



## Audition venues for 2011 – can you help?

We start the process of booking our audition venues in January each year as it takes three to four months to put together a timetable for our audition teams to tour the country in the autumn. As part of this process, we review the venues used last year and decide which to reuse and which to replace. There may also be places which cannot host us again.

We look at the trends for where our applicants come from (rising numbers in some areas and fewer in others) and which venues were oversubscribed or underfilled. We identify which parts of the country we would like to see more applicants from and consider how we can promote more widely. Some venues which do not attract large numbers of applicants will be retained because we wish to make auditions available throughout the UK and the more rural areas need to be represented as well as large towns and cities.

Last year we asked parents if they knew of somewhere which might be suitable and we were given a number of contacts to follow up. Such lines of enquiry do not always result in a new venue for us for a variety of reasons; the commonest causes are availability and cost.

All of you will have experienced at least one of our venues when your child auditioned last year and some have tried several in different years. We use a variety of locations: schools, colleges, village or church halls, conservatoires and commercial company premises. For instance, Yamaha sponsor us by giving us an audition day at their headquarters in Milton Keynes free of charge, but for most places we have to pay a hire fee.

For this year, we are particularly keen to find potential venues in certain areas: northern England (Yorkshire/Durham/ Tyneside), west midlands and the Welsh Marches (Shropshire/ Herefordshire/Staffordshire), North Wales, east midlands (Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire/ Lincolnshire), East Anglia (Norfolk/Suffolk) and Sussex.

We also need to have some venues which can host us on weekdays during the first two weeks of October so we don't have to cram too many days of auditions into the final fortnight. The audition period in 2011 is likely to be between 26 September and 28 October though it will be several months before all dates can be confirmed.

If you think you know of a potential new venue for us, please send us contact details so that we can investigate the possibilities. (Geraldine on 01934 418855 or [G.Jones@nco.org.uk](mailto:G.Jones@nco.org.uk)) For guidance, you will find some notes on the following page which explain the sort of facilities we are looking for. Thank you for any help you can give.

## Audition venues

What we need for an audition venue to work well are the following:

1. An audition room with a piano in good working order. There should be room for the two adjudicators to have either one large table or two smaller ones for their paperwork and sufficient space for the candidate so that he/she does not feel claustrophobic. (This room should be large enough that the adjudicators are not too close to the candidate and with sufficient space that they are not deafened by the volume of sound produced by brass players in particular.)
2. A practice room where the next candidate can work on the prepared sight reading. This room can be small and should ideally be in the vicinity of the audition room but not so close that any sound carries between the two. A piano, to facilitate tuning, is desirable but not essential.
3. A waiting area for parents and accompanists should also be located not too far away. It should have space for those waiting and for instrument cases and outdoor clothing to be left. We allow 15 minutes for each audition – 4 per hour. There is a steady turnover of applicants and their 'entourages'. There are about 6 to 8 people there at any time though we have had candidates arrive with their extended family for support. Again, it is useful to have this area in the same vicinity as the audition room as long as those waiting can converse at a normal volume without disturbing either the audition room or the practice room.
4. Additionally, it helps to have access to somewhere to make tea or coffee for the adjudicators mid morning, lunch time and mid afternoon, though this is not essential.

We usually work from 9am to 6pm if there are sufficient candidates to fill the day but at some venues we accept shorter hours. For instance, at Radyr we can only book the hall on a Saturday for the afternoon as there is a group with a permanent booking for the morning, and at Cardiff on a Sunday the college has restricted opening hours which we have to match.

## Percussion

We are keen to increase the number of venues at which we are able to audition percussionists. The equipment is too bulky for it to be carried in the audition team's vehicle so we need to arrange to have access to the required items at the venues. The kit needed is timpani (at least 2 but preferably three), xylophone and snare drum. If that equipment is available, we can designate that venue as open for percussion auditions.

Last year we could offer Blandford, Bushey, Cardiff, Huddersfield, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oakham, Shrewsbury and Wells but some of those venues will not be used this year, so new venues would also be welcome.