Preliminaries: Myths

- “Any job is a good job”
  - Location of the school counts
  - Mission of the school counts
- “It’s all about playing the game right”
“What are your future research plans?”

- Instead of this:
  - “I'm going to write a textbook!”
- Say this:
  - “I'm interested in several different areas of pedagogy, including…”

Principle: The committee is interested in what you will be able to accomplish pre-tenure.

“Describe your dissertation”

- Instead of this:
  - “I've developed a method of teasing out various types of semitones in Renaissance music according to their structural functions. In doing so, I hope to separate out different levels of chromaticism in this repertoire in a way that converges presentist and historicist views of early-music theory, while still paying respect to the intentions of the composers themselves…”
- Say this:
  - “I've been working towards a deeper understanding of what “chromaticism” meant in early music, and I've developed a new analytical method to do so.”
- Principle: The search committee will likely be made up of people from a variety of departments. Keep your descriptions free of jargon.
“What excites you about your research?”

• Instead of this:
  • “No one’s ever thought about these kinds of things before!”

• Say this:
  • “I have a unique approach to [my topic], which combines [current research people have heard of] with [whatever you’ve added].”

• Principle: Don’t oversell yourself, people will recognize groundbreaking stuff when they see it. Also, be specific. (Plus: “no one”? Really?)

“You’ve mentioned your doctoral document on Ligeti, and your interest in performing Ligeti’s work. What are your other interests?”

• Instead of this:
  • “Well, I’d also like to teach a course on Ligeti,” or even this:
  • “I’d like to do interdisciplinary work with your musicology department to study the social and political climate that gave rise to Ligeti’s style”

• Say this:
  • “I’ve also loved Brahms’s chamber music since childhood and would love to [perform][study][lead student ensembles in] it. I find his use of rhythm continually fascinating.”

• Principle: Don’t be a one-trick pony. Have at least one secondary interest (Brahms) that you can say a little about (use of rhythm).
“What course would you like to teach?”

• Instead of this:
  • “Meh—whatever,” or this:
  • “A course in late 12th-century organum and its antecedents in the tonal structures of the Byzantine oktoechos”

• Say this:
  • “Well, obviously I’m looking forward to sharing my research with your students, but I’m also drawn to teaching core classes so I can engage with as many students as possible.”

• Principle: Make yourself look like a versatile teacher.

“We’re looking for a person who could teach brass choir as well. Is that something you could do?”

• Instead of this:
  • “Well, I don’t know, that’s pretty far away from what I do. Besides, I’m really more of a [soloist][scholar].”

• Say this:
  • “Yes.”
  • You can qualify it with “it’s outside of my specialty, but boy that would be a great opportunity! And there’s a lot of good rep!”

• Principle: Be honest but positive.
“We really enjoyed your performance of Bartok’s *Contrasts* yesterday. I swear, your tone was better than Benny Goodman’s!”

- **Instead of this:**
  - “Well yeah, my dog can play the piece better than Benny Goodman did.”
- **Say this:**
  - “Thanks for the compliment! I love the piece and have worked really hard on my tone.”
- **Principle:** Don’t say anything demeaning about anyone, ever. You never know whose work the search committee will admire.

“How do you feel about the incorporation of popular music into the curriculum?”

- **Instead of this:**
  - “I like Mozart and Beethoven, and they’re very popular.”
- **Say this:**
  - “It’s not my music of choice, but I think it’s important to try to reach out to all of our students.”
- **Principle:** Same as the last one (don’t say anything demeaning). Also, you can answer an inscrutable question with an inscrutable answer.
“How do you feel about moving to Tromso, Norway?”

- Instead of this:
  - “I guess I’ll manage.”
- Say this:
  - “Any move is going to be a challenge, and of course I’ll miss Bloomington. But I’m really looking forward to getting to know the arctic circle, and I’ve heard the braised seal fat is delectable.”
- Principle: As earlier, be honest but positive. And try to learn something about the place before you interview.

“Have you had a chance to go to church since you’ve been here? Would you like a recommendation?”

- Instead of this:
  - “Ummmm...” or this:
  - “Hey! That’s an illegal question, you a*****e!”
- Say this:
  - “It’s been such a busy visit, we haven’t even thought about those kinds of things. But I’m sure we’ll have time to look around once we settle in.”
- Principle: If you really want the job, you might shoot yourself in the foot by calling them out on inappropriate questions (on the other hand, do you really want to work there...?) Mention it gently when you meet with the administration.
“[any question at all]”

- Instead of *this*:
  - “[anything sarcastic]”
- Say *this*:
  - “[anything else]”
- Principle: The department is looking for someone they’ll like, not just the best scholar/performer for the job.

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**Above all:**

**Remember to be yourself!**