

The Working Singers' Newsletter

June 2009

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Do you need new song ideas for an audition or show?

The Top Ten Tips for Auditioning by Joshua Finkel follows.

Top Ten Tips for Auditioning

By Joshua Finkel

Joshua Finkel, MFA, is a classically trained Broadway and Hollywood Actor, Director and Acting Coach. He created and heads up the Musical Theatre Emphasis at California Lutheran University, the Performers' Workshop at the Academy for New Musical Theatre (providing an intensive Musical Theatre curriculum for Adults and Teens) and teaches his 11 master classes internationally. He has directed and taught in London, Scotland and all over the USA. He is also on the faculty of Jodie Langel's *Making it on Broadway* and the San Francisco Academy for the Performing Arts.

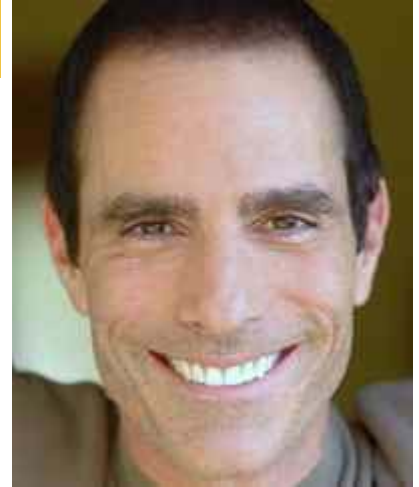
On Broadway, Joshua starred as Molina in *KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN* opposite both Chita Rivera and Vanessa Williams and appeared nationally as The nardier in *LES MISERABLES*. He received an outstanding featured performance award for his portrayal of Lumiere in *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* and has appeared on film opposite Bruce Willis, Calista Flockhart, Jill Clayburgh, James Naughton, Kathleen Quinlan, Marcia Cross, and many more.

Joshua currently lives in Los Angeles. He continues to act, direct and coach actors and public speakers of all ages and levels in person or using his unique "Quick Coach Calling Card" system on the phone for actors who are out of Los Angeles or on a set and can't get to him.

This summer, Joshua will be starring in two shows at Peterborough Players in New Hampshire.

For more info on Joshua and the Creative Combustion Acting Studio, go to

www.ccactingstudio.com



SF Classes and Private Coachings:

The Dance Arts Center in San Carlos, CA - June 18-20

1. Building Character Versatility / Acting for Dancers - Thurs, June 18 at 7:30
2. Singing in Different Styles and Genres - Friday June 19 at 7:30
3. Mastering the Elements of Comedy - Saturday June 20 at 7:30

Los Angeles Master Classes:

The Academy for New Musical Theater Summer Boot Camp - Saturday June 27

1. Acting for Writers
2. Being the Song: Musical Theater Audition and Performance Technique Master Class
3. Audition Monologue and Cold Reading Class

These can also serve as your audition for Joshua's ANMT Performers' Workshop starting in the Fall.

Performers' Workshop Auditions are August 30 from 2-6pm at ANMT in North Hollywood

www.anmt.org/arc/pwdefault.asp

For complete info on cost, enrollment and preparation on these Master Classes, go to

http://www.ccactingstudio.com/upcoming_master_classes.html

1. **Be a nice, responsible and prepared actor.** Always be yourself and the most positive side of yourself when you walk in, greet the room, or when talking to all members in the room. This goes for talking to the monitor outside, to the accompanist, and to the staff behind the table. When I've met someone I've liked or maybe am wondering if how they were in the room was how they REALLY are outside the room, I have asked the audition monitor "how was so and so in the waiting room?" If the response isn't positive, that helps me decide if I want them on my team at 10 a.m. in rehearsal on Monday morning. Also know it's a small world out there. Folks do call each other and ask the folks you list on your resume how you were to work with. So don't lie on your resume. Don't list directors or casting folks you have not worked with. The lie could be uncovered quite easily. It's also very important to show up on time. Be prepared, friendly, courteous and be a team player from audition to closing of the show. And remember that this business is a roller coaster; even though you may be a "star today" you could be unemployed or offered a small ensemble role in another show. Likewise, the rehearsal pianist may one day be the next Tony award winning composer and be able to hire you because they liked working with you years before. You never know, so keep your ego in check and treat EVERYONE with the respect, professionalism and kindness that you would request yourself. It sounds obvious, but good AND bad memories linger so keep creating good memories for yourself and others. Also, don't be a flake - don't have an audition appointment and then not show without calling to cancel. Flakiness is absolutely remembered and not rewarded. Too many folks think it does not matter if you don't show up, it does. Your slot was reserved for you and someone else could have been seen instead. That creates a great deal of bad blood between you and the casting office.
2. **Do consistently great auditions.** That is your job. The rest is truly out of your hands. If you are always prepared, fun and cordial, dress appropriately to the role or show (not in costume but towards the feel (rich, poor, groomed, messy etc), and are simple, honest, and connected emotionally and intentionally to your song, that will get you wonderful feedback. After that, it's simply a numbers game when your type, fits the role and the politics or the cast make up as a whole. If you do consistently great auditions, the casting
5. **Tempo and the accompanist.** Remember to tell the accompanist everything you need them to know. Have no regrets, wishing you had said something. Lay your music out so there is no page turn for the last page, so you can finish strong in the room and the accompanist does not have to flip the page for your last measure or two. Set your tempo by lightly tapping on your chest. If you just sing or tap somewhere else, it does not drop into your "center" to really feel the groove of your tempo; this is great especially if you're nervous and may rush the tempo you set. Remember, whatever tempo you set, the accompanist will play. So be clear and sing between 2-4 bars quietly while tapping on your chest so the pianist will be clear. Similarly, walk them through and lightly sing any tempo changes or written in alternative endings so they are not only looking at it but hearing it as they see your music. The last thing you want to let the accompanist know is when to start. You can say something like "I'll nod to you when I'm ready" or "I'll look up when I'm ready" so they are not starting before or after you. This is very important for open calls (I've had an accompanist start as I'm leaving the piano even before hitting the center of the room). Above all, ALWAYS thank the accompanist on the way out. They are one of your best friends and teammates in the room. Treat them as such, regardless.
6. **Fixing a tempo mid song.** Let's say that even though you set your tempo correctly, the accompanist did not interpret it as such. NEVER glare at the pianist while singing. That makes the room think you are temperamental. Instead "have no regrets" and take the reins. If you want the tempo to go faster mid song, accentuate the consonants for 2-4 bars in the strict tempo you DO want to sing in. That will cue the accompanist of the tempo change. Similarly if you want to go slower, accentuate the vowels in the new strict slower tempo you want to create. The accompanist will listen and respond. But DO NOT endlessly syncopate the song so that you never square up with the pianist. You need to make sure you are together, usually on the beginning of a measure about every 4 measures or so, even in a jazz tune with lots of syncopation.
7. **The Introduction: I coach actors to say their name as a statement, not a question.** Use a "downslide" or period after it, not a question mark, which is a normal speech pattern in today's society. Most of us say our name in passing, almost apologetically en

director will always want to bring you in because you make him or her look good in front of the director and they will WANT to get you work. Also, even though you may be wrong in their eyes for THIS project, they may be casting something else next week that you're perfect for. A great audition is always applauded and remembered. Remember they want you to do well. They WANT YOU to get the role so they can stop looking! Use that as great supportive info when walking in and saying hello.

3. **Set an audition checklist.** Before going into the room and actually before every rehearsal of your number, declare what you want to accomplish in positively phrased goals. Don't write something like "I won't be nervous" or "I won't crack on the high note". If that weren't happening, what WOULD be happening? Rephrase it in positives: "I will be calm and energized" or "I will sing the high note with emotional fullness and even breath". That gives you a positive thing to do, instead of a judgmental or defensive outlook as you prepare.
4. **Visualize.** After you state what you want to accomplish in positive terms, see yourself from the audition table's perspective doing your perfect audition from entering the room to leaving it, embodying the checklist you created. If you mess up when visualizing this, rewind your mental tape a bit and go over that part again until you're clear and seeing EXACTLY the goal you want to create. Then go inside your body and actually EXPERIENCE AND FEEL what you just saw, using the same "rewind" tool if you mess up in that visualization. You will have done your PERFECT audition TWICE before entering the room. You'll feel prepared, not unfocused and can create that result intentionally in the room. It's also easier to make adjustments given by the director if you're clear about your choices going in. After the audition, look at your checklist. Did you accomplish what you wanted? Write down any revisions: e.g. "I will be calm, especially before the final, long high note", and use THAT as a revised checklist point for next time. Your auditioning will continually get stronger and better by your own conscious design. Don't chat outside the audition room. Focus and visualize. Chat afterwards. You are there to get the job, not talk with friends. Be cordial, then excuse yourself to prepare and DO prepare thoroughly via this technique.

route to the song title and out the door. Own your name and be proud of it, let us hear it. It helps create a confident and non-apologetic appearance in the room and in the ears of the auditioners.

8. **Remember that the "scene" of your song starts the second the music hits the air during the intro, NOT when you start singing.** Similarly the scene continues in the measures between thoughts. Always be in a conversation and responding physically and emotionally to the person(s) you are talking to in the song, which can also be yourself or the universe. The intention of what you want that other person to do continues because the obstacle to getting it continues throughout. It makes you stay in action, working to get your goal in the song.
9. **If there is any song you can't fully sing in your audition book, take it out.** Really be able to sing EVERYTHING in the book you bring into the room. Sometimes casting people ask to see your book and choose what they want to hear. Be able to sing it and be able to find it QUICKLY if asked. Organize and know the order of your book. Similarly, have clearly marked separate copies of a 16 bar cut, a 32 bar cut, and the whole song in your book. You can store them in non-glare sheet protectors and then pull out and secure the version you're using. Also feel free to change some notes in a short version of a song to feature your range. Take an alternate high or belt note at the end so we get your full vocal potential and range in each piece. Remember to personalize the situation and substitution you are using for your song. That will make it your own and alive for YOU. That is what we're looking for - YOUR connection to it. To fully cover the bases, have uptempos AND ballads in EACH of these categories in your book:
 - * Standard Legit Broadway (R and H etc.) showing your full voice and range
 - * Jazz tune/Jazz standard
 - * Rock/Pop Tune (not necessarily Broadway but a top 40's tune with a good story to act)
 - * Specialty numbers (this can be switching the context, lyrics, or groove of a song)
 - * Comic numbers
 - * Country tune
 - * Any particular genre piece that is right for your type, e.g. some folks have a classic look from the 20's or so. Have that kind of song for your type(s) in your book.

10. **At the end of your audition, ask "if they'd like to see anything any other way".** This allows for a dialogue between you and the table and suggests that the choices you made were just that - choices - and you CAN be directed. It also lets any reservations they may have be voiced and then give you an adjustment they may not have thought to give in the room. NOW, if they DO give you an adjustment, DO IT. Don't be the same. You'll have shown them you're a flexible and capable actor as well as a great team player able to take criticism and adjust to it, knowing they are on your side trying to help you get the role! Have a great time in the room!