

Getting and Keeping Gigs

Ryan Janus

Where are they?

- Restaurants/hotels (surf the yellow pages!)
- Private parties
- Weddings, baptisms, bar mitzvahs
- Conventions
- Churches
- Festivals
- Schools

Who should I know?

- Contractors
- Bandleaders
- Studio Engineers
- Publishers
- Any and all musicians in your area
- Band directors (handy people to know for private students AND for possible guest clinics/solo appearances)

What do I do to get them?

- PRACTICE! Especially sightreading and doubles (e.g. flute and clarinet for sax players, flugel for trumpeters, bass bone for bone players, etc.) The two most common reasons I've seen for getting fired from gigs are bad reading (especially rhythms) and playing out of tune. Practice accordingly.
- Take lessons from someone who gets lots of gigs. You might get the crumbs that fall from his plate, and sometimes they're big crumbs!
- Do auditions/competitions. Even if you don't win, you can network with lots of musicians and force yourself to practice harder.
- Sit in with other bands. This is how most of the non-orchestral world do their "auditions."
- Keep in touch with contractors and bandleaders. If you haven't heard from one in a while, find an excuse to call him. Out of sight, out of mind.

What do I need to own?

- All your own instruments (or have easy access to them), including doubles
- Metronome and tuner (believe it or not, some bandleaders actually ask who in the band has them!)
- Mutes for brass players: cup, straight, harmon, plunger, hat
- Music stand, stand light, and instrument stand
- Microphone w/cord and stand

- Business cards
- Extra reeds, sticks, strings, or whatever can break on your instrument (it will!)
- Tux (for guys) and black clothes

How do I get the next gig?

- Be responsible: don't drink on gig, be on time, have all your equipment, dress properly, ... all the things you would do if you had any other "day job."
- Don't complain about other musicians! It's a small world of musicians out there, and word gets around fast that you're a gossip.
- Be polite, cheerful, easy to get along with – in other words, someone other musicians want to hang out with.
- Play like your life depends on it. Professionally, depending on whom you're playing with, it just might!
- Go above and beyond what other people would do. This could mean memorizing the band's tunes, volunteering to help pack up the gear, even remembering people's birthdays. Anything that will let a bandleader know that you're doing something "beyond the call of duty."