AUDITIONING FOR THE MUSICAL THEATRE

From the Book by the Same Title

by

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Some Basic Terms

Voice Teacher  -vs-  Vocal Coach
# Some Basic Terms

<table>
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<th>Voice Teacher</th>
<th>Vocal Coach</th>
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<td>• Sing on the vowels – Open vowels to keep the throat open.</td>
<td>• English=consonants, compound consonants, liquid consonants, plosives, fricatives, diphthongs, and triphthongs ALL EMPHASIZED.</td>
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<td>• Phrase from the music</td>
<td>• Phrase from the lyric</td>
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<td>• Music selection purpose to train voice</td>
<td>• Music selection to match actor with material</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Private lessons</td>
<td>• Public auditions &amp; workshops (learn from other people, gain confidence)</td>
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WHAT IS A GOOD AUDITION?

One that gets you the job / part
(although many times brilliant auditions do not result in employment)

One in which the performer, to the best of his abilities, reveals who and what he is as a human being while at the same time giving the auditors an idea of the extent of his talents!
WHAT IS A BAD AUDITION?

One in which the performer thoroughly confuses the people who are auditioning him by camouflaging himself with the wrong material and the wrong approach in presenting it!
UNDERSTAND THIS

We have been brought up in a competitive society, where since kindergarten we have been taught that

BEING FIRST AND BEING BEST ARE EVERYTHING!

Actors are hired not because of they are better than the other people who are auditioning,

but because they are more right for the part they are up for!
SPECIAL PITFALLS OF THE MUSICAL AUDITION

STRAIGHT SHOWS

- Character development written into the script
- Give time for actor to become the character

This is not possible in musicals

- 1 ½ Hrs. of music & dance in the 2 ½ hr. musical
- Above + intermission, leaves only 45 min. at the most for character development
When Directors are casting a musical and filling PRINCIPLE ROLES

It is MORE important to them that the actor

SPEAK, MOVE, SOUND, LOOK and FEEL like the character

... than be a brilliant actor, singer or performer!
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It means that...

Just by BEING YOURSELF you have a good chance for a callback or a reading if you are remotely close to what they are looking for!

Assuming you DO NOT OBSCURE who you are by singing the wrong material and playing someone you are not!
DON’T FORGET …

Actors are hired not because of they are better than the other people who are auditioning, but because they are more right for the part they are up for!
"Well, it's not my fault if nobody bothered to tune the microphone."
ACT THE SONG...

DAMN YOU!
ACT THE SONG
Only under the following circumstances

1. To be considered for a role
2. To keep the role you have already
3. TO NOT SUCK
But I think, I DO ACT when I sing

Do you really?

Are you sure?

90% of actors who audition regularly for musicals stand there stiffly for the entire number with their arms at their sides!

Remaining 10% (those who do use arms) tend to gesture spastically or nod their heads every time there is a downbeat or musical accent!

YIKES!
ACTING A SCENE
—VS—
ACTING A SONG
SCENE
Scene nearly always longer than a song & usually involves dialogue between two or more people

SONG
Unless a duet, obviously only one person singing
SCENE
You deliver the dialogue in your own meter
You use your own individualized rhythm of speech
You speak at the tempo of your choosing
You are not required to speak on pitch
You speak in the vernacular

SONG
The lyric is poetic, terser and more concise
Requires actor to elucidate more clearly his intent through use of subtext
Lyric moves much, much slower than the spoken word
IN A SONG ...

The audience is ALWAYS going to be way ahead of the actor in anticipating his next words!

The lyric requires a different sort of timing

One that requires the actor to act several beats

IN ADVANCE of what he is saying!
HAVEN’T WE ALL AT ONE TIME BEEN BORED BY A PERSON WHO SPOKE SO SLOWLY THAT IT SEEMED WE HAD TO WAIT FOREVER FOR THEM TO FINISH THE SENTENCE?
SO...WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

NOT to act the lyric, but to invent a new text,
One that is heard only by the actor,
One made up of inner thoughts and emotions
that sometimes can even be unrelated to the text.

A “SUBTEXT”
SUBTEXT
A different meaning

Do not think of “sub” as meaning “below” in this case
Think of “sub” as meaning “substitution

In the subtext we substitute thoughts,
feelings, emotions,
and even dialogue
AND MORE IMPORTANT...

In the lyric of a song
There are spaces between the words
And even larger spaces between complete thoughts
and between sentences

It is during these spaces of empty intervals of time ... 

THAT THE ACTOR’S PERFORMANCE DIES AND BECOMES LIFELESS
THE INABILITY TO HANDLE THESE MOMENTS OF “NON-SINGING” IS ONE MAJOR REASON ACTORS HAVE SUCH DIFFICULTY IN ACTING A SONG!

It is during these spaces of empty intervals of time ...

THAT THE ACTOR’S PERFORMANCE DIES AND BECOMES LIFELESS
THE OTHER MAJOR FACTOR THAT PREVENTS ACTORS FROM ACTING A SONG IS . . .

HOW THEY USE THEIR EYES TO SPOT

SPOTTING IS:

The technique of how, where, and on whom to focus the eyes
WITH A SONG . . .

You must create the illusion that you are playing to
An acting partner, who, unfortunately is not
At the audition with you!

THIS SPOT, on which the actor would focus
would have to be at the back of the auditorium or studio
To create the illusion that someone is really there!
You must create the illusion that you are playing to

An acting partner, who, unfortunately is not

At the audition with you!

**ACTORS WHO DO NOT PLAY TO A SPECIFIC (imaginary) ACTING PARTNER,**

**USUALLY WIND UP **_**DOING TOO MUCH!**_
HOW THEN, DOES ONE ACT A SONG?

Make exactly the same preparations you would make when acting a scene, PLUS A LITTLE BIT MORE.

**STEP 1**

**ANALYSIS:**

- Know **WHY** your character is making that particular statement
- Know **WHAT** the motivation & dramatic necessity of the lyric consist of
  - Know **WHERE** the action is taking place
  - Know **WHEN** it is happening (almost always in the “now”)
  - Know to **WHOM** it is being played
NOW YOU ARE WAY AHEAD of nearly everyone else showing up for auditions !!!
REMEMBER!

The reason most people select the audition songs they wind up singing is that they have heard someone else sing them and they liked the performance of the song!

IN OTHER WORDS . . . .
SUBCONSCIOUSLY –

They are going to give a SECOND-HAND performance!

One that is influenced and based on what they have already seen and heard!

**NOT** one that is the result of **Analysis and introspection**

**AVOID THIS PITFALL !!!**
Step 2

GET A NOTEBOOK – THE COMPOSITION TYPE

Copy the lyrics from the music in this notebook as your script

Leave two blank lines between each line, sentence, or complete thought

Of the lyric you are writing out.
REMEMBER . . .

AN ACTOR IS ALIVE
ONLY AS LONG AS HE HAS DIALOGUE COMING OUT OF HIM
OR IS INVOLVED IN A PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL LIFE
THAT IS PERCEPTIBLE TO THE AUDIENCE!

THEREFORE: An actor singing a song is only interesting to watch while words are coming out... and ceases to be so, in the spaces between the lines of the song!!!
STEP 3

THESE SPACES HAVE TO BE FILLED DRAMATICALLY

And the way to fill them is to write additional dialogue & subtext

In the two BLANK LINES YOU HAVE PROVIDED YOURSELF BETWEEN THE LINES OF THE LYRIC
SHORT PAUSES can be filled with lines that cause you to REACT EMOTIONALLY & PHYSICALLY

PEPPER THEM WITH EXPLETIVES like "Damn", "Wow", "Gee", etc, etc. Make them "colorful" and preferably with lots of the *unprintable kind*!

THEY CREATE A SORT OF "INSTANT ACTING PILL"
ANOTHER WAY TO FILL THE EMPTY SPACES

CREATE A SCENE

between you and another acting partner or partners

PASSIVE: The partner just smiles benevolently as you sing and emote your heart out!

ACTIVE: The partner has created dialogue that we were previously giving to ourselves.
LAST but not least . . .

STAGE DIRECTIONS

With this technique, the actor overwrites stage directions the way an overzealous playwright might!

They give the actor some direction to follow and work best when they describe:

- Emotional responses
- Physical actions
- Movements
OTHER THINGS THAT HELP
DRESS FOR SUCCESS

1. Avoid casual attire
2. Dress to enhance your personality
3. Wear the right shoes
4. Dress to flatter your body size and type
5. Plan in advance
6. Don’t dress as someone else
7. You’ll perform better when dressed for it
8. Invest in good grooming
VERY IMPORTANT ALSO...

IF YOU GET A CALLBACK

WEAR THE SAME OUTFIT

THE SAME SHOES

AND YOUR HAIR THE SAME WAY
WHAT TO SING
A SONG CAN SERVE MANY PURPOSES

The Actor, is concerned about those songs that were conceived to work THEATRICALLY. meaning, those designed for the stage or musical film!

POPULAR SONGS never work as Audition Songs because . . .

• designed to be sung into a microphone
• no acting partner implied most times
• not enough “meat” in the lyric to sustain dramatic interest

instrumental feeling is so important to structure that:
• vocal tries to blend with instrumental ensemble and in doing so becomes almost unintelligible
HISTORICALLY

POPULAR MUSIC was written by Musical Theatre Giants
Berlin, Kern, R.& H., Lerner & Lowe, etc.)

That changed in the 50’s / 60’s
with Elvis, Beatles, Etc.

And for the first time –
MUSIC OF THE THEATRE
was no longer
the MUSIC OF THE MASSES
WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT A “SHOW TUNE”?

1. Meant to HIGHLIGHT or capture a moment in a show, so important that it prompted it being written in the first place!

2. Has “built in” ACTIBILITY

3. Almost always has an implied ACTING PARTNER
BUT —
THERE ARE SHOW TUNES . . .
and THERE ARE SHOW TUNES !
THE WRONG KIND OF AUDITION SONG

1. SONG & DANCE
2. PRODUCTION NUMBERS
3. SIGNATURE SONGS
4. FICTIONAL CHARACTER SONGS
5. PLOTLINE NUMBERS
6. VOGUE NUMBERS
THE BEST KIND OF AUDITION NUMBERS

“IN-ONE” NUMBERS
HOW TO SING IT

FROM THE MOMENT YOU START TO SING A SONG . . .

The lyric becomes YOUR PROPERTY!

You have the OBLIGATION to . . .

MAKE THE LYRIC COME ALIVE
AS IF YOU HAD INDEED CREATED IT!
HERE ARE SOME OBVIOUS WAYS TO DO IT

1. ESSENTIAL & NON-ESSENTIAL WORDS
2. COLOR WORDS (Adverbs, Adjectives, Verbs)
3. LIQUID CONSONANTS
4. PLOSIVES
5. ALLITERATION
6. ONOMATOPOEIA
7. PHRASING
THE VERSE
How To Sing It

IT IS EXPOSITIONAL
AND CRUCIAL TO SETTING UP THE CHORUS

Usually sung in “the rhythm of speech”, or \textit{ad lib} as it is usually called.

which means... “at the liberty of the performer”!

A well written verse must be EASILY HEARD, SIMPLY CONSTRUCTED, made up of very FEW NOTES. (almost like nursery rhyme)

Always with the intent to: MAKE SURE THE VERSE IS HEARD & THAT IT DOESN’T “UPSTAGE” THE CHORUS OR SLOW DOWN ITS DELIVERY!
THE CHORUS
And How to Sing It

32 measures

divided into 4 - eight measure sections

FORM is of two different kinds ... or variations of these two
( AABB or ABAB )

For these reasons, there will be LARGE EMPTY SPACES (air)
THAT’S WHEN YOU MOVE TO CAPTURE VISUAL INTEREST!