

## More survey results

Additional questions on the Overdone Monologue Survey

On [www.monologueaudition.com](http://www.monologueaudition.com)

### WHO TOOK THE SURVEY

**Amanda Charleton**, Associate Director, Festival, of the Williamstown Theatre Festival; **Patricia Decker**, Applicant Services Coordinator, NYU/Tisch School of the Arts' Department of Drama, undergraduate; **Carl Forsman**, Off-Broadway theater director and Artistic Director of Keen Company; **Mari Lyn Henry**, Manager, Henry-Downey Talent Management, co-author of "How to be a Working Actor," and judge of many monologue competitions; **Kevin Kennison**, NYC/LA casting director, previously NYU/Tisch faculty auditioning new students; **Christian Parker**, Associate Artistic Director of the Atlantic Theater Company; **Walton Wilson**, Head of Voice and Speech, and Associate Chair, Yale School of Drama; **Scott Zigler**, Head of actor training at American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) at Harvard University; **A New York theater casting director** who wished to remain anonymous; and **me**.

### ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

I couldn't resist asking the survey takers the following questions, because I am frequently asked them by actors on the site and in my classes. Note: I told them their answers would not be identified with their names, so that they would be candid, and, not every survey taker answered every question.

#### Do you have problems with material that...

##### ...describes graphic violence?

No • No • No. Unless that takes precedence over revealing character • Sometimes • Sometimes • Yes • YES! • Yes, if it is poorly handled and being done for intentional shock value/attention getting • Yes, I've gotten more fragile about hearing some of these violent or shocking things unexpectedly as I've gotten older, but, I don't mind it if it justified artistically

##### ...contains profanity?

No • No • No • No • No • No • Unless that takes precedence over revealing character • Sometimes • Gratuitous profanity, yes • Yes, ditto [to shock value/attention getting comment above]

##### ...describes sexual behavior?

No • Sometimes • Sometimes, depends on so many things. I usually find that the actor is too self-conscious to pull it off • As long as it is not too graphic and doesn't dwell on it • Yes, it's not the best way to introduce yourself to someone • Yes, if it's graphic • Yes • Yes, ditto [to shock value/attention getting comment above] • Yes, it is almost always way too personal for an audition context, makes me uncomfortable

##### ...describes bodily functions (toilet, vomit, etc.)

No • It's ok if it doesn't repel [me] • Sometimes • Sometimes • Sometimes, see above [comment about self consciousness] • Yes, ditto [to shock value/attention

getting comment above] • Makes me uncomfortable unless it's funny • Indeed, that's not going to help me have warm feelings for you • Usually. Why are there so many monologues written about these things?

**...are any of the above okay if there is a good artistic reason for it (it's funny, well written, connected to a larger truth (i.e. not gratuitous)?**

Yes • Yes • Yes • Sometimes • If connected to a larger truth AND justified! • It depends. I suspect many young actors choose this kind of material merely for "shock value," and don't do the necessary work to either make the speech active or connected to some sense of truth. So these monologues are a general rant, or a loud or frantic assault, rather than as a truthful expression of a character's deeper need.

**Is it important to you that the material correspond to the actor's...**

**...age?**

Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes, almost always • Yes, must be in their natural range • Age range of 10 years • As long as the material is accessible to the actor's experience

**...gender?**

Yes • Yes • Yes • Usually. It can be distracting unless there is a clear reason why • Depends: if it doesn't, I want there to have been a clear choice • Sometimes material works for either sex • No, depends • Depends on role and actor's unique qualities • No

**...race/ethnicity?**

Yes for contemporary material (white actors can't really do August Wilson) • Usually not, depends on actor's ability to transcend • Not unless it is written for black, asian, etc. actor specifically • Not necessarily – unless it was written very specifically for a race which is not the actor's own and is spoken in a voice that the actor will have to fake • Sometimes minorities can do white roles but nbo the other way • Completely depends on the actor and the context • No • No • Nope

**A comment regarding all 3 – age, gender, race:** Not necessarily, but that depends on the context of the audition and on the individual actor's depth of imagination. (In the context of the auditions for our program, it usually serves the actor to choose material that is relatively close to who she or he is as opposed to material that would be considered an obvious "stretch." I don't mean to imply by this that such material is either dull or safe.) How does the actor choose to present him- or herself? Does the actor have an accurate sense of who s/he is, where their own "center" lies? Can the actor reveal that part of him- or herself truthfully through the material? Do I – as the audience sitting on the other side of the table – believe what I am hearing and seeing? I suspect a lot of young actors don't really have a sense of who they are yet, so the vast majority of auditions tend to feel rather impersonal, as if there were a disconnect between who the actor is and the material they choose.

**Is it important to you/your company or program that actors only do material that is from plays?**

Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes. A camera and editors can make a lackluster piece of writing interesting in a film but it very rarely translates to live performance. I'm interested in adapted material but it calls upon someone not only to be a gifted actor but a pretty flawless dramaturg. Very tricky. • Usually but not necessarily • No, there is very good material that can be found in film, novels, and even magazines • No, but they should always do something dramatic with some emotional range • No • No • No

**Any advice or anything else you would like actors to know about choosing material (note: choosing as opposed to performing)?**

I will always prefer material that contains humor • Choose material that you love that plays to your strengths. It should feel easy to you. This is not the time to challenge yourself with that role you've always been dying to play • Other than the really overdone ones, I don't mind seeing ones I've seen as long as you do it well. Also, nothing about rape. I don't want to hear about any rapes, any. Why does everybody want to do monologues about rape? Please don't, even if you do it well, I don't care • Pick something with a good hook at the top and something that can stand on its own ([so that your auditors] don't need to know the play in order to know what's going on). Don't be afraid to slightly edit the beginning and end of a monologue to help clarify the monologue and the character's situation • [Do pieces] close to your age and experience • Choose something that "speaks" to you, that you have a passion to communicate and ideally also may tell the audition-er something about you as a person. It makes it a whole lot easier to do when you're nervous, or in less than ideal circumstances, if you really care about what you are saying • In the course of a long day, I appreciate an actor who chooses material that reveals something about his or her sense of humor • Better to do good writing than obscure writing. Most monologues I don't want to see because they're not good, not because they're overdone • Be specific to each audition: research your material choices carefully; have lots of different pieces to choose from so you're not stuck; do everything to your absolute best, and take considerations of people's taste into account, but also work for your own enjoyment and keep a sense of openness, play and adventure. You should look like you love the piece and love performing it.

**Please ballpark the rough number of monologues you have seen (answers like 'many thousands' are fine)**

Around 2,500 • A few thousand • Probably about 5000 • Five thousand • Five thousand • Thousands and still counting • Many thousands • More than I could (or would want to) count I'm sure • Many thousands • Many thousands • Many, many thousands

**MORE OVERDONE MONOLOGUES**

There have already been more suggestions for the overdone lists, and additions will be put up periodically. To be notified of these updates, [join the newsletter list](#).

If you see a lot of monologue auditions, and want to suggest overdone monologues, please [send them in](#).

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[Overdone Monologues!](#) – how the survey was done and what it reveals

[Overdone Shakespeare](#)

[Women's overdone monologues](#)

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