

THEATRE SCHOOL AUDITIONS

by Richard Evans CDG

The popularity of stage musicals has never been greater and many more people have been inspired to audition and train as performers, not only through trips to the theatre, enjoying the actual shows themselves, but by watching TV talent shows, such as 'I'd Do Anything', 'How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria?' and 'Grease Is The Word'. While these performances can often look easy and effortless, there is a huge amount of skill and technique involved and as there are many more outstanding performers than available jobs, a good training has never been so important.

So what will this training give you? Primarily, it will help you to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence that you'll need to get through auditions and, once offered a job, sustain your vocal and physical performance for up to 12 shows every week. If you're seriously considering applying for theatre school auditions for a full-time course, you will have probably already been part of a youth theatre or operatic society and taken some classes in singing, dancing and acting, therefore knowing your strengths as well as the areas you need to improve. If you haven't yet gone down this path and have just been inspired by what you've seen, I strongly recommend taking a short course or summer school before making your decision, which will also give you a good grounding.

Once you are sure, the first step is to do your research and target the theatre schools that seem most appropriate for your needs. Many advertise in The Stage, and in Contacts (published by Spotlight). Look at their websites and request prospectuses. Check out what you will be taught, the people who'll be teaching you and the success of past graduates. Don't be afraid to ask people who are training, and even established performers for their views on where they trained. Before making any decision, work out your budget, remembering that all schools will charge an audition fee and that you may have to travel long distances, perhaps staying overnight (twice, if you're recalled), which will restrict the number of theatre school auditions you can afford to take. When the date of your audition is confirmed, thoroughly prepare everything they've asked to see, with the help of family, friends and preferably a qualified teacher.

So what will the panel need to see when you audition? Schools look for several things: the most important being that you can demonstrate that you have potential to build on the skills which you already have and will be receptive to what you are taught. This is vital, as a great performer cannot be created out of nothing – a school has to build on the talent that you already possess. They will also look for somebody who is going to be a pleasure to teach, as nobody wants to be stuck with a diva or pain, no matter how talented they are. Having sat on many audition panels, I have seen many amazing people rejected for these reasons.

Like any audition in this overcrowded industry, auditioning for your desired theatre school can be extremely competitive, so make sure you stand out from the crowd, as they will doubtless be seeing many people that day and throughout the year for a comparatively small number of places. You will achieve this by being prepared, knowledgeable and original. Do as much research as you can before the day, on the school, the panel and the business which you plan to enter. I am amazed how many people don't bother to learn even the simplest of things about this Industry, thinking that because they are so talented every school will want them – this is rarely the case. When picking your songs and acting pieces, don't limit yourself just to the shows you have seen (musicals were written before the 1980s) as this will give you a definite advantage. Be real and honest about your abilities; know why you want to enter the world of musical theatre and what you want to achieve, remembering that not everyone will be, or wants to be a star. Think seriously about why you want to train, what you hope to get out of it, where you fit into the Industry and how you would pay for the training and living expenses if you weren't to win a scholarship or be awarded funding. You will be questioned on these topics at every audition you do, so be prepared and think ahead.

Most importantly, be yourself, believe you can succeed, enjoy your audition and *go for it!*

My book AUDITIONS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE contains in-depth information on auditioning for theatre schools, as well as chapters on auditions for musical theatre and many other media for graduates and experienced performers, and lists of often overlooked composers and playwrights. Log on to www.auditionsapracticalguide.com to buy your copy with FREE DELIVERY.

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