

Making The Most

of a
Music

Competition



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Banbury Young Musician of the Year.

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Making the most of a Music Competition

A Music Competition is a chance to perform, and to learn by performing. You can learn as much from what goes badly as you do from what goes well; and you learn a great deal by listening and supporting other people.

1. Choice of Piece:

Difficulty

In a competition which is organised in age categories there may be quite a wide range of ability in any one class.



We want to hear a polished musical performance, something your audience will really enjoy, and that you will enjoy playing. This may mean playing brilliantly something which is slightly easier — finding a piece that is within your abilities, not at their limits.

How the Adjudicators will evaluate your performance

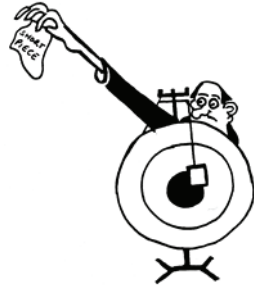
Our Adjudicators will be considering the following elements of each performance:-

- The demands in instrumental technique and musicality that are made by the chosen music
- Accuracy in the playing and demonstration of musicianship (e.g. phrasing, articulation, range and control of dynamics, tone, clarity)
- Communication (or engagement) with the Adjudicators and audience.

If you get excited about a piece of music then you are likely to perform it well.

Length of piece

A short piece performed really well delights an audience. It is likely to give a better impression to the Adjudicators than a long performance which is only moderately good.



Remember to check that your chosen piece does not exceed the time limit for your class. In the Finals, any performance that exceeds the time limit will incur a penalty in the adjudication process.

Accompaniment

Music written for a solo instrument (unaccompanied) is fine, but if your chosen piece is published with an accompanying instrument (usually the piano) then it is preferable that you arrange for someone to accompany you in your performance.

2. The Adjudication

The Adjudicators evaluate only what they hear on the day of your performance, and no two performances will be exactly the same.

Adjudicators are giving personal opinions, based on expertise and years of experience. Their words are carefully chosen to inform and encourage, not only for the individual who has performed but for everyone present in the class.

Musicians' Health Warning

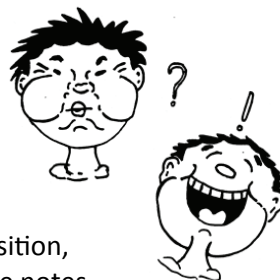
Some of the ideas that follow may not be relevant to you, but many of the suggestions have helped musicians in the past. So do try them and use those that work to help you become a better performer.

3. Learning the Music

Laying good foundations

Attend to details such as fingering, bowing, hand position, breathing and emboucher whilst you are learning the notes.

You need a secure technique to give a fluent, musical performance.



The performer translates printed music into a musical performance, so dynamic changes, phrasing and articulation are just as important as the actual notes. If you change or add your own expression make sure that you write these onto the music you will provide for the Adjudicators.

Know who wrote your music (it might be your Adjudicator!), and try listening to other pieces by the same composer – to give you a better understanding of the musical style. It can also be helpful to listen to professional performances of your chosen piece.

Planning Ahead

Aim to be at your very best on the day. If you have prepared well in advance, don't be afraid of giving your piece a complete rest for a short time. You are not likely to give an inspired performance if you are bored with the music.

4. Practising

Your teacher should be constantly helping you to develop effective methods of practising. Here are a few ideas:

- Get your mind into gear – concentrate and listen carefully
- Stay fresh – better to practise in short sections rather than the whole piece over and over
- Don't practise your mistakes! – it makes it much harder to correct them
- Practise regularly – frequent practice is better than all at once just before a lesson!
- Good posture – whatever your instrument, good posture avoids tension and helps you perform well.



It is good to get family and friends to hear you perform, and take up any other opportunities you can. Listening critically whilst playing is quite an advanced skill – recording your performances means you can then concentrate fully on listening.

5. Preparing to perform

Make your own check list – here are some ideas:

Before you leave home:

- Dress well – it helps you feel good and the audience appreciate it.
- Have a clean handkerchief or duster – so you can have dry hands



- Prepare a 'first aid kit' – things like spare set of strings, reeds, valve oil, drinking water.



At the Competition:

Warm-up with long notes, scales, exercises or sections of your piece that will build your confidence and focus your mind. If there is nowhere to warm-up there are still things you can do whilst you are waiting for your turn to play:

- Breathe through your instrument to maintain a steady temperature
- Finger, silently, some scale patterns or sections of a piece
- Perform simple, silent breathing exercises
- Warm-up arm and hand muscles by gently tensing and relaxing them
- Keep your hands warm.

6. Your performance in the Competition

The competition can be an exciting event, when all your efforts in preparation and practice come together – and you might even inspire other young musicians who are listening!

- Don't be afraid of checking your instrument before you begin, especially if you are playing a piano that you've not touched before. You could play a few long notes, chords, a scale passage (one you know well) or part of your piece
- Check the height of a music stand or piano stool
- Check for water trapped in brass tubing



- Check the tightness of bow hairs
- Take your time and make sure that your instrument is properly in tune
- You may be asked to announce the title and composer of your piece – do this anyway if you would like. A smile to your audience and Adjudicators is a good idea
- Good posture
- Breathe evenly and have the right tempo in your head before the first note
- Wow your audience with wonderful music!



7. Coping with disappointment

Prepare well, give of your best, and whatever your instrument and level of ability, your performance will be an achievement!

Do not get discouraged if you do not get through to the Finals this year. Let the Adjudicators' comments, and what you learn from listening to others, help you to prepare for next year's competition.



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The Banbury Young Musician of the Year Competition is organised by The Rotary Club of Banbury