

# VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS HANDOUT

BHS College and Career Center



## **This handout provides information on how to:**

- prepare photographs of artwork for a portfolio
- prepare for live music, dance, or theater auditions
- prepare a taped audition.

A discussion of specifics in evaluating and choosing visual and performing arts colleges is in Chapter 15 in the *College Application Handbook for the Parents and Families of Seniors*; the *Handbook* is also posted online at the BHS College and Career Center website.

## **PREPARING PHOTOGRAPHS OF ARTWORK FOR A PORTFOLIO**

- Professionals can photograph portfolio art if students do not want to do it themselves. Art teachers will have the names of good photographers.
- Portfolios usually include small (8.5 x 11) photos, 35mm slides, or images on CD—no originals unless specifically requested. Photos should be high quality; snapshots will not do.
- Photos should avoid flash burn, blurred images, and shadows.
- Each image should be photographed alone and should fill the frame.
- Each work should be identified with a brief descriptive sheet discussing the work.
- Only the best works should be included. Variety is good, but portfolios containing high quality work in limited categories do best.

## **PREPARING FOR LIVE MUSIC AUDITIONS**

### **Before the Audition, students should**

- Check requirements carefully for each school—specific works or style periods, or other technical requirements.
- Learn about the format of the audition—length, who will be there, other requirements besides performing.
- Select a variety of works that they love to perform, that demonstrate their strengths.
- Prepare thoroughly with the teacher and with lots of focused practice. Cramming is ineffective.
- Perform the music many times before the audition, in different situations, for a variety of people.
- Videotape and critique themselves.
- Maintain the instrument and other equipment (reeds, bow, etc.) in top condition.
- Stay healthy, with plenty of rest, good nutrition, exercise, vitamins.

### **The Day of the Audition, students should**

- If possible, arrive at audition site a day ahead to be well rested.
- Arrange the day so they don't have to rush.
- Drink lots of water, and find rest rooms near the audition space.
- Eat lightly for energy; bland is probably best.
- Bring extra copies of the music they will play for the judges.
- Warm-up thoroughly, but don't wear out.
- Find the audition room well ahead of the appointed time.
- Dress appropriately. Dress-up a bit, but don't overdo it—be business-like, comfortable, clean and neat.

### **During the Audition, students should**

- Be personable and respectful when it's their turn to perform—first impressions count.
- Expect that they may not perform all the way through any piece. Time is limited and they want to hear several examples of your work. Students should not be bothered if their piece is cut short.
- Stay focused on the performance and let their personality shine.
- Anticipate less-than-ideal circumstances just in case. The room may be acoustically dry, too hot or too cold, too small or too big; the judges may be unfriendly.
- Remember, schools are looking for teachable students, not perfection.
- Be prepared for questions and be sure to have some well thought-out questions you can ask that demonstrate interest and familiarity with the school.

### **For Follow-up, students should**

- Send a brief thank you note to someone—a prospective teacher, head of the department or someone in the admissions office.

### **Pitfalls—Students should NOT**

- ignore requirements for repertoire or other expectations.
- select music that is too difficult or doesn't highlight their strengths.
- be under-prepared.
- listen to other people's auditions.
- be late.
- make excuses.

## **RECORDED AUDITIONS**

Schools may require a recorded, preliminary audition. From these auditions, some students are then invited to audition in person. To create a recorded audition, follow requirements exactly and use the best equipment available, as described below. Whenever possible, students should arrange a live audition either at the school or at a regional audition. Not appearing in person puts students at a distinct disadvantage. If you are unable to attend an audition, contact the school to explore alternatives.

### **To create a recorded audition, students should:**

- Confirm requirements for repertoire, length, tape or CD format, and accompanist.
- Use the best equipment available—microphone and recorder.
- Record in a room with flattering acoustics to enhance the sound.
- Secure technical support, if available: An audio engineer (or at least someone to run the equipment and keep track of each take) will save a great deal of time. The student should concentrate only on playing well.
- If the format is not specified exactly, put the best work at the beginning of the recording.
- Listen all the way through the completed recording before mailing it to make sure it's all there with no pops or drop-outs.
- Label the recording appropriately and clearly.

### **Dance Auditions**

Dance auditions are structured to show a range of skills. Auditions typically include three parts and an improvisational piece. For excellent information on preparing for dance auditions, <http://danceu101.com/> is a useful site.

#### **On audition day, students should**

- Be prepared. Wake up early. Check clothing, shoes, hair, and makeup. Allow plenty of time.
- Leave early for the audition, have clear directions, and know where to park. Be relaxed.
- Most auditions begin with a ballet class. A modern combination will likely follow.
- A solo follows the modern combination. Research the school's website to know what is expected and how much time is allocated for the solo.
- An improvisational piece is often included to demonstrate technique, skill and range.
- Remember, they're looking for teachable students, not perfection.
- Be prepared for questions. And be sure to have some well thought-out questions for them as well to show your interest in their school.

### **Drama Auditions**

Different theater colleges have different requirements for their auditions, so check the website of each college. It is to your advantage to audition in person. An in-person audition will give the college a chance to work actively with you and better judge your skills, especially improvisational skills and the ability to work with an ensemble.

- Before the audition, students should send each program:
  - A resume of their theater experience
  - A recent photo
  - Music for the accompanist (if applying for musical theater)
- Unless their requirements state differently, plan on preparing two contrasting monologues from plays of their choice, particularly if they are auditioning for a B.F.A. acting program.
- Musical theater requirements generally consist of one up-tempo musical selection and one

ballad, as well as a monologue from a play or musical of the student's choice.

- All combined, college audition pieces shouldn't exceed five minutes.

### **Tips for a theater school audition: students should**

- Choose material suitable for their age.
- If choosing a monologue from a book of monologues, read the entire play to become familiar with the context of the selection.
- Select a monologue that allows them to speak directly to another person.
- Play only one character.
- Memorize the selection.

A tip from the Cornish College of the Arts:

- The most important suggestion we can give you is: be prepared to PLAY. The audition will be a chance for us to see you use your imagination, to see how you give and receive from your fellow actors in a group, and how you respond to suggestions. Jump in and play with fearlessness and joy. Have fun.

### **Resources**

*A Guide to College Choices for the Performing and Visual Arts*, Buck and Schoenberg

*Creative Colleges, a Guide for Student Actors, Artists, Dancers, Musicians, and Writers*, Loveland.

Additional information on auditions can be found at:

<http://auditioningforcollege.wordpress.com>

<http://danceu101.com/>

*Preparing for College Auditions* is aimed at string students but with lots of good information for other artists also. See [http://music.cua.edu/html/gatwood/college\\_auditions.html](http://music.cua.edu/html/gatwood/college_auditions.html)

College Audition Preparation Workshop (for wind, brass and percussion students in grades 10-12) at Indiana University is held for a week every summer:

<http://www.music.indiana.edu/som/colaudpre/colaudpre.html>

This site has a series of very useful articles on the audition process as well as information on music careers: <http://www.larrykrantz.com/caraudit.htm>