

Staying on top at Auditions and interviews

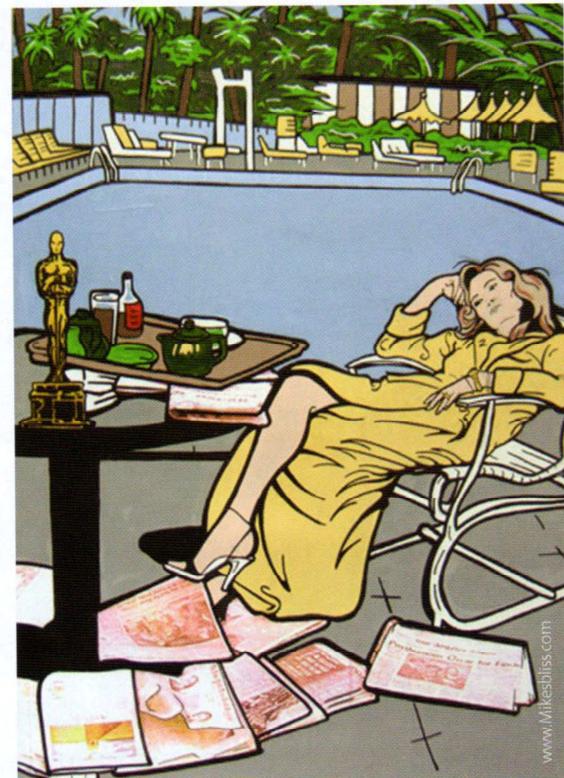
By Richard Evans CDG

The competition among actors and performers to get work has always been fierce, with many more actors in the marketplace than jobs available at any given time. In these recessionary days, however, the competition has never been more intense, with ever-decreasing budgets and the amount of reality television being made far outweighing drama and therefore fewer actors employed, so that even the most experienced of performers is 'having to raise their game' at auditions. This was brought home to me last year, when I was casting a replacement actress for a small touring show. The standard of the artists suggested by agents was phenomenally high and I assembled an excellent list of 20 people to bring in. To my surprise and delight, not only had everyone turned up at their allotted times and fully prepared, but nobody cancelled or even asked to change the time of their appointment – it was the first time in over 20 years of casting that my pencilled list in the office had no eraser marks on it. So what can you do to be at the top of your game and stand out from the crowd when auditioning?

The first thing to do, when you find out you have been called for an audition, is as much research and preparation as possible. If the appointment has come through your agent, ask them for as much information as you can get about the project, the part you're being seen for and the people you will be meeting. If the company have called you directly, don't be shy – ask the person you speak to for as much information as you can (even insider tips on how the director sees the

character and how you should dress). The more you know that you're right for the part, the more confident you will be and, as confidence is the key to success and becoming a working performer, so the more ground work you do the better you will feel. Knowledge is power! Armed with this information, it is now time for further research. The Internet is brilliant for this, especially Google, as you can type in the name of the play, production or theatre company, director and other creative's, and be instantly provided with facts and details of past work, which could be useful to drop into conversation should you get to chat with them. By doing this, you will show that you've done your homework, earn respect and put yourself in a memorable minority (try not to be too obvious though, and only drop anything into the conversation if the right opportunity presents itself, or you could be seen as desperate). Next, be sure to prepare anything that has been

requested as thoroughly as you can. If you have been emailed or sent script before the day, ensure you are off the page and have it word perfect (though often directors don't mind you keeping the script by your side as a security blanket). If the script has been sent beforehand, this will be expected and the majority of your competitors will have learnt it (no matter how short the time frame) and, in my experience, those who have prepared



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almost always get the job over those who choose to sight-read. If the script isn't sent ahead, arrive a little earlier in case there's script for you to look over. If you're dyslexic, please don't be afraid to explain the situation and ask if you can come in as early as you need to look at the script, or have it sent beforehand to learn, if necessary – it is your right to have as good a chance as everyone else, so don't hide the fact.

Lastly, you're being auditioned for the project because whoever is responsible for casting it believes that you are right for the part for which you're being seen and stand a good chance of getting it. If they didn't think this way, they wouldn't waste their time seeing you and, strange as it may seem, you are actually 70% of the way to getting a job if you're called in to audition. Everybody in the room will want to you get the job – especially the casting director – so it's important to think positively (if you convince yourself that you won't get the job, or somebody else will get it instead of you, your prediction will usually come true). Keep telling yourself mentally 'I am going to succeed' and 'I can do this!' right up until you walk into the room. When you get in there, be prepared for anything that may happen and, above all, enjoy your audition!

You'll find more detailed techniques for maximising your success in my book, **AUDITIONS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE, AND ITS WEBSITE**, auditionsapracticalguide.com, also provides useful tips, advice and resources.

GOOD LUCK!

One of the most nerve-racking experiences at auditions is when one of the panel asks you a question that you find awkward or embarrassing.

Surprisingly, this is often not done to embarrass you, but to see how you react, so be sure to keep calm and avoid confrontation and sarcasm – which are all too common reactions. Think before you speak and be honest, turning any negatives that are thrown at you into positives. For instance, your response to 'You haven't had much experience' might be 'No, but I'm a new face in the Industry', or if someone asked 'Why haven't you trained?' you could reply 'Because I've learned far more actually working professionally'. You'll be prepared and more confident in this situation by running through questions that might be asked (thinking back on past experiences will help too) and working on positive responses in advance.

This article originally appeared in Theatre And Performance Magazine in May 2011



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