

# ARDENT RESOURCES

---

## Theatre Auditions

Produced by Ardent Theatre Company  
with contributions from directors Anthony Biggs,  
Caroline Byrne, Sue Dunderdale and Bob Wolstenholme.



“Auditioning is full of many paradoxes. You need to be fully prepared, but prepared to let it all go. You want to be informed and totally open to new ways of thinking about the material. You must want the job and yet treat the experience with ease and curiosity. Embracing the paradox is key, and a practice you’ll refine and refine as you navigate the art of auditioning.”

**Caroline Byrne**

## ABOUT

**ARDENT RESOURCES** is a collection of workshop notes, interviews, guidance and tips about working in Theatre. It is not intended as comprehensive advice or formal educational resource on which reliance should be placed; rather it collates various insights from people working in the industry that you can choose to incorporate into your own toolkit. Nothing should be taken as a representation or warranty as the correctness or fitness for purpose of any of the content.

Any links shared are for information only and are not endorsed by, connected to or representative of Ardent Theatre Company. We can’t guarantee that any of the advice given will lead to future opportunities in the arts; but we do hope it provides resources to help build your own career strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

Auditions are one element of the casting process that usually starts with submission of your CV and photo or a call from your agent because they have put you forward for a role; or it might be that you’re auditioning to get into drama school.

The audition is an opportunity for you show something of yourself and your abilities, and for you to find out more about the director and company you’ll hopefully be working with.

## BE PREPARED

You will be asked to prepare a speech or speeches of your own choosing or be sent something from the play to read from; or you might be asked to do both.

If it’s something of your own choosing, then you will need to learn it. If you’ve been asked to read from the script, you don’t need to learn it unless specifically requested to do so; but you do need to be familiar with it.

# 2

“Be as prepared as you can be - I don't mean learn the piece(s), unless you're specifically asked to - I mean read the play so that you understand the full range and journey of the character you're auditioning for. If it's a new play and the full script isn't available yet, try and get as much of it as you can and/or read some of the writer's other work.

Have a look round the production company or theatre's website and Google the director - find out what other work they've done, how it's been received, whether they've done work you like etc. It's rare you get the chance, but if you can, see something by the company/theatre/ director.”

## **Bob Wolstenholme**

“Make sure that you're well rested, you're in a good frame of mind, healthy, that you can focus on your audition. So make sure you've given time for it and you've rearranged any other commitments that you have and that you are on time on the day.”

## **Anthony Biggs**

## **BE PREPARED (continued)**

The audition will give the director a glimpse into how you work. It will be brief—auditions always are—but it may well give the director a chance to see how well you respond to direction.

KNOW THE SPEECH inside out, so that when it comes to the moment the director asks for a different interpretation of the text, you can manage those changes effectively and without fuss.

## **DEALING WITH NERVES**

It's natural to be nervous and anxious before an audition, especially when you're just starting out. The more castings you do, the more relaxed you'll be and realise it's just one part of the process of being an actor.

So much of the decision process is out of your control, so focus on the bits you do have control over. Be on time, do your preparation and know the speech inside out.

If you can, find a way to relax. It might mean doing breathing exercises or giving yourself a quiet moment before you go into the room. Find something that works for you and becomes part of your preparation routine.

## **AUDITION SPEECHES**

Choose a speech that suits you best. Avoid doing a speech that is beyond your means. That doesn't mean you shouldn't select something that is going to push you in terms of demands but try and make your choice based on the character being similar in age to you.

The audition speech gives the director or casting director a glimpse into you not only as the performer but also as the person. That might sound bizarre if you are playing a murderer for example, but every speech you do will shed light on a little bit of you too!

# 3

## QUICK TIPS

“Choose something that suits you and the part you’re going for. You’ve only got 2 mins so don’t make it difficult on yourself. And if doing comedy probably avoid farce - it’s hard to get people to laugh if there’s only a couple of audience. Choose something that gives you room to move. Standing still may suit the scene but doesn’t show your range. Have contrasting pieces and have a few in case they’ve just heard your first piece. Be prepared to be given notes.”

### **Anthony Biggs**

“Breathe, relax, give yourself time to arrive. If you are doing a learned piece know it so well that you can do anything with it, if you’re reading - go over it so many times that you know it, when you finally come to do it - allow it to happen rather than try to control it.”

### **Sue Dunderdale**

## AUDITION SPEECHES (continued)

As an actor our instinct can often be to choose the speech that is the darkest, meanest most dramatic. That might not be the best option, and so choose carefully. A speech that is far less dramatic, and yet much better suited to you, might well be the better option.

The audition speech might well be your first introduction to the creative team on the panel. Make sure it counts. Make sure the speech shows you off for who you are, and what you are capable of.

## THE AUDITION

Your audition begins the moment you enter the building and doesn’t end until the moment you leave. It’s important to make an impression inside and outside the audition room. The person ticking your name off the list when you arrive may be an essential part of the creative team and involved in the decision process.

Be prompt - first impressions count for a lot. The director will always be thinking about the long term, the rehearsals, the production etc - no one wants someone who struggles with timekeeping.

Don’t use props or dress in costume to suit the part; these things become a distraction. The director or casting director just wants to see you and what you can do.

Be prepared to stop the speech at any point, be asked to do a line slightly differently, be asked to do the speech in a completely different.

Remain positive and be confident. Don’t worry about dropping lines and so on, just start again. It really isn’t a problem. No director is seeking perfection in these circumstances, they are merely seeking a bit of you, so it’s not about whether you’ve forgotten a line, it’s about HOW you deal with it.

# 4

## From Bob Wolstenholme:

On very simple audition technique - don't look at the director while you're performing unless they're the person reading with you. If it's a monologue, find an eyeline to play to; if it's a duologue, play to the person you're reading with.

Don't worry about what the director is doing - I should keep this secret, but I often write more in the auditions of actors I'm not bothered about, just to look like I'm engaged; when I'm really engaged with what an actor's doing, I tend to stop writing altogether and watch.

Don't be afraid to ask questions and have things clarified if you need to; and if a new bit of text or an unexpected task is sprung on you, take your time to understand it. If you're asked questions, also don't be afraid to take your time to think through your answers so that you can be clear - it's much better than waffling nervously.

## From Caroline Byrne:

Ultimately, you want to leave the room having had a rich and creative exchange with the team, and build new relationships with directors, casting directors and writers regardless of whether you get the job or not. Here are some things that might be useful to help you do just that:

### 1. Read the scene for logic (not for your part)

Know the logic of the whole scene, not just what you're doing in it. Having a narrative overview will help you discuss the scene, demonstrate your dramaturgical skills and you'll discover genre, pace and rhythm accordingly.

### 2. Learn the thoughts (not the lines)

Knowing what the character is thinking will be more helpful than knowing what they are saying. It will be helpful if you're asked about the scene, asked to improvise, dry on a line and need to paraphrase, and the writers and director will get what they need. Knowing the text inside out will help you do your best in the room.

# 5

## **From Caroline Byrne: (continued)**

### **3. Come in with your own read on the part**

Once you know what the character thinks, and what world they are in, prepare your take on it. Bring in your ideas that serve the story and add to it. Show them what the part could be. Be prepared for this to be undone and redirected by the director, who will also want to see how well you take notes and can work with them.

### **4. Listen**

When we are stressed our ability to listen can be compromised. Listening and being listened to is a vital exchange between actor and director. Listen consciously, and if you're given notes it's okay to repeat them out loud to double check with the director that you heard their thoughts. It will also give you time to prepare to integrate these notes and ideas.

### **5. Learn to debrief with yourself afterwards and be your own gauge of how well it went.**

Sometimes you won't hear back from an audition. This can be excruciating. And bad practice, but it is common. You can audit the experience for yourself and let it go. Add up how you felt with the creatives, how you experienced the material and apply any thoughts or reflections to the next one.

# 6

“Keep it tidy. What we don’t want as you exit the room is waffle. That again shows sort of nervousness and anxiety and it’s just something that’s very off-putting. So, don’t have lots of bags hanging around on the floor that you need to collect or don’t feel like you need to go round and shake everybody’s hands at the end or any of that kind of thing... Once you’ve finished and you’re done, you be off.”

**Anthony Biggs**

## AT THE END OF THE AUDITION

If you don’t get the part, try not to take it personally. Competition is always high and to even get in the room in front of a director or casting director is a huge achievement.

There are so many factors that determine whether someone is or isn’t offered the part. The director will be trying to put together an ensemble that looks right for their vision of the play as well as thinking about the combination of individual personalities in the rehearsal room. Some of the actors may already be cast and it might just be about getting the right look, especially if the character is part of a family unit in the play.

You will usually be asked if you have any questions. It’s fine not to, especially if it’s information you’ve already been told by the director or was included in the casting brief. You don’t have to ask something just to show that you’ve read the script. Equally, the audition is a chance for you to find out more about the director or production and if there’s something you genuinely have a question about, don’t be afraid to ask it.

When you’re done, then leave. Don’t prolong your exit thinking the more time spent in the room, the more chance you’ll have.



“There’s a huge amount of competition... the reason you don’t get the part will simply be because you don’t fit. That’s all it will be about.”

**Anthony Biggs**

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Once the audition is over, try and forget about it. Go and do something just for you, that takes your mind off it. Rejection is part of the business and there will be many auditions you go for where you won’t get the role.

If you’re prepared and have done all your homework, then you’ll have done as much as you can and everything else is beyond your control and not worth worrying about.

There can be so many reasons why you didn’t get the part, so forget about it and move on to the next one.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Watch our interview with director Anthony Biggs:

<https://tinyurl.com/anthony-biggs>

Check out our units and actions resource published on **10th June 2021** to help you prepare your audition speech:

[www.ardenttheatre.co.uk/units-and-actions](http://www.ardenttheatre.co.uk/units-and-actions)

Bob Wolstenholme’s Signal Theatre Company have a published casting policy, which says they’ll tell you what they’re going to ask you to do and who’s going to be in the room when you do it. If this information isn’t available when you audition it’s perfectly acceptable to ask for it:

[http://signaltheatre.com/?page\\_id=1033](http://signaltheatre.com/?page_id=1033)

Last updated 13th May 2021

[www.ardenttheatre.co.uk](http://www.ardenttheatre.co.uk)  
[contact@ardenttheatre.co.uk](mailto:contact@ardenttheatre.co.uk)  
Registered Charity No. 1161320