

# Youth Orchestra

## College Help Sheet

Are you a student planning to major in music, but don't know where to start?  
Here are some things to think about.

### Choosing a school

Before choosing a school, you need to know what you're looking for.

- ❖ Ask yourself questions like: What are my goals in pursuing a degree in music? What do I want to do after graduating? Is a *conservatory* education, a *university* education, or a *liberal arts* education best for me? What other interests might I pursue instead of or in addition to music?
- ❖ Visit school websites. Read about the professors and their specialties. Find out about curriculum, scholarships and financial aid. Write down the names and e-mail addresses of important contact people.
- ❖ Visit schools. Ask to take a lesson with a teacher. Talk to advisors and student representatives. Come prepared with a list of questions to ask them. Attend an ensemble rehearsal and some classes.
- ❖ Ask around! Your teacher, your friends, or anyone you might know at that school can give you an idea of the school's reputation.

### Applying

- ❖ Type, do not hand-write, all application materials and make sure everything is clean and neat. The application is the college's first impression of you and a messy or illegible application reflects poorly on you.
- ❖ Triple check spelling and grammar. Have your English teacher or guidance counselor read through any essays or personal statements.
  - ❖ Give at least three weeks notice to people writing letters of recommendation for you. They are more likely to write good things about you if you don't put them on the spot. Make sure to tell them who to address the letter of recommendation to and how it should be delivered (either in a sealed/signed envelope or open to be submitted with the application).
- ❖ Don't over-commit. Four or five schools are usually more than enough.



### Preparing for the audition

- ❖ As far as practice goes, start as early as possible. The better you know your pieces, the more comfortable you will be at your audition.
- ❖ Record yourself playing your audition pieces and listen to them. You will be surprised at the difference between what you thought you were doing and what actually comes across to an audience.
- ❖ Play a mock audition for your teacher, friends and/or family. It's always good to practice playing when you're nervous. If you can play more than one mock audition or perform the pieces on a recital or two that is even more helpful.

### The day of the audition/visit

- ❖ Arrive early for all appointments. Leave time to find the location, get lost, etc.
- ❖ Dress appropriately. When in doubt, dress as though you are interviewing at a law firm.
- ❖ Even in a small room, stage presence is important. Walk into the room with confidence and poise and, even if you are nervous, pretend that you are not. Sometimes musicians also have to be actors!
- ❖ If you make a mistake, keep going. Do not show any indication that you messed up, including facial expressions. Practice this as well!
- ❖ Thank your adjudicators for their time.

### Waiting

- ❖ What's done is done. There is no use beating yourself up over mistakes you made in your audition or obsessing over things you could have done better. You will be much happier if you concentrate on the positive and wait calmly and patiently.
- ❖ Do not keep calling or emailing the school or teacher if you don't hear back right away. The process takes time! If the application/audition deadline has passed and 2-3 weeks have gone by without still hearing anything, contact once to see where the school is in the process.