Audition Guidelines for Monologues

CONTEMPORARY MONOLOGUES

Your monologue must:

- Be taken from a published play – not a film or tv script. It must not be a self-written piece or a poem. You are advised to look at better-known playwrights: they are more likely to be quality pieces of writing and good writing is easier to act well. Otherwise the choice is up to you: part of what we’re interested in is what you choose, as well as what you do with it.

- Be contemporary! We are defining contemporary as post-1950. Contemporary adaptations of older plays count as contemporary (e.g. Andrew Upton’s play “The Present”, which is an adaptation of Anton Chekhov’s “Platonov”). Similarly contemporary plays set in earlier periods are fine too (e.g. Stephen Jeffrey’s “The Libertine” is set in the 17th century but was written in 1994).

- Be spoken by a character who is fairly close to your own age. Be guided by whether it is possible for you to have had the experiences the character has, which should allow you to better understand them. If you can’t really understand and empathise with the experience your character has had, it’s probably not a good choice for you even if it is a good speech.

- Be something you can speak in your own accent. Some speeches are written in such a heavy dialect that you can’t speak them without the accent or without feeling awkward if you keep your own, so if you find this to be the case, choose something else. (We are happy for your accent in song to be appropriate to the material but your monologues should be in your own voice).

- Provide a good contrast to your Shakespeare speech. For example, they might be very different kinds of characters, or one speech could be comedy and one drama, etc.

SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES

Your monologue must:

- Be no shorter than one minute and no longer than two.
- Be a speech from one of the plays. No sonnets or excerpts from poems please.
- Be in your own accent.
- Be within your playing age range (as for contemporary monologues)

SOME ADVICE

- Choose pieces you like and to which you feel a strong connection.
- Don’t worry too much about whether pieces are ‘over-done’: choose the piece that is right for you. There will be pieces we see a lot (e.g. anything that is on lists for other courses) but if one of these feels like the best possible piece for you, you are welcome to bring it.

- Cutting and pasting sections together is fine but only if it really works as one whole speech. If you aren’t absolutely sure of how to edit pieces to make a speech that has good structure, choose something that is already one piece.
• Make the interpretation your own. Whilst it can be helpful to run your pieces for other people so you get used to so you get used to an audience, know that it is your interpretation we are looking for and you that we are interested in, not your teacher or your friend.

• With the contemporary speech, be wary of pieces that feel like they are just one idea or emotional state, or where the speaker is only reflecting on something that has happened in the past. It’s great to look for pieces where your character is trying to affect or change the point of view of the person they’re speaking to in the moment of your speech. Speeches that feel like they are scenes rather than stories tend to be easier to act well.

• Read the whole play. If you don’t, you risk making choices that are inappropriate because you don’t have the whole picture. Use your reading of the play to help you understand who the character is, what their world is like, what’s happened to them and most importantly, what they want. These are really important questions for you to take into consideration when interpreting your speech. If you find reading Shakespeare difficult, having a contemporary interpretation alongside the original text can be helpful, but only reading a synopsis will give you a fairly limited view.

• Don’t bring costumes or props. The exception to this is if there is a prop that is absolutely essential to your piece (e.g. a letter the character is reading). We will have spare chairs in the room: you are welcome to use one to be your ‘scene partner’ so you can more easily keep your eyeline.