

# HOW TO CHOOSE A MONOLOGUE

## **What to choose?**

MOST likely, the person conducting the auditions for the college program, the auditors, will want you to perform two monologues, of contrasting character, for a total of four minutes. Choose monologues from characters that are closest to your experiences and age. You are not out to win a Tony or an Oscar here, just show them that you are determined and talented. I highly recommend not choosing a Shakespeare monologue. "Why not a Shakespeare monologue?", I hear you mutter. If you have had training and experience in performing Shakespeare, then by all means, do Shakespeare and do it well. But my guess is that most of you know only the Shakespeare from Senior English. This does not constitute training in performing the Bard's work. The point I want to make here: Why make it harder for yourself? Don't sweat over learning a scene from Shakespeare with language 400 years older than you; with hidden context that would make even Kenneth Branagh's head swim. Relax and choose another "classical" monologue. Show them that you are comfortable with your choice of monologue and with the language. Choose something from a Greek play, or from Checkhov (he's classical too, you know).

## **Vulgarity & Violence:**

Do not choose a monologue with violent behavior patterns and vulgarity. The auditors do not want to hear or see such a monologue. You are not auditioning for Mamet or Sam Sheppard. Show them talent, not a violent temper tantrum. Use your own judgment when it comes to content of a monologue. Would you like to sit in their place and watch you perform this monologue? Sorry if all this seems negative, but I focus on the "don't do's" to get them out of the way. Ultimately the choices are yours. This is your audition, and you need to make the decisions regarding your monologues for your audition. Any decision you make will be good. I just show you the major no-no's that I have learned about auditioning for theatre programs. And wish you luck.

## **Contrasting monologues:**

Making your monologues contrasting is this: Two completely different characters from two different plays and play styles. One classical and one modern piece is the norm. Make one comedy and one dramatic. Keeping your monologues under the time limit is the way to go. If you run over, you will be stopped. They will not let you continue past the time period stated. Do not abuse this. To be honest, if you can give them great stuff in less time, the better. You do not have to use your full four minutes (or whatever) for your monologues. They will appreciate your brevity. Trust me on that one.

## **Cut your monologues for content:**

If your character is carrying on a conversation with some other character, cut it out. Try to choose a piece of the monologue where you are speaking to someone actively, but with little to no interruption from the other character. Try to avoid "telling a story". There are a hundred and one monologues where the character is telling a story of what happened to them at a party, or on a hunting trip, or on the subway... you get the picture. Don't do it. It is boring. You want your character to be active, not sitting and telling a boring story (out of context) to some other character who is also probably bored. My advice: Stay away from them. Really try to get to the meat of the monologue. Analyze your character's monologue. Is what the character is saying intriguing or interesting? If it isn't, keep looking. This character has to have something important and exciting to say, or that is one poor playwright. Visit your local bookstore. There you will find books that offer great advice concerning the editing of your monologues for content. Check em out! Read the play

## **Reading:**

Do not for a minute think that you will get away with not reading the play. That is how you prepare for the audition. You must read the play that your monologue comes from so that you will have an understanding of your character and the situation that your character is speaking about, or is involved with. It will show like a red flag that you haven't read the play, believe me! The auditors will know if you have done your homework, or not. If you go into that audition with just a few lines from some character in some play and they ask you about the play or the character in the play (and they will!) you will regret it. The auditors will probably not wrestle you to the ground and pummel you, even though you would deserve it. You probably will not be called back or be asked to join the program. Read the play and study your character. This will give you a foundation to build your character around. Be prepared! Read the play!

## **Advice about monologue books:**

You see them on the shelves of all major bookstores: "1,000 Monologues for Young Actors" or "1997's Best Monologues for Women..." People will say many things about these books, such as: "Those monologues in those books are over-used. Do not use them... etc" My advice? Use them! There is nothing wrong with them. They are great sources to use to find a great monologue that fits you, the actor. But here is the trick: Browse through the monologue books to find the best character that you can play, to show off your stuff; read the play that the monologue comes from; then you can choose another monologue from the same character within the play, or stick with your original choice. That way it isn't "over-used" and may be a monologue that auditors have not heard. Besides, you have to read the play anyway. You will find some really great monologues this way in a short period of time. Make sure that it is a monologue that you like. Nothing like going into an audition with material that you are uncomfortable performing. This is your audition. Choose your monologues well. These books are a great resource; so why not use them?

## **Please practice:**

I cannot emphasize this point enough: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! Sorry for shouting there, but I had to drill that in. The more comfortable you are performing your pieces, the better. Get your family together and go through the whole audition with them as the "auditors". Have them give you notes, if you wish; but for all intent and purposes, get used to performing your pieces. When you walk into that audition you must be ready to go at the drop of a hat. Forgetting your lines is bad, very bad. Practice.