A PERFORMER'S GUIDE

The Performer's *Starters Pack*

Your Ultimate Audition Edge, navigate auditions with confidence: what to avoid, what to embrace, and how to truly shine.

THE DEFINITIVE EDITION

A practical, no-nonsense roadmap for the modern musical theatre performer

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Six chapters, one transformative audition strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Your *Audition Game Changer*

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Ever walk out of an audition room feeling like you just sang your heart out, only to be met with… crickets? Or maybe you've watched a younger performer, brimming with raw talent, pick an audition song that, well, bless their heart, was never going to get them a callback? This isn't about talent, confidence, or even how many D5s you can belt out. More often than not, it's about the choices we make before we even step foot in the room. And let's be honest, in the competitive world of musical theatre, those choices can feel like navigating a minefield blindfolded.

I've been there, and I've seen it from both sides of the table, as a performer pouring my soul into every note, and as a musical director, listening intently for that spark, that fit, that tells me *this person understands the material* and, more importantly, understands themselves as an artist. What I've noticed, time and time again, is a pattern. Incredible performers get overlooked not because they aren't good enough, but because they're bringing a knife to a gunfight, or worse, a spoon. They are using the wrong tools, specifically, the wrong audition material.

This isn't about shaming anyone for their current songbook. Not at all. It's about empowering you with the knowledge and the specific tools to stop making those common, often career-stalling, mistakes. Think of this as your backstage pass to understanding not just *what* to sing, but *why* it works, and crucially, why some well-loved classics are actually doing you a disservice in the audition room. This isn't some airy-fairy, "just be yourself" guide; this is a practical, no-nonsense roadmap crafted from years of experience in the trenches.

> *" In The Performer's Starters Pack, we're going to pull back the curtain on the audition process like never before, and by the time you finish, you won't just have a new set of songs; you'll have a profound understanding of your own artistry.*

We'll start by shining a spotlight on **Chapter 2: The 'Not-So-Secret' List**, a deep dive into those songs that, while beautiful, might be sabotaging your chances. We'll break down the "why" behind each one, saving you countless hours of frustration and redirection. Then, get ready to expand your repertoire exponentially in **Chapter 3: Your New Audition Bestie**, where I'll introduce you to not 10, not 20, but 100 diverse, powerful, and often overlooked songs that can make you stand out from the crowd. This isn't just a list; it's a living, breathing canon designed to supercharge your auditions.

You'll also discover your own unique vocal fingerprint in **Chapter 4: Finding Your 'Instinctive Fit'**, learning how to choose the songs that don't just sound good, but feel like they were written for you. We'll then move into the practicalities with **Chapter 5: The Ultimate Audition Checklist**, ensuring you arrive at every callback polished, prepared, and present. Finally, because our craft is as much about our head as it is our voice, **Chapter 6: Beyond the Checklist** will equip you with the mental frameworks to navigate the inevitable highs and lows of a performing career.

By the time you finish this book, you won't just have a new set of audition songs; you'll have a profound understanding of your own artistry, a renewed sense of confidence, and a clear path to owning every single audition room you enter. Are you ready to stop guessing and start getting those callbacks? Let's dive in.

CHAPTER ONE

01 Welcome to Your *Audition Game Changer*

Let's be straight with each other: you've probably sung "On My Own" so many times it feels less like a song and more like an extension of your vocal cords. Or maybe you've heard "Popular" one too many times at every single audition callback. We've all been there, and honestly, it's not your fault if you're feeling a little stuck in an audition rut.

You're a performer, a singing teacher, a parent of a bright-eyed young talent, or a musical director always searching for that perfect voice. You know the hustle, the hours of practice, the sheer emotional grit it takes to step into that audition room. But sometimes, despite all that effort, something just doesn't click. Maybe you feel like your song choices aren't quite landing, or you're getting vague feedback, or worse, no feedback at all.

That's exactly why I, your friendly guide, put together *The Performer's Starters Pack: Your Ultimate Audition Edge*. Think of this not as another dusty textbook, but as your most trusted, slightly cheeky, and always honest companion for navigating the often-baffling world of musical theatre auditions. My goal is simple: to transform your audition preparation from a guessing game into a strategic, exhilarating experience where you feel genuinely confident and excited about what you're bringing to the table.

What's Inside This Little Gem?

This isn't just a pep talk; it's a practical toolkit designed to give you concrete, actionable steps. Inside *The Performer's Starters Pack*, you're getting a few crucial things that are going to seriously level up your audition game:

- **The 'Not-So-Secret' List: Audition Pieces to Rethink (and Why!):** This is a candid, 56-page guide highlighting those ubiquitous songs and monologues that, frankly, directors and musical supervisors have heard a thousand times. We're talking about the pieces that, unintentional as it may be, might be working against you. But don't worry, I won't just tell you *what* not to do; I'll explain *why* and give you the insight to avoid common pitfalls.
- **Your New Audition Bestie: A 100-Song Replacement Canon:** This is where the magic truly starts! Forget the overdone. I've curated a list of 100 diverse, fresh, and often overlooked songs that genuinely showcase different vocal types, acting styles, and personalities. This canon is

designed to give you options that are both unique and perfectly suited for a wide range of musical theatre roles, allowing you to breathe fresh life into your repertoire.

- **The Ultimate Audition Checklist: Confident Steps to the Room:** You know that nagging feeling that you've forgotten something? That's gone. This comprehensive checklist walks you through every single step of your audition prep, from choosing your sheet music to packing your bag, ensuring you walk into that room feeling completely prepared and in control. It's like having a seasoned stage manager whispering reminders in your ear, but without the actual whispering.

Why This Matters for You

I've seen a 22-year-old aspiring soprano, with a voice like an angel, be consistently overlooked because her song choices were always the same three ballads every other soprano was singing. And I've watched musical directors sigh internally when they hear "Defying Gravity" for the third time in an hour. Your talent is undeniable, but sometimes, the material you choose can inadvertently put a cap on how brightly that talent shines.

This guide is going to empower you to:

- **Choose with intention:** No more guessing. You'll understand the psychology behind song selection and how to highlight your unique strengths.
- **Stand out from the crowd:** With a fresh canon of songs, you won't sound like everyone else. You'll sound like *you* at your very best.
- **Walk in with genuine confidence:** Preparation banishes nerves. When you know you're bringing your A-game with killer material and meticulous organization, that confidence radiates, and casting teams notice.

So, if you're ready to ditch the audition clichés, discover material that truly excites you, and finally step into that room feeling like the star you are, you're in the right place. Let's get started on making your next audition your best one yet.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

What you'll walk away with

- ✓ Understand the core purpose and benefits of *The Performer's Starters Pack*.
- ✓ Get a sneak peek into the valuable content waiting for you.
- ✓ Realize the impact this guide will have on your audition preparation and confidence.

ACTION STEPS

Try this today

1. Review your current audition song list, making a mental note of any songs you've heard countless times from other performers.
2. Open *The Performer's Starters Pack* and quickly skim the table of contents to get a feel for the journey ahead.
3. Commit to approaching your audition preparation as a strategic act, not just a talent showcase.

02

CHAPTER TWO

The 'Not-So-Secret' List
Audition Pieces to Rethink

Most performers I chat with have a story about an audition where they felt like they nailed it, only to get a polite "Thank you" or, worse, just silence. Often, it wasn't their talent or preparation that was the issue, it was the song choice itself. It's like bringing a perfectly cooked steak to a vegan potluck: delicious, but completely misses the mark for the audience. This chapter is your friendly, backstage pass to understanding why some pieces, even fantastic ones, might be working against you in the audition room, and how to spot them in your current book.

Think of your audition song as a carefully selected ambassador for your talent. Its job is to introduce you in the best possible light, tell the auditors what they need to know, and then step aside gracefully. The problem is, some songs are just overused, like that one pop song everyone's humming on the radio; others are great but might be putting you in a box you don't belong in. And some are just plain tricky, even for the most seasoned performers. My guide, *Your New Audition Bestie: A 100-Song Replacement Canon*, dives deep into these specific songs, but let's talk about the *why* behind those choices.

The Overexposed Anthems: When Everyone Else is Singing Your Song

Imagine you're a casting director, and it's 3 PM on an audition day. You've seen 40 people, and you've heard "On My Own" from *Les Misérables* a staggering six times already. No matter how beautifully the 41st person sings it, it's going to be hard for them to make a fresh impression. This isn't a knock on the song itself, it's a phenomenal piece of musical theatre history, but its sheer popularity has made it a double-edged sword.

When a song is too familiar, your performance has to work twice as hard to stand out. It also tells the panel that you haven't dug deep to find something unique, something that truly speaks to you and for you. You want them leaning forward, interested, not stifling a yawn of recognition. This is why you'll often find songs like "Defying Gravity" or "She Used to Be Mine" on that "rethink" list; they are warhorses, and sometimes, warhorses are best left in the stable for a less rigorous journey.

The Miscast Messages: Sending the Wrong Signals

Sometimes, a song is amazing, but it just doesn't fit you. Perhaps you are a comedic actor auditioning for a lighthearted musical, but your chosen ballad is a heart-wrenching lament from *Rags*, which sends a misleading signal about your fundamental type and energy. This mismatch between performer and material can confuse casting directors, making them question your understanding of the role, the show, or even your own strengths. Your audition song should be a clear, concise statement about who you are as a performer and what you can bring to a production, not a test of their interpretive abilities.

Another common pitfall is selecting a song that showcases a vocal gymnastics routine rather than genuine emotion or storytelling; while impressive, technical brilliance alone rarely lands a role if it lacks connection to the material. An audition piece should highlight your unique voice, your theatricality, and your ability to embody a character, not merely demonstrate your highest note or most breath control.

> *When a song sends an unintended message, it inadvertently creates a hurdle for you to overcome, forcing the panel to look beyond what you're presenting, to guess at what you might be capable of.*

Critically evaluating whether your song truly aligns with your personal brand, the specific audition's requirements, and the fundamental story you wish to convey, is paramount. You want your song to act as an unencumbered showcase, a spotlight illuminating your most pertinent talents without any distracting shadows or conflicting messages.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The lessons of this chapter

- ✓ Identify overdone or problematic audition songs and monologue choices.
- ✓ Understand the rationale behind avoiding certain material, overexposure, miscasting, difficulty.
- ✓ Learn how to critically evaluate your current audition repertoire.

ACTION STEPS

Audit your current book

1. Go through your current audition book and pull out any songs you've heard multiple people perform in auditions or classes recently. Set them aside for now.
2. For each song in your current book, ask yourself: "Does this song genuinely feel like *me* right now, or is it a character I'm trying to play for the room?"
3. Open the companion spreadsheet, *Your New Audition Bestie: A 100-Song Replacement Canon*, and identify two or three new songs that would suit your voice.

CHAPTER THREE

03 Your New Audition Bestie

A 100-Song Replacement Canon

Okay, so we've talked about the songs that might be giving you a bit of grief in the audition room. You know, the classics that everyone and their mum has sung, or the ones that just don't quite show off your sparkle. Now, let's pivot to the fun part: finding your new audition best friends! This chapter isn't just about giving you a list; it's about introducing you to a whole new world of possibilities: your *100-Song Replacement Canon*. Think of it as your personal, curated Spotify playlist for auditions, specifically designed to make you shine.

Now, I know what you're thinking. A list of 100 songs can feel overwhelming, like trying to pick one grain of glitter out of an entire shaker. But here's the thing: this isn't about learning a bunch of new repertoire. It's about widening your scope, giving you options, and introducing you to material that might just be the perfect fit you hadn't considered. For instance, if you're a mezzo-soprano who's always pulled out "On My Own" for every dramatic ballad call (and honestly, who hasn't?), imagine trying something with the raw emotional honesty of "Without You" from *Ghost*, or the poignant reflection of "Days and Days" from *Fun Home*. Immediately, you're telling a different story, and showing a different facet of your talent.

How This Canon Works for You

This canon is designed to be a springboard, not a straitjacket. It's split into voice types to help you navigate, whether you're a high soprano looking for a comedic patter song or a bass-baritone searching for a heartfelt ballad. Each suggestion is chosen because it offers unique vocal challenges, relatable emotional content, or simply isn't heard quite as often as its more famous counterparts.

For example, instead of "Popular" for a quirky ingénue, how about "Screw Loose" from *Cry-Baby*? It's still character-driven and fun, but it has that edge that makes a casting director sit up and take notice. Or for a classic leading man, instead of "Maria," consider the earnest charm of "Tonight at Eight" from *She Loves Me*, or "It All Fades Away" from *The Bridges of Madison County* for a contemporary feel (although, keep an eye on the age ranges of characters as well!).

Choosing Your New Bestie: Beyond Just the Sound

Selecting a song from this canon isn't just about whether it sounds good when you sing it. It's about finding that *instinctive fit* we talked about earlier. Does the character's journey resonate with you? Do the lyrics speak to an experience you understand, even if it's not verbatim from your own life?

When a 16-year-old high school student I was coaching chose "Run Away With Me" from *The Mad Ones*, a song about restlessness, freedom, and the pull of an unwritten future, it wasn't just because he had the pipes for it. It was because he genuinely connected with Sam's longing to break free and choose her own road, that ache between staying safe and stepping into the unknown. That connection, that personal understanding, bled into every note and every word, making his performance deeply moving. He wasn't just singing notes; he was sharing a part of himself, and that's unforgettable.

Another example: a hardworking mum in her late 30s, juggling teaching singing lessons and trying to get back into performing, found her new anthem in "Brave Thing" from *Fangirls*. Caroline's quiet reflection on the unseen courage of ordinary days, the weight of love-as-labour, the resilience nobody applauds, spoke directly to her own life. She wasn't trying to act it; she *felt* it. That's the gold you're looking for.

> *" Does this song spark something in me? Does it make me want to explore the character, delve into the lyrics, and ultimately, tell a story that feels authentically mine?*

So, as you dive into this canon, I encourage you to listen with an open mind and heart. Don't just tick off the boxes of vocal range; ask yourself whether each song genuinely calls to you. The aim isn't to replace your existing repertoire, but rather to diversify it, adding layers of nuance and individuality that elevate your audition to a truly memorable experience.

Think of these new songs as potential conversations waiting to happen, opportunities to connect with casting directors and creative teams on a deeper, more personal level. Each selection in this canon has the potential to become a powerful extension of who you are as an artist, showcasing your unique voice and interpretive skills in a way that tired warhorses simply can't. Unearthing these gems, some familiar and some completely new, is an exciting journey of self-discovery.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Why this canon will serve you

- ✓ Explore a curated list of 100 fresh and effective audition songs.
- ✓ Learn how to choose material that genuinely suits your voice, type, and personality.
- ✓ Gain inspiration and expand your audition repertoire with exciting new options.

ACTION STEPS

Make the canon yours

1. Review the 100-Song Replacement Canon and note down 10–15 songs that pique your interest based on title, show, or initial listen.
2. Listen to at least five new songs from the canon that you haven't heard before, paying attention to lyrics, character, and emotional arc.
3. If you're a singing teacher, challenge yourself to find at least three new songs from the canon for your students to explore next month.

CHAPTER FOUR

04 Finding Your 'Instinctive Fit'

How to Choose YOUR Perfect Song

Okay, so you've just poured over Chapter 3's 100-song replacement canon, maybe your brain feels a bit like a musical theatre jukebox, humming with possibilities. But here's the thing: just because a song is good or fresh doesn't automatically make it *your* song. Choosing from a list, even a fantastic one, is only half the battle. The real magic happens when you find that piece that feels like it was written just for you, that "instinctive fit" which makes you feel like you're not just singing notes, but telling your own story.

Think about it this way: remember that time a director asked you to bring in a song you love? And you immediately thought of three or four that just felt right, that resonated deeply with your spirit? That's the feeling we're chasing here. It's not about what's trendy, or what your friend Sarah nailed in her last call back. It's about what makes *your* voice, *your* personality, and *your* unique perspective shine the brightest. Because when you feel that deep connection, it's not just a performance; it's an extension of you.

The Three Pillars of Instinctive Fit

When I work with performers, young or seasoned, we always look for these three key elements when picking a new piece:

- **Vocal Sweet Spot:** Does the song sit comfortably in your vocal range, allowing you to showcase your best qualities without pushing or straining? I'm not talking about just hitting the notes, but singing them with ease, agility, and the beautiful tone that makes your voice distinctly yours. If you're a soaring soprano, don't force a gritty belt unless that's genuinely one of your strengths. If you're a rich baritone, avoid a song that lives primarily in a whisper-light falsetto. Your goal is to make the panel forget they're judging an audition and just enjoy your artistry.
- **Authentic Connection:** Can you genuinely relate to the character, the lyrics, and the story of the song? Does it tap into a certain emotion or experience you've had? If you're singing a song about lost love but you've been happily married for a decade without a heartbreak in sight, it may be harder to convey genuine emotion. Conversely, if you connect deeply with the theme of perseverance, or joy, or even quiet contemplation, that authenticity will radiate from you. The panel isn't just listening to your voice; they're feeling your truth.

- **Your Story, Not Theirs:** This is where you put your stamp on it. Every song has a given story, but how do you tell it? What unique interpretation can you bring to the table? When you're breaking down a song, don't just learn the notes and rhythms. Ask yourself: What's the context? What happened right before this moment? What does my character really want? For example, if you're singing "Part of Your World," instead of just being a hopeful mermaid, maybe your Ariel is fiercely determined, almost defiant, dreaming of a life beyond the sea in a way that feels uniquely powerful for you.

Practical Steps to Finding Your Perfect Match

So, how do you put this into practice? Here's my go-to process for performers looking to really own their audition material:

- **Listen, don't just hear:** Go back to that song list. This time, listen actively. Close your eyes. Which songs immediately make you feel something? Which characters do you feel drawn to? Don't worry about vocal range yet, just let your gut guide you to the ones that spark curiosity.
- **Trial and error, out loud:** Pick 3–5 of those gut-feeling songs. Don't worry about memorizing them perfectly yet. Just sing them through, in your practice room. Pay attention to how your voice feels. Are you comfortable? Are you battling the key? Does it make you want to sing it again, or are you relieved when it's over?
- **The mirror test:** Stand in front of a mirror and sing your top two or three choices. What do you see? Do your eyes light up? Do you look engaged and connected? Or do you look like you're just performing a task? Your reflection won't lie. This isn't about perfection; it's about genuine expression.
- **Get a second opinion (the right way):** Play your top choice for a trusted teacher, coach, or even a friend who knows you well as a performer. Don't ask, "Is this song good?" Instead, ask, "Do you see *me* in this song? Does it feel like I'm telling *my* story?" Their objective perspective can be invaluable.

> *" Your audition isn't about fitting yourself into a pre-defined role. It's about revealing the incredible performer you already are.*

When you choose a song that is an instinctive fit, you're not just presenting material; you're presenting your most authentic, powerful artistic self. By diligently following these steps, you will not only select a song that highlights your technical abilities but, more importantly, choose one that allows your authentic

artistic self to truly emerge. This intentional approach ensures that every note you sing and every story you tell in an audition becomes a genuine reflection of who you are as a performer, creating an experience that resonates deeply with any panel and distinguishes you from the crowd.

Ultimately, finding your "instinctive fit" transforms an audition from a nerve-wracking test into a thrilling opportunity to share your passion and talent, leaving a lasting impression long after the final note fades.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Selecting with intention

- ✓ Develop criteria for selecting audition material that feels authentic and instinctive, focusing on your vocal sweet spot, genuine emotional connection, and opportunities for unique interpretation.
- ✓ Understand the importance of personal connection to your audition pieces; when a song resonates deeply with you, your authenticity will shine through, making your performance more impactful.
- ✓ Learn strategies for breaking down songs and finding your unique interpretation, active listening, singing through potential choices out loud, using a mirror for self-assessment, and seeking targeted feedback.

ACTION STEPS

Find your fit this week

1. Review the 100-song canon from Chapter 3 and shortlist 3–5 songs that immediately grab your attention or emotional connection.
2. Spend at least 15 minutes with each shortlisted song: sing it aloud, pay attention to how your voice feels, and imagine yourself performing it in an audition.
3. Practice your top 2–3 choices in front of a mirror, focusing on your facial expressions and overall engagement to assess your "instinctive fit."

CHAPTER FIVE

05 The Ultimate Audition Checklist

Confident Steps to the Room

You know that heart-dropping moment when you walk out the door for an audition, halfway down the street, and a cold dread washes over you? You start frantically patting down your bag, mentally ticking off items: *sheet music? check. headshot? check. water bottle? uh oh.* Or worse, you're already in the waiting room and realise that you brought your regular repertoire book, with no audition cuts marked. We've all been there, and it's the absolute worst. That scramble, that sudden sweat, that feeling of being completely thrown off before you've even opened your mouth? It drains your confidence faster than a quick change in the wings.

This chapter is your antidote to that panic. We're going to build your ultimate audition checklist, not just to make sure you have your physical stuff together, but to ensure your mental game is unshakable, so you can walk into that room feeling completely in control and ready to shine. Because frankly, the only thing you should be worrying about is delivering your best performance, not whether you forgot your dance shoes.

While talent and preparation are key, a seamless audition day experience is what actually allows that talent to shine through. Think of it as your pre-flight safety check for your performing career. Here's how we make sure you're soaring, not scrambling.

Before You Leave the House: The "Got Everything?" Scan

The night before, or at least a good few hours before you have to dash out, perform a comprehensive sweep. This isn't just throwing things into a bag; it's a strategic packing mission.

- **Your Audition Folder (the holy grail):** This needs to contain not just your sheet music (clearly marked with cuts, in the correct key, taped securely for the accompanist), but also several copies of your headshot/resume, stapled together, or printed back-to-back. Put one copy into a clear plastic sleeve. Always have a backup. Always.
- **Your Performance Outfit (and backups):** You've chosen an outfit that makes you feel powerful and fits the role, right? Great. Now, pack it, and maybe a backup top or pair of socks, because you never know what spilled coffee or surprise puddle awaits. Make sure everything is clean,

pressed, and comfortable. Seriously, that new itchy sweater is not a good audition day experiment.

- **"Comfort is King" Essentials:** Water bottle (full!), a small, quiet snack (think banana or a granola bar, not crunchy crisps), a pen, a small notebook, and any personal items you might need (inhaler, lozenges, lip balm). These small comforts can make a massive difference to your mental state.

The "On-the-Go" Readiness Pack

Once you're out the door, the goal is minimal stress and maximum flexibility.

Travel Plan B (and C): Know exactly how you're getting there, and have an alternative in mind. Has that train line been unreliable recently, or are there roadworks? Is there a big event blocking traffic? A thirty-minute buffer is good; an hour is better. The last thing you need is a mad scramble through crowded streets, arriving breathless and flustered.

Warm-Up Wisdom: If you have travel time, use it. Gentle vocal warm-ups in the car (if you're not driving, obviously!) or on a quiet part of your journey can get your voice primed without drawing too much attention. Similarly, a little light stretching or movement can help iron out any nervous kinks before you arrive.

Mental Prep Micro-Moments: Instead of doom-scrolling on your phone, use these travel minutes to review your monologue, visualize yourself nailing the song, or simply practice some calming breath work. Re-centre yourself. This is your time to dial in your focus.

Inside the Waiting Room: Your Command Centre

You've arrived, you've checked in. Now, it's about maintaining your calm and focus.

Observe and Adapt: Take a quick glance at the room. Is it quiet? Respect that. Is there a conversation happening with another performer? Gauge if it's appropriate to join, or just smile politely. You're assessing the vibe, not judging it.

Limit Distractions: Put your phone away. Seriously. The latest cat video or social media drama isn't helping your performance, or those around you, always be respectful. Use this time for subtle vocal warm-ups (humming, lip trills, but only if the space allows), gentle physical stretches, or a final, quiet review of your material.

Be Prepared for the Unexpected: The panel may be running early, someone ahead of you may be delayed or something else may have happened. Have a pleasant, prepared response for any curveball.

> *"This isn't about controlling every variable, life always throws curveballs. It's about being so meticulously prepared for the predictable elements that you have the mental space and resilience to handle the unpredictable ones with grace.*

By systematically preparing every aspect of your audition day, from your sheet music to your mindset, you not only reduce external stressors but also build an internal reservoir of confidence. So, breathe deep, check your bag, and walk in knowing you've set yourself up for absolute success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The prepared performer's mindset

- ✓ Utilize a comprehensive checklist to ensure meticulous audition preparation.
- ✓ Minimize last-minute stress and feel fully in control of your audition.
- ✓ Arrive at auditions feeling confident, organized, and ready to impress.

ACTION STEPS

Build your routine

1. Create your personalized "Audition Day Packing List" tonight, including all physical items and mental prep reminders.
2. Practice your "Travel Plan B" for your next upcoming audition or important destination.
3. Before your next audition, allocate 15 minutes in the waiting room specifically for silent warm-ups and mental visualization, putting your phone away completely.

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CHAPTER SIX

Beyond the Checklist

Mindset and Maintaining Your Shine

Auditions are a bit like that moment just before the orchestra strikes up the overture: a thrilling mix of anticipation and nerves. You've got your perfect song, your monologue is polished, and your outfit is just right. But what about everything else? Because let's be honest, the audition room isn't just about the notes you hit; it's about the headspace you bring with you. This chapter isn't just nice-to-have; it's your essential guide to keeping your performer's spark alive, regardless of the outcome, and making sure your mental game is as strong as your vocal performance.

The Nerves are Normal (and How to Tame Them)

Anyone who tells you they never get nervous before an audition is either lying, a robot, or they haven't auditioned for something that truly matters to them. Those butterflies in your stomach? That slight tremble in your hands? They're just your body telling you, "Hey, this is important!" The trick isn't to eliminate nerves entirely, but to channel that energy. Think of it like taking a high-energy dance number and focusing all that power into sharp, precise movements instead of flailing around.

One technique I often share with my students is the "Breathing Triangle" or "Anchor Breath." Before you even walk into the room, find a quiet moment, maybe in the hallway, or even in the car. Close your eyes, and choose an "anchor" in your body: it could be the feeling of your feet on the floor, the gentle rise and fall of your chest, or the sensation of your hands resting in your lap. Focus on that anchor. Take a deep breath in for a count of four, hold for four, and exhale for four. Do this five times. It literally calms your nervous system, pulling you back into your body and out of your racing thoughts. You're present, not panicking.

The Audition as a Learning Lab, Not a Final Exam

Sometimes, especially with young performers, there's this idea that an audition is the ultimate judgment day. You either "win" or "lose." That's a fast track to burnout and disappointment. Instead, try reframing every audition as a learning opportunity. Did you connect with the material in a new way? Did you handle a moment of unexpected direction with grace? Did you leave feeling like you gave your authentic self, regardless of the outcome? Those are wins.

I remember working with someone who was devastated after not getting cast in a role he felt perfect for. After a week of feeling down, we sat down and talked. He realized that while he didn't get the part, the director had given him specific feedback on his acting choices that he'd never considered before. He took that feedback, applied it to his next audition, and booked the role. He didn't "fail" that first audition; he simply learned.

> *" Resilience isn't about never falling; it's about how quickly you get back up, and what you take with you from the fall.*

Another performer I worked with was cast in a role they had not even considered before, but their audition quality displayed something more aligned with that role, and they realised that it was a better fit for them than the role they were originally hoping for. Sometimes, not getting what you want can be exactly what you need in order to move forward.

The Long Game: Nurturing Your Performer's Spark

Your performing career isn't a sprint; it's a marathon with a lot of fascinating detours. It's going to have ups and downs, dazzling highs and challenging lows. It's absolutely vital that you cultivate a long-term approach to your craft and your well-being. This means protecting your voice, your body, and your mind.

For example, a performer I know who's been in the industry for 20 years meticulously schedules "recharge days" after demanding contracts or intense audition periods. They know that pushing relentlessly leads to burnout, not brilliance. This isn't about being lazy; it's about strategic self-care. It means continuing your training even when you're working, staying curious about new techniques, and surrounding yourself with a supportive community. Your spark is precious; don't let it dim because you're constantly chasing the next booking without tending to the flame. Celebrate the small victories, learn from the rejections, and always remember why you started performing in the first place.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Mindset for the long haul

- ✓ Utilize techniques like the "Anchor Breath" to manage audition nerves and channel that energy positively.
- ✓ Reframe auditions as valuable learning experiences rather than pass/fail judgments, fostering resilience.
- ✓ Adopt a long-term strategy for your career, prioritizing self-care and continuous growth to sustain your passion and prevent burnout.

ACTION STEPS

Tend to your spark

1. Before your next audition, practice the "Anchor Breath" technique for 5–10 minutes to center yourself.
2. After your next audition (regardless of outcome), write down at least one specific thing you learned or one moment you felt proud of your performance.
3. Schedule a "recharge day" or a deliberate self-care activity into your week, especially after a period of intense work or auditioning.

IN CLOSING

The Spotlight is *Waiting for You*

Alright, you've made it! You've navigated the tricky terrain of audition room pitfalls, discovered a treasure trove of killer songs, and crafted a personalized strategy for showcasing your unique talent. You're no longer just showing up; you're arriving with purpose, armed with choices that genuinely represent you and your artistry. Remember that feeling of walking out of an audition wondering what went wrong? That's about to become a distant memory.

The most important takeaway from this journey is simple: your audition is your opportunity to tell your story, authentically. It's not about being someone you're not, or singing the flashiest song you can find. It's about making smart, informed choices that highlight your strengths and connect with the material in a way that feels organic and right for you. We've unmasked the songs that, despite their popularity, often mask your true potential, and we've replaced them with a vibrant canon designed to make you shine. You now know that choosing an audition piece isn't a shot in the dark; it's a strategic act of self-expression.

Now, here's what I need you to do: don't let this knowledge sit on a shelf. Your next step isn't just to read through the 100-song list again; it's to interact with it. Pick three songs from "Your New Audition Bestie" right now that pique your interest. Go listen to them, print them out, and schedule a session with your singing teacher to explore one of them next week. If you're a teacher guiding a student, challenge them to choose two from the list that they've never considered before. If you're a parent, encourage your young performer to explore the variety and discuss what resonates with them.

> *"The performers who succeed aren't just talented; they're proactive and persistent. They don't wait for opportunities, they create them by being consistently prepared and making intelligent choices.*

Your voice, your artistry, and your unique perspective are invaluable. The world of musical theatre needs your specific magic. By applying the principles in this book, you're not just learning how to ace an audition; you're learning how to build a sustainable, fulfilling career rooted in authenticity and informed

decision-making. Go out there, choose wisely, prepare thoroughly, and most importantly, remember to enjoy the incredible gift you have.

Break a leg.

I can't wait to see you shine on that stage.
The spotlight is waiting for you.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicole Thomson

Performance. Resilience. Reinvention.

✦ ✦ ✦

After 30 years in the performing arts as a classical singer, musical director, educator, and producer, I understand both the visible and the invisible realities of this career. The work on stage. And the work nobody sees: the near-misses, the rejections, the reinvention, and the resilience it takes to keep going.

I've performed and recorded for film, theatre, and major releases through The Song Company, ABC Classic, and Tall Poppies, with soundtrack credits including *South Solitary*, *Happy Feet 2*, *Legends of the Guardians*, *Halo*, and *World of Warcraft*. As a member of the chamber ensemble Flametree, I perform intimate art song recitals with mezzo-soprano Jenny Duck-Chong and pianist Jo Allan, and I co-founded The Culture Exchange, a creative initiative producing immersive performance projects across the UK, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

Alongside the stage, I work as a vocal coach, educator, and mentor, supporting emerging performers and educators in Australia and across Southeast Asia.

But the work I'm most drawn to now lives in the conversations behind the curtain. Practical tools for the emotional side of performance. Honest talk about auditions, rejection, and reinvention. Guidance for building a creative career that's sustainable, meaningful, and genuinely yours.

The Performer's Starters Pack is part of that work. While it's grounded in musical theatre, the wisdom inside extends far beyond, into any space where identity, ambition, and "almost" collide.

FOR PERFORMERS. FOR CREATIVES. FOR ANYONE NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY WHILE PURSUING SOMETHING THAT MATTERS.

ALSO IN YOUR STARTERS PACK

Your New Audition Bestie: A 100-Song Replacement Canon. A sortable, filterable spreadsheet of every song from Chapter 3, organised so you can find the right piece for your voice in seconds.

The Audition Day Checklist. A printable, reusable companion to Chapter 5 that you can tick off before every audition.

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Created with care for the next generation of performers.

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