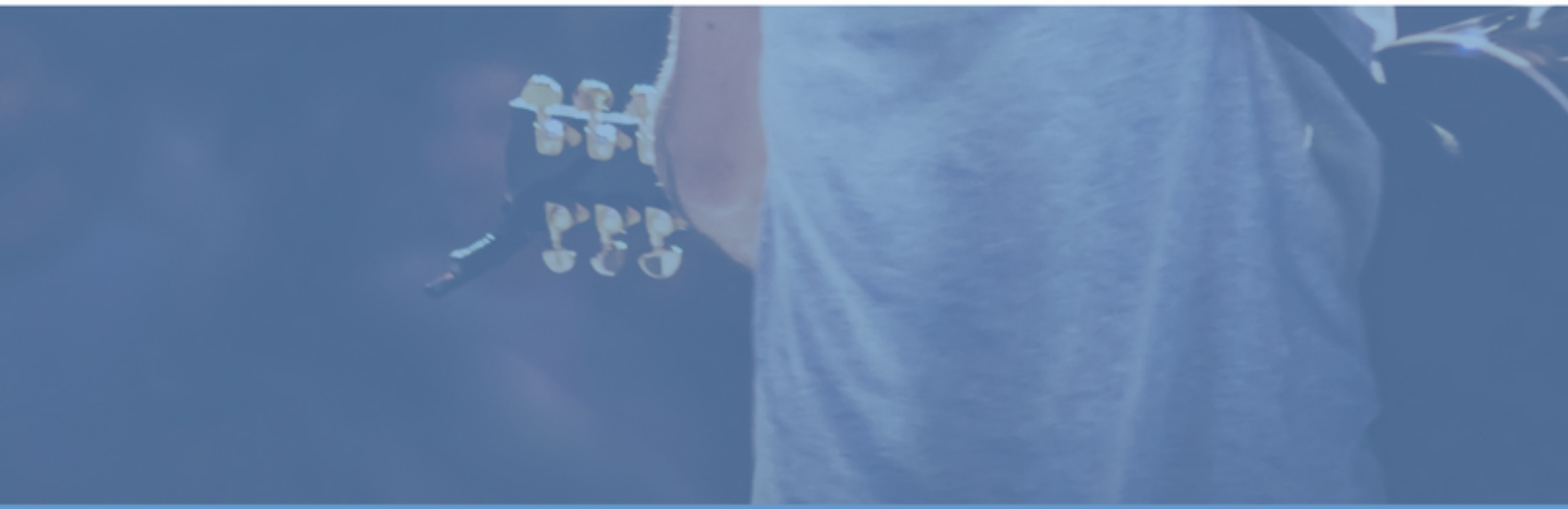


AUDITION
FOR CHANGE

A proven system to build successful worship teams



Chris Vacher

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Way to go!

You've already demonstrated a commitment to your personal leadership, to the development of your church and to the discipleship of people on your worship teams by beginning with this book. You're showing that you're concerned about improving what you do and how you do it and you should get a big ol' fist bump for that one! Way to go.

The process laid out in this book is put together from my experience as a worship leader and pastor in full time ministry since 2003. I've auditioned hundreds of musicians and singers along the full spectrum of talent from delusional to professional. (Those delusional ones.. you know what I'm talking about!)

My hope is that my process will inspire you to think about *your process* and your church will thrive because of it. Remember that part of your job is development - developing yourself, developing people and developing your teams - and so you can think of the audition process as a way to develop from within.

I'm convinced that you'll take what I've written here and make it even better for your own context! I can't wait to see the impact your refined audition process will have in your church. I'm cheering you on!

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Introduction

One of the beautiful, difficult realities of having a leadership role is evaluation. We are asked to evaluate new ideas alongside existing realities. Leaders are constantly evaluating where things are and where things could be. Leaders are asked to evaluate people, events and systems at every stage along the way.

When it comes to a leadership role in worship ministry, evaluation can take on some added complexity. We are sometimes asked to evaluate someone based on their ability, their talent and what they have to offer our church. While this seems like an easy task in principle it won't take you long to figure out that all kinds of circumstances can contribute to the complexity of evaluation.

Auditions are one of the ways worship leaders are asked to evaluate. We are evaluating the ability and compatibility of someone who has a desire to lead our church in worship.

This responsibility for evaluation is part of the role of the leader and you mustn't run from it, you can't apologize for it and you should never be afraid of it. God has called you, equipped you and empowered you to lead in the context where you are leading and part of that leadership is evaluation. Leaders must live out their leadership in many ways and evaluation is one of those ways.

The catch is often *how* do we evaluate, *what* do we evaluate and *where* are we trying to lead people. If we don't have answers for those questions it will make our responsibility for evaluation difficult and the people who we are leading will be confused, disappointed and eventually disillusioned with your leadership. Ain't nobody got time for that!

In our evaluation if we focus exclusively on ability, we will have a team of great sounding musicians who may or may not get along, who may or may not care about the greater mission of our church and who may or may not have their hearts in the right place. "They're a killer player!" is never reason enough to let someone play on your worship team.

If we focus exclusively on compatibility, we will have a team of nice people who love to serve but you probably won't have many people in your church telling their friends about how great the music sounds. "They have a great heart!" is never reason enough to let someone play on your worship team.

There has to be a balance.
Ability with compatibility.
Skill and soul.
Competency and chemistry.
Hands and heart.

When I talk about this with people on our worship teams I will often bring them to Psalm 78. Through the psalm we read the cyclical story of

God's faithfulness, Israel's disobedience, their repentance, God's forgiveness and God's continued faithfulness.

Psalm 78 ends with this verse: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them."

See it? Heart and hands. Soul and skill. Capability and character. Both are important.

If we're honest, ability is fairly easy for most of us to evaluate. Can they sing? Do they have good tone? Do they care about having quality gear? Are they able to match harmonies?

Compatibility can be a harder thing to evaluate but it is just as important when it comes to the formation of our worship teams. In fact, compatibility may have more impact on the long-term success of our worship team and the worship culture of our church than ability on its own.

What you've read so far is a pretty good description of the *why* behind our audition process so let's talk about the *how*. Your *how* will probably not be exactly like mine and that's okay. We don't need clones but take what we're going to talk about in the next few pages and make it work for your own context. Make sure you get to the *why* of what you're trying to do and the *how* will come from that.

The Audition Process

I get asked pretty regularly about how we do worship team auditions at my church – this ebook is a current description of that process for us and if it helps you figure out how to do auditions at your church, that's great!

To say we "audition" people for our teams is actually inaccurate – we don't do solo auditions in front of a panel. In our worship team setup it is very rare for anyone to play a musical solo on a Sunday morning so it's actually not all that helpful for me to only hear them play or sing on their own.

Our entry process to joining our worship team actually has three main components -

1. Observation
2. Conversation
3. Integration

(Look at that – I even managed to use three rhyming words!
Coffee must have already kicked in.)

At the core of this process is a care and concern for discipleship – that's what we're about, that's what we do, that's what we're focused on, that's where our priorities are. If the worship team audition process is not about discipleship (for the joiner, for the others on the team and for our congregation) then it doesn't fit. Joining our worship team is not about finding a place for your creative expression (although we do that), playing music with your buds (we do that, too) or showing the

church how you can belt a high C (every now and then we need that!) – it's about discipleship.

It's about you growing in your walk with Christ, learning how worship is an expression of your love for Him and how leading others in worship is a great act of service for our congregation.

The purpose of the audition process is to evaluate both the ability and compatibility of the person in light of this desire to see our whole church grow in their walk with Christ.

Your ability as a musician will help us as we lead people in worship, no question. This is the "skillful hand" portion of Psalm 78:72.

Your compatibility as a member of our team is equally as important. How you fit with our team and your desire to see the team grow as a whole are reflected as "integrity of heart" like David had.

So let's get to these three stages of the audition for change process:

Observation.

Conversation.

Integration.

Step One: Observation

If you come up to me on a Sunday morning, tell me it's your first Sunday at our church and you want to join our worship team, you're not getting a "yes" from me. You're getting a "Well, the timing's not great for us right now, we'd love to talk in a few weeks or maybe a couple of months…" I (and others on our team) need to observe that you are committed to a few things – Sunday morning attendance, the singing/worship portion of our service as well as developing relationships with others in our congregation.

If you aren't regularly attending our church on Sunday morning, you're not joining our worship team. This doesn't mean we require an every Sunday attendance (I know churches who do) but if you don't believe in the priority of Sunday morning, why would you be placed in a position of leadership during that time?

Also, if you come on Sunday morning but are disengaged, disinterested and not singing during the music/worship time, you're not joining our worship team.

Part of our role as worship leaders is to inspire worship in others and part of that inspiration is physical – what we do with our faces, our hands, our bodies while we are worshipping communicates our love for the Lord. (This doesn't mean we're mechanical or forced or smile because we have to – we clap our hands because Scripture describes that as a way of worship, because it encourages the congregation to do

the same, because it shows that we are engaged in the singing beyond simply the words coming out of our mouths.)

So the first stage of our process is simple observation. I (and others on our team) want to see that you are committed to our church, committed to Sunday morning, committed to worship – all as an outflow of your commitment to Christ.



Some questions for you to think about and discuss:

1. What is the minimum requirement at your church for someone to join the worship team?

2. If I were to observe you on a Sunday when you are not part of the worship team but part of the congregation, what would I see?

3. How does our physical participation in worship inspire others to worship Jesus passionately?



Step Two: Conversation

People who ask to join our team usually fall into one of two categories – eager beavers or humble hedgehogs. Eager beavers want to join the team yesterday and would like to know what songs they'll be playing next Sunday. Humble hedgehogs want to know if *maybe, possibly there might, just maybe, if it's okay with you, one day be a chance for someone like them – although they're not that good – to have a place, only if they're needed!*

Part of the pastoral role of worship leadership is recognizing pride expressed by either of these two kinds of people. Pride can be displayed as zealous overconfidence but it can also be displayed through an "aw, shucks" false humility. We want people who are confident in their ability, humble in their faith, confident in their salvation, humble in their walk.

Yes it's a tightrope and a balancing act but dealing with issues of the heart like pride before the person enters your team will save you much grief and embarrassment down the road.

Once we've observed a person's commitment level and feel like they'd be a good candidate to join our team, I will usually schedule a meeting with them either at the church or out for coffee. (It goes without saying, of course, that you need to use your brain as far as when/where/how this meeting happens depending on your age/gender and the age/gender of the person you are meeting with. Use your brain.)

During this conversation I ask the person to share their testimony of salvation through Christ to see if they can express that clearly. I'll ask them why they want to join the worship team, what worship is all about for them. I may ask them to describe some meaningful moments of worship that they've been a part of – either as part of a worship team or as part of our congregation.

The reason I'm having this conversation is I'm trying to see if they have a heart and a passion for the Lord and His work in their life. I want to hear a heart for the people of our church, that our congregation would grow deeper in their understanding and pursuit of worship. I'm also trying to get a sense of whether or not the person will mesh with our current team:

> Will they get along with the people who are already serving?
> Will anything about their personality clash with
> some other personalities on our team?
> Is this person going to be a team player?

All of those questions are running through my head during these conversations.

Out of these conversations, I may ask people to read a book related to worship (the "Healthy Tensions" portion of Worship Matters by Bob Kauflin is a favorite of mine to pass along). Generally the conversations go very well and we are ready to invite the person to a worship team rehearsal.



Some questions for you to think about and discuss:

1. What would you say to someone who asked you why you want to be part of the worship team at your church?

2. What are some of the personal characteristics you're looking for in people who would like to join your worship team?

3. As a team, how are you actively welcoming people who are new musicians or singers?



Step Three: Integration

This can be the longest step of the process but it is very important – it's important for the person joining the team, it's important for the current members of the team, it's important for you as the worship pastor/director and it's important for your congregation. There are all kinds of ways to do this. We have not struck some magic formula, we've just found a way that we're happy with and that works for us.

This is where your process is going to diverge from mine because how this works in your own context is more important than how I do it. I'm actually going to give you *two* clear methods for audition integration which are typical and ones that I've used at my current and previous churches.

Method 1: Rehearsal-driven

Once you're happy with what you see and hear through observation and conversation you want to invite the person to a couple of rehearsals. They key here is to setup your new friend succeed. You want to do everything you can as a leader (you're the leader, remember?) to help them do a great job.

So over-communicate what they need to know and what they should expect. Make sure you're clear on arrival time, what they should bring in terms of equipment, give them more than enough time to rehearse then songs they'll be playing.

Do you use in ears? They may not know this or have experience with it in the past. Do you use Planning Center to help your musicians practice at home? Get them integrated into your regular team process right away to help them understand expectations even as part of the audition process.

You want to set them up with everything they need to feel confident when they come – they know the songs, they've got chord charts or lyric sheets, explain to them how rehearsal is going to happen. Include them as a full participant in your worship team at the rehearsal – the only major difference is that you may want to keep their voice/instrument in the monitors only and keep them out of the house.

Whatever your audition process is, do everything you can to set the person up to succeed. Part of your role is to grow the worship capacity of your church and part of that is developing new members of your worship team. Give them the best chance they can get to give you their best!

Added bonus if you use a personal mixing system like Avioms, you can occasionally bring that person's instrument/voice in and out of your own in-ear mix so I can hear a few things:

> How are they playing with the rest of the team?
> Are they listening to what others are playing?
> Is there a nice mix with the rest of the band?

At the end of your rehearsal, make sure your whole team is very encouraging and knows their involvement in the rehearsal was valuable for the team. At that point you'll need to consider if you want to bring them back for a second rehearsal or if you think they're just not ready yet to join your team. Remember that you may not have seen their best but you may want to give them another opportunity to be a part of our rehearsal – they may have played nervous, they may have been getting used to in-ears, they may not have been as familiar with the songs as they thought, they may have had a bad day at work. All kinds of reasons why it may not have gone well.

Up to this point, it is *crucial* for you to communicate that coming to rehearsal does not mean the person is joining your team for Sunday morning. I try my very best to be explicit (several times) that we are asking them to come to rehearsal only and that once they've done a couple of rehearsals we'll evaluate whether they are ready for Sunday morning. Yes, this comes from a bad experience where I wasn't clear enough with someone and they came (very prematurely) to our Sunday morning call time, ready to sing with the band that morning.

Not a fun conversation out in the foyer of our church with that person, explaining that the invitation to rehearsal did not include an opportunity on our Sunday morning team!

Whether you are inviting people for a single or multiple rehearsals you'll need to create space where you can gauge if they are going to fit musically with where you'd like your team to go. Remember we're talking about audition *for change* and if you bring someone new on to

your team, your team *will* change so you need to evaluate (there's that word again) if the coming change will be in the right direction or not.

Method 2: Video-driven

This is the method we are currently using at our church and it's working very well. To begin with you want to create a form email that you can quickly send to anyone who is going to make it to this part of the audition process. (See **Appendix 1** at the end of this book for an email template that you can modify.)

That email should give people very clear instructions about how they should submit their video audition as well as some information on the calibre of video you are looking for.

Over time we build a library of these video auditions from people who are interested in joining our teams. Depending on the size of your church, the needs of your team, the number of musicians in your church and how often you do auditions you'll have your own number of video auditions you're looking to receive before beginning a live audition process.

You can also use this first step in the video-driven process to capture some info about the person using your church database if it has forms or a free solution like Google Forms to gather some very helpful information which will give you a clearer picture of the person who is wanting to join your team. (See **Appendix 2** at the end of this book for

an example of the questions we ask people who are interested in joining our worship team.)

This method is usually for larger churches who have higher musical expectations and more people wanting to audition but it could work just as well at a smaller church.

Use the video audition to evaluate whether or not you'd like to invite them for a live audition. Typically worship leaders who are leading a church where this method will work has the kind of musical ability and evaluation skills where you can tell just from the video if the person has the skill level you're looking for.

For the live audition you may want to integrate them into a rehearsal and then do a shortened version of Method 1 or, like we do, you may want to setup some dedicated audition nights where people come to the church.

Again, you want to set these people up to succeed so be very clear in your communication and in your expectations. Do you want them to audition specific songs or is it up to them to choose? If you have songs you want to hear them sing/play as part of their audition make sure you give them the material a couple weeks ahead of time. You don't want the audition to fail only because they didn't have time to prepare.

As part of the audition you may want to give them a song on the spot and see how they do with that but only do that if you are also giving

them a great change to prepare a couple of songs that they'll feel really confident playing when they come to audition.

If you're going to have a full team for them to play with as part of the audition you'll also want to make sure those people playing know the songs and the keys they're expected to play for the audition. Again, you don't want the audition to be unsuccessful because of something that was out of their control - set them up to succeed!

For singers, generally we want to hear them sing both melody and harmony line. We don't ask every singer on our teams to be both melody and harmony singers but auditions are a great place to discover that someone may be able to nail melody but they've got pitch issues when it comes to harmony.

For musicians, you're going to want to hear them play both fast and slow songs. You want to hear the full range of ability and discover in this audition process whether or not there's a genre or tempo that's right in their wheelhouse but once they go outside of that things get tricky.

Also if you typically use a click track on Sunday morning make sure that click is part of the audition and explain that before the audition happens so they're ready. You don't want to have someone join your team after an audition and then you discover that this drummer has never played to a click or a metronome and can't keep time. There are also cases where people feel their personal creativity is violated in

some way with a click track so, again, you want to discover that in the audition process if possible.

You may be thinking that moving to video auditions is a great way to make the job easier on you and your worship leaders but don't neglect the work that goes into communicating clearly and pastoring people through a process which may feel on their end very impersonal and mechanical.

Remind them that you want them to succeed and you're there to help them along the way!



Some questions for you to think about and discuss:

1. How can we best setup someone to succeed when they come to audition?

2. What would be some signals that this person is NOT ready to join our team?

3. What would be some ways we would know that they ARE ready to join our worship team?



Evaluation

Even though I didn't include this in the list up top, evaluation is the first and last step of this process. Over the course of getting to know this person, hearing their heart for worship and having them go through an audition you want to be constantly evaluating. At this point, the applicant deserves a fair assessment of whether or not they are ready to join your team on Sunday morning.

Remember, you are the leader and you need to be concerned with both ability and compatibility. You need to evaluate both as part of your audition process.

Once we've been able to evaluate them as part of the process, we need to give them an answer. This is where leadership comes in. Even if the answer is no, you need to give them an answer. You must honor the person's commitment to your church and to the process, even it means telling them they are not in a place where they are able to serve on your team.

Yes, these can be difficult conversations but the leaders of your church and God Himself has you in this role at this time for this purpose. Take everything that comes with this role and lead.

Typically, the answer after they've gone through the audition process falls in to one of three categories:

- **Yes.** You're ready. You've shown a commitment to Christ, a commitment to our church, a love for worship and a heart to see people grow. You have musical ability at an acceptable level for us and we're excited about how you would fit in our existing teams. Let's get you scheduled on our Sunday morning rotation.

- **Not yet.** You're almost ready, but… I need some more time. I'm concerned about any of these things – a character issue, your understanding of worship, your motivation for being part of the team, your level of musicianship, etc. I can see you being a part of our worship team in the future but just not yet. There may be a way for you to be involved in leading worship for our kids or student ministries, we'd love to see you continue to grow in your understanding & ability and then we'll come back and reconsider at a future date.

- **No.** Serving in worship ministry is not for you. You may love Jesus but you can't hold a tune. You might run musical circles around everyone else on our team, but you're a jerk. (Thankfully I've never had to say that one!) I appreciate your desire to serve and every follower of Christ is called to serve in some way but the worship team is not a spot for you.

Conclusion

As we wrap this up, let's go back to the beginning.
"And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;
with skillful hands he led them."
Psalm 78:72

Would you say this describes your worship team right now? Are you making it a point to develop both skill and heart, competency and character? One of the ways you can do this is through your audition process: audition for change!

I would hope this has been helpful for you. Your process will never look identical to mine and that's okay. Spend some time digging into the *why* behind the *how* and be willing to explore your audition process.

If you've found this ebook helpful, please let me know. I love interacting with worship leaders all over the world and the best way to reach me is by email at chrisvacher@gmail.com

I've been blogging since 2007 at www.chrisvacher.com and you can find more resources like this ebook on my blog. I am really focused on developing and sharing resources for worship leaders and would love to have you come by for a visit.

Of course I'm very active on twitter @chrisfromcanada and my facebook page www.facebook.com/chrisfromcanada and would be happy to connect with you there.

Appendix 1

Here's a copy of an email template that I send to everyone interested in submitting a video audition. Edit and adapt for your own context:

I'd love for you to get the process started on your end so that I've got your info and can check off this part of it.

1. Watch this video:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_zpLX6Uy0k&feature=youtu.be

2. Record an audition video of yourself at home playing along to a song that would be a typical worship song for our church. A few ideas -

Hands to the Heavens by Kari Jobe
Only King Forever by Elevation
10,000 Reasons by Matt Redman

Feel free to do the song in the key that works best for you.

3. Fill out this form: <see Appendix 2>

When we officially open auditions we ask everyone to submit a video audition this way. We go through them and invite some of those submitters to live auditions with a full team and our worship leaders. After our live auditions I talk with worship leaders and we invite some of those to join our teams.

Once the info above is submitted then your name goes onto a list of people we contact once auditions are ready to go. Hope that's not too confusing.

Thank you so much for your interest in auditioning for our worship team. Let me know if there are any questions at all about the process!

Appendix 2

Here's an example of questions we ask people to answer as part of their video audition submission. Check with your church database to see if you can build a form like this or use a free solution like Google Forms to collect this information. Again, edit and adapt for your own situation!

PERSONAL INFORMATION
* First Name
* Last Name
* Email
* Phone Number
* Are you currently in a Connect Group?

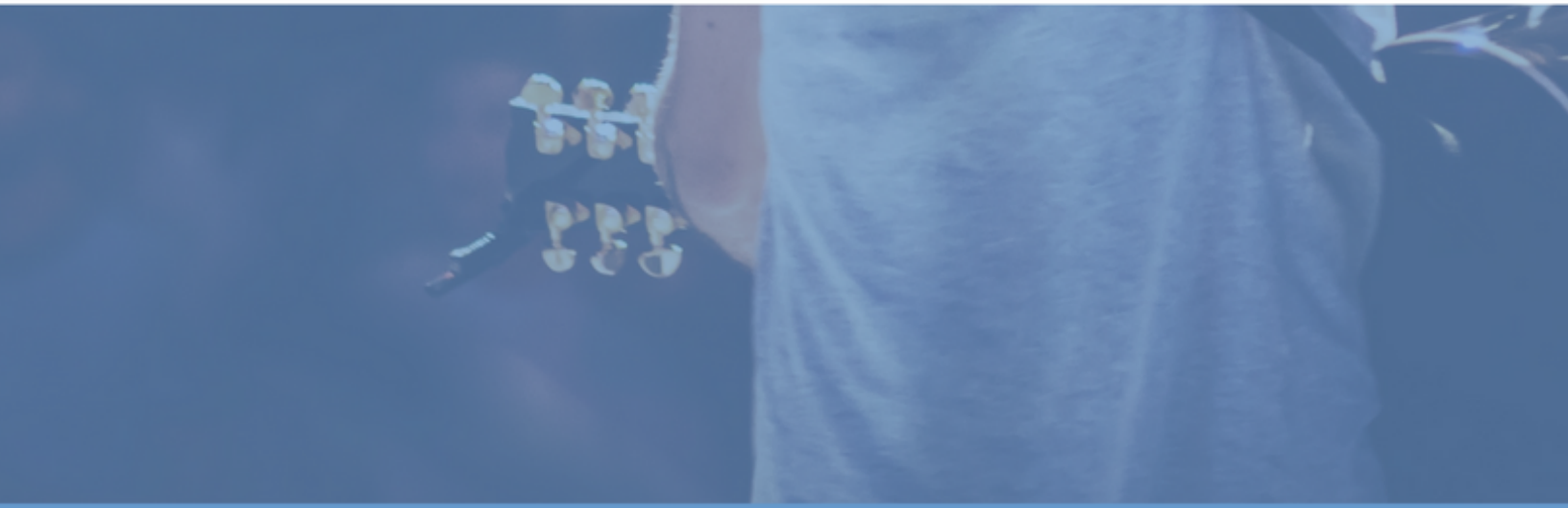
AUDITION INFORMATION
* Audition Instrument Request
* Link to Audition Video on YouTube
* How many years of experience do you have on the instrument you plan to audition with?
* Please give a brief description of your previous musical experience (e.g. professional, church/worship team, bands, etc.)
* What gear do you own for the instrument you are auditioning?
* Do you have experience playing with a click or metronome?
* Do you have experience using In-Ear Monitors?
* Who are your current musical influences?
Additional Information or Comments



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