

Preparing for College Musical Theatre Auditions
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It's time to begin preparing for college and university auditions for musical theatre programs. Are you REALLY prepared? Have you done all you can to present yourself at its best to college recruiters? Preparation is the key to success. Here are some tips to help you be successful.

Do Your Research

- Do your homework and prepare. You will be best served if you research colleges across the country. There are many outstanding theatre programs in places where you would least expect. Each program will be as different as you are from your classmates.
- Research the curriculum and degree programs offered. Be honest with yourself about what kind of theatre program you need in order to be happiest during your college career. Research the difference between a BA (Bachelor of Arts) program and a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) program. How are they different? Which program is best suited to your talents/needs?
- Research the faculty in each Theatre Department. You wouldn't hire a contractor to build your house without knowing his/her credentials – know who will be teaching you for the next four years.
- Research the audition requirements for each school. Every Theatre Department will be slightly different in what they require for the audition/interview process.

Be Prepared

- Don't wait until the last minute to select your audition material. It can take weeks, months, even years to find just the right audition material. Do not expect that you can find a song or monologue from your friend a day or two (or even the previous evening) before the audition and be completely ready to "deliver the goods." It is not going to happen...and, believe me, we can tell the difference between those who are REALLY prepared and those who are sliding by.
- REHEARSE, REHEARSE, REHEARSE...and just when you think it's ready, REHEARSE SOME MORE!!

- Know your time limit. Every audition is going to be different, and YOU are responsible for following whatever guidelines are set forth by the school for which you are auditioning. Not following the rules shows you are not professionally prepared, and it gives the Auditors a sense that you are a little self-centered and self-indulgent. By not following the rules, we see you don't really care what WE want...you are going to do it YOUR way! Sorry – that doesn't work at a college audition.
- **GET A COACH!!** Acting and singing coaches are worth their weight in gold. Whether it's your teacher at school or a private coach you hire, find someone to work with you and guide you. **DON'T RELY ON YOUR FRIENDS AS COACHES!!** Remember – your “friends” are the same people you will be auditioning against, and no matter how much you care for each other, when it comes down to the nitty gritty of auditioning, it's not always best to rely on your friends. Besides, your teachers and private coaches are going to have more knowledge about what it takes to be successful.

Create An Action Plan

- Do your research and make a list of all the college programs that interest you. Put together a spreadsheet and keep track of all the following information:
 1. College/university/conservatory application deadline
 2. College/university/conservatory Admissions contact person
 3. Theatre Department application deadline
 4. Theatre Department audition date(s)
 5. Theatre Department contact person
 6. Financial Aid Office deadlines
 7. Financial Aid Office contact person
 8. “Early Decision” deadlines. (Take advantage of this opportunity!)
- Gather your letters of recommendation (usually 3-5 are required) long before you begin the application process. When are the letters due? Mark those deadlines on your calendar as well. And, by all means, do not wait until the last minute to ask your teachers/directors for letters of recommendation!! There is nothing more aggravating than someone begging for a letter of recommendation at the last minute. And, you might not get a GOOD letter of recommendation if you do that.
- If you have the option of attending one of multiple audition dates, **GET IN EARLY!!** Don't wait until the last audition date, unless there is absolutely no way you can avoid it. Every year we get bombarded with students begging, screaming, kicking, and crying they

HAVE to get an audition slot on that final day. PLAN AHEAD...don't wait until the last minute.

- Make sure you have plenty of pictures and resumes prepared for all the auditions.
- Make a list of any other materials you will need at each of your auditions.

Select Your Audition Material

- Choose material you LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!!! If you aren't enjoying what you act and sing, it will show, and you will not give your best audition. However, avoid using the "show of the month" for your audition material. Whatever's popular on Broadway and/or Off-Broadway today is not always the best material to use. Usually, it's overdone, and much of the material is not suitable for a high school performer.
- Be sure to have the following in your audition repertoire:
 1. A comedic and dramatic classical monologue (examples: Greek, Shakespeare, Restoration)
 2. A comedic and dramatic modern monologue (examples: Williams, Inge, Miller, Shaw)
 3. A comedic and dramatic contemporary monologue (examples: Wasserstein, Wilson, Henley, McNally)
 4. A monologue from a musical
 5. A classic musical theatre ballad and uptempo (examples: Berlin, Porter, Gershwin, Rodgers/Hart, Rodgers/Hammerstein)
 6. A modern musical theatre ballad and uptempo (examples: Lerner/Loewe, Herman, Styne, Loesser)
 7. A contemporary musical theatre ballad and uptempo (examples: Sondheim, Webber, Wildhorn, Lippa, Guettel, Larson)
 8. A classical aria and/or operetta song
 9. A patter song (a quick song that shows your ability to handle language)
 10. A pop/rock song (examples: Billy Joel, Whitney Houston, Elton John, Mariah Carey)
 11. A 1940s Big Band song

12. A 1950s-1960s rock song

13. A country-western song

- When you are auditioning, don't use the Auditors as your scene partners. They are there to observe your work...not to be an active scene partner with you. You should be so clear about to whom you are talking that you don't need to look anywhere else but at THAT person!
- If you are given an audition mark, stay within close proximity to that mark! Don't start working your way forward towards the Auditors. They need distance from you to fully evaluate your use of voice and body.

Create Your Image and Presentation

- Know who you are **NOW!** Don't try to be somebody you aren't – we want to see the true YOU! Be secure in who you are and what you look like at this time in your life. Don't "false advertise." That means dressing appropriately for who you are. The minute you walk into that audition room, Auditors will make a value judgment about you solely based on what they see before them. You need to insure the impression they get of you based on appearance is the person you really are.
- Practice your slate – an introduction of your name and the pieces you will be performing. The Auditors only need the titles of your pieces – they don't need to know the author, lyricist, composer, director, choreographer, your grandmother's name who was in the original production, etc. Short, clear, and concise!
- When you slate, use the phrase "I am" instead of "My name is". It's a nice, subtle way to let Auditors know you are confident and ready for your audition. Sometimes "my name is" comes off as an apology for being there. Don't EVER apologize for being there – WANT TO BE THERE and show us you are ready to be seen!!
- Make sure we can understand your name clearly, especially if you have an unusual name or a name that is hard to pronounce...or if you are "Larry" but you spell it "Lery".
- Don't try too hard – BREATHE, BREATHE, BREATHE!! Find your center, focus, relax, and give it your best.
- Don't get friendly with the Auditors and invade "their space." Be polite, and, yes, if you DO know someone at the Auditor table, please acknowledge them...especially if they acknowledge you first! Don't act like you don't know them.

Work on Your Appearance

- Be sure you have appropriate clothing for dance auditions. Don't show up in sweats, jeans, tennis shoes, or any other inappropriate attire. Invest in tights, leotards, dance

shorts, and appropriate undergarments. Be sure you have appropriate dance shoes. You should have ballet slippers, jazz shoes, tap shoes (if you tap), and women should have character shoes.

- Solids are better than prints or wild designs in your audition attire. Avoid wearing all black or all white. Use some color, and it's best when it's on the top half of your body. Find colors that are complimentary to your skin tones.
- Don't wear jeans...even nice ones. They are just too casual and don't really enhance the line of the body. **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER wear flip flops!!** Wear appropriate shoes. And, if the heel is so high on the shoe that you can't walk properly, don't wear those either.
- Be well-groomed and clean!! Comb your hair and get it out of your eyes. We want to see your face, especially your eyes. A lot of acting is done with the eyes, and we want to see them. As well, actors who aren't fully prepared usually go into "teleprompter" or "deer in headlights" mode with their eyes, and it's clear as day to those of us watching the audition.
- Don't overdo the makeup! Less is always more.

Think About The "It" Factor

- If we are paying attention to "It" – whatever "it" may be – then we aren't paying attention to you. This can include:
 1. Language
 2. Clothing (especially wild patterns)
 3. Shoes
 4. Hair
 5. Posture
 6. Personal "tics" – playing with your hands, unfocused eyes, swaying, etc.

Utilize Manners and A Good Attitude

- Be nice to **EVERYONE YOU MEET!!** You never know who will be in charge of making decisions. Be polite to the accompanist, even if he/she completely ruins your audition. Say "thank you" at the end of your audition. Be polite to fellow auditioners. Remember: they are just as scared as you are, and it does you no good to try to outwit, outsmart, intimidate or be nasty to them.

- **Don't be a Diva!** I don't care how talented you are – if your ego is out of control, you'd better check it before you arrive at any audition.
- Don't be afraid to ask RELEVANT questions...but don't overdo it with the questions. Part of what college programs will be looking for, especially at dance auditions, will be how well you problem solve. If something is not clear, then, YES, ask a question for clarification. But, don't waste everyone's time by asking a multitude of questions – it just angers people and says you are high maintenance and needy.

Make Choices

- Have choices when looking for a college to attend. **DO NOT SETTLE ON ONLY ONE SCHOOL!!** More hearts are broken by students who set their eye only on one school...and then don't get accepted. There are plenty of phenomenal schools in the country for you to attend. **REALLY** understand the nature of how competitive it is to get into a good school. Be aware that you are competing with students from across the nation...not just those who go to your high school or perform at your dance studio.
- Talk to your friends who are attending college already. They will tell you the real truth about college life and the demands expected of you. They will also know you well and will be able to let you know if the atmosphere of their school is right for you.
- Be very cognizant of how you are treated at each school, whether you are just visiting to get information or actually auditioning for their program. REMEMBER: It's a two-way street – they are selecting you, but you are also selecting them. If you visit and it seems like no one really cares about you, do you want to spend thousands upon thousands of dollars to attend that school/training program?
- Be realistic about what you and your family/guardians can afford for college. Understand the financial responsibilities that will be put upon you, especially if you attend a school out of your home state. Out-of-state tuition can be exorbitant in some states, and you don't want to jeopardize your college career if your family truly cannot afford to send you to that school.
- Be realistic about how far you are willing to be away from home. Many students THINK they want to get as far away from home as possible when they go to school...and many of those students end up leaving after their first year because they realize they are too far from home.
- Understand that it is **CRUCIAL** to have good grades AND good test scores (ACT/SAT) to get into competitive schools/theatre programs. Long gone are the days when slacker theatre majors could get by with a 2.0 and get into a great program on their talent alone. Check to see what the minimum qualifications are for every school you are considering attending.