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### Next!

By *Kay Daly*, N2Arts Correspondent  
Preparing for Your Theater Audition

If you're born to act, you're also born to audition. But for many actors, auditioning means butterflies, blown lines, and panic attacks. Relax! Competing for a role doesn't have to be a frightening experience. Do your prep and you'll be strutting your stuff to standing ovations.

#### Stocking Your Arsenal

"The key to being prepared," explains New York-based actor Michael Shattner, "is having an arsenal of pieces ready." As part of his ongoing preparation, Michael selects, learns, and perfects a variety of monologues, ranging in theatrical style, character type, and length. Then, no matter what the director wants to see, he's ready to give them his best.

The same process applies to musical theater. "Having your 'book' of songs prepared is crucial," says actress Catherine Brunell. A veteran of Broadway's *Les Miserables*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Big River*, Catherine makes sure her book is stocked with songs she can sing at a moment's



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notice, including:

An old favorite that really shows off her voice and personality

A Broadway "classic" (Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers & Hammerstein, etc.)

An up-tempo piece

A ballad

A contrasting song (she's a belter, so she has one "legit" soprano piece)

A country-western song

A pop song

A jazz/blues song

"You want to have as much as you can on hand so you can make suggestions as to what they might like to hear," says Catherine.

If the director asks for only 16 bars (or measures), be prepared with your best cut. But don't just pick the first 16; look for a break that makes sense musically and that shows off your skills. And don't worry about having exactly 16 measures; they won't count them.

### **Made-to-Order**

But what if you're asked to prepare material from a specific show?

"In that case," Michael says, "I try to learn as much as I can about the character and the show." Read the whole play, if it's available. If not, learn

everything you can from the materials you're given. "Read all the stage directions and the other character's lines. If there's a section that's not included in what you're supposed to prepare, read that, too," he advises. "Review anything that can give you a hint as to the tone and motivation."

Next, record yourself reading the scene. "Listening to the lines over and over is a good way to familiarize yourself with the material," Michael explains. "In addition to memorizing the lines, you'll really get to know the rhythm of the scene."

Chicago-based actress Kristen Freilich uses a similar technique when she's given a specific song to perform. Her vocal coach helps her master the mechanics of the song as well as how to act the piece. She also records the accompaniment. "I listen to it over and over," she explains. "By the time I audition, I really have it down."

### **The Final Moments**

All three actors agree: on the day of the audition, there's not much more you can do than relax, warm up, and go in with a good attitude. An hour before, Kristen sings scales, to warm up her whole voice, then does a few exercises to focus on the range of her song. Just before she goes in, she centers herself, and takes a deep breath into a big yawn. "It opens my throat, back and rib cage, and helps me relax," she says.

Catherine advises not getting to your audition too early. "I get there about 10 minutes before my time and then just try to focus," she says. "I don't want to have too much time to think or I'll get nervous."

Finally, it all comes down to attitude. "You can only be responsible for what you do, not for the director's choices," Michael says, "So I just try to go in there

and turn it into something fun.”

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*Kay Daly is a freelance writer and editor. You can learn more about her at her Web site - <http://www.geocities.com/dalykay>.*

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