

Code of Ethical Audition Practices

The following code of ethical audition practices was unanimously approved in August 1984 by delegates to the annual ICSOM conference, unanimously approved in April 1984 by the Major Orchestra Managers Conference, and approved in October 1984 by the AFM.

This document is the direct product of action taken by delegates to the 1982 ICSOM conference in Los Angeles. Prodded by an examination of auditions practices and problems, prepared by Gordon Peters of the Chicago Symphony, delegates mandated establishment of a committee to further study audition practices and abuses and to recommend improvements.

The topic was subsequently taken up in meetings of the Major Managers-ICSOM Liaison Committee where this code of ethics was conceived and formulated.

It is important to understand what this document is and what it is not. It is essentially a document of persuasion. There are no “shalls” but lots of “shoulds.” Those who have endorsed it assert thereby that they will conduct their auditions in accordance with the principles articulated therein. The tacit assertion is also that they think others should do likewise.

However, such a code is not a contract. No one is involuntarily bound by it. It contains no provisions for punitive action. It does not presume to tell orchestras that they will run their auditions a certain way—or else. This is consistent with policy of not intruding upon locally bargainable practices.

One will not find any mention of screens, for example. Orchestras are divided on whether the use of screens is desirable and on the extent to which they should be used. While the use of screens, which protects the anonymity of applicants, may serve to prevent discrimination on any basis other than musical merit, the code prefers to articulate the principle rather than dictate the mechanism.

This code of ethics is not a document for management alone. It is a code for everyone, orchestra musicians included. As an example: One area of concern in formulating this document was the sharing of information about musicians who audition. Audition committees, as well as managers and personnel managers, must guard against inadvertently and casually sharing information about a musician's presence and performance at an audition, which could jeopardize his or her current position or be damaging to his or her future career.

Much thought has gone into the preparation of this code. Provisions have been formulated, debated, amended, deleted, reconsidered, added, debated again, and ultimately dropped or retained. In the belief that the first document can be improved over time, a provision for regular review has been written into the code.

This code is a significant achievement. Its joint formulation and unanimous endorsement by national representatives of orchestra musicians and managers constitutes the first time both groups have acted in concert rather than autonomously in addressing such a major issue. Both organizations also jointly encourage their constituencies to use this code as a point of departure, a guideline and baseline for the review and development of local policies and practices for conformity to ethical principles.

Ethical Practices for National and International Auditions Code

Purpose and Scope of Code

It is of utmost importance to musicians, managers, and conductors that auditions be conducted in accordance with guidelines ensuring competition that is fair to all who audition while providing the best results for orchestras seeking musicians.

Therefore, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM), and the Major Orchestra Managers Conference (MOMC) propound the following ethical and fair audition practices to which all parties should adhere, subject to local contractual considerations.

Preparation for Auditions

1. Notices of auditions should be given only for genuine vacancies, including newly created positions, which the management intends to fill as a result of those auditions, with no predeterminations having been made as to who will be hired. Musicians taking such auditions should only do so with the intention of accepting the position if it is offered.
2. Auditions should be advertised in appropriate places, including the *International Musician* and the central auditions office. Notices should be clear and complete, specifying the position intended to be filled by the auditions, the person to contact in response to the notice, and the dates that applications are due and that auditions will be held. Notices should appear far enough in advance of auditions for interested musicians to apply and to adequately prepare.
3. All applicants should be sent written responses to their applications. Invited applicants should be sent clear instructions setting forth the date, time and place of the audition, the complete audition repertoire (excluding sight-reading repertoire), and parts for announced excerpts not generally available. All parts supplied by the orchestra should be legible and identical for all candidates.
4. Applicants should be given notice that if they choose not to attend the audition they should promptly notify the personnel manager or other designated person.

Conduct of Auditions

1. In preparing for and conducting auditions, all participants should be aware of policies and procedures governing those auditions, including this code.
2. Although the existence and composition of an audition committee and the nature and extent of its participation in auditioning and hiring is determined locally, musicians' involvement should at least include the initial screening of applicants.
3. Applicants should not be disqualified from auditioning on the basis of information about them obtained from current or previous employers or from other institutions to which they have applied.
4. Auditionees should be given sufficient time and, to the extent possible, adequate private facilities in which to warm up and practice.
5. Parts supplied by the orchestra for auditions should be in good condition, legible, and clearly marked as intended to be played at the audition.
6. There should be no discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, creed, national origin, religion, or sexual preference; steps ensuring this should exist in all phases of the audition process.
7. There should be reasonable accommodation for the handicapped.
8. Auditionees should be given opportunity and encouragement to comment, anonymously if desired, to the audition committee and management about the audition process.
9. Auditionees should be notified of their status in the audition process immediately upon such determination. Candidates under active consideration after auditions are completed should be so notified and given an estimated time of final decision.
10. Auditionees should be informed prior to auditions of the orchestra's policy regarding reimbursement of auditionees' expenses for additional stay or travel incurred at the request of management.

Administration and Review of Code

A joint committee of representatives of the Major Orchestra Managers Conference, ICSOM, and the AFM Symphonic Services Division shall be established to oversee and review this code periodically.