

How to Rehearse a Monologue

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Audition Monologues are somewhat my specialty as an Acting Coach. So far in 2019, 100% of my 1-2-1 private students (who have had more than 2 sessions with me) this year have either been offered recalls or places at top UK Drama Schools.

When it comes to performing monologues some people 'just' want to work on character choices (although they usually can't tell you what they mean by that!). Some people want to simply 'action' (or as I call it 'tactic') their lines. In my experience it's fair to say that most people battle through their monologue on often mis-guided 'gut-instinct'.

But there is a better way; at ACS we have developed a PROCESS that you can follow which can be applied to ANY monologue, whether modern or classical, tragic or comic.

The best thing about this process, is that it is relatively simple to follow and makes the monologue unmistakably YOURS (this is especially important if its Shakespeare and you have that dreaded worry about it having been done a million times before).

I have had private Drama School Audition clients work with me for a couple of sessions, go away and apply the process to all their monologues (yes you do have to put the effort in, there's no point me giving you all the answers!) and then come back to me and present a rough set of great monologue performances, ready to polish up for audition time!

1. Through Analysis, you need to identify the journey of the monologue: it's Hook, it's Turning Point, it's Climax, and it's Resolution. This is what I refer to as 'The Journey' of the topic, issue, or more specifically task that you should be exploring (we'll figure out what that IS later!)
2. The shape of the journey can be plotted on a simple graph, with 'INTENSITY' on the Y axis and 'TIME' on the X axis. A standard journey that works with 99% of monologues looks a little like three undulating hills that rise and fall but each hill gets steeper. As we go through time, the intensity of the monologue rises until it reaches its peak intensity at the climax. However, between those moments you have to work out how your intensity will rise and fall, or peaks and troughs. This is important as the listener craves dynamics, there must be change and movement in pace, energy and intensity or the monologue becomes too boring and stale.
3. If your struggling with your analysis or can't quite work out what motivates your character to speak these words, look at the Climax of the monologue, which is usually just a few lines back or a thought or two from the end. You can also check it's exact location by asking yourself this question - if my character had to choose only articulate ONE thing from all of this, what would it be? It should therefore be the MOST intense moment, and that will tell you what the characters WANTS - this is critical as it drives the whole purpose of the monologue
4. Think of the monologue as a conversation between two people, in which only one person is talking. You have to have a sense of being in the present. Even with monologues that refer to past events, you're not a reporter, you have to re-experience them.
5. A monologue is not a pre-planned speech. It's a train of thought in which you don't know what you're going to say next. You have to break it up into chunks of thoughts (or carriages on the train of thought, which is driven by the engine of the big idea or WANT that you're exploring).
6. You then can take those big chunks of thoughts and think about what I call your 'Macro Subtext' - the significant underlying strong opinion or feeling that drives only that thought and that thought alone. (There is also 'Micro Subtext' but I won't go into that now)
7. Don't fall into the emotional trap. If you're behaving a certain way at the climax, you MUST start emotionally somewhere significantly different otherwise there is no journey or evolution of the character.