

“Tips for Successful Online/Video Auditions”

By Earl D. Weaver
Artistic Director, Theatre UCF

More and more universities, colleges, and professional companies are utilizing online auditions these days. Most notably for universities and colleges is the online program known as Acceptd (www.getacceptd.com). At the University of Central Florida, we have started using Acceptd in the following manner for our program auditions/interviews:

- **BA Theatre Studies:** Informational purposes only. On-campus interviews.
- **BFA Acting:** Online and on-campus auditions.
- **BFA Design/Tech:** Pre-screening of portfolio work. Option for submission of required materials prior to an on-campus interview. On campus interviews. Assistance also available to schedule Skype interviews when special circumstances or extreme distance dictate.
- **BFA Musical Theatre:** Online auditions only. Finalists are selected to attend an on-campus callback.
- **BFA Stage Management:** Pre-screening of portfolio work. Option for submission of required materials prior to an on-campus interview. On campus interviews. Assistance also available to schedule Skype interviews when special circumstances or extreme distance dictate.

Students are highly encouraged to check the websites of universities and colleges they wish to attend to see if an online submission program is being used and in what capacity. Ways in which schools use online submissions include, but are not limited to:

- An active recruitment tool only
- Presenting program information only
- Pre-screening candidates to invite to campus for an in-person audition and/or callback
- Sole audition for making acceptance decisions

It also is important to double check what each school requires with regard to audition pieces, length of audition pieces, picture and resume, letters of recommendation, and other support documents (i.e., transcripts for students with dual-enrollment credits or Associate Arts degrees).

Many schools evaluate a student’s ability to follow guidelines and submit the required materials on time as part of their acceptance decision. It is important for high school students to meet deadlines and upload all required materials. We have found one of the biggest problem areas is getting letters uploaded by their Recommenders by the deadline.

Here are some tips to better help students be successful with their online auditions.

DO:

- Research university and college websites to see which schools might be a good fit for you.
- Be fully aware of school application policies and deadlines, including providing SAT/ACT test scores/transcripts/other required information and completing all Financial Aid Application materials on time. Apply as early as possible to schools, since classes may fill up before the department’s individual auditions.
- Be fully aware of Theatre Department policies and deadlines and if they accept/require online video auditions.
- Have a minimum of 5 people who will agree to provide letters of recommendation for you. Most schools will require at least 3. It’s always good to have extras, in case something happens and one of your references cannot meet a deadline or get a letter to you to submit on your own.
- Make sure your school is willing to provide electronic copies of your transcript, if requested.
- Make sure you have a current photo and resume. Also make sure your resume focuses on your strengths for the program(s) for which you have applied. Performers should emphasize performance work; designers and stage managers should detail different talents in each of these areas.
- Follow audition/interview requirements as set forth by each Theatre Department. Keep your audition material within the required time limit and include only pieces requested by the school.

- Seek help with selecting audition material and/or guidance for developing your portfolio (design tech and stage management). Successful students are those who seek advice and coaching from their adult mentors – drama teachers, professional directors, voice teachers, choreographers, technical directors, etc.
- Select age-appropriate audition material. Only present a Shakespeare monologue if the school requests it. Sing songs from classic Broadway musicals which highlight your vocal range the best.
- Make sure you are presenting appropriate video footage for dance auditions. If the school is asking for ballet, then be sure to show them ballet. Most schools will want to see a short combination choreographed for you and taped in a dance studio.
- Seek help with getting your audition/interview recorded. Students need the help of a trained eye to insure that what is being presented on camera actually is what is intended to be seen.
- Dress appropriately for your video. You need to present yourself in the best light possible. This includes hair, makeup, clothing, shoes, etc.
- Meet all deadlines!! It says a lot about you to people viewing your materials online if you do or don't meet their deadlines. If students can't meet online deadlines, will they be reliable students in a university theatre program?
- Make sure your contact information is current, especially e-mail and phone numbers (if provided). An e-mail address and a phone number are usually requested for your online application. Be sure this is the only information listed on your resume...and preferably a cell phone number – not a home number.
- Check your e-mail regularly for correspondence from schools interested in you. If you receive an e-mail, be punctual in responding to that correspondence.
- Take every precaution to insure your online video audition is a complete success and fully represents who you are and where your talents are strongest.

DON'T:

- Don't miss deadlines!
- Don't use relatives for your letters of recommendation, even if your mother HAS been your dance teacher for 12 years.

- Don't use a senior portrait, family photo, or passport photo for your picture.
- Don't put your address, home phone number, social security number, and/or birth date on your resume. You only need to include your e-mail address and a CELL phone number (if possible).
- Don't misrepresent yourself on your resume. If you only have a few credits, that's ok! Just let us know what you have done, where you did it, and with whom.
- Don't use your laptop computer in your bedroom to record your video submission. If that is the only space you have available to use, then CLEAN YOUR ROOM! And, be aware of who also might be included in your screen shot as you record. If something happening behind you is more interesting than your audition, it's not a good thing.
- Don't sing a cappella! ALWAYS use an accompanist, if possible. Recorded music is an acceptable alternative, but it does not show schools how well you can communicate with a pianist in an audition and/or performance situation.
- Don't perform Shakespeare monologues if the school says they don't want Shakespeare monologues.
- Don't sing “cabaret” songs that were written specifically for another performer. Most of the time, they only worked because of that person's personality, and too many of them are not harmonic or good audition material (i.e., “Blue Hair,” “Joey Was A Punk Rocker,” etc.)
- Don't sing contemporary songs that are extremely difficult rhythmically, hard for the accompanist to play, and don't show your true vocal abilities.
- Don't film your audition in your night clothes. Make sure you are dressed appropriately!
- Don't use your phone to film your audition package.
- Don't use film clips from recordings of your high school shows as your audition...or any other recordings of your performance work (i.e., singing on the local news station or at your church; fourth girl on the left in the yellow dress dancing with guy in blue bow tie, etc.)
- Don't videotape yourself dancing in your room, kitchen, den, or bathroom. Get into a rehearsal or dance studio to film your work.

- Don't harass school representatives wanting feedback on your audition if you are not selected for their program. As helpful as it can be to get such feedback, do not expect to get a response if you ask.
- Don't decide to attend a college and pursue another program track with the intention of re-auditioning for the program you really want. There are many, many factors in the selection of new class groups, and there is no guarantee you will get into your preferred program even after a second audition. It also demeans the program in which you do register, because you are not giving your full effort to that program's requirements.