

• • • • • BE AMAZING IN TWO MINUTES OR LESS • • • • •

Choosing The Monologue

Choosing the right monologue counts roughly 30% toward amazing. That may seem like a low percentage. It's not the words alone on the page that will bring success, but what you do with them. Choosing an award-winning monologue will set you on the right path - but if you choose that monologue the night before and hardly have time to memorize it, let alone work on it, that award-winning sheen won't help.

Still, choosing the right monologue does put you on the path. So how do you choose it? What's the key?

Show Off

You want to shine in this moment. That's what it all boils down to, right? You want to show off your skills, your versatility, your connection to the piece. You want to shine in order to get the part, the scholarship, the ranking. How are you going to shine if you choose a monologue that you hate? Or you choose just because it's supposed to be good? Or just because it comes from a popular play? Never choose a monologue 'just because.'

The show off monologue is not a cubic zirconia: all sparkle, no substance. The show off monologue is not doing something so wacky and out of left field because you think it will leave a mark or impress. You're showing off your skills, remember? That is what's going to make you shine.

Your show off monologue has two qualities: It's right for you and and it's right for the moment.

Right for you: Right for you doesn't mean easy to do; so like you that you could perform the monologue in your sleep. Having said that, you do want to look for an age-appropriate piece with a **character in your age range**. It's not necessarily a skill to play a seventy-year-old when you're seventeen. More often than not, that'll be a distraction for those watching you, no matter how good the piece itself is.

What makes a piece right for you? Choose a piece that you love and connect to. The more you love a piece, the more fun you'll be able to have with it, the more you'll want to work on it, the more you'll shine. Let the monologue excite you, not bore you! The more you love a monologue the easier it will be for you to make it live off the page.

That's the real key to the successful monologue: does it live off the page? Is the story vivid? Is the character three-dimensional and age-appropriate? Your audience, be it judge or director, doesn't care about the words on the page. They don't want to see words. They want to experience a living, breathing character.

Right for the moment: Know beyond a shadow of a doubt the purpose of the monologue. Time and time again, good actors lose out because they don't pay attention to the details. What have you been asked to prepare? Do your pieces contrast? What's the time limit? Is the play a comedy or a drama? Modern or classical? Is your monologue on a red light list? (meaning, DONT do it)

Choose a monologue that is right for you and right for the moment and your audience will be completely focused on you. Never make them ask themselves, "Why did they choose this?"

EXERCISE

Look at the last monologue you performed and answer the following questions.

- What was the situation?
- Why did you choose it?
- What do you like about the monologue?
- What don't you like about it?
- What do you know about the character?
- What makes the character live off the page?
- What was the response when you performed the monologue?
- Finish this sentence: This monologue is right for me and right for the moment because...

CONTRAST

Contrast. To compare in order to show unlikeness or differences

Most if not all competitions require two contrasting pieces. And if they don't, you should always have contrasting monologues ready to go.

Contrast shows your versatility as an actor. Choose monologues that are unlike each other, that have differences. Keep in mind, they still need a show off quality, and they still need to be right for you.

Types of Contrast

Character: What makes the characters different in each piece? How do they physically move about the space? What emotion does each character experience? Are the stories for each character similar or different?

Sound: Read the monologues aloud. Sometimes monologues that look different on the page become similar when spoken. Do the pieces sound similar? Do they move at the same pace? Is the vocabulary different?

Period: Pair Shakespeare, Euripides or Moliere with something modern. *The Importance of Being Ernest* with Mamet. A Fedeau farce with Arthur Miller.

Genre: Classical, Absurd, Naturalistic, Modern, Postmodern, Melodrama, Comedy, Drama, the list goes on. Don't use two pieces in the same style of writing.

Mood: Contrast giddy with serious. Which of the following moods contrast well together: expectation, peaceful, frightened, joy, anger, charming, frustration, warmth, playful, condescending, upbeat, festive, sombre, whimsical, anxious, sad, bored, excited, passionate. **Define the mood in your monologue.**

Pace: Pace is an excellent way to establish contrast. Some pieces will have the pace organically built in through the sentence structure: pauses, run-on sentences, clipped short sentences. If not, look at the character. How urgently do they want to share their story? What tactics do they use to get what they want? Let the character determine the pace.

EXERCISE

Contrasting Monologue: Read aloud the included modern monologue with your students. Have students write a reflection where they decide on a contrasting classical monologue and explain their choice.

CONTRASTING MONOLOGUE EXERCISE

Here is a modern monologue. What would make a good choice for a contrasting piece?
Explain your reasons using the different types of contrast.

Wait Wait Bo Bait by Lindsay Price

TAMARA lies on the floor. She raises her arm above her, her hand is held like a sock puppet.

TAMARA: Where's Tamara? Where's Tammy? How come she's not sitting by the phone anymore? What's the matter with Tammy? Could it be that's because she's lying on the floor in a pit of despair? Oh no. Not our Tammy. She'd never lie on the floor in a pit of despair just because she waited all day and all night for a boy to call and HE NEVER DID. Oh. Oh. Inside voice. No need to shout. *(she sits up suddenly)* What's that? Is that the phone? I do believe that's the phone. But who could it be. It couldn't be Dylan. Noooooooo. That would be too precious. Make a girl go absolutely crazy bonkers and then call. That would be a treat. *(she fixes her hair, wipes her face and answers the phone)* Hello? Loony Bin Incorporated. Who? Tammy? Yes this is she. Why Dylan. Dylan Blankers-Wallace. It's Dylan Blankers-Wallace I've got on the phone. Isn't that a treat. Isn't that precious. Why no. There's nothing wrong with me. Nope. I'm like fresh bread. Fresh bread rising in a pan, that's what I feel like Dylan Blankers-Wallace. I feel like fresh bread. Is there something you wanted? Is there a reason for this ever so timely call? A date. You want a date. Next weekend. 7:00. A movie! Isn't that precious. Oh I love movies. Well, Dylan Blankers-Wallace let me tell you something. Let me give it to you straight. Let me lay it on the line for you. I would....I would like to say.....Yes! Yes! I would love to go on a date with you. I would love to see a movie with you. I would love to go out next weekend at seven o'clock. Just one thing. Don't be late. I'm a girl who doesn't like to be kept waiting!

THE MATERIAL

Monologues are used for a variety of reasons within plays. To share a thought, a story, an emotional outburst. A revealing character moment. A private moment between the character and the audience. What makes a monologue amazing for competition?

Choose a monologue that is....

Active. You don't have to physically run in circles to have an active monologue. A character dealing with conflict is active. A character making a life and death decision is active. A character confronting another for the first time is active. And having said all that, a little blocking doesn't hurt - which we'll talk about in the Prep section.

Emotion-based. It's always better to choose an emotion-based monologue over a storytelling monologue. It's more engaging to watch a character deep in the throws of an emotion. But don't confuse emotion-based with emotional. Being emotional (such as sobbing or shouting for your whole monologue) comes across as self-indulgent rather than engaging.

Character-driven. There are no lights, no sets, no costumes, no other actors, no rest of the play. Just you and the words. Give yourself a helping hand and make sure those words come out of the mouth of a three-dimensional character.

Well written. Seem obvious? Be on the lookout for all of the above in your piece. An interesting character in the throws of an emotion-based moment. Look at the sentence structure; is it ordinary or something you can have fun with? Is there some subtext? Is there a journey within the monologue for your character?

Avoid monologues that.....

Are too long. Always err on the side of too short rather than too long. That way you can play with your monologue rather than rushing to beat the clock.

Don't work out of context. If the monologue doesn't work on its own or without explanation, don't use it.

Tell a story rather than show a story. Monologues are often used to advance the plot of a play. These types of monologues do nothing to show off your skills as an actor. There's nothing for your audience to connect to.

Don't come from plays. Particularly if the rules of your particular competition state as such. Certainly there are amazing monologues that come from outside the realm of theatre. If you want to work on your skills as a theatre actor, in theatre competitions, use what theatre gives you.

EXERCISE

Choosing Material: Read aloud the two included monologues with your students. One is a good choice for a competition piece and the other is not. Have students determine which piece is the better option and why. An answer key is also included.

CHOOSING A MONOLOGUE

Here are two monologues. One is a good choice for a competition and the other is less so. Which is which and why?

Sweep Under Rug by Lindsay Price

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Counsellor Kelly here on C-I-T-Y with the evening announcements for Blocks 7A through E. I'm so excited to announce the upcoming plans for the tenth annual Bobby Sue birthday celebration! I can't wait! Can you believe it's been ten years? "A Bobby Sue in every home that needs one" has been the motto from the very beginning. We see no reason to change it. When you have a Bobby Sue to tell you what to do, life gets better! Employment is way up; crime is way down. Just the way we like it. Yay! You guys are so good. We're so proud of you! To help celebrate ten successful years, we're going to have an extra special celebration. Party hats and noisemakers for everyone! Just remember to treat them nicely, we'll be collecting them at the end. We'll do a count down, just like New Years Eve, and we'll all sing together. Won't that be fun? And then, very exciting, a confetti cannon! And then we'll hold a lottery to see who gets cake. I know, I know, I know. Yes it would be great if we could give everyone cake. But in these times, it's just not possible. What can we do? You don't have to eat your piece if you get one. You can always share. That would be such a good thing to do!

Deck the Stage by Lindsay Price

SHELLEY: You don't get off that easy. Sit down! I haven't even started. Sit down. *(She holds the picture in front of his face)* Ask me who's in the picture. Ask! That's my dad. Pretty handsome guy don't you think? Ask where he is. Ask where he is! Come on, you wanted to talk; ask where he is. I don't know. Isn't that funny? Isn't that a scream? I don't know. Two years ago he went to work on Christmas Eve and he never came home. Don't be. He stole money from his company and ran away with the boss' secretary. Merry Christmas! That's our nearest guess anyway. No one knows for sure because there hasn't been one word. Not one. Not a letter. Not a telegram. Not a postcard. Not an answering machine message. Nothing. He left us with debts up to our ears, and we didn't even get a goodbye. How's your dad? Is he alive? Does he talk to you every day? Well good, 'cause let me tell you, around here there isn't much talking. Around here, we bounce from apartment to apartment and my mom tries to keep working but she's not very strong. My dad knew that. And he left. So you'll have to excuse me if I'm cold, or distant, or pretentious. But my mind's a little full 'cause I only got three hours of sleep after working the night shift at the 7-11. And I could really give a crap about Christmas because all it means is that my father didn't love my mother and he didn't love me.

CHOOSING MATERIAL ANSWER KEY

Sweep Under Rug: There is certainly a clear character in this monologue with a specific voice. While there's the potential to have fun with the characters, there's also a lot of plot being set up. There's more storytelling here than any emotional journey - the character's emotional state is exactly the same from beginning to end and that's an issue if you're looking for something to win a competition. It's much more about the story and much less about the character.

Deck The Stage: This is a character-driven emotion-based monologue. The character is on a roller-coaster of emotion as she not only confronts the person she's talking to, but reveals some very deep wounds about her dad. Not only that, but there are specific clues for how to play the character physically - if she works the night shift at the 7-11, she's going to be exhausted, frustrated, spitting mad. These are great clues toward an award-winning performance.

MONOLOGUE COLLECTIONS

Should you get your monologues from a monologue collection? Collections certainly are handy. They're easy to get ahold of. It helps to have a variety of pieces right at your fingertips with all the work done for you. They are an excellent first step toward choosing a piece. And that's how they should be considered: a step in making a monologue choice, not the whole process.

Why you should find your own pieces instead of relying on a collection?

Collections make it easy **not avoid reading the whole play**. That's dangerous. You really should read the play. If you don't, you're missing out on potential Awesomeness by not learning the whole story of your character.

Collections are made up of **popular monologues from popular plays**. On its own not a bad thing. It's fun to read monologues from the hot plays, or to even see what's considered popular. But watch out for things that are popular. You're not the only one with that collection in your hands. They're in many, many other actors' hands. And that means potentially many, many other actors are choosing the same monologue as you. There's nothing worse in a competition than to be the third (or fifth, or twentieth) person performing the same monologue. **You automatically get compared to other actors**, putting you at a disadvantage.

Now. That's a lot of do this/don't do this. Seems like a rather complicated process just to pull a couple of words together for two minutes. Can you get a great monologue out of a collection or outside the theatre world? Of course. Can you win using a storytelling monologue over emotion-based? Of course. Are rules meant to be broken? All the time. But make sure you're breaking the rules in order to be awesome, and not because you don't want to put the work in. Shortcuts will not get you the part or win you the competition. And in the end, you're only shorting yourself.

Preparing The Monologue

If you prep well, you'll achieve 60% toward amazing (and if you're playing along that leaves only 10% for performance. Chew on that for a moment)

You must prepare your monologue. You must prepare your monologue. And I'll say it again: You must prepare your monologue. Can an actor do a good job if they don't prepare? Depends on the actor and the monologue. Depends on how the other actors have prepared. It even depends on the mood of the particular audience.

But why rely on luck when you can build a preparation method that will work every time, for every monologue, for every situation?

CHARACTER

Character development is key if you want to show off your skills. Here's a list of questions every actor should ask and answer regarding their monologue's character. If there isn't an answer for every question, think about whether the monologue is the right choice.

- List all known character details (name, age, family, education, occupation, etc)
- What does my character want?
- Do they get it? Why or why not?
- What change happens to my character within the monologue?
- Who are they speaking to? What's the relationship?
- What emotions does my character experience?
- What is my character doing, thinking, feeling the moment before the monologue?
- How does my character move?
- How does my character stand?
- What pace does my character speak? What language do they use?
- What does the language say about the character?
- What adjectives describe my character? How can I physicalize these adjectives?
- What do I think of this character? How do I relate to this character?

VOICE AND SOUND

Pay attention to the sound of your monologue. You can have the best character development and the most interesting piece, but if you mumble, speak in a monotone or speak so fast no one can understand a word, it won't matter. Your voice is a powerful tool, use it well.

- Project but do not yell. Yelling turns off an audience if you do it for long.
- Record the monologue and listen back. Is every word clear? Is there variety? Is the variety driven by the piece?
- Warm up your voice before you perform. Never perform with a cold, unused voice.
- Tongue Twisters are an excellent way of working on your diction. Really enunciate and articulate to make every word distinct. Make Tongue Twisters part of your warm up.
- Breathe! When you control your breath, you control your voice.

EXERCISE

"Use this monologue to practice analyzing the sound elements of a monologue" to read - "Voice and Sound: Use the Included Monologue to practice analyzing the sound elements of a monologue"

- Circle every sound element in the monologue. Is there any repetition? Alliteration? Are the sentences clipped short? Run on sentences? What's the punctuation? Are there pauses built in? see the included example.

- What does the character sound like? How do they speak? Define their vocabulary. What language do they use?
- Where will you breathe in the monologue?
- Choose one place to pause. Don't make it arbitrary, look at the character and decide why they would pause.
- Read the piece aloud. What is the pace of the monologue? Where does the pace change?

VOICE AND SOUND EXERCISE

Floating On A Don't Care Cloud by Lindsay Price

MYA: So I'm over at Shona's house and we're studying, we're not doing anything out of the ordinary, I have an Economics test tomorrow and we're grilling each other. Everything's fine. Everything's fine. I took a pill earlier today and they're supposed to last a long time. I guess I'm taking them more and more. I guess. Not really. It's not drugs. But I guess, if I was really thinking about it, not that I do, but I notice more and more I find the edge getting stronger and if I don't take another pill I think I might fly apart. Not really. But I might. And I said I'd never inject. Never, never. But it's got to be faster and we're just sitting around and I feel the edge. I go to the bathroom. Her bathroom is a mess. The tub is disgusting. If I clean her tub I'll bet I can make the edge go away. (she drops to her knees) That's what I'll do. I scrub the tile. Up the walls. Faucets. Can't stop it. I scrub and scrub and my fingers are bleeding and my heart is beating so fast, I have to hold the edge. If I don't hold on I'll fly part. All of a sudden it's all edge. All I feel is the edge. Everything is edge and my hands won't stop shaking. I can't get rid of the edge. I can't get rid of it. I have to pull back from the edge the edge the edge if I go too far I'll fly apart, I'll break into pieces, I'll break, I'll break, I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll -

VOICE AND SOUND EXERCISE EXAMPLE

more repeats makes her seem very unsure

Run on

Floating On A Don't Care Cloud by Lindsay Price

MYA: So I'm over at Shona's house and we're studying, we're not doing anything out of the ordinary, I have an Economics test tomorrow and we're grilling each other. Everything's fine. Everything's fine. I took a pill earlier today and they're supposed to last a long time. I guess I'm taking them more and more. I guess. Not really. It's not drugs. But I guess, if I was really thinking about it, not that I do, but I notice more and more I find the edge getting stronger and if I don't take another pill I think I might fly apart. Not really. But I might. And I said I'd never inject. Never, never. But it's got to be faster and we're just sitting around and I feel the edge. I go to the bathroom. Her bathroom is a mess. The tub is disgusting. If I clean her tub I'll bet I can make the edge go away. (she drops to her knees) That's what I'll do. I scrub the tile. Up the walls. Faucets. Can't stop it. I scrub and scrub and my fingers are bleeding and my heart is beating so fast, I have to hold the edge. If I don't hold on I'll fly part. All of a sudden it's all edge. All I feel is the edge. Everything is edge and my hands won't stop shaking. I can't get rid of the edge. I can't get rid of it. I have to pull back from the edge the edge the edge if I go too far I'll fly apart, I'll break into pieces, I'll break, I'll break, I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll -

Repeat. Is it really fine?

again unsure

*edge repeated ~~Nine~~ times
→ TEN times*

slower or faster?

whoa! No period in last sentence - where breathe? All one breath?

Speeding up?

Prognosis

MOVEMENT

Staging shouldn't be ignored simply because you're performing for a mere two minutes. Two minutes is a long time for an audience to watch someone standing still. On the other hand, it's not appropriate to move chaotically about the space from beginning to end. Your movement must be carefully thought out, planned and practiced.

There are two types of movement in a monologue performance.

Good movement: Specific, character-driven blocking. A movement to impact the climax. A pose or gesture to establish character. Good movement will always add to the overall presentation.

Bad movement: Wander-itis, vague gestures, movement and gestures that come from the actor instead of the character. Moving for the sake of moving because the actor thinks they're supposed to.

How do you achieve the good and banish the bad?

Avoid Wander-itis. Wander-itis (random, unmotivated wandering) is one of the most common movement issues. Practice your monologue pretending that your feet are welded to the floor. The more you practice, the more natural it will become.

Less is more. Come up with one specific move, one pose and one gesture for the piece. Each must be character driven. Never move for the sake of moving. See included examples for two monologues

Videotape your performance. Watch it with the mute on to focus solely on your movement. Do you stand your ground or wander? What do you do with your hands? Are your movements character driven or are they things you do? Watch for adjusting of clothes, brushing hair away from the face, shuffling feet, and hands that wave about for no reason.

Perform your piece in front of a friend. Have them raise their hand every time you do something out of character.

What Else?

Practice, practice, practice. The more you rehearse the monologue, the more you'll discover about your character, coming up with the exact right movement, the more ingrained the piece will become. That's when you become amazing.

Time your monologue. Make sure you are well under any time limits. If you have five minutes for two pieces, don't choose two two and a half minute pieces! Going overtime is the easiest mistake to make, and the easiest problem to solve.

Memorizing lines. The less time you spend with your monologue, the easier it will be to forget your lines. Write them out, say them out loud, learn them out of order, say them fast, say them slow, repeat, repeat, and repeat it again.

Read the whole play. Read the whole play. Read it. Really.

MOVEMENT EXAMPLES

Floating On A Don't Care Cloud by Lindsay Price

MYA: So I'm over at Shona's house and we're studying, we're not doing anything out of the ordinary, I have an Economics test tomorrow and we're grilling each other. Everything's fine. Everything's fine. I took a pill earlier today and they're supposed to last a long time. I guess I'm taking them more and more. I guess. Not really. It's not drugs. But I guess, if I was really thinking about it, not that I do, but I notice more and more I find the edge getting stronger and if I don't take another pill I think I might fly apart. Not really. But I might. And I said I'd never inject. Never, never. But it's got to be faster and we're just sitting around and I feel the edge. I go to the bathroom. Her bathroom is a mess. The tub is disgusting. If I clean her tub I'll bet I can make the edge go away. That's what I'll do. I scrub the tile. Up the walls. Faucets. Can't stop it. I scrub and scrub and my fingers are bleeding and my heart is beating so fast, I have to hold the edge. If I don't hold on I'll fly part. All of a sudden it's all edge. All I feel is the edge. Everything is edge and my hands won't stop shaking. I can't get rid of the edge. I can't get rid of it. I have to pull back from the edge the edge the edge if I go too far I'll fly apart, I'll break into pieces, I'll break, I'll break, I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll -

The Pregnancy Project by Lindsay Price

NEIL: First she's quiet. And distant. Like on another planet. I'd be talking about track and how coach won't stop ragging on me – normal stuff. She doesn't hear a word. Then. She doesn't want me to touch her. She keeps shrugging me off. I put an arm around her shoulder, I try to hold her hand. Nothing. I ask her: "What's wrong." Nothing. She's fine. "What's wrong." She's perfectly fine. Mrs. Rossi,

why do girls say they're fine, when they're not? Cause she wasn't. I'm on my way to practise. She's at my locker. I'm late, I don't have time to talk. She's late. She. Is. Late. How? What am I – I'm not, I'm just a normal guy. I'm supposed to get a track scholarship. It's not my fault. We were careful. It's not mine. We were so careful. Sort of careful. I thought we were careful. She's waiting for me to say something. Anything. I want to run. I want to get away from her face. I want her to stop looking at me. Stop waiting. My life can't be ruined because of one... I don't run. I can't. I blame my parents. I don't run. I say: Ok. We'll handle it. I'm a father. I'm a father. I try to get into that frame of mind. Figure out the right thing to do. I'm a father. I'm a father. Over and over and over and just when I.... she's yelling at me in the hall. It's ok. It's ok. No baby. Everything - the whole world wrenches back to normal. Before normal. Sort of. It's stupid. I feel kind of sad. Only not. I'm sure I'll be.... We broke up last week. I broke up with her. I guess I couldn't go back to normal.

Examples Floating On A Don't Care Cloud by Lindsay Price

MYA: So I'm over at Shona's house and we're studying, we're not doing anything out of the ordinary, I have an Economics test tomorrow and we're grilling each other. Everything's fine. Everything's fine. I took a pill earlier today and they're supposed to last a long time. I guess I'm taking them more and more. I guess. Not really. It's not drugs. But I guess, if I was really thinking about it, not that I do, but I notice more and more I find the edge getting stronger and if I don't take another pill I think I might fly apart. Not really. But I might. And I said I'd never inject. Never, never. But it's got to be faster and we're just sitting around and I feel the edge. I go to the bathroom. Her bathroom is a mess. The tub is disgusting. If I clean her tub I'll bet I can make the edge go away. That's what I'll do. I scrub the tile. Up the walls. Faucets. Can't stop it. I scrub and scrub and my fingers are bleeding and my heart is beating so fast, I have to hold the edge. If I don't hold on I'll fly part. All of a sudden it's all edge. All I feel is the edge. Everything is edge and my hands won't stop shaking. I can't get rid of the edge. I can't get rid of it. I have to pull back from the edge the edge the edge if I go too far I'll fly apart, I'll break into pieces, I'll break, I'll break, I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll -

The Pose: There is so much chaos in the sound of the monologue, it's important to contrast that in the movement, rather than add on to it. Chaos in both sound and movement is just that, a lot of chaos. I would go for intense forced stillness – the character talks about flying apart, so the character's pose should try to contain that: arms folded tightly across the body, locked legs with maybe the glimmer of a shake that would be instantly contained.

The Move: Down to the knees when the character talks about scrubbing the tile.

The Gesture: Mya is on the verge of flying apart, which gets harder and harder to contain. I see a case of the shakes just bursting to get out of her as her heart beats faster and faster. So the gesture would be that shake coming to the surface – a fluttering of a hand, a trembling of the leg, and then instantly containing that shake.

The Pregnancy Project by Lindsay Price

NEIL: First she's quiet. And distant. Like on another planet. I'd be talking about track and how coach won't stop ragging on me – normal stuff. She doesn't hear a word. Then. She doesn't want me to touch her. She keeps shrugging me off. I put an arm around her shoulder, I try to hold her hand. Nothing. I ask her: "What's wrong." Nothing. She's fine. "What's wrong." She's perfectly fine. Mrs. Rossi, why do girls say they're fine, when they're not? Cause she wasn't. I'm on my way to practise. She's at my locker. I'm late, I don't have time to talk. She's late. She. Is. Late. How? What am I – I'm not, I'm just a normal guy. I'm supposed to get a track scholarship. It's not my fault. We were careful. It's not mine. We were so careful. Sort of careful. I thought we were careful. She's waiting for me to say something. Anything. I want to run. I want to get away from her face. I want her to stop looking at me. Stop waiting. My life can't be ruined because of one... I don't run. I can't. I blame my parents. I don't run. I say: Ok. We'll handle it. I'm a father. I'm a father. I try to get into that frame of mind. Figure out the right thing to do. I'm a father. I'm a father. Over and over and over and just when I.... she's yelling at me in the hall. It's ok. It's ok. No baby. Everything - the whole world wrenches back to normal. Before normal. Sort of. It's stupid. I feel kind of sad. Only not. I'm sure I'll be.... We broke up last week. I broke up with her. I guess I couldn't go back to normal.

The Pose: Neil is an athlete, confident, and very conscientious. These should both be revealed in his pose – firmly planted feet, hands on the hips, straight back, head held high.

The Move: Neil is talking to two people in the monologue: his girlfriend and his teacher. They should be to his front left and his front right. When he expresses his frustration to Mrs Rossi, a definite strong cross, a bursting out to physicalize his lack of control on this situation.

The Gesture: The events of the monologue are out of Neil's control, and he's a character with a lot of control – the gesture should definitely reflect that. Fists tightly clenched when he talks about his girlfriend being late and then splaying open, like there's nothing he can hold on to.

Performing The Monologue

Why does the performance itself only count 10% toward amazing? If you've chosen the monologue correctly and you've put in the advanced legwork, the performance should be the easy part.

Ah, 'should' be the easy part. For some, performing is never easy.....

BEFORE YOU EVEN BEGIN

Be prepared. That will allow you to worry about one less thing.

Be professional. You can act professionally no matter your age or situation. Be on time and have your paperwork filled out properly. Don't disrupt your fellow performers. Don't waste anyone's time. Don't apologize for anything - for having a cold, for being unprepared, for being late. Do your best under whatever circumstances you're in.

Dress appropriately. Choose clothes that allow you to show off your acting and don't distract from your performance. Choose comfortable pieces that you don't have to adjust. Likewise, keep your hair off your face and keep it from getting in your way.

Breathe. It helps. Really. Take a deep breathe before you start to speak.

Focus. Don't worry about what anyone else is doing. If you start comparing your work to others, you're sunk before you've begin. Focus on your breathing, run the first line of the monologue silently, run through the movements in your head.

Warm up. Find a place that you can do a few vocal warm ups, and some stretching. Get yourself ready to act.

Smile and make eye contact during your introduction, and **then don't look** at your audience while you perform. They want to be able to observe you without being stared at.

And.... Make sure you know the **name of the playwright and the play** your monologue comes from.

CONQUERING STAGE FRIGHT

Sometimes all the rehearsal in the world can't conquer the biggest demon of them all: stage fright. It happens to the most seasoned actors. So how do you deal with it?

Be prepared. Have you heard this one before? Must be important. But when you're prepared, the work you've put into the monologues can override nerves.

Realize that **nerves are natural** and that everyone gets nervous. You should be nervous. This process can be quite nerve wracking. You just don't let the process become all about the nerves. Let the nerves fuel your performance instead of preventing it.

Practice in front of an audience. The more you practice, the less terrifying the performance aspect. Your audition or competition slot should never been the first time you've performed your pieces in front of people.

Visualize your success. Some actors work themselves into such a lather before hand that everything they imagine going wrong happens right on cue. Focus on the positive before you perform. This isn't about being boastful about your performance. Simply see yourself going through your monologue as it's supposed to, without any mistakes. Know that you've practised enough and have the ability to do well.

YOU HAVE TEN SECONDS

One last thing to think about. You have **ten seconds**, not two minutes to impress your audience. It takes the judge, the adjudicator, or the director ten seconds to make a call about what they see and whether or not they're going to engage further.

Yes, that's an insanely short period of time, but that's what you've got. So, don't leave your best stuff till the end. Hook your audience from the first first word, make them lean in, and then make them want more when it's over.

Processing Feedback

Receiving feedback is part of the game in competition. It's an important part of the process - the right feedback can help a lot. But how do you decipher the right feedback from the wrong?

Because here's something that may surprise you. Not all judges know what they're doing. Not all auditions are fair. Some adjudicators make subjective remarks. Some people, are just mean.

Of course, there are some who believe 100% in the process, who are committed to giving constructive criticism and only want your performance to be the best it can be.

But how do you tell the difference between the two? How do you know when you should take criticism to heart or ignore it? How do you interpret feedback in a way that helps you grow as a performer?

You should pay attention to feedback when.....

You consistently get the same note. If every judge gives you the same note such as 'Watch your diction; it was hard to understand every word' Or, 'make sure each move is character driven, there was a lot of wandering around the space.' If the same note comes back to you time and time again, then address it. If you're getting a good response from multiple adjudicators, that's something to celebrate!

You receive a suggestion to try something different. There should be a specific suggestion, not just 'do something different.' But if a judge has gone out of their way to suggest a specific path, why not try it? You may discover another level to the piece. This is especially important if you're coming in second a lot or getting Excellent scores instead of Superiors. Be open to change. Those who are willing to change, get better.

You should ignore feedback when....

You receive negative scores without written backup. A judge who gives you a failing grade without specific reasoning is being mean. Perhaps the performance wasn't up to snuff. But it's a judge's job to justify their decisions.

You receive negative scores without suggestions for change. Likes and dislikes are subjective. If feedback is solely focused on the negative (I didn't like this) how can you improve?

The feedback is focused on the choice of monologue rather than your interpretation and performance. Some people just don't like certain monologues. It shouldn't matter in a competition but it does. If all the feedback is centered around the dislike of the piece rather than what you did with it, don't take it to heart.

The scores don't match the written evaluation. It happens time and time again â the written evaluation is all praise and then the score is lower than you'd anticipate. The feedback should always give you suggestions to grow.