THEATRE SIMPSON
AUDITION TIPS, REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Helpful ideas to assist your development of audition material.

- REHEARSE, REHEARSE and then when you think you are ready REHEARSE SOME MORE. Extensive preparation is essential for a successful audition piece. Auditioning, in many ways, is more difficult than performing in a full length production. When you are auditioning you have to motivate yourself to work and then, when you begin to act, you find that there isn’t another character/actor to work off of. The ball is, as they say, entirely in your court.

Rehearsal begins before you even start to speak the lines. Treat your audition piece as a short play. (The play begins with your entrance onto the stage and concludes with your exit. Each beat between that entrance and exit is important.) Take the time to fully analyze the monologue. (You do need to read the entire play to understand the monologue.) What is your character’s goal? (Be specific—the goal should be obtainable from the other character even though that character is not visible to the audience.) Why does your character begin speaking? What motivates them in this moment to pursue their goal? What tactics are they using to reach their goal? Are they checking in with the other character to see if they have made any impact? Where are you? Are you in a public or private space? How does this space affect your behavior. [This is only a beginning list of questions you need to ask.]

Once you have analyzed the piece try working through the monologue beat by beat. When you rehearse you shouldn’t always do run-throughs. As you rehearse remember that your character is trying to GET SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE. Work toward your objective while remaining sensitive to your affect on the other character.

- BASIC EXPECTATIONS FOR THE ACTUAL AUDITION.
  - Arrive early and warm-up. You should plan for at least a thirty minute warm-up.
  - If possible check out the space prior to the audition. You will need to make accommodations for size of space.
  - Once your name is called you should set up your space, come downstage, find your light, stop moving, then introduce yourself. Write out your introduction and rehearse it with the monologue (remember it is part of the play). Make sure you are clear and only say what is essential. “Hello, I’m ___________. I’ll be playing Desdemona from Othello.”

Michael Shurtleff says that the entrance and exit is “your chance to show both how businesslike and how charming and open you are. Most actors are busy dealing with the agony they are undergoing rather than trying to communicate to the auditors that they are pleasant and outgoing human beings.”

- Place the character you are talking to out past the auditors and down center.

- Let there be a clear beat between the introduction and the first moment of the monologue.
• Make sure you know why your character is beginning to speak and what they want from the other character or character(s).

• Let yourself live in the monologue. Work from beat to beat and work to overcome the obstacles in the characters way. Remember that the character is speaking these words for the first time. The character must also explore different tactics to get the goal—maybe the first one didn’t work.

• Make sure you are playing the specifics of the monologue rather than getting lost in a generalized emotion or attitude. Explore ironies and opposites which coexist in the piece (and in life). Serious problems have an element of humor in them and vice versa.

• Put a clear conclusion on the monologue and then you can end with a “thank-you.” [Do not say “scene” or “curtain” at the end of the monologue.]

• Exit with as much enthusiasm as you entered with. Even if the monologue doesn’t go as you intended, do not leave apologetically, nor angrily, nor sadly, nor triumphantly.

• If they have given you 90 seconds for your audition then plan accordingly. It is best to have 60-75 seconds of material and play that well, rather than coming in at 89 (or 92) seconds each time.

• FURTHER NOTES AND TIPS FROM SHURTLEFF ON AUDITIONING.

   “Actors panic at the sight of a long speech. But you can easily handle it by pretending it is several short speeches, with you creating the rest points en route by seeking response from your partner. Insist on a response before you’ll go on. (It need not be verbal, of course.) It will renew relationship and make contact real; and you will avoid just the speaking of written words (which is what long speeches frequently become in an audition).”

   “I don’t know anything that throws actors into greater panic than having to perform monologues. ‘What will I do?’ they ask, as if there were very little material available to them. Do something you like. I can’t quite believe the number of actors who pick material they hate. If monologues are so trying to perform, why pick something that sets you off wrong? Pick something you enjoy, that you’re comfortable with, that might even be a pleasure to perform.”

   “…To hell with whether you can see someone who’s not there; what’s important is what you are doing. What you are doing depends on the relationship you create. Relationship isn’t dependent on ‘seeing’ someone else, but on need for their response. Create response needs from your imaginary partner.”

   “Need is the greatest help in doing a monologue. Needing a specific reaction or series of reactions from your invisible partner. Pick someone you know from your own life to be the invisible partner...Have a great need to change their point of view.”