

JONATHAN CARR'S QUICK AND CANDID AUDITION ADVICE

READ THE PLAY

If at all possible, read the scripts. If you can't do it before the audition, not a huge problem, but at least do a little research so you'll know what you're getting yourself into. If you do manage to get a callback, you must read the script before you go to that. Knowledge of the play can be a huge help in those situations, and again, you want to know what you're striving to commit yourself to.

PICK MONOLOGUES

Did you read the scripts? If you're smart you can think about monologues that let you feature something that will be needed in the shows. (It's generally frowned upon to pick a monologue from the actual play you're auditioning for, but you can choose something that reflects similar sensibilities or opportunities, and something from the same playwright is fine.)

If you don't know exactly what role best fits you and you're just trying out for everything, try to pick something that shows what you think are your strengths. Don't be afraid to do something a little edgy. (Swearing is fine.)

Be sure to pick something that has your character ACTIVE, and not just telling a story, right? (Or at least so that you can play an action stronger than "to tell a story"... which would be a boring thing to do.) But any contemporary play would work great. Ideally you wouldn't do something from a movie or tv show— some directors will ignore that kind of thing for stage work.

Pick something that is not too long. You do not want to be trying to rush to finish. You want to have time to breathe and change tactics like a human. Nobody cares if you finish, they care what you're doing right now.

HOW LONG?

Less is more. Do not go over. If anything it's better to go a little short. If you have 2 minutes to do 2 monologues, you should not be going over 1:50. Remember that you need a moment in between each monologue to catch your breath and separate the two, and remember that it doesn't take long for humans to know what they think about somebody new. (How long does it take you? 10 seconds? 30 seconds is a long time.)

PREPARE

Just like you would with any scene, analyze the monologue for action. Consider tactics you could try. Try to achieve an action with an imaginary listener, and then you can deliver the monologue to the imaginary person. Make the imaginary person really active, so that you have a lot to react to, and since

they're imaginary you can make them react in perfectly frustrating ways that force you to change tactics!

Too often people deliver monologues that aren't active. If you're not trying to win, you're going to end up just talking or trying the same tactic for too long without topping. Think of it like a scene that gives you the best chance to show off a few different tactics with clear topping and tactic changes.

And if you're doing more than one monologue, that's a whole other set of chances! Make sure you give yourself the chance to show contrast.

REHEARSE

Rehearsing by yourself is awkward. Do it anyway. Performing by yourself is awkward too and that's what you're preparing to do.

Ideally you are rehearsing enough that you are well-memorized and that you've gotten to try out lots of different ways of doing it. Prepare and give yourself the best shot so that, even if you're nervous, you can fall back on your fantastic preparation. Being underprepared and nervous is a bad recipe. It doesn't feel good and it doesn't show you off at your best.

If you're lucky enough to get someone knowledgeable to take a look and give you some feedback before, great! But start with a bunch of rehearsal by yourself.

THE NIGHT OF THE AUDITION

WHAT SHOULD YOU WEAR?

I'll just say, you don't want your outfit to be the story. Wear something you like, something that makes you feel good. That confidence will help. But don't dress in costume for your monologues. Dress like you're meeting new people who you want to think that you are interesting, full of potential, and worth a risk.

SLATING:

Greet the directors and then when you're standing in front of them you introduce your audition, which people call "slating." Here's how it works:

You get up (when called), say something like, "Hi, I'm NAME NAME, and I'll be performing ROLE from PLAYWRIGHT's PLAY." Then you take a moment and get yourself set, and then you launch into it.

WHERE SHOULD YOU LOOK?

Some actors are very uncomfortable performing to an imaginary scene partner and want to act with the director or someone else in the room. I strongly advise against using a real human who you are just meeting to be your scene partner in this situation. They will not be good scene partners for you, and how will you feel doing your scene if they look away from you and start reading your resume or making notes or looking bored or etc?

My best advice is to place your imaginary scene partner a little bit over the director's head. And it's fun to have that person move, too, so you can follow them in a big moment if you want. But create a situation where the director can see you easily but doesn't have to pretend to want to act with you.

SHOULD YOU SIT?

There's likely a chair available for you. Should you use it? (Be careful, it can be a trap!)

Directors generally prefer actors that stand and move so they can see the actor's physicality. (Sitting cuts you off a lot, but if you need to sit to be comfortable, just go ahead and do it. You want to do something that you like, and that you're proud of, to give you the best shot.)

Generally, I'd say you should be standing most of the time, but if the chair gives you a chance for an awesome moment, go ahead.

WHEN YOU'RE DONE

Say thank you. Before you leave, or sometimes even before you start, the directors might ask you a question about your resume, or something you performed. If they ask you a question, be nice, be respectful, be yourself. The casual moment of you talking with the director might be the moment they are paying the most attention to you!

ONE LAST THING

A little advice adapted from something Bryan Cranston said:

He's given a few interviews about this but the upshot is that his career improved when he stopped worrying so much about whether he was going to get a job or not, and instead starting seeing the audition as the job. You're auditioning so that you can get a chance to perform, right? Well, guess what: if you have the audition, you already have the chance to perform! Make the most of that performance, and then the rest of it is somebody else's problem.