

Demystifying the Audition
The audition process step by step!
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1. Come to the audition with realistic expectations for casting
 - a. How many are auditioning?
 - b. Is it a large theater or small? Is the cast of the show you're auditioning for large or small?
 - c. How many main parts are there compared to Ensemble?
 - d. Does the theater company take new people very often? PPH does! But not all do. We try to take as many new people as we can.
 - e. Everyone wants a "part." However, only 1 person can actually get that part! And at PPH, we can have over 100 people auditioning for the same part! There are many factors to consider, and we try to remind our performers that casting isn't just about whether you are 100% right for a part. We can have a lot of "right" people for a part!
 - i. Casting decisions are based on the cast as a whole, factoring in chemistry between players, heights, voice styles, looks, and more.
 - ii. Remember that only 1 person can get each part, and very small things decide whom that 1 person will be. Sometimes 2 people are equal! In those instances, directors will often take someone they are familiar working with, as they know the professional work ethic of that individual versus a stranger.
 - iii. When we are casting people we know, we factor in work ethic sometimes heavier than talent. If we know someone will work harder than another and be on time, we will often choose that person.
 - f. Is it largely an ensemble show?
 - i. Directors love ensembles, but more importantly, AUDIENCES love ensembles! Big ticket ensemble numbers are what make a show amazing (Shrek's Frek Flag for example).
 - ii. Remember in a professional theater environment (eg Broadway), 95% of professional performer work is IN AN ENSEMBLE, not leading roles! ENSEMBLES ARE IMPORTANT!
 - iii. Directors need strong ensemble members! Being cast in an ensemble is not an insult.
 - iv. If it is your first time with a company, sometimes a Director needs to see how you work in an ensemble to truly see what your skills are when you're on stage. They also may want to judge your work ethic and ability to work with other players before determining if you can handle more responsibility.
2. Choosing a Song for your audition
 - a. Choosing appropriate material - This is not the time to choose the hardest, most elegant piece of music to sing. It is better to choose something easier, in your range, and one that will sound good from the moment you start so the directors will be interested within the first 5 seconds.
 - b. Don't choose highly known/popular songs, especially from recent movies or popular musicals. Examples of songs that too many people choose, so don't make good audition songs, are songs from *Wicked*, *Frozen*, *Tangled*, *Annie*, and hopefully you can think of others. A director has heard these songs many times, and won't be able to NOT compare you to the original soundtrack, their favorite performer, or the other performers who also chose that song that same day even! More obscure songs show knowledge of musical theater, more vocal training, and helps a director focus only your voice and not make any unintentional comparisons.
 - c. Don't choose a song with high notes that you can "sometimes" hit. Better to choose something with notes you hit every time. You want to show off your range, but only your comfortable range.
 - d. Only choose a highly stylized song if you are fully comfortable with that style (or if asked for in the audition notice). Otherwise go with comfort! And go with a song that showcases your underlying voice, so the Director can picture your voice singing any number of songs.
3. Decide how to start (first impressions).
 - a. You might want to start in the middle of a song to get the best parts or larger range/faster tempo, etc.
 - b. Or choose a song with a strong beginning so that you can impress quickly.
 - c. We recommend avoiding the long, high, sustained notes, since those are very hard to sing "right on." Unless you're a highly trained singer, go with a comfortable part of the song.
4. Who are you impressing?
 - a. Broadway - You may have 6-8 directors, etc. listening to you and you have 20 seconds to make an impression due to the large number of people auditioning.
 - b. Community Theater - You may have more time to impress, but less people. Is it a Director you've had before? Then you may want to try even harder to show them something new, or just remind them how good you are since often they only get to see you in any one particular stylized production.
5. Knowing the Expectations
 - a. Are you going to be singing an entire song or just a 30 second snippet? Usually even in community theater, a director only needs to hear part of a song. Don't be alarmed if you are cut off and only get to sing part of a song.
 - b. We like to remind performers that we do this a LOT, and have done it for a long time. If you sing the best you

can, or even just your average ability, we can tell right away mostly what your voice can do. Even if you're sick, we can hear around that. Even if you don't sing perfectly, we can still tell whether you've had any training and what you can do.

- c. Many audition notices have a required tempo or style - make sure you know the differences
 - i. Uptempo vs. Ballad
 - ii. Pop, Rock, or Belt
 - iii. Traditional Musical (Oliver, Fiddler on the Roof, The Music Man)
 - iv. Contemporary Musical (Next to Normal, Rent, Spring Awakening)
 - d. Accompaniment
 - i. Is a pianist supplied?
 - ii. Do you need sheet music?
 - iii. Are music tracks/karaoke tracks allowed?
 - iv. Accapella?
 - v. If singing with a pianist - PRACTICE WITH A PIANIST (At the audition, approach them first with your music and give them a tempo. It is often good to just sing a bit of it quietly for them so they know how fast you want the music. Most are familiar with almost any audition song you could bring them. Also, if you start singing and a pianist is not playing what you expected, just sing how you practiced and they will either catch up or let you sing without them. Show confidence in how you know and sing the song. Don't show any signs of annoyance toward the pianist or look in their direction. A Director can tell if it's the pianist's fault - we do this a lot.)
 - e. Is a monologue required?
 - i. If not, don't waste time preparing one.
 - ii. As an actor, however, it is always good to have one in your repertoire.
 - iii. Most musicals don't require a monologue
 - iv. If a monologue is required
 - 1. Make sure to know time length
 - 2. Choose a monologue that is in style with the character you hope you to be cast as.
 - 3. Show character, differences in volume and emotion, speed and energy
 - 4. Make your posture and body/arm movements as natural as possible without looking nervous.
 - 5. Don't use props or costumes.
 - 6. Practice in front of a mirror.
 - 7. Record yourself and listen to it to make sure that the proper inflections are there and that you are not too monotone.
 - 8. Have someone watch your body language, focus and motion, emotion, inflection, and posture.
 - 9. Don't look at the Directors. It makes them as uncomfortable as you. They want to be free to write notes about you without feeling rude, and they need to be able to do that. Choose another focal point and train your eyes to stay there.
 - f. Is there cold reading involved? If so – see #8
6. Appointments vs. Open Audition
- a. If an appointment
 - i. Show up at least 15 minutes early in case they are running ahead of schedule.
 - ii. Be prepared to wait, and don't be pushy about appointment times. Be flexible and prepared for changes.
 - b. If it is an open audition
 - i. Come the earliest you can and be prepared to wait.
 - ii. Keep your voice warm by humming if you can find a place to do so. Breathing exercises are a great way to warm up your voice if you can't audibly sing, otherwise, vocal warm-ups are always recommended before an audition.
 - iii. Size up the competition if you get to watch.
7. Showing professionalism
- a. #1 item of importance at a singing audition: You don't want anything to distract from them listening to your voice.
 - b. If you don't know the director, introduce yourself and tell them what song you are singing and be sure to know where the song came from.
 - c. Look sharp, but not distracting
 - d. Be courteous and respectful, don't talk too much!
 - e. Present an impressive resume
 - i. Even if the Director knows you, give them a full resume. Sometimes they like to be reminded why they like you (or maybe they need a new reason if competition is fiercer)
 - ii. Headshot is very helpful when casting, but unnecessary if the Director knows you personally

- f. Be honest on your audition form. If you are not interested in ensemble, don't say you will accept any part. A Director would much rather know up front you are only taking a lead then to cast you and have you not accept a role. Especially with ensemble. But remember, ensembles are very important!
 - g. Don't chew gum or tug at your clothing.
 - h. Don't play with your hair.
 - i. Don't look nervous! Act like you're not.
 - j. Don't choreograph a dance or moves. This takes away from the #1 item of importance... focusing on your voice!
 - k. Don't let eyes roll toward the ceiling or wander
 - l. Don't EVER ask to start over or ask for a 2nd chance. Remember we can tell what your vocal ability is, even if you forgot the words or didn't sing it perfectly.
 - m. Don't ever make excuses to the director. We hear these items a lot and wish we NEVER did:
 - i. "Sorry I'm sick today."
 - ii. "Sorry I've been sick this week."
 - iii. "Sorry I had it down a lot better at home."
 - iv. "I can sing that much better."
 - v. "I swear I did this better yesterday."
 - vi. "I kinda forgot my words..."
 - vii. "I didn't know this audition was happening until today when my Mom told me."
8. Cold Reading - this typically only happens at a call-back, but it's always good to be prepared.
- a. Practice reading out loud at home. You can record yourself like a monologue and see how you sound.
 - b. What is the Director looking for with a cold read?
 - i. The Director likely doesn't know what your capable of as an actor. You might be a brilliant actor, but unless you are able to show them a piece of it in a cold read, they won't cast you. Show differences in emotion, inflection, speed, energy, and character.
 - ii. For call-back, or open cold read:
 - 1. Something that sets you apart from the others reading.
 - 2. But be careful – too different might make you uncastable in their eyes.
 - 3. But nothing is worse than 30 kids reading a line the same way. How will you play the part differently than everyone else?
 - 4. Even changing the way you read one line can make a difference.
 - 5. Listen to others reading the same part and continually make choices about what were good reading choices, and how you will make it better.