Orchestral repertoire passages to be performed will be chosen by the committee and approved by the music director and are sent to all candidates in advance.

The Audition

Times are generally assigned before candidates arrive. Because of the facilities available at Orchestra Hall, this allows candidates to arrive in a timely fashion and have access to private warm-up facilities for a bout half an hour prior to the audition. Candidates are told the exact passages they will perform (from the previously provided list) a few minutes before they go on stage for the audition. Auditions are generally held in Orchestra Hall, and about 90% of the time a screen is used in preliminary auditions. Sight reading can be a component of any

audition and candidates are so informed, although it is rarely used. Sight reading, if used, will come from the standard repertoire, but “standard repertoire” may include chamber music.

NOTE: The MSO does rather regularly ask finals candidates to play with the section in Orchestra Hall to measure the candidate’s ability to blend with the section.

#### Adjudication

In the early rounds the committee can and sometimes does talk briefly after each candidate. There is a break after every five candidates in the early rounds wherein more discussion and a vote for dismissal/promotion can take place. After each set of five, the previous five candidates are informed of either dismissal or promotion to the next round. At the final round, there is no discussion until all finalists have played and a first (secret) ballot has been taken. After the vote is taken and counted, discussion ensues with the vote used simply as a point of departure. The Music Director is involved in both the vote and the discussion and makes the ultimate hiring decision.

#### Stage Presence/Appearance

“The proof is in the playing.” BUT it is a good idea to look and act professionally.

#### Other notes...

- 1) The “total package” is what wins an audition. No one item or occurrence (missed note, etc.) in an audition “loses the audition.”
- 2) Don’t give up! Some eventual winners have auditioned for an MSO position five or six times before succeeding.
- 3) The MSO advertises positions via the usual channels and sends out packets to those who inquire about positions. Technically ANYONE who applies may come to the audition. A \$50 deposit is required with the application, and that is returned upon arrival at the preliminary round of the audition.

## Appendix III: Orchestra Conductors

### Zubin Mehta Interview Summary

This interview was held at Orchestra Hall in Chicago on February 24, 1998. Those present were Maestro Mehta, Jerry Young (the interviewer), and Gene Pokorny, tubist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The interview lasted approximately forty minutes. Maestro Mehta has enjoyed an illustrious career wherein, in addition to being Music Director and Conductor of some of the world's finest orchestras (most notably, Los Angeles, New York and Israel Philharmonics), he has guest conducted virtually every major orchestra in the world multiple times. Mr. Mehta made a remarkable forty-five hires during his tenure with the New York Philharmonic alone. As a result of the various music directorships he has held and the numerous auditions he has conducted, he has an unusually intense interest in the audition process. The interview was somewhat "free-flowing." What follows is a summary of Maestro Mehta's comments on a variety of topics.

#### On audition committees

Auditions should not be conducted by elected general committees, but by experts in the various instrumental areas, i.e. brass players should listen to brass auditions, string players to string auditions, etc. One "set" committee should exist for each instrument. A player must fit into the section concept of sound and style for any given orchestra, and those who participate in creating that concept are best qualified to make that determination.

#### On audition procedures

The audition should be extremely well organized to the smallest details. The audition should be administrated in such a way that the auditionee is able to play and only play for the duration of the audition with no distractions for either auditionee or committee. Music should be organized on the stand so that the auditionee only needs to turn the page to the next passage to be performed, etc.

Open discussion among committee members is important throughout the audition process - even if the discussion is heated. He believes that open discussion is important to getting the best result and that it usually does.

In the final round (where the music director is participating), Mehta believes that every candidate should be fully heard - nothing should "end the audition." Everyone may present something with which the Maestro might disagree, however, later in the audition, that might be offset by something else. Individuals have prepared a lifetime to get to the finals of a major orchestral audition. The Maestro and the committee owe a full hearing to that person.

From the music director's chair, Mehta will make the final hiring decision (which is customary), however, he does listen to the audition committee's opinions and judgements. Usually he is in agreement with the committee - could only remember two occasions where he deviated from the audition committee's recommendation. He also expressed concern over the lack of diversity in American orchestras.

#### On sight reading in orchestral auditions

Sight reading is really not a valuable item in determining how well a candidate will do the job, as this skill is not really part of the job. In “the real world” of orchestral playing, music for any given concert is available well in advance. (He once fired a librarian for not having music available for early preparation.) The ability to prepare repertoire is an important part of the job. One should know the repertoire for one’s instrument coming into the audition to the fullest extent possible.

#### On stage presence/visual impression

Visual impact in the audition is very important. The comment was not directed so much at dress as at the appearance of the candidate with relation to his/her instrument. The person should appear “natural” and comfortable with the instrument. Specific reference was made to a “natural” and normal appearing bow arm for string players. Object lesson: if one has an unnatural or unusual approach or mannerisms in one’s playing, one should strive to eliminate them before taking professional auditions.

#### On musical preferences/building musicianship

Maestro Mehta feels that most orchestral musicians lead a robot-like musical life, only thinking of producing what they are told to produce from the podium - which certainly is one part of their job. He wants to hear auditions that exhibit some individual musical integrity and passion - these qualities are more important than technical perfection (although this statement should not imply a lack of value placed on technical proficiency on the Maestro’s part). His strong feelings on these issues caused him to start the New York Philharmonic Chamber Music Series. He wanted to encourage orchestral musicians to develop better musical habits and sensitivity and felt that chamber music performance was the best avenue to those goals. Chamber music performance demands soloistic skills, and great soloists should make great orchestral players. Imagination and creativity can play a role in orchestral music making. The idea is not create anarchy, but to create a dialogue between players and between players and conductor.

#### On qualities sought in tuba players

Maestro Mehta prefers a big sound paired with the ability to produce different colors on demand and a good understanding of the variety of musical styles and how the instrument fits into those styles. The tubist’s duty is principally to provide a “rock bottom” to reinforce overtones throughout the orchestra.

#### Eiji Oue Interview Summary

Eiji Oue, a native of Hiroshima, Japan, has been Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra since 1995. He is also Music Director of the Grand Teton Festival (Wyoming) and Radio-

Philharmonie Hannover (Germany). Prior to coming to Minnesota he was Music Director of the Erie (Pennsylvania) Philharmonic and Associate Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic. Maestro Oue, a student and protégé of Leonard Bernstein, has conducted major orchestras around the world and also is a particularly strong advocate of local orchestral outreach activities of all descriptions.

1) What are the core musical values that you listen for in audition final rounds and that determine your decision in hiring any new orchestra member?

Individuality/personality: musical character!! Missing a few notes is much less important than one's ability to demonstrate musicality. Auditionees should not be afraid to "take a chance." The person who ONLY plays all the right notes will probably not be a winner. O.E. is looking for someone who is going to add to the ensemble - not necessarily "just fit in" with everyone else.

2) Are there one or two things that you might hear in any audition that will automatically end the audition?

NEVER!! Finalists have gone to considerable trouble to get to that point, and they deserve to be heard.

NOTE: E.O. tries to talk to each finalist individually after the audition is ended. His intent is to provide encouragement and advice.

3) Do you have any specific and/or unique things that you seek from a tuba player in the audition situation?

The tuba player in particular really needs to "know the score" (literally). O.E. likes to see tuba players who come to rehearsals with scores. For the tubist (maybe more than anyone), knowing just "the excerpts" is not enough. The tubist should even know the movements where he/she doesn't play! The tubist must be one of the best musicians in the orchestra, as well as being both accurate and musically aggressive. If the tubist is without energy, the orchestra is dead. O.E.'s favorite "telling" audition passages would be the Mahler First Symphony solo (phrasing), passages from Don Quixote, and the end of Symphonie Fantastique (rhythm and energy).

4) Any other comments for young people preparing for auditions or about auditions in general that you would like to add?

Direct advice: "Know all the music - the entire score. Open your eyes and ears. Imitate the best players on your instrument. (And, of course, study and practice.)"

General comments:

Auditions are generally more fair than they have ever been. E.O. doesn't know of any orchestra where racial or gender discrimination is a factor. Orchestras in this country work very hard to be as totally fair as is possible.

The Music Director enjoys very broad ranging power in this country which is not present in either Europe or Japan (where the orchestra personnel carry the most power in decision making). E.O. sees the power given to the Music Director in this country as a good thing, as long as it is not misused by someone who wields the power “just to show that they can” - which has happened from time to time with certain individuals.

In making hiring decisions, the joint and open effort between the orchestra’s audition committee and the Music Director generally yields the best result for everyone.

### Henry Charles Smith III Interview Summary

Henry Charles Smith III is Conductor and Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony. He was for many years resident conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and has conducted over 1,000 performances of that organization. He served as Music Director and Principal Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra at the Interlochen Arts Camp for many years (retired from that position in 1996) and has also served on the conducting faculties of the University of Texas - Austin and Arizona State University. He has also conducted numerous choral ensembles and instrumental chamber ensembles (such as the Summit Brass) and is a gifted arranger and composer. His participation in this project is particularly unique because, prior to his long and extensive experience in the professional conducting world he was principal trombone of the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Eugene Ormandy. In addition to many other audition experiences, he has listened to many professional auditions both as an orchestra member and as a conductor.

1) You are very unique in the scope of my project interviewees in that you have participated in auditions both in the role of audition committee member and as maestro. Do you find that there is there any fundamental difference in the way you listen in those two roles?

Essentially, there is no fundamental difference. If any difference exists, it may be that when listening as a section principal one has greater empathy with the auditionee. Simply listening as the conductor allows one to be more detached from the performance problems/difficulties of the particular instrument and to focus more on what is actually being produced musically.

2) What are the core musical values that you are listening for from any auditionee?

Right notes, right rhythms, and good intonation! Beyond those basic things, it’s always nice to hear playing that is musically interesting.

3) In listening to auditions wherein you make the hiring decision, might there be anything that could happen (in terms of musical performance) in the course of the “finals” audition that would cause you to terminate the audition?

Most obviously, bad playing! HCS usually does a little conducting of each candidate to evaluate whether or not the candidate can actually “follow.” Inability to follow could end the

audition. If the candidate (by stage presence, direct communication, etc.) displays obvious personality problems, the audition will end more quickly.

4) How do you feel about the issue of discussion among audition committee members during the course of auditions? Should discussion take place during/after each auditionee? Or should there be (relatively) enforced silence with only a vote? Or are there typically too many rules anyhow???

HCS welcomes discussion at all points. Open discussion is a good thing. While the conductor must still make the final decision, it is good for the conductor to hear what others think, and it is indeed possible for the conductor to appropriately assert his/her authority without being domineering.

5) If there is no screen or if the screen is down for a final round, do you have any advice or comments about a candidate's appearance, grooming, and/or stage presence? Might those things indeed influence a committee's or maestro's hiring decision, all else being equal?

Definitely. The candidate should dress and groom with respect for the occasion. In any professional situation (civilian or military) there are dress expectations. For orchestras this is often specified in the contract. Dressing appropriately for the audition recognizes that obligation. The way one dresses is going to send a message to the committee (whether intended or not) about how serious one is about the position.

6) Comments on sight reading in orchestral auditions?

In HCS's early years of taking orchestral auditions himself, sightreading was mandatory: often taken from sight reading texts and usually rather obtuse. In some instances, the sight reading was even conducted. It was a large factor in the audition. Then, as now, it was very important to know the repertoire, but then there were no lists! You were simply expected to know any repertoire that might be asked. Today sight reading appears less and less on orchestral auditions and tends to come from standard repertoire not on the audition list for any particular audition. When the situation arises and an auditionee knows the piece already, it should simply be played without comment. Knowing the repertoire is to one's credit.

7) Any other general advice for the aspiring orchestral auditionee?

Always be ready for this statement: "Play something of your choice." (Whether you're being asked to choose something on or off an audition list.) Have something lyrical and something technical prepared to play at any time, and be prepared to play it well. Something is going to have to set you apart from others to get you to the final round - do something to get the audition committee's attention. **BE SURE TO SHOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND HIDE YOUR WEAKNESSES!**

8) Do you have any specific advice relative to tuba auditions? What is important to you as a conductor as you listen to tuba auditions?

Beautiful sound, good ear, ability to blend well with basses. Sound and pitch accuracy that the orchestra can build a chord on is critical. The tubist should be able to be an “extrovert” when needed and be able to be a “team player” when needed and know when each character is appropriate. (Too many tubists feel a need to be the consistent extrovert.)

Other comments:

- 1) It's a good idea to have committee members from outside the section where the vacancy occurs.
- 2) Auditionees should remember that when one is stopped and asked to do something again (faster, slower, louder, softer, etc.) that this is a GOOD sign, not a bad one. The committee and/or conductor in this situation generally realizes that you are a good performer and wants to know if you are flexible. Sometimes the request may not seem to make good musical sense, but “good musical sense” is most often not the object of the request. Being able to play passages in a variety of ways is an important part of the orchestral player's job.
- 3) More accurate and appropriate hiring would probably take place if there were a consistent practice of having finalists play either in the section or (if possible) with the orchestra before final decisions are made.

## Appendix IV: Musicians

### Ronald Bishop: Tubist of the Cleveland Orchestra

Mr. Bishop joined the Cleveland Orchestra in 1967. In addition to being among the finest orchestral tubists in the world, he is a premiere teacher and soloist. He has served on the faculties of Baldwin-Wallace College and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and currently is on the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music. In the fall of 1997 he presented a solo recital tour in New Zealand.

1) What has enabled you to enjoy success as performer and teacher - both musically and non-musically speaking?

Great instruction and great role models. His earliest teachers, although not tuba players, set high standards and encouraged good habits. He feels that he had a solid foundation in the basics of playing and musicianship and that maintaining good health has made a large difference. As a student, he spent a lot of time playing with trombone players. A selected list of teachers of influence includes Betty Hamilton-Dobzinsky (first teacher), Donald Knaub, Robert Gray, Arnold Jacobs.

2) What prepared you to win the auditions you have won over the years?

“Fire and desire.” One has to be “hungry” to win an audition. He was thoroughly prepared to sit down and play well for twenty minutes.

3) How do you advise students that come to you to prepare for orchestral auditions?

He tells them truthfully how competitive the field is. One must be/prepare like an Olympian, totally dedicated to a goal and willing to do what it takes to achieve that goal.

4) Do you see/hear audition repertoire on the horizon that is becoming standard audition repertoire that the profession doesn't think of as such today?

He sees the audition repertoire as being somewhat static for the time being. People should be looking more at recent contemporary orchestral composers (Messiaen, John Williams) and the wind ensemble repertoire (Schwanter, etc.) just to be better prepared for eventualities in audition repertoire.

5) What general advice do you have for anyone preparing for an audition?

What is going to make me (as an audition committee member) want to choose you? Make a musical statement. Allow your personality to come through. Believe in your product. Be a wonderful presenter (ex. Ron Bishop “to be or not to be” vs. Sir Laurence Olivier “to be or not to be” - the words are the same, the presentation is not! LO will win!) Don't try to guess about what the committee wants to hear - listen to recordings and know the parts.

## Interview with Martin Erickson, U.S. Navy (ret.) and Professor of Music at Penn State University

Mr. Erickson was a tubist with the U.S. Navy Band for well over 20 years and was principal tubist for most of that time. He is one of the world's premiere tuba soloists and among the very best combination classical/jazz artists. In addition to performing as a soloist around the world in both classical and jazz venues and as a member of bands and orchestras, he is a leading pedagogue with numerous successful former students.

- 1) How committed are you? This is the primary question that persons interested in winning auditions must answer, because the level of commitment must be very high.
- 2) Recommends establishment of a preparation timeline. ME has a suggested timeline and recommends the following individuals as good information resources for other approaches to good preparation leading up to an audition: Joh Hagstrom (second trumpet of the Chicago Symphony) and Ed Livingston (retired professor of music from Illinois State University).
- 3) In planning for the day of the audition, one should have everything carefully planned so that energy (mental and physical) can be focused on the audition. Travel, eating, accomodation of important personal habits, etc. should be considered. Don't economize yourself into a losing situation, i.e. if a hotel closer to the audition site will allow you to relax more or provide practice space for you, but the cost is more, the cost is worth it if the likelihood of your winning the audition is increased.

### Military Band thoughts

- 1) Bring a substantial, quality contrabass tuba to the audition. Be observing what instruments are being used in the band(s) you're interested in pursuing in terms of size and characteristic tone color they produce.
- 2) Work to produce a "blending sound" that will fit in with a section. NO "edge" is necessary in a military band audition and most often "edge" equals failure.
- 3) Know how to interpret the various styles of band music. Do your listening to many recordings. Your personal interpretation may be fun, but it probably won't "sell" to an audition committee. Stay close to standard interpretations.
- 4) The principal concerns are going to be quality of sound, intonation, time, and style. Do your homework in those areas.
- 5) A bonus that isn't often thought about: are you a good person? Personal interviews and stage presence are a part of military band auditions. This is not different from a job interview in some ways. Can you "fit in" and work with others?

### General Practical Advice

- 1) Don't make extraneous sounds at an audition. Are you a foot tapper? Are you a noisy breather? Don't make any sounds other than musical ones. Also, be careful of displaying unusual "rituals." You should just plan to sit down and play.
- 2) Minimize, but PLAN your warm up. Here "warm up" refers to the "play a few notes to get used to the room" time usually provided in audition situations. Don't just haphazardly blow two or three notes - know what you're going to do.
- 3) Choose tempi that allow you to perform with clarity. Do you know what your "peaks" of ability are relative to such matters? Going just a LITTLE slower than an indicated tempo, but playing with clarity is better than stumbling through a passage at a tempo you cannot initially accomodate.
- 4) Whether a woodwind or brass player, have you cleared your instrument of fluids in keys or tubes before you have begun to play?
- 5) Professional carriage telegraphs so much - you can lose the audition before you play a single note. Be aware of stage presence.
- 6) Trust your preparation - don't change something at the last minute that you've been practicing simply because you hear someone at the audition doing it differently.
- 7) Believe that you deserve the job.

## Interview with Wesley Jacobs, tubist of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Mr. Jacobs has been with the DSO since about 1970. In addition to his long tenure with the orchestra, he has taught at several institutions and currently is professor of tuba at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He also is the owner of Encore Music Publishers, the largest commercial publisher of music and study literature for the tuba.

1) What has enabled you to enjoy success as performer and teacher - both musically and non-musically speaking?

Consistent practice. (Everyone is different, but...) He takes no vacations from the horn. As you get older, challenges come physically. Intelligent practice is necessary to overcome those challenges. Diversions help to maintain excitement - WJ recommends that we develop interests outside of playing.

2) What prepared you to win the auditions you have won over the years?

Consistent practice! Playing in an orchestra was his goal since his second year of college. The first audition he took (San Francisco) was not successful, but he "stuck with it."

3) How do you advise students that come to you to prepare for orchestral auditions?

Focus on orchestral literature and on the technique of playing the tuba.

4) Do you see/hear audition repertoire on the horizon that is becoming standard audition repertoire that the profession doesn't think of as such today?

He does not see any patterns involving new repertoire emerging.

5) What general advice do you have for anyone preparing for an audition?

1) To brass players in particular: **DON'T PLAY TOO LOUDLY!!!**

2) Play musically, in tune, and with good rhythm.

3) Be yourself.

4) For tuba players, emphasize high playing - especially be able to read well.

Other general comment: WJ is very glad that they don't use tapes for DSO auditions. In applying to positions or competitions where tapes are required, only the less thoughtful individuals don't submit perfect tapes - it's a necessity. One can pat oneself on the back about total honesty, however, those who use technology to produce perfect tapes will be the ones invited to the audition, competition, etc. He (obviously) encourages individuals to take advantage of available technology.

## Fritz Kaenzig: Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and The University of Michigan

Mr. Kaenzig has been a member of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra for many years and has served on the music faculties of the University of Northern Iowa and the University of Illinois in addition to his current position at the University of Michigan. In addition to his regular summer appearances with the GPSO, he has performed extensively with other orchestras, including the Los Angeles, Chicago, and St. Louis Symphony Orchestras. He is an internationally recognized solo performer and pedagogue.

1) What has enabled you to enjoy success as performer and teacher - both musically and non-musically speaking?

Balance between a commitment to living life and making music.

2) What prepared you to win the auditions you have won over the years?

a) orchestral: Listening to recordings and going to concerts. Playing with recordings in practice time. The ability to play what the audition committee wants to hear is very important, and these practices build that ability. You must be able to “sell” your musical ideas effectively.

b) college/university: Intelligent programming of the recital portion of the interview. Plan a musically effective recital.

3) How do you advise students that come to you to prepare for orchestral auditions?

See 2) a) above.

4) Do you see/hear audition repertoire on the horizon that is becoming standard audition repertoire that the profession doesn't think of as such today?

The short answer is “no.” Extended research may say yes, though. Repertoire that isn't necessarily new, but that is receiving more play (Nielsen and later Shostakovich symphonies are examples) might begin to appear on audition lists in the future. Do not look for movie score parts, although they are certainly challenging. In the long term, there will be additions to the “standard repertoire,” but we can't “pin down” what those additions will be at present.

5) What general advice do you have for anyone preparing for an audition?

Play musically! Make the most out of the music before you. Don't overblow. Play with refinement, taste, style, and intimate knowledge of every piece. Know every measure of every piece - not just the “standard excerpts.”

Additional note: FK posed the questions: “What is the job?” Do we prepare our students for performance jobs?” Advice to students: “You are a soldier! What are your goals?”

## Interview with Gene Pokorny: Tubist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Mr. Pokorny joined the Chicago Symphony in 1989. He has also been a member of the Israel Philharmonic, the Utah Symphony, The St. Louis Symphony, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In addition to being considered among his peers as the premiere orchestral tubist in the world, he is among the finest pedagogues. His instructional CD recording on basic orchestral audition repertoire for the tuba is considered to be a ground breaking educational work. Due to a sudden family illness, Mr. Pokorny was unable to complete our scheduled interview and provided answers to the project questions in written form. Everything included with each question is a direct quote of his written statement.

1) What has enabled you to enjoy success as performer and teacher - both musically and non-musically speaking?

I had a good upbringing and enjoyed the support my parents gave me. By not really being a “popular” person, I found some social recognition by the fruits of spending time in a practice room. My continued pursuit of higher musical goals led me to better and better jobs. The sacrifice of one failed marriage and the prospect of no descendants has been tempered by the knowledge of knowing what I did was the correct thing to do at the moment. In the last eight years I have found solace in Stephen Covey’s “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.” It is the handbook of life. There has been no greater investment I have made because what is in that book has affected every other important thing in my life so completely.

2) What prepared you to win the auditions you have won over the years?

1) Adherence to the “basics” regarding the technical aspects of playing, especially low register ability, playing in tune and in time with clarity. 2) The idea of assigning a separate picture in my mind for every excerpt to be performed.

3) How do you advise students that come to you to prepare for orchestral auditions?

I tell them that the audition itself is a cosmetic end result. The real end result is to become a better player, a better musician. I tell them that the true judge of how good a player you are should be yourself and your smart pursuit of being an objective listener. What an audition committee thinks of your playing is secondary. Then I tell the student to work on the answers I gave in question 2) above.

4) Do you see/hear audition repertoire on the horizon that is becoming standard audition repertoire that the profession doesn’t think of as such today?

Mahler: Symphony No.6, Liberman: “Drala,” Gorecki: Piano Concerto

5) What general advice do you have for anyone preparing for an audition?

Do not base your happiness on the decisions of an audition committee. go for a much bigger goal in mind: you becoming a better musician. Judge yourself by the progress achieved, not the changeable winds of an audition committee.

## Interview with Ross Tolbert, tubist of the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra

Mr. Tolbert won his position in the Minnesota Symphony in 1967. Prior to winning that position, he was tubist of the New Orleans Symphony. His first professional position (at age 17) was with the West Point Academy Band. In addition to his 31 year association with the MSO, he has also been the very successful professor of tuba at the University of Minnesota.

1) What has enabled you to enjoy success as performer and teacher - both musically and non-musically speaking?

In younger years, starting out, a healthy ego didn't hurt. Over the years, he has been successful in evolving in his role in the job. Being a team player in the orchestra and fulfilling his role in all its aspects (beyond just playing well) has been important.

2) What prepared you to win the auditions you have won over the years?

Felt that he was indeed well prepared - understood the music as a whole, more than only the tuba part. Luck is also an element...

3) How do you advise students that come to you to prepare for orchestral auditions?

To win the audition the music must "speak." The player must "be in tune with the music." Further the player must BELIEVE in the music itself.

4) Do you see/hear audition repertoire on the horizon that is becoming standard audition repertoire that the profession doesn't think of as such today?

NO! (Same comment as others - Sensemaya might become a more common part of lists, but it's already part of the repertoire of the informed player.)

5) What general advice do you have for anyone preparing for an audition?

1) Tape your audition in advance just to listen to yourself instructively - one can't depend on one's own ability to hear all aspects of the performance while playing/practicing.

2) Whether making "practice" tapes or a tape to send in prior to a preliminary audition, have someone else "proof" your taped performances. Find the best people you possibly can to "audit" your tape.

3) Try to make your performance as "natural" as possible - put yourself (mentally) in the texture or the orchestra - you must have the TOTAL picture (musically speaking) in your mind.

4) Musicianship and basics (rhythm, tone, dynamics, and interpretation) are critical. The player must communicate confidence and must demonstrate total respect for the rules of the audition.

5) Should sight reading come up, try to get all the right notes - more important than the most accurate tempo.