Musical Theatre: Singing Audition Tips

If you are auditioning for a musical, the song(s) you choose for your singing audition might just be the most important factor in whether or not you are chosen for the role. While we certainly hope the audition panel will not judge you solely based on your choices, the song you choose will impact how your vocal talents are perceived by the panel. You need to show not only the quality and beauty in your voice, but how you can use your voice to convey a character.

Tips for Choosing Your Audition Songs

Look at your audition songs not only for how well they show off your singing technique and range of your voice, but how well they show off the technique and range of your acting. Look at each song's lyrics alone, as if it were a monologue, and speak it. If you find yourself slipping into the character somewhat easily, or see potential in it, then try it with the music and see if it's melody is as effective. If you don't relate to a song or understand what its really about, then you have no business singing it in an audition.

Keep in mind also the characters in the show you are auditioning for, and make sure that the audition songs you choose reflect the same types of situations, themes, and emotions. This site has an excellent tool for this. Browse the roles you are interested in playing by their profiles, and find a list of characters from other shows that are very similar.

Audition Songs: The Up-Tempo Song and The Ballad

You will almost always have two chances to show off your voice and acting skills in a singing audition: the up-tempo song, and the ballad. This means you will have the chance to bring two characters to life. Choose two songs as different in emotion as possible, because this shows your acting range. If you can perform two very different emotions well then the audition panel will assume you can perform all the emotions in between.

Audition Song Performing Order

At a singing audition, always perform the song you are most comfortable with first. If you are equally comfortable with both songs, perform the up-tempo first, because if you are nervous it won't be as noticeable. As well, up-tempo songs are great stress-relievers because of their, well, tempo. When performing ballads, a nervous voice will easily break during long, drawn-out phrases, so it's best to save your ballad for after you've loosened up.

Movement in the Singing Audition

Do not 'stage' or 'block' your song. All your energy should go into the emotion in your voice, not in 'being emotional' while you sing. Moving a bit naturally is fine, but don't plan it out. Remember that the audition panel wants to see and hear your singing in a singing audition. If they want to see you dance, they'll ask you to a dance audition.

What Are They Looking For In Singing Auditions?

Your sheet music should...

\* be clean and easy to read and free from unnecessary marks

\* be in the correct key and with cuts clearly marked (do NOT expect the accompanist to transpose for you!)

\* attached at the edges or in a binder so that it is easy for the accompanist to use

Before you go to the singing audition, make sure you know...

\* what the song is about

\* what show it is from

\* what character sings the song and why

\* where and when the song is sung in the show

\* all the words

\* the whole song, not just the 16 bars you have chosen (they may ask you for more)

\* how to work with an accompanist

At singing auditions, you will likely be judged on the following criteria:

Tonal Quality: Does the voice sound focused, clear, open, warm, mature?

Rhythm: Is the beat secure, and the rhythms accurate?

Notes & Pitch: Is the pitch consistently accurate?

Dynamics: Are the dynamic levels obvious, consistent, and matching the style of music?

Expression & Style: Is the song performed with creative nuance and style appropriate to the music?

Ability to Take Direction: Does the singer perform all requested changes to the best of their ability?

Audition Advice From A Professional Actress

by Catherine Fitzlanders

I always say acting is the best and the worst career in the world. There is nothing like being called to say you have the lead in a film or a part in the play, your tummy will flip over and you will not be able to take the smile off your face. But you have to remember for every part maybe 200 will apply and they could audition 20 or more people. That means the odds on you getting the part every time will be slim. Before you get disappointed hopefully what I am going to say will hopefully help you on your way!

BE PREPARED

It is very important to be prepared for auditions and there are a number of ways you can do this. The first is simple, if you are going for an audition for a play always read the script first. Buy a copy and study your character. You may only be asked to read a small part, but if you read the whole play you will be able to get a better understanding of the character you are auditioning for and how you feel it would be best to play him or her. If you are auditioning for a new film, then ask for the script before so you can again get a better feel for the character.

You will usually be asked to perform a monologue or read a part of the play/film. Have 2 contrasting (different) pieces prepared, so you can do them if you get a short notice audition or if you are asked to. It is always a good idea to have one modern and one classic, that way you are prepared for whatever part you are auditioning for. If you do not have a drama teacher, perform the monologue in front of someone whom you know will be able to give you honest feedback.

CLOTHES

Either wear plain clothes or if you have an understanding of the character dress in clothes you think they would wear. It is a good idea not to go too over the top so if in doubt keep it simple. Casting directors may only see you as you are dressed, so if you are going for a part as a girl next-door type and are dressed a little wild, they may not see you as the part you are auditioning for.

KNOCK BACKS

Not everyone can get a part that has 20 applicants. When I didn't get a couple of my first auditions I was very upset. It would be great if you could get every part, but you have to remember this is unlikely. You may audition and do the best you have ever done, but the casting director doesn't feel you fit the look of the character he/she has in their head. They may want someone with a rounder face, bluer eyes etc. This is something you cannot change. I always do my best and even if I do not get the part, I come out of the audition knowing I have shown them my best acting even if I am not suitable for the part I have auditioned for. They may call you back another time to audition, this has happened many a time for me. As long as you have come out of the audition having done your best, you cannot change an image the casting director has in their mind. You should feel happy!

NERVES

The first few auditions you may find very nerve racking. This will get easier and casting directors will understand. Take a deep breath and hold you head up high. Don't be too over confident, but try not to be shy either.

I hope this has given you a bit of an insight into acting auditions. If you have any questions I will try my best to help you answer them. Feel free to email me on cat\_fitzlanders@yahoo.comThis email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it

Regards,

Catherine Fitzlanders

UK actress

How to Audition for a Musical

DO:

\* Read the audition posting carefully, and follow all instructions

\* Arrive early

\* Be prepared to wait, and bring something to keep you busy

\* Bring water and a snack

\* Warm up

\* Use material well within your grasp and understanding.

\* Use material in which you have been carefully coached.

\* Choose clothing that is simple, professional, and comfortable.

\* Introduce yourself politely.

\* Behave yourself until you've left the building.

DON'T:

\* Select material that is too young or too old for you

\* Choose a role in which you could not feasibly be cast

\* Select material written before 1900 unless asked

\* Use costumes

\* Use dialects

\* Use props

The following is a musical theatre rubric used by a highschool to score musical theatre auditions, and it is a very good example of what musical theater audition panels are looking for. See that level 4 is the highest and most desireable.

Dance Audition Tips

Dance auditions, whether alone or part of an audition for a musical, usually consist of a dance routine. This routine is demonstrated by the choreographer or dance captain and then you are asked to perform it on your own or in small groups. With this type of dance audition, it is very important that you are able to learn a dance routine quickly. However, there are some auditions (particularly those that require you to send in an audition video) where you will be required to perform a prepared solo piece.

Dance auditions are usually judged on the following criteria:

Body Alignment: Does the dancer display correct alignment at barre and at center?

Poor posture will ruin an otherwise beautiful performance. If you do not have good posture, studying pilates may help.

Dance Technique: Does the dancer exhibit excellent turnout, pointed feet, high extensions, and flexibility?

If you are hoping to become part of a dance troup there is nothing more important than technique. If you are auditioning for a main role in a musical (unless a dancing role) your dance technique will be often be secondary to your singing and acting, depending on the musical, of course.

A very little training can go a very long way in a basic dance audition for a musical. A single year of weekly dance classes will help you achieve better posture, positioning, and coordination. If taking classes at a dance school are not an option, consider a home DVD (we have links to some very good ones in the "learn to dance" links in the menu to your left). If following a DVD isn't for you, even doing some pilates will help a great deal with posture and flexibility.

Skill & Potential: Does the dancer perform turns, jumps and combinations with ease and quality?

Musicality: Does the dancer demonstrate an excellent sense of rhythm and phrasing?

Recall of Movement Sequences: Does the dancer recreate combinations quickly, easily, and accurately?

Your ability to learn a routine in a short amount of time can vary in importance, depending on the type of show and how long you have to rehearse. If you are auditioning for a dance troup that focuses only on dance (think Riverdance), this becomes exceptionally important. It may be less important if you wish to be a chorus member in a musical, but if you are looking at a main role it is important that you learn quickly since you will also have songs and scenes to work on.

Most musical auditions will send you as a group to a different room either before or after you do your individual audition to learn a dance combination. Once you have learned the combination, you will be taken to the audition panel to perform it. The time you spend learning the combination is very important. You need to take control of your own learning in this situation. If you hide in the back, fake your way through the steps and keep going even though you don't understand the last step, you're not going to do well. However, if you make sure you can see the teacher at all times, stop and ask for clarification, and put your full effort into learning, you will stand a good chance of catching most of the steps. Asking for help when you are learning something is NOT a sign of weakness. To the contrary, it shows that you are genuinely interested in doing your best.

Remember to do your best to perform the steps exactly as they are shown - do not "improve" them. The audition panel can't tell the difference between changing on purpose and not being able to remember. Besides, choreography is not your job. You can prepare for the routines you may learn ahead of time by listening to the cast recording of the show you are auditioning for. Learning routines is easier when the music is already familiar to you. Click here for tips on learning combinations.

Stage Prescence: Does the dancer demonstrate appropriate energy, focus, facial expressions, emotion, and confidence?

This becomes terribly important if you are auditioning for a musical. All the technique in the world won't get you anywhere if you can't connect with the audience. If it takes you a while to learn the steps but you've got this dynamite personality and stage presence, you'll still be much more impressive than a wall-flower with perfect turn-out. Always smile and look like you are enjoying yourself. The audition panel likes to work with people who look like they are having a good time.

Cold Reading Audition Tips

At both straight theatre auditions and musical theatre auditions (as well as television and film), it is common to be asked to do a cold reading. The cold reading is simply a scene (usually from the show you are auditioning for) that you are asked to read at the audition. Sometimes you are given a chance to look over the scene while you are waiting for your turn to audition, and sometimes it is given to you right in the audition itself. This leads me to the most important tip I can give you. Be early for the audition, in case the scene(s) are available for you to read in advance. You don't want to be the person who only got two minutes to read it through, while other people got twenty minutes because they arrived early.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #1:

Don't be afraid to take your time. Usually the audition panel will give you a few minutes to look over the scene. Take them. Sometimes, in the fear of wasting time, we don't really take the time to do this right. Read the scene all the way through once, slowly, really thinking about the character you are reading and what is happening in the scene. Spend this time wisely - don't try to memorize. Just get a really good handle on what is happening in the scene.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #2:

Remember your basic acting technique. Often when faced with new material we forget all that "common sense" stuff like speaking slowly, clearly, and loudly. Even if everything else falls apart, make sure that they can always hear you and see your face (hold your script at chest level). Take your time. Don't be afraid to move around.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #3:

Don't feel that you need to memorize the cold reading - the purpose of the cold reading is not to test how quickly you can memorize, but to see what you can bring to a character (using your skills and creativity) on short notice. Instead, look at your next line as the other person finishes speaking, so that you can look up while delivering it and not at the paper.

Don't spend the whole time the other person is speaking to look at your lines, because you also need to show that you are listening/reacting. Use your thumb to keep your place while you are looking up, so that when you look down again for the next line you know where to look.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #4:

Listen carefully to any directions that are given to you. Sometimes the audition panel will introduce the character you are reading to you. Listen carefully to this as there may be some hints as to how they might like it played. But beyond that, don't be too worried about making the wrong artistic decisions. Making no decisions at all about the character you are playing is far worse than making the wrong ones. As long as you make a decision about the character and fully commit to it, the audition panel will notice that you are willing to take risks, and that is always a good thing for an actor to do.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #5:

If someone is reading the scene with you, you should interact with them as you would any other actor. Look at them and speak to them. Usually, you should refrain from making any physical contact unless it is requested of you.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #6:

While it is perfectly acceptable to have the script with you as you perform your cold reading, there is no reason to draw extra attention to it. It is not a prop - so don't wave it around. Try holding the script in your weak hand - so if you are right-handed, hold it in your left. This will leave your strong hand free for gesturing naturally as you act.

Cold Reading Audition Tip #7:

Preparation can really make a difference. Read the play you are auditioning for, and ask yourself, "If I were a director, what scenes would I choose for auditions?" You'll be suprised how often you're right! Also, practice reading lines you've never seen before -- it doesn't matter what play they're from. This will increase your ability to act well the first time you read something. The cold reading exercise: Look at the first line, quickly committing it to memory. Then look up and say the line aloud. Gradually you should be able to repeat larger sections of words at a single glance.

Acting Audition Tips

Tips for preparing for your acting audition.

Acting auditions, although necessary in most cases for earning a role, can be stressfull and difficult, especially if you do not have a lot of acting experience. These auditions may take the form of prepared sides, a monologue, or a cold reading. If you are experiencing a high level of stress or fear, read our article on how to handle audition jitters, and remember that the best way to fight stress is to be fully prepared. The following outlines the main attributes that an audition panel in an acting audition will likely be looking for. Don't have an audition yet? Search Audition Notices.

Acting Auditions are usually judged on the following criteria:

Concentration: Are the actor and character completely integrated?

Physical Expression: (Focus, gesture, posture, gait) Does the actor commit to physical choices that suggest the character?

Vocal Expression (Diction, projection, rate, pitch) Does the actor give a clear and nuanced vocal interpretation that reflects the character?

Text/Sub Text: (Memorization, pronunciation, understanding of material, literal & implied) Does the actor effectively engage the audience through their passion, believability and willingness to take creative risks?

Overall Impact (Confidence, believability, passion, creative risk taking) Does the actor effectively engage the audience?

Acting Audition Monologues

Many acting auditions require you to perform a prepared monologue. If you are asked for a monologue, keep in mind the following points...

\* the audition monologue should be memorized

\* your audition piece should be carefully timed to the requested length

\* your acting audition piece should be relevant to your own age and life-experience

\* your audition monologue should be chosen from a play, not from a monologue book, and it should reflect the types of characters and themes found in the show you are auditioning for

\* supported by character research

\* your acting audition should be introduced by giving the title of the play that the monologue is from, but don't launch into long introductions or "setting the scene"

Instead of an audition monologue, some acting auditions may require you to perform a cold reading. The cold reading may also follow the monologue, or be used at call-backs.

How To Choose Audition Monologues

The following is a list of points to consider when choosing a monologue. For a list of the types of monologues you should have and how to find them, visit Monologue Repertoire. This site also hosts a list of free monologues from plays .

\* Choose an audition monologue that have some sort of change in the character from beginning to end. This shows range of acting and an understanding of monologue beats.

\* Choose an audition monologue that is appropriate for your age range and life experience. Don't choose the monologue of a character you cannot identify with.

\* Choose an audition monologue that is appropriate for the show you are auditioning for. If you are auditioning for Shakespeare, don't use a contemporary monologue, and vice versa. If your audition for a musical requires a monologue, do you best to find a monologue from a musical.

\* Choose an audition monologue that interests you, with a subject that you either know about, or can at least identify with. If you find a monologue you really like but don't know enough about the subject, do some research.

\* Do not choose an audition monologue that requires an accent unless it is specifically asked for.

\* Make sure that you like your monologue. If you don't enjoy performing it, there's no point.

\* Either avoid choosing an audition monologue that is too long, or cut it down to size. Most audition monologues should be about one to two minutes in length. If the audition notice specifies that it must be of a certain length, time it very carefully several times and edit it if necessary. You do not want to lose a part because you didn't follow instructions. If you feel that you cannot edit a monologue to fit in the time allowed without taking out something important, choose a different monologue. There is no point in ripping a perfectly good monologue to bits just to make it fit.

\* It is okay to cut down and modify a script to create a monologue, but if you have made significant changes make sure to list it as an "adaptation".

\* Some 2-person scenes can be converted into an audition monologue by cutting out the other character's lines and modifying it slightly for content (the other character can be imagined and implied by your actions - it is an interesting effect). Never speak both characters' lines, as if you are having a conversation with yourself. This is not appreciated by audition panels. It tends to make you look a little crazy. :)

\* If you are auditioning for a stage part, use a monologue from a stage play. Do not use monologues from movies for a theatre audition.

\* Do not use monologues that were written as stand-alone monologues. I know those "free" monologues on the internet are very tempting, but most of them are very bad. There is a reason they are free. Monologues from plays have much more background to draw from to create a more complete character.

\* Do not perform a monologue in an audition without reading the play it is from.

\* Do not perform a monologue written by you or one of your friends. You are auditioning as a performer, not as a playwright.

\* Choose non-traditional monologues only when appropriate.

Learning Dance Routines Quickly

Your ability to learn a routine quickly can greatly affect your overall dance ability. If you are slow to learn dance routines, this can interfere with your ability to concentrate on finer points such as technique and expression. This problem can filter down, affecting how far you are able to advance in your classes and how effective you are in dance auditions.

Dance Routine Memorization Tip #1: Practice

Just like any other skill, you must exercise your memorizing muscle if you expect to improve. Some dance classes work on new routines all the time, but many classes work only on long-term routines, such as recital pieces. Since these pieces are worked on in the long term, you may not be called upon to learn things quickly in your class. If this is the case, you need to look outside your regular class for opportunities to learn new routines. You can do this by taking drop-in classes (which by their very nature include stand-alone routines) or by using dance instruction videos. Drop-in classes and videos are also excellent resources for those of us who aren't currently enrolled in a scheduled class.

Dance Routine Memorization Tip #2: Sequence

Often it is the way we are thinking when we are learning the routine that is keeping us from picking up the sequence. Remember that good choreography is more than just a list of moves. Each movement should flow naturally from the one that came before and lead to the one that comes after. If you can remember to see each movement as a part of a whole rather than an item on the list, you may find it easier. You might even consider studying various memorization techniques to see if you can find a trick that will work for you.

Dance Routine Memorization Tip #3: Mental List

Creating a dialogue or mantra that you can say to yourself in your head can also be helpful. For each movement you are shown in a sequence, think of one word that will remind you of it. Then repeat the list of movements in your head during breaks and while executing the movements themselves. Rely on your own brain to remind you of the movements rather than watching the choreographer or dance captain.

Dance Routine Memorization Tip #4: Individual Steps

Don't forget to improve your core skills in jazz and ballet. Learning a routine is one thing, but the difficulty is compounded when you are also trying to learn the steps themselves. Obviously it will be easier for you to remember a routine if you are already familiar with the individual steps used.

Dance Routine Memorization Tip #5: Music

If the music you are dancing to is already familiar, it will make things a lot easier. You will know the overall style and feel of the song, and may even be able to anticipate the choreography to a certain extent. As soon as you hear of an audition, start listening to the cast recording, with an emphasis on known dance pieces, so the songs will be familiar to you when you arrive at the audition. Use cues in the music (such as tempo, dynamics, instruments, and lyrics) to remind you of the steps in the dance sequence.