

5 practice strategies for your next audition

as you're working on your audition repertoire, you're going to run into all sorts of issues, obstacles, and roadblocks.

when you don't know how to do something, you need a new technique or strategy to overcome that problem.

these are my top 5 practice strategies that i personally use. there's one for each of these musical elements:

1. time: the 'wait for it...' exercise
2. rhythm: the 'where'd that come from?!' exercise
3. phrasing: the 'peaks and valleys' exercise
4. dynamics: the 'synesthesia' exercise
5. musicality: the '3 emotion word' exercise

oh, and check the final step of each exercise for my recommended drink pairing!

1. time: the 'wait for it...' exercise

this exercise is all about reducing your reliance on the metronome, and learning to perfect and trust your internal time.

symptoms:

1. you rushed.
2. you dragged.
3. ya got unstable tempo.
4. your teacher says, "did you mean to do an accelerando or was that my imagination?"

strategy:

you're going to set the metronome to click a LOT less. like... every two measures, or more.

action steps:

step 1. learn a line of music with the click on every beat. (this exercise is in cut time, which is why the click is on every half note.)



metronome:



step 2. reset the metronome to every 2 beats and relearn the line. repeat until every metronome beat perfectly lines up.



metronome:

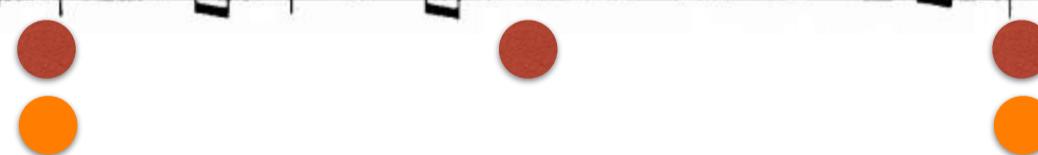


see how it's a little different and some notes require adjustment?

step 3. reset the metronome to every 4 beats and do it again. and then every 8 beats.
repeat until every metronome beat perfectly lines up.



metronome:

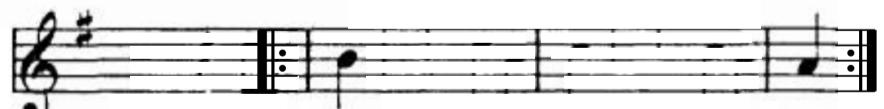


metronome:



- A. see how the click comes early or late sometimes?
- B. stretch the notes in a measure or crunch them and keep trying it again and again until you start landing with the metronome EVERY TIME.
- C. make adjustments until you line up correctly.

step 4. if you can't seem to line it up with the metronome, try this:



metronome:



step 5. boom, done. celebrate. best when paired with: hitachino nest white ale.

2. rhythm: the 'where'd that come from?!" exercise

this exercise forces all the notes within the measure into place by setting up a variety of mid-beat clicks.

symptoms:

1. unsteady 16th notes
2. unsteady anything notes
3. you're stretching and crunching notes to stay in time.

strategy:

put the metronome on the offbeats

action steps:

step 1. set the metronome so that it's on every beat.



metronome:



step 2. rethink where the beat is, such that the metronome is on the OFFbeat.



metronome:

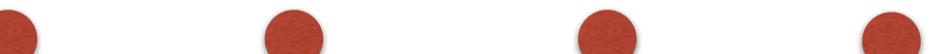


keep repeating and making adjustments until it feels really comfortable.

step 3. repeat with the metronome on the 'e' of a beat. (you know, like 1 e + a 2 e + a style.)



metronome:



step 4. repeat with the metronome on the 'a' of the beat.



metronome:



step 5. boom, done. celebrate. drink pairing: glenmorangie single malt scotch, neat.



3. phrasing: the 'peaks and valleys' exercise

this exercise forces you to think about logical ways to phrase.

symptoms:

1. phases are too flat
2. you're just playing the notes
3. i can't tell what your musical phrases are, dude
4. there's no inflection there. just notes and rhythm.

strategy:

write in all your phrasing markings above the notes.

action steps:

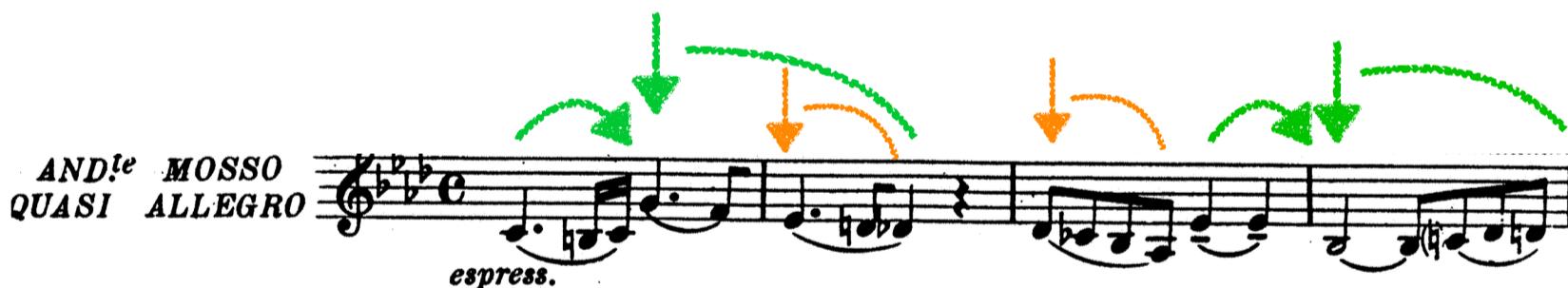
step 1. decide on one main 'peak' in each measure or phrase. (btw: this can totally change later!)



step 2. if necessary, choose a secondary peak. these are going to make little mini-phrases within the bigger phrase.



step 3. decide on the phrasing. every note in the measure is either GOING TO the next peak, or FALLING AWAY.



step 4. write in THIS marking when notes are GOING TO a peak:



step 5. write in THIS marking when notes are FALLING AWAY from a peak.



step 6. boom, done. celebrate. drink pairing: glenmorangie single malt scotch, neat.



4. dynamics: the 'synesthesia' exercise

this exercise helps keep the same dynamic sounding the same throughout the piece, and also assists with designing your dynamic levels.

symptoms:

1. your pianos are different throughout the piece
2. your dynamics are flat
3. there's not enough contrast from one dynamic to the next
4. you forget to change dynamics when you're supposed to.

strategy:

draw colored pencil lines in your music based on dynamics

action steps:

step 1. choose a dynamic/color map. i recommend this one:

ff = red

f = orange

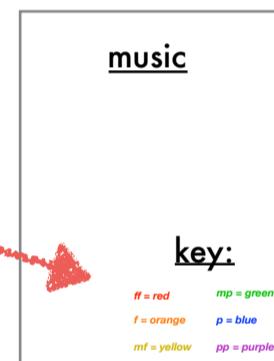
mf = yellow

mp = green

p = blue

pp = purple

step 2. draw a key at the bottom of your music. otherwise you'll forget.



step 3. under each section that's at a specific dynamic, draw a colored line through the dynamic indication and continue it until the dynamic is different.

step 4. IGNORE CRESCENDOS AND DECRESCENDOS.

step 5. boom, done. celebrate. drink pairing: long island iced tea.



5. musicality: the '3 emotion word' exercise

this exercise helps bring emotion and character to your piece to help guide your decision making while you learn it.

symptoms:

1. it's boring as hell.
2. i don't hear the orchestra while you're playing.
3. it needs more character.
4. your teacher thinks you're not inspired so they tell you a story about a pirate ship.

strategy:

find the 3 best emotion words to transform the piece.

action steps:

step 1. while you're listening to recordings, write down every adjective that describes how you feel and your emotional state.

use emotion words, or things that draw you into another world. for instance, how does this word make you feel: "Jafar"? i don't know about you, but it makes me think of an evil arabic uncle who's out to get aladdin.

examples:

1. jafar
2. the wild west
3. sparkly
4. slap-happy
5. rose from titanic
6. aqua teen hunger force



step 2. choose the 3 that are THE most impactful to get you into the right character.

step 3. write those 3 words on the top right of your music.

examples:

1. jafar
2. the wild west
3. sparkly
4. slap-happy
5. rose from titanic
6. aqua teen hunger force

<u>music</u>	<u>3 emotion words</u>
	1. jafar 2. sparkly 3. aqua teen hunger force

step 4. use the few seconds before you practice or play an excerpt to draw yourself into the character of those 3 words. play. change the world.

step 5. boom, done. celebrate. drink pairing: tokara pinotage.

