

Managing audition nerves

Charlotte Tomlinson has some simple steps you can take to reassure your students

Every musician has to deal with performance nerves at some stage in their life and for some, it can be devastating. Walking on stage or into an audition room can feel dangerous. It may not be the same as coming across a sabre-toothed tiger in the jungle, but the body can't tell the difference. A *perceived* threat of danger, stemming from feeling judged, not good enough, not being adequately prepared or feeling under too much pressure, can activate the same response as a *real* threat of danger. This in turn triggers an onslaught of physical

symptoms all designed to survive the threat, when in fact, what a musician needs is to thrive, with a small amount of adrenalin that enhances the performance. So how can you best prepare your pupils for such a potentially challenging event?

Practise, and practise performing

When your pupil walks into an audition, a dose of adrenalin can easily destabilise anything that is not learned extremely thoroughly, and this can lead to a rapid loss of confidence. They need to learn that knowing the music inside out will give them

a feeling of security when performing.

Along with lots of good, efficient practice, another way to handle performing stresses is to practise performing. Tryouts and mock auditions in advance can help the pupil get the feel of how they manage both their pieces and their adrenalin. In an ideal world, they can check out the venue beforehand, but even if that's not possible, the more experience they have of a performing situation, the more they will feel able to deal with any nerves they might have on the day.

The pianist is your ally

It's so important that those pupils who need to perform with a pianist don't leave rehearsal time with the pianist to the last minute. Pianists can be incredibly busy, so they need to have the music well in



'If the student actually starts enjoying the whole experience of performing music, nerves have a magical way of disappearing'