



INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows that auditions are brutal. There's no other word for it. They are unnatural, awkward, stressful, and sometimes even unfair. But they have always been with us. As we saw in the movie *Shakespeare in Love*, even Will had to hold auditions. We can assume that further back, in the time of Aeschylus and Euripides, actors were sprucing up their togas to stand in torchlight and emote lines from the newest plays in hopes of snaring a role. No one has ever found a better way. So if auditions are still all we have, we had better make the best of them.

If you've ever auditioned for a role in a film or a television show and you didn't get it, this book is for you. If you've ever auditioned for lots of roles, didn't get them, and you wondered why, this book is for you. If you've trained for the stage but want to work in film, if you've done commercials or industrials or worked in any other media and want to try your hand at dramatic programming, this book is for you too. If you've ever directed or thought of directing, you will also find this book informative. And if you've ever wondered what really goes on in auditions, then read on.

In the following pages you'll find advice about how to get the audition and what to do with it once you have it. There are suggestions for properly preparing beforehand and following up later. And of course, there are the things I feel you should never do if you want to win the role. I should, perhaps, state that all these things are the gospel according to me – one individual casting director. If you speak to other casting directors, you will find certain differences in approach. But the basics won't change.

Auditions are a way for the decision-makers to get a sense of who is most right for the character in question, and get an indication of that actor's take on the part. We

can even begin to sense what kind of person he¹ is. We get a chance to see what the actor looks like, hear what he sounds like, and determine if he is someone who will get along with the director. Can he take direction? How nervous is he and will be able to calm those nerves and put them to good use? In callbacks we also look for chemistry: how does he match with the female lead or the other male leads he might have to interact with – a possible father or brother or buddy?

For the actor, his task in the audition is clear. He's there to prove that he's the best person for the job. He's there to shove the competition out of the way. He's there to prove that he's a brilliant actor so that even if he doesn't get this part, there might be something else for him either in this film or in the director's next project.

But it's also important to remember what auditions mean for the casting director. This is my showcase. This is where I get a chance to let the people who hired me know they've made the right decision and I'm sensational at my job. It's my opportunity to prove that I'm so in tune with the acting community, and I so understand the requirements of the roles, that I can provide the director with first-rate actors who are exactly what he's looking for. In fact, the best thing that can happen to me is that every person who comes in to audition is so perfect that we can't decide who to hire.

From time to time I'll try to dispel some common misconceptions such as: Casting Myth #1: Casting directors don't want you to do well. Think about it. If you fail, I look bad. The worse you are, the worse I look. Therefore the better you are, the better I look.

So believe me when I say I'm rooting for you. I don't want to be embarrassed any more than you do. If I call you in for an audition, you have to know I think you can do it. That's especially true since every director I have worked with starts our first meeting with the same proclamation, "I need really great actors for this film." I'm waiting for the day when a director says, "I don't need good actors. You can find me some crummy ones if you like." What you can take from this

is that you have to be a "really great actor" if you're going to get the part and, furthermore, I already think you are.

My main focus in this book is to tell you what you can do to give yourself the edge over all those who want the same role as you. As a casting director, I can only pave the way by inviting you to the audition. Once you are inside the room, it's up to you to win the role. Quite simply, you have to be better than everyone else and you have to show that to the people watching your audition. In order to do that, you have to start by believing it yourself. Because if you don't believe it, no one else will.

Chapter Notes

1. Both males and females who act are referred to as actors, and I do acknowledge that there are approximately equal numbers of both. For simplicity I have chosen to use the masculine gender when referring to actors in this book.