



Musical Audition Tips from Stephen Schwartz

Stephen Schwartz (*Wicked*, *Godspell*, *Pippin*) has been involved with Broadway and film casting decisions for over thirty years. Here he answers a question from a performer about audition tips. (Used with Stephen Schwartz's permission).

Question from Sera to Stephen Schwartz:

I'm an aspiring music theatre actress and I have an audition for a performing arts university and I really want to be accepted. This sounds naive but I was wondering if you could give me some advice as to what you would look for if you were auditioning people? Are there any things I could do to make my audition stand out? Do you know anything that would be helpful?

Thank you so much, Sera

Answer from Stephen Schwartz to Sera:

Dear Sera: The art of auditioning is, as you know, not something that can be fully discussed in a brief email. There are books written and classes taught about it. But briefly, I would say the following:

What you most want to do is to present who you truly are and to show your skills to their best advantage. Here are some ways to do that:

1. Know something, if you can, about the role or roles for which you are auditioning, and pick appropriate material to show. For instance, if you're auditioning for *CAROUSEL*, don't sing a rock song from *RENT*, and vice-versa. The same holds true for what you wear to the audition -- you don't want to come in a costume, obviously, but you want the auditioners to be able to envision you in the show. Thus, you wouldn't wear a punk "streety" outfit to an audition for *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*, nor look like a cheerleader if you go in for *HAIR*. I know these things seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people don't consider them.
2. Beyond the above, don't try to second guess the auditioners. Just go in and do your piece to the best of your ability. Be focused and as in-the-moment as you can.
3. Be REALLY well-prepared with your material, if possible. Remember, you're likely to have an accompanist who can't play it perfectly, and you will be nervous, which will be distracting. So be ready to the extent you can.
4. Don't try to sing beyond your range or riffing ability. You would be surprised how many good singers decrease the effectiveness of their auditions by adding a higher note than they can hit comfortably or a riff that they are not good at, when they don't need to do either. Know what you're good at, and stay within it.
5. Never apologize for anything. As I said before, try to seem (and feel) as relaxed, confident, and focused as you can. Just be true to yourself, and you will impress people, at least in my experience.

I hope you find these tips helpful. Good luck, Stephen Schwartz

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