

PLANTING SEEDS

BLOSSOMING AS AN ACTOR

BY MONAY THOMAS



ENLIGHTEN



COMMISSIONED BY
SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS

ENLIGHTEN



ENLIGHTEN IS A PROJECT FIRST CREATED BY MONAY THOMAS AS A WAY TO UPLIFT BLACK ARTISTS STARTING OUT IN THE INDUSTRY AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO HAVE BELIEF IN THEMSELVES AND THE VALUE OF THEIR ART. ENLIGHTEN AIMS TO OFFER ACCESSIBLE RESOURCES THAT PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT. THE FIRST FACET OF ENLIGHTEN WAS A SHORT PIECE OF FILM RELEASED DURING LOCKDOWN ON 29/05/20. IT INVOLVED CREATIVES EXPLORING THE QUESTION 'WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED OR GIVEN? TOUCHING ON SELF-CARE AND REPRESENTATION IN THE ARTS.

MONAY THOMAS IS AN ACTOR, WRITER AND FILM-MAKER FROM SOUTH EAST LONDON. SHE IS A MEMBER OF SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS, THE NATIONAL YOUTH THEATRE AND THE BFI FILM ACADEMY. MONAY HOPES THAT THROUGH ENLIGHTEN, ARTISTS WILL FEEL EMPOWERED TO TAKE AGENCY OVER THE TRAJECTORY OF THEIR CAREERS.



SOUNDS
Like
CHAOS

SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS IS A COMPANY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTH EAST LONDON, BASED AT THE ALBANY IN DEPTFORD. THEY SPECIALIZE IN MAKING NEW, DEVISED THEATRE AND CREATIVE, COMMUNITY FOCUSED PROJECTS.

THEIR MOST RECENT WORK INCLUDES WOW EVERYTHING IS AMAZING, AS PART OF INCOMING FESTIVAL IN 2019-TOURING SEVERAL UK THEATRES. ARTISTIC DIRECTORS ARE GEMMA ROWAN AND ROISIN FEENY.



~WELCOME!~

~THE REALITY~

~GETTING INTO THEATRE~

~TRAINING~

~MONOLOGUES~

~PREPARATION~

~REJECTION IS REDIRECTION~

~THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE~

WELCOME!

I'll make this a quick thing. First and foremost, I'm so glad you're here - that means you're interested in pursuing acting or someone you know is. Either way, I write this in the hopes of it encouraging you fellow creatives to take the leap; to shed those outgrown limiting beliefs and connect with your inner light. I want those of you who are just getting started in acting, to have an idea of where to begin. I want to encourage you to take care of yourself in the process because you, as you are, your essence, is enough. Learning to revel in our authenticity is liberating and a total game-changer. I know for me, I wish I had something like this back when I was starting out - I'm a strong believer that peoples experiences can be a learning ground for others.

As a young, black (mixed heritage) female creative, I have insights that will be of particular use to those with similar intersectionalities in their identity. So to my peopledem, this is for you.

I created this in a way that combines both my personal experiences and research I've collated. Be prepared for some wild stories! It's also important that you understand that this is not a comprehensive guide but rather, a taste of progression possibilities and industry relations. Highlight, make notes, whatever - just be present and open to learning. You must take agency and do research of your own as much as you can. This is your life, you are the driver.

I know how tricky it can be to take those first steps, so from me to you - I admire your bravery and I hope that you come away from this feeling more enlightened about your path.

With love,

A human just trying to help x

P.S. I hope to meet you talented souls one day.



THE REALITY

Society tends to perpetuate an acting career as either stardom or failure. If you're not on a Netflix show or on the West End then you're not *really* an actor. Or people assume it's just a hobby or a 'phase'. Trust me, I know the feeling of having people ask "Oh so what have you been in?". In my opinion, that's a very shallow view of our work and undermines the value of our art. We should be putting value on the journey, on the training, on the hard work and the courage it takes to do what we do. That's why it's important to know why you're choosing this path. It can be for many reasons, but if it's only for fame or money, maybe you should rethink.

More times than not, people will only see the end product of your art and in reality, most of the time, you won't be working as an actor. It shouldn't be glamorized as 'easy' or 'all about fame and money' - yes that is a part of it if you're in the top 2% maybe. But being an actor is a massive commitment; it is arduous and challenging. There'll be moments when you're getting role after role and times when you haven't received an audition for months. If you're looking for an easy route to the top, there isn't one.

WHAT IS YOUR 'WHY'?

Let's figure out the root of your passion for acting. Is it that you love using your imagination and connecting with people? Is it that you feel at home on stage? Is it that you enjoy being different characters and exploring different stories? Write your reasons down. You have to be sure of your 'why' because that is what will carry you through your journey. When the going gets tough, you can look back at these to reassure and remind yourself of why you started in the first place. Never lose sight of that.

Secondly, write down some goals you have about progressing as a creative, big or small. One of mine in the beginning was to join a youth theatre, whilst another was to be confident enough to call myself an actor. I like to write these goals down as if they've already come to fruition because it ignites a feeling in me when I read it.



Sometimes the gap between where we are and where we want to be can be daunting. So instead of making it affirmative, perhaps start with 'May I know' at the beginning of each sentence. For example, 'May I know that I have joined a youth theatre' or 'May I know that I am an actor'. It can sound pretty bizarre at first, I know. But when you say it, close your eyes and really visualise it. Start with your first goal. How does it feel? Tune into that feeling. Let yourself react physically and emotionally. Repeat this for every goal. Get rid of any expectation and just be. Do it everyday if you can. When we're in a mindset of abundance, the universe works wonders. Plus, connecting with the goal emotionally will allow you to be in tune with your path. For me, it's a way of finding clarity amidst the chaos.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

When I first decided I wanted to act, I was terrified of not living up to peoples expectations. I often tried to convince myself that it was something I could do 'on the side' because there was a pressure to pursue a more traditional career and go to university. Taking Drama at A-Level was me testing the waters a little to see where it would lead me. I ended up wanting to go to drama school but my drama teacher wasn't exactly encouraging about that prospect. Apparently I couldn't sing or dance, so wouldn't stand a chance. Ridiculous, I know. I mean, I'm not any Misty Copeland or Beyoncé but I didn't think that was a big deal. It isn't. Yes, it's normal for parents to feel a little uneasy about you becoming an actor; that's because it is a notoriously unstable and difficult profession to succeed in. But you know what you're capable of. Sometimes we have to let our actions speak for themselves.

Frankly, I didn't have many people who believed I had what it took. Especially because I was in a predominantly white school where the standard of arts was upheld by the elitist musical theatre girls. I remember when my teacher told me not to apply to drama school - I had a really vivid and persistent gut feeling. I'd never been so sure about something in my life. Yet here I was, listening to some white male teacher who probably had an antiquated perception of the industry.

Point is, you have to believe in yourself and your art even when no one else does. It's scary but if it feels right, go for it!! I was constantly told in school to pick one path and commit to it. Honestly, explore the hell out everything and find what brings you joy. Don't commit too early. Explore, explore, explore. Sometimes you have to experience what you don't like in order to figure out what you do like.



Of course, there are cultural barriers and other factors that come into play, but a part of your journey could involve you breaking that mold. There can be an outdated view of the arts as something that is only for the few elite. I promise you, that's far from true. These days, there are ample opportunities for artistic endeavors for people like you and me. When you take that leap, people might even be inspired by your courage and conviction.

Short term discomfort perhaps, but for long term peace. When you do what you love, there are no failures. You won't regret following your heart. Be honest and gentle with yourself, dear friend.



GETTING INTO THEATRE

I didn't grow up necessarily watching that much theatre, mostly film and TV. My Dad would take me to Peckham cinema all the time and that's where I fell deeper in love with the craft. But for many people, there can be a perception that theatre is only for white, middle class folk. And if you don't fit that, it can seem out of reach. Yes, there is an overwhelming majority of a certain demographic on and off our stages. But creatives are actively challenging this and things are changing, albeit rather slowly. As actors, our responsibility is to be truthful story-tellers and without you or me, a massive part of our truth is missing. Theatre *needs* people like us.

One of the first plays I ever saw was 'The Merchant of Venice' at The Globe - It was a standing ticket might I add. Boy did my legs feel like jelly afterwards. Given the lack of diversity in Shakespeare's story-telling, it isn't surprising that I didn't necessarily relate or feel connected to the characters. Our people were definitely around during those times and not just as slaves but wealthy businessmen and aristocrats. Those stories are yet to be told. That's why representation is so important. Everyone deserves to see themselves and their stories told. It has a profound effect on how we view and navigate our lives as people and artists.

ACCESS TO PLAYS

There's no better way to learn about theatre and acting than to watch or read plays. When you're fresh to the theatre scene, finding accessible ways to engage can seem difficult, especially if you're black and/or from a lower socio- economic background.

In terms of watching plays, many theatres offer discounted tickets to those under 25, so have a look.

Where to find discounted theatre tickets:

<https://officiallondontheatre.com/news/discounted-theatre-tickets-for-young-people/>

Take advantage of them while you still can! Some places have digital theatre access too such as the National Theatre or the Almeida.



As for reading plays, there are physical libraries at places like the National Theatre, and the Royal Court but of course, you'd have to buy them. For something more affordable, you can go to the Mono Box who charge around £5 to enter and read as many plays as you like! They've got a library of over 4,000 plays donated from industry professionals. You can also ask around; friends or people you know may have plays that you can borrow, or even your school library. Be resourceful. For online access, I suggest having a look at Drama Online, Perlego, Amazon and other online bookstores.

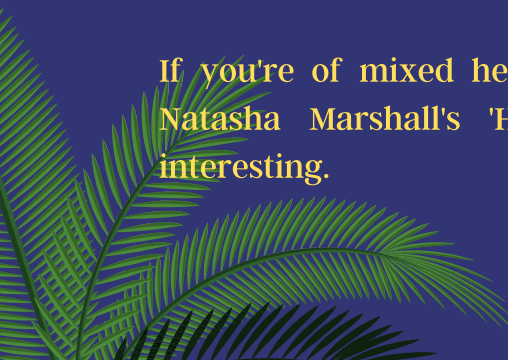
'BLACK' THEATRE

It's frustrating how difficult it can be to find plays by black playwrights or that have nuanced black characters. Although they may be buried deep, they exist (not enough clearly). If you haven't been able to access these types of theatre plays (it's practically a birthright) then here is an little introduction to some black playwrights and where to find plays that tell stories you may relate to.

Some phenomenal black and brown playwrights:

- Winsome Pinnock
- Yolanda Mercy
- Chinonyerem Odimba
- Rachel De-Lahay
- Rikki Beadle-Blair
- August Wilson
- Debbie Tucker Green
- Lolita Chakrabarti
- Danusia Samal
- Ryan Calais Cameron
- Bola Agbaje
- Koko Brown
- Natasha Marshall
- Theresa Ikoko
- Kwame Kwei-Armah
- Danai Gurira

If you're of mixed heritage like me, you might find Koko Brown's 'White' and Natasha Marshall's 'Half Breed' exploring mixed race identity particularly interesting.



National Theatre Black plays archive - <https://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/>

To reiterate, this is just a starting point - be active in your own research. Read and see as much as you can. You'll then be able to develop your own tastes and opinions which will inform the work that you eventually make as an actor.

ACTING IN THEATRE

My first experiences of acting in theatre was in school plays - start there if you're still at school. I'd recommend joining a youth theatre if you can.

Some youth programmes/theatres:

- Almeida Young Company
- Orange Tree Youth
- RADA Youth Company
- Sounds Like Chaos
- Young Vic
- Talawa Young People's Theatre
- Camden Youth Theatre

They're usually free to join and are great starting points for development, offering opportunities for performance experience. The National Youth Theatre is a massively reputable one which I would wholeheartedly recommend auditioning for. Their renowned summer courses are phenomenal and equip you with performance skills as well as offering a safe environment to explore creatively with like-minded artists. You won't regret it, I promise. NYT offers financial assistance for those who need it, so please don't let your financial situation stop you from applying. My experience there was invaluable and I made connections for life. You'll also have access to many opportunities as a member such as their REP Company and shows throughout the year. Ultimately, it's key that you try to learn and get as much experience as possible. So, research possible options and see what they're about - have a look at previous shows or testimonies from participants.

For me, being a part of Sounds Like Chaos was life-changing in so many ways. That's why I feel so strongly about young people getting involved with youth theatre - it can be the stepping stone to a career in the arts. There, you get to explore and play and find out more about yourself as an artist. There is so much freedom in that!



For a lot of very useful info about getting into theatre also check out - <https://getintotheatre.org/>

Other companies to look at :

- Frantic Assembly
- The Pappy Show
- Theatre Peckham
- Tamasha Theatre Company
- Orisun Theatre Company
- Nouveau Riche
- Uproot Production Company

Many theatre companies will run programs for emerging artists, especially creatives of colour. Look out for them and grab them with two hands!



TRAINING

The question you've probably been asking yourself is whether you should be looking to train as an actor and what type of training is best for you, right? Well, I'll let you in on a little secret... I had no idea you could even train to be an actor when I was in school. Shocking, I know. Nothing is more important than honing your craft - if you wanted to become a doctor, you wouldn't just jump straight into the surgery, would you? Exactly. The same goes for acting. Especially in the early stages, the passion can be overpowering in a way that doesn't necessarily serve you. The worst thing you can do is get lost in the endgame, in the agents, the roles, the money. It'll only lead to disappointment, and probably poor acting. The thing you should be most concerned about is getting training. Like an athlete's muscles, your acting muscles need to be stretched. Be obsessed with learning. One can have a natural talent for acting, but at the end of the day, hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard. In saying that, training doesn't teach you everything. It's more of a building block, a foundation of sorts that you build on. So, let's dig in, shall we?

DRAMA SCHOOL

The big question, eh. To be or not to be? First of all, let's talk about what drama school training is actually for.

Main aims:

- Voice training - learning to connect deeply with your body and therefore be able to have stamina and not strain or cause harm to your voice. Learning to be vocally imaginative and versatile.
- Physicality - getting rid of tension in the body to be able to find freedom in movement. Connecting body and mind to optimize capacity to take on roles.
- To develop imagination and truth in acting
- To be able to channel and access your emotions creatively and safely



- To learn to analyse text and character in order to be authentic
- To further instill confidence, self-belief and discipline
- To learn to be more receptive to other actors and be able to live in the moment

Personally, I see training as a way to also allow you to explore your identity and authenticity. At least, that's what it should be. One thing you should know is that everyone's experiences at drama school are different. Particularly as black artists, it's important to know how these drama schools function in relation to their curriculum, students' welfare, communication etc. You should be able to feel safe in training. It is a fundamental need. In the last year we've seen how many drama schools have neglected to take racial prejudice seriously and address serious systemic issues within their institutions. Some more than others.

Whilst I was training on a foundation acting course, I was confronted with how inept the institution was at ensuring their black students felt safe and supported. Not only was I the only black student in the class, but most of the teachers were white too. This was a school that prided itself on the affordability of its course, yet couldn't be bothered to ensure their outreach was reaching those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. I found that there were many moments I felt alienated and although I just wanted to train, I had to deal with all this other stuff which can be extremely taxing psychologically. There's a phrase I often hear that as a student of colour, you go into drama school wanting to train but leave as a social activist! I found it hilarious and truthful but also really bloody sad.

We are deserving of protection and safety - to my sisters in particular. In environments like that, it can be difficult to speak up about these issues when everyone around you seems unbothered by it all - consciously or not. I'll detail more about my experience some time, but that's perhaps a conversation to be had more in depth. Just know that if you ever find yourself in these situations, that you are not alone. You deserve to be heard. Institutions have to take accountability. We're changing the game!!



BE INQUISITIVE

Research the different drama schools, look at their staff, speak to their students. Each one will have a certain vibe - think about which ones you could actually see yourself training at. Make a list of pros and cons. When you get a chance, don't be afraid to ask about what kind of changes they're making and how they intend on catering for your needs as a student. Ask them about complaints procedures, about the relationship between staff and students, about the culture there. Anything that will help you get a clear picture of what they're about. Be perceptive and don't get lost in the fantasy of 'drama school'. Transparency is important so demand it.

Spend time really digging deep into the reasons as to why you want to train. If you're just coming out of school, you may want to think about whether a year of exploration and experience may be useful. There's no rush to do a 3 year BA. If you truly feel that it's the right path for you at this moment in time, go for it!! Hold onto your 'why'. The audition process is very thorough and will demand commitment and drive. Most of all though, it should be enjoyable. Don't take it all too seriously. Once you've chosen which schools you'd like to apply to, have a look at their audition requirements and make notes of what you need to prepare for each school. I find creating a table really helpful.

OPEN DOOR

Open Door is a charity that works with talent from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them to gain a place at Drama School. They also help cover audition and travel costs, as well as free workshops. Their success rate is extremely high. It's definitely worth applying if you fit the criteria. Building a community of support is invaluable.

DRAMA SCHOOL IS NOT THE BE ALL AND END ALL

It really isn't. There are always other training pathways. Many actors have established careers without going to drama school. Everyone's journey is different, dear friend. What is important, is finding training that works for you. There are part-time schools and one or two year courses that can really help you improve your craft - they're not substitutes for drama school, of course. But say for instance, you need to work whilst training, then a part-time option may be ideal. Or if you have some experience under your belt and want to spend a year really delving into the technical stuff, maybe a one or two year may suit you.



Here are some places to start:

- Originate Actor Training
- Fourth Monkey
- Identity School of Acting
- The Actors Centre
- GoHub
- National Youth Theatre REP

This article discusses the pros and cons of drama school - <https://www.spotlight.com/news-and-advice/tips-and-advice/drama-school-to-be-or-not-to-be-the-pros-cons-of-formal-training/>

Again, do your own research and see what's out there! Explore, explore, explore. Take as many opportunities that come your way but look after yourself. Don't compromise your mental health or physical self for any acting exercise! Keep up with your other stuff outside of acting too. When you give yourself that time to really explore and be open, you'll be surprised at how many things come into your radar. I mean, I ended up getting involved with film-making and writing and even Anthropology study. Gap year, part-time training, drama school, whatever, just know that this is *your* journey, no one else's. It will be difficult and scary at times, but trust that what you're doing is leading you to exactly where you need to be. Everyone deserves a chance to create the life *they* want. Choosing a path out of fear won't serve you in the long run. Be strategically realistic but leave room for spontaneity. Life has a way of working itself out when we align ourselves with our truth. You got this my g!



MONOLOGUES

If you do decide to train, there's no doubt you'll need to master the art of monologues. Finding ones you're passionate about and can authentically perform is key. Looking for monologues can be tricky if you don't know where to look, as discussed earlier with plays.

Here's some other places to look:

- Foyles Southbank
- Backstage.com
- The Mono Box - they have a monologue library which is a collection of over 100 audio recordings of renowned artists performing theatrical speeches. Plus, it's free!

You will need to consider what type of speech you're looking for. There are many classical plays you can find online for instance - a website called Shakespeare-monologues is free to use. I personally moved away from performing Shakespeare speeches as there weren't many with the type of characters I felt passionate about embodying. If the speech requirements for the classical(s) aren't specifically Shakespearean, then research some other playwrights/ plays of that era.

Some non- Shakespeare plays/playwrights:

- Aphra Behn
- Elizabeth Carey
- Jane Wiseman
- John Marston
- Thomas Kyd
- Thomas Middleton
- Thomas Dekker
- John Fletcher
- John Webster

A lot of Thomas' and Johns, I know. There are many undiscovered stories out there, especially about and by our people. Hopefully they'll come to light. In the meantime, we take charge of our narratives.



For my sisters, Aphra Behn's 'The Rover' has some great female roles as well as John Marston's 'The Dutch Courtesan' and 'The Roaring Girl' by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. If you're like me and enjoy playing stronger female roles - have a look at Hermione's speeches from 'the Winter's Tale' or Joan of Arc's speeches.

Either way, don't rely on anyone else to find a monologue for you. You need to dedicate time to finding yours. I remember spending hours at the National scowring through plays - it will take time, be patient. The hard work will pay off in the end because you'll have speeches that fit you like a glove.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SPEECH

It's important that you know what makes a good monologue. It's pretty easy to find that out online, so I'll share with you what I personally look for in a speech.

- A character journey/ arc - avoid speeches where the character is only expressing one emotion. There should be shifts of thought and action. It's always more engaging when the character is trying to solve a problem of some sorts. That gives you room to be versatile and play.
- A personal connection - speeches that I can find relatability in such as identity, culture and background, allows me to play it with more truth. I'm able to use my imagination . It's key that you connect with what you're performing, even if it's just an overwhelming feeling of empathy.
- Pieces that have a clear character objective .
- Speeches in my native accent and around my playing age.

Don't worry about choosing monologues that might have been done before - there are only so many classics anyway! The way you do it will be different to how someone else does it. Don't forget - if it says that you need to have contrasting speeches, make sure they are. That could be in terms of subject matter, tone, character etc. You want to really show off what you can do.

Hopefully you'll find ones that really speak to you and say something about your art. Play to your strengths and recognise the power in what makes you different. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.



CONTEMPORARY MONOLOGUE IDEAS

Here's a list of some contemporary plays that have some great female and black characters.

- Emilia by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm
- Melody Loses Her Mojo by Keith Saha
- Cuttin' It by Charlene James
- Chewing Gum Dreams by Michaela Coel
- Misty by Arinze Kene
- Barber Shop Chronicles by Inua Ellams
- Leaves by Lucy Caldwell
- Out Of Sorts by Danusia Samal
- Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons, by Sam Steiner
- Been So Long by Che Walker
- Free Fall by Vinay Patel
- Alaska by DC Moore
- Snowflake by Mike Bartlett
- Things I know To Be True by Andrew Bovell
- Ear for Eye by Debbie Tucker Green
- Death of England by Roy Williams and Clint Dyer
- Dance Nation by Clare Barron
- Oil by Ella Hickson
- White by Koko Brown
- Half Breed by Natasha Marshall
- I Think We Are Alone by Sally Abbott
- Oleanna by David Mamet

It can be pretty overwhelming with how much is out there. Just have fun with it and don't put too much pressure on yourself. See it as a way of exposing yourself to more plays! We touched on classical pieces earlier but I just want to reassure you that if you're someone who finds them daunting, you are definitely not alone. What helped me was knowing that I didn't have to put on a specific accent or change my speaking voice - bring yourself to the speech. As long as you really understand what you're saying and have done the preparation, you'll be just fine.



PREPARATION

This will make or break you. Good preparation actually gives you greater freedom when you're in the audition room because you're not worrying about your lines or the story. I guess you're probably thinking "how best do I prepare?" Well, I've made a list of things that are general building blocks for characterisation and text analysis. Most of all, see your preparation as a chance to really get to know your character and delve into their story.

- Read the play that your monologue is from - more than once if you have time.
- Write down the 'given circumstances'/ facts - information from the text including who, what, where and when.
- Figure out the character's objective in the scene - what do they want from the other character?
- What is the obstacle in the way of your character getting what they want? That will inform the tactics that you use to get what you want.
- Separate each thought to really get underneath the thinking of your character. Pay attention to punctuation, that is a big teller of when a thought might start and end. It might be helpful to learn the lines thought by thought.
- 'Action' those thoughts by picking active verbs such as 'beg' or 'charm'. Everyone does this in their own way, some like to put 'To' at the beginning; others put 'I', it's up to you. Just make sure it is in relation to affecting the other character. Such as 'I charm you'/ 'To charm'. In real life, people don't always say what they mean. There is often subtext. Try to flesh that out from your text. When they say that line, what do they really mean or want?
- You may find something called 'uniting' helpful - marking where there are shifts in the monologue, usually emotionally.

I like to create a character profile for each of my characters as well. Do whatever you feel will help you connect with them imaginatively and creatively.



Our job as actors is to bring characters to life in a truthful and three-dimensional way. By understanding and analysing the text, you will be able to make clear choices. That then leaves room for you to be instinctive and present. Spontaneity is born out of living in the moment and trusting your instincts and preparation. Personally, I found at the start of my journey, I tended to intellectualise most of my work. Which is fine from an analysis perspective but then you have to really connect emotionally. Move from that place of impulse as much as you can. It's hella scary, I know. Vulnerability can be terrifying but powerful and necessary for growth and truth. Definitely don't get stuck doing a speech in a specific way!

Another thing I would add is that you should be actively envisioning whoever you are speaking to when you do your monologue. Set the scene. Use all of your senses to create a real world. What does it smell like? What is the character wearing? What sounds can you hear? The more in tune you are to the world of the character, the more believable it will be. If *you* believe it, so will the audience.

AUDITIONING TIPS

Auditions are a massive part of being an actor - you can't escape them unfortunately. The biggest mistake many actors make is trying to be something that they're not. Or trying to give the panel what they think they want. Trust me, they're looking for you, the real you. Don't doubt your worth - you have every right to be there! If you find that you often get really in your head before auditions, perhaps record words of encouragement on your phone to listen to. Remind yourself of the value that you bring to relieve any pressure you're putting on yourself to 'do well'. Come as you are.

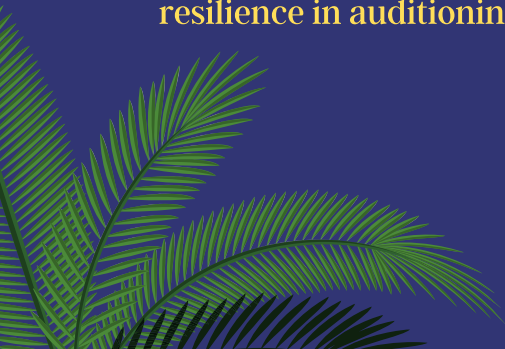
Here are some of my top tips:

- Take a small moment before your monologue to get yourself set. Don't feel pressured to rush into it, especially when you're doing one monologue after another. That time is yours.
- Take risks and be bold - if you get a character impulse to do something, do it. Otherwise, you'll regret not following your instinct.
- Try to use your physicality to embody the character. How do they walk? How do they stand?



- Embrace the nerves - they're a sign that you care! Everyone gets nervous. Use that energy for your piece. The worst thing you can do is try to fight them. The panel understands that this is a nerve-wracking experience.
- If you are redirected, go full in. It doesn't mean your interpretation is wrong, it just means that they're wanting to draw something else from you. Have fun with it.
- Ask questions if you need to - clarity is important.
- Take time beforehand to focus. Don't feel the need to react or copy what everyone else is doing. Everyone prepares differently. If you want to sit quietly with your headphones on, do it. Just make sure your voice and body is warm!
- Don't put the panel on a pedestal - they're just humans, like you and I!
- You're auditioning them as much as they're auditioning you.
- If you make a mistake, go with it! Acting is all about living in the moment. Don't try to be perfect.
- Breathe, you've got this.

I remember watching a video of Brian Cranston talking about auditioning and ways to view it as more of an opportunity to share a gift with people; they may like it, they might not, that's down to them. He says "You're not going there to get a job. You're going there to present what you do." It's true, you can't control how others view your work, and all you can do is your best. Whenever you feel scared or worried, ask yourself "What's the best thing that could happen?" Focus on that. Often our perception of situations can get clouded by feelings of insecurity or worry. Personally, I like to do some affirmations before auditions for a little boost. They can be powerful if you're consistent. Try it out, it might work for you. For a lot of auditions, there'll be workshops in groups. I'd say be as generous as possible; listen to others, be thoughtful and be respectful (goes without saying); and just have fun. Try not to put too much pressure on yourself! Whatever the result, your resilience in auditioning speaks for itself.



REJECTION IS REDIRECTION

It took me a while to understand that. But when I did, it was incredibly liberating. Rejection and failure are not synonymous! I find that taking the time to step back and look at what I've learnt in the process allows me to grow. I'd encourage you to do the same. Your auditions and experiences are all a part of your journey. The good, the bad, all of it. As actors, we experience an overwhelming amount of rejection throughout our careers. It's part of what we do. Don't take it personally - there are so many factors that come into play. I bet you'll find that there's another open door right around the corner. The audition process is a great way to learn more about yourself and your art. For most actors, it takes a few tries to get into drama school. I know people who have got in on their 5th try! Be resilient and determined. If you want to give it another go and it feels right, do it. If you figured out that maybe it isn't what you wanted, that's okay. Whatever you go through will prepare you for what's ahead.

Rationalise feedback as well. Like we discussed earlier, art is subjective. I remember getting accepted for a course at the drama school I'd originally wanted to go to. Yet in that same year, staff on another course at the same school had told me I was 'untrainable'. Everyone will have their opinions. What matters is that you know for yourself, where you're at. Don't settle for anything. and certainly, don't give up if it's truly what you want. Your next opportunity could be right around the corner.

INTRINSIC GROWTH OVER EXTERNAL SUCCESS

If there's anything you take away from this, let it be an understanding that whatever happens, stay focused on trying to grow as an artist and human being. That's where the real magic happens. You can be taught text analysis and method, but you can't be taught how to connect with your spirit and your inner child. Be fiercely vulnerable. There is so much strength in turning up as yourself because you are enough.

It's okay to be wrong sometimes. Don't get caught up in wanting to be perfect or right all the time. By stepping into the world of acting where you're encouraged to connect deeply with yourself and others, you are surrendering to your essence. It's a damn special life to be living.



THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE...

I've come across some life-changing gems that have transformed the way I navigate my artistic journey and life in general. I share them with you in the hope that they may do the same. Some of them I wish I'd known when I first entered this crazy creative realm. Lucky for you, I'm giving you first class access.

- Be patient. What is meant to be yours will be yours. End of. Trust that everything will fall into place with time.
- Always remember to take a step back to see how far you've come. There was a time when you desired to be exactly where you are right now. Ground in gratitude.
- You never know who's watching - you could be inspiring someone to follow their passion.
- Be true to yourself - nothing is more powerful than someone who is unapologetically themselves. It opens space for others to do the same. Nothing is ever going to be worthwhile if you can't be yourself in the process.
- If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Follow your gut and instinct, they're often trying to guide us. Be mindful of whether your endeavors align with your values.
- You should never have to compromise your integrity, as an artist and as a human being.
- Don't stop living. Don't put things on pause waiting for your acting career to take off - keep living life. The opportunities will come to you when you're ready.
- Don't doubt your readiness when those opportunities arrive.



- There is enough room for everyone. Try not to compare yourself to others.
- Don't be afraid to say no and set firm boundaries. Know that you are powerful enough to speak up and that there are always people who will be there to support you.
- Be bold. Speak your truth. No one does it like you.
- Listen as though everyone you speak to knows something that you don't.
- Don't get lost in the endgame. Be present and enjoy your journey because moments are fleeting.
- Everyone has a different path - there is no 'one size fits all' to what we do.
- Create your own opportunities. Don't wait for people to do it for you.
- Call yourself an actor.
- Have other streams of income that can support you - you're not going to be acting all the time.
- Let go of that audition once you've done it.
- Manage your priorities.
- Take up space.
- Don't be an asshole.
- Call out assholes.
- Follow your dreams but don't lose yourself in the process
- Love yourself and know that you have everything you need within you, dear friend.



FROM ME TO YOU...

Try to live purposefully, whatever that means for you. Big or small. Make it count. Remember that as long as you move through life with integrity and love, that is success right there. The rest will follow. Stay true to yourself and never let anyone silence you, ever. Keep being you, keep spreading light and love.

You've got an exciting journey ahead - enjoy it.

P.S Now that some seeds have been planted within you, go and do your ting!

