

Backstage Coach Productions

Dance Education

BackstageCoach.com

THE AUDITION MONOLOGUE

These performance techniques are compiled from workshops taught by Mark Pinkosh, Ken Washington, and other acting instructors.

Dancers often audition for roles in which they must exhibit expertise in acting, singing and dancing, and this is especially so in musical theater. Therefore, it is often necessary for the dancer to also have a monologue prepared for auditions. The following monologue techniques share general information that will benefit any performer. Professionals usually have a standard dramatic and comedic monologue performance-ready. I suggest that any serious performer have at least one prepared monologue.

AUDITION MATERIAL

- When looking for a monologue avoid books which are all written by the same person; instead look for a compilation of material.
- Read the best one-act plays for that year to find an original piece.
- Look for active monologues.
- Avoid narrative monologues that are storytelling.
- Do keep the monologue around one minute.
- Choose a contemporary American monologue unless you have a special skill with accents.
- If choosing a British piece then be able to perform a British dialect.
- Look for contrasts: passion, humor, and intelligence.
- Do know the play from which the monologue was chosen. This background work will show in your performance.
- What's most important is to connect to the piece; if you go out of your age range it had better be accurately performed.
- You can never know what the director will really like, so be true to yourself and choose a piece that is meaningful and heartfelt to you.
- Directors are looking for performers who show evidence of a love for words and the language; those who articulate enough to express thoughts and ideas in a piece with meaning.

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VOCALIZATION

- Vary your tone or note throughout the work. Find your beat and break monotonous rhythms or patterns so that the work is not sing-song.
- Eliminate accents if it restricts the voice from performing totally free.
- Build to an arc or peak both vocally and physically.

ACTING

- Try several approaches to get what you need; meaning use several different verbs or actions.
- Show a sense of living in the life of the character.
- Find unfinished business that reflects a sense of urgency or immediacy.
- Crazy people appear normal in a freaky, scary, and funny way, so play the ordinary, and the weirdness will unfold with the dialogue.
- In a traumatic piece have a lucid moment in the madness. Don't always perform the obvious.
- Keep an emotionally heightened piece very subtle.
- Subtle movement is interesting.
- Find the moment of discovery.
- Don't give all the intensity away at the top of the scene; instead, slowly reveal it.
- Don't push or "act" so much. The actor is already being looked at because he/she is a solo act, so there is no need to work on drawing attention to yourself when you already have it.
- When crying perform "about to cry" with tears welling up in your eyes. If the actor openly cries the audience tends to pull away on a subliminal level perhaps out of discomfort with such a display of emotion.
- Always be thinking.

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MOVEMENT AND FOCUS

- Avoid performing cliché movements to reflect the dialogue.
- Find a moment of stillness.
- Hold your ground versus moving around too much; this provides you with far more power.
- When retelling a story with someone in it, create an imaginary focal point for the other participant in the story and then tell the story to the audience and the other focal point. Create two very different focal points.

Visit the Backstage Dance Library for more information on acting, playwrighting, and staging terminology: Sawyer, Gina. *The Performance Dictionary*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2005.