

MONOLOGUE GUIDE FOR SINGERS

Brian DeMaris | www.briandemaris.com

Why monologues?

- * Many opera companies are requiring monologues for auditions, and even those that aren't, may often ask if a singer has one or ask a singer to prepare one for a call-back. Also, when many opera companies produce musicals they may very likely be hiring theatrical casting agencies who will ask for monologues in the audition. This is a growing trend as opera companies rely more and more on producing musicals and operettas to attract audiences.
- * In contrast to the where the industry was 10, or even 5 years ago, acting skills are of increasing value to directors, conductors, agents, and casting panels. The high level of competition in the current market and contemporary operatic trends provide that competitive and professional opera singers are equally (if not in some cases more so) skilled in acting and movement as they are in singing.
- * The monologue gives the panel an opportunity to assess a singer's acting skills that may be affected or perhaps hindered by one's singing.
- * The monologue gives the panel an opportunity to hear the actor's speaking voice.
- * To stress the important of acting in opera, and perhaps to help encourage students to seek out acting training, particularly if they are uncomfortable with monologues and acting in general.
- * And to give the voice major the valuable learning experience (even if self-guided) of choosing, preparing, and performing a monologue.
- * Contrary to public opinion, voice majors are quite adept at performing monologues.

Finding monologues

- * Go to the library
- * Read a play
- * Find a monologue in the play that speaks to you.
- * Research what playwrights and plays have been produced at the college level (Ithaca College or otherwise).
- * Ask faculty, staff and students who might have ideas of additional choices.

* Search the internet for monologues from plays, many of which are in the public domain. For example, www.monologuearchive.com or www.actorpoint.com

Choosing a monologue

- * Choose a character with whom you identify and a scene which you can relate to
- * Monologue anthologies are fine for getting some ideas, but avoid choosing monologues that are not extracted from plays, and by all means, read the entire play for any monologue you choose.
- * It is imperative that you read the entire play from which the monologue is extracted.

Additional considerations

- * Is the monologue age appropriate?
- * Is the monologue from a known play?
- * Does the monologue have a beginning, middle and an end?
- * Do you as the actor relate to the subject and content of the monologue?
- * Ware the needs of the audition and does the monologue fit the criteria?

Things to avoid

- * “Original” monologues, and monologues that are popular and performed too often.
- * Avoid taking lyrics from an opera or musical and turning it into a monologue. Monologues that have subject matter or content that you don’t relate to.
- * Contrary to the theater and musical theater industry, it is generally risky (if not inappropriate) to perform a monologue that involves sex, violence, or profanity for an opera audition.

Preparing a monologue

- * Identify where you are, who you are, what you want, what's in your way, how you get past what's in your way to get what you want, and what you risk by doing so.
- * Study the text in the same way you study your text for an aria (word-for-word meaning, operative words, phrasing, alternative wording, subtext, "beats")
- * Stage your scene

* Time yourself and make sure your monologue fits into the time allotted for the monologue in the audition (generally 60-90 seconds).

Performing a monologue

* Have a clear establishment of the character and scene (physically) to start the scene, but don't take too much time doing so.

* When the monologue is complete, noticeably break character (physically), and if necessary say "thank you" to the panel.

* Don't be afraid to use more space than you would for singing an aria at the piano, but also avoid approaching the panel (maintain a "fourth wall").