

Need Help Sessions: College Auditions

A Conservatory education provides SPCPA students who wish to remain engaged in the arts in college a technical and practical advantage that can allow them to **stand out** from their fellow applicants and improve their chances of being accepted into the programs of their choice (academic and artistic). Audition and portfolio requirements bring another set of eyes into the admissions process which can make the difference between a disappointing happy outcome and a one.



Graduating from SPCPA requires sustained effort and a willingness to be scrutinized via juries, auditions, and performances large and small. SPCPA students can be confident that they deserve to step into the audition spotlight and/or share their portfolios as they have received a level of technical training and perspective unavailable to most high school students. Working with professional performing artists throughout their high school career allows SPCPA students to speak and act knowledgeably during auditions and later in the college classroom.

SPCPA students arrive at college more “tested” than many of their equally talented peers simply because of our curriculum and the opportunities/expectations that exist to engage more deeply and specifically with your artform. As a result, SPCPA students who are willing to put in the additional effort and audition, have two distinct ways to take advantage of their unique preparation:

- Students seeking a four-year degree focused on the arts – **BFA** (Dance, Theatre, Studio Art, Creative Writing) or **BM** (Music and some Musical Theatre programs) – **must** demonstrate their level of skill, commitment and “fit” via in-person auditions (on- or off-campus), pre-recorded submissions and/or portfolios (Composing/Song Writing, Visual Arts & Creative Writing). Interviews may also be required.
- Students seeking more broadly focused majors (**BA**) inside **and/or** outside of the Arts can reduce the cost of their education and improve their chance of being accepted if they audition/submit a portfolio for talent and participation-based scholarships in their area of expertise.

Important information for college applications:

SPCPA School Code: 242 284

Counselor: Alison Green
(greena@spcpa.org)

School Information:
16 W 5th St
St Paul, MN 55102
(651) 290-2225

The top 10 tips for self-taping or attending an online audition:

1. **If you can get a tripod then it really does make a difference.** It holds the camera sturdy and at a good angle. If you can't get hold of a tripod, then don't worry. Be creative and prop up your filming device (phone, laptop, camera) on a shelf or some stacked boxes to get the angle right.
2. **You want the camera to be not too close but not so far away.** In a monologue or song performance, above the knees should do the trick. However, when dancing you will need your whole body in the frame. Try to clear the room to give you the depth of space and most importantly lift the camera rather than tilt it up. This will give you a better angle to film your audition piece.
3. **If you are in an interview,** just take a seat in front of your device and prepare everything you might need, including a glass of water.
4. As much as possible, **keep the background for your self-tape plain and simple.** Ideally, it would be a plain wall, but failing that, make sure you don't have anything too distracting in the background. It shouldn't be obvious where you are in your home.
5. **Make sure you consider the lighting.** Direct sunlight can obscure the view of your face and hinder the audition.
6. **Try to deal with any potential disturbances** like a pet or a family member interrupting. Of course, if this happens and it is live, just deal with it and carry on.
7. If you are using music, **check your sound levels beforehand.**
8. **Have you thought about how to introduce yourself in the self-tape?** Start by stating your name and the title of the piece as an introduction before you begin.
9. **You'll need to do a test self-tape** to ensure you can be seen in the frame and can be heard completely clearly. Check if there are guidelines set by the drama school or audition panel on whether you should look at the camera during your self-tape audition. If not, look just above or to the side of the camera rather than directly into the lens.
10. **Most importantly, relax** and just do the same performance as if you were in the actual room with them. The interviewer knows that this is a new experience for us all and remember they are on your side.

College Application Support.....

SPCPA transcripts/student reports are **NOT** processed during the dates listed below. *The no processing window extends before and after the longer holiday periods...*

Thanksgiving (November 19 - 28)

Winter Break (December 16-January 10)



College Auditions Basics: Talent matters, but so does preparation! **Understand the requirements** – they vary (in large and small ways) by school/program!!! Pre-audition audio/video? Solo piece? Headshot? Performing resume/repertoire? Artist's statement? **Read then re-read the directions!** Similar requirements -- 90 second vs 2 minute solo, student provided music for accompanist vs sound system, contrasting monologues vs two monologues one of which is comedic -- are not the same expectations. Failing to provide what was specifically requested can make an applicant seem unfocused and haphazard in their efforts. **Don't let a misstep in the application process prevent you from having their full attention on your actual audition.** If the requirements aren't clear, call the school! Bring extra copies of your actual applications to review/refresh before meeting the auditioners. Colleges want students who show a willingness to take direction, exhibit organization and professionalism as well as demonstrate passion and originalism. Auditions start before you step into that space – be polite/amenable in all interactions with the schools and fellow applicants! **Come prepared to learn as well as perform.** Be the student you would like to teach/train with. The applicants who stand out have more than technical abilities. They are open, curious, and willing to push themselves out of their comfort zones. They take corrections seriously (even corrections given to peers) and recover from mistakes quickly. The strongest applicants understand that they are pursuing an academic discipline and are able to discuss their work and the work of others intelligently. Understand the callback process if there is one. Mentally prepare yourself to move on if an audition doesn't go the way you'd hoped. **Remember, you are auditioning them too.** Keep notes about your experience to refer back to when you are in the deciding phase. Performers are not interchangeable. Rejections are not an assessment of talent or you as a human being as much as they are of institutional "fit." **If a college or university doesn't "see" you, then it's not the school for you!!!**



- **Dance: In-person auditions** in most cases include ballet and modern "classes" (at a minimum) followed by solo (if required) and interview. Virtual auditions follow a similar format. Prepare yourself (well-rested, with water and snacks, dressed appropriately and ready to learn) and your space if a video audition (room to move and clear camera lines of sight) for what may be a multi-hour audition experience. Some schools may require writing tests while others may expect writing samples. Be able to speak thoughtfully about your training, dance influences, career goals and what inspired you to create/perform your solo (if required).
- **Vocal and Instrumental Music: Pre-audition lessons may be required/suggested.** Pre-recorded audio submissions likely required. Be prepared to sight read/sing. Know the audition requirements (which can be very precise and may include a music theory test). Jazz students come prepared to improvise. Make sure any music provided to an accompanist is in the key you will be performing in. Be prepared to provide a leave behind copy of your Representative Repertoire/Performing Resume and letter of recommendation from your primary private instructor as well as speak about your career goals.
- **Theatre and Musical Theatre: Unifieds are in person this year! (New York January 29-30, Chicago February 7-10, LA February 12-13).** Know which schools require pre-recorded video submissions to access audition dates/times. Prepare an "audition book" (copies of applications, monologues/musical scores, performing resume, etc). Prepare yourself (well-rested, with water and snacks, dressed appropriately and ready to learn) and your space (if submitting video auditions) for what may be a multi-hour audition experience with callbacks. Rehearse your monologues/musical numbers in your audition attire. Make sure you can speak knowledgeably about your monologues in the context of the entire piece. Be yourself when not performing! (*Note: They want a sense of who you are as well as who you can be.*)