

How to Create Your Best Self-Tape

from Michael Baxter, Associate Artistic Director (Casting Director)

The preparation and creation of material

1. What is the audition/evaluation? – *song, dance, etc.*
2. Song Choices (provided for you)
 - a. Appropriateness
 - b. Authenticity
 - c. Memorized
 - i. Samples, instructional videos and audio tracks will be provided.
 - ii. Rehearsal: Prepare the work with power, passion, pathos and poise. Represent YOU to the best of your ability.
3. Dance Combination (provided for you)
 - a. Accuracy of memorization
 - b. The dancer should clearly demonstrate technique, appropriate style, line, flexibility, jumps, turns and musicality that is all encompassing in performance.
 - c. Rehearsal: Prepare the work with power, passion, pathos, and poise. Represent YOU to the best of your ability.
4. Remind yourself -- you can only control what is in your control. Be open to everything else!

Please know that you will not be evaluated on the quality of the video recording itself. Everyone has different technological resources. Do the best with what you have! No stress. We understand.

Technical Equipment/Resources

1. Camera -- Smartphone/Tablet/Laptop cameras are totally acceptable.
 - a. If you are using your smartphone camera, please set the camera on the highest quality settings to 4K at 1080p at 30fps will allow for smoother video.
2. Light source -- natural light is always best, but a strong source, such as a ring light or lamp, is necessary.
3. Tripod with a smartphone mount – or get creative with music stands and books.
4. **You do NOT need a USB microphone or phone adapter for sound amplification.** Just make sure the microphone on your recording device is operating properly.
5. Clear and easily photographed background – blue, gray or white work best so YOU pop.

Prep Your Space/Set-up your Shot

1. Framing: Make sure you are always in camera focus.
 - a. Always use the back facing camera on your phone. (No selfies, please.) Record in landscape or horizontal view.
 - i. For singing auditions: Medium full shot (*top of the subject's head to just below the waist*)
 - ii. For dance auditions: Full body shot (*top of the subject's head to floor*)
2. Background:
 - a. Create clean lines behind you, nothing too busy or distracting. If using a blank/plain wall or backdrop, step towards the camera enough so that there is not a shadow behind you. 3 ft from the wall is the recommended suggestion.

- b. Do not stand in front of a window, as this will put you in silhouette. Use a piece of tape to set a mark on the floor for consistency.
3. Presentation/Wardrobe: **Treat your evaluation submission as an audition --- it is. Dress and conduct yourself professionally.** Wear something that you feel comfortable and confident in.
 - a. Do not wear stripes, or busy patterns/brands on your clothing. They can jump around on camera. Like in-person auditions, keep your hair out of your face. Keep makeup natural. Look like yourself.
4. Audio matters:
 - a. **Be mindful of the acoustic dynamics of your recording. Review the recording prior to submission checking for clarity of sound and distracting background noise.**
 - b. Record in a “soft” room where there is very little echo or reverberation. The ambience of the room is important. Make sure the resonance of the room does not overshadow the tonality.
 - c. Do a sound check before you record.
5. **Lighting in the room should allow you to be sufficiently well seen.** Natural light is great, but if that is not possible, place a light source in front of you from the side at a 45-degree angle, behind the camera. Watch for shadows and adjust. If the light is behind you, it makes it harder to see you. A harsh overhead or fluorescent light is not flattering.
6. Focus: The camera should be placed “eye level” so that your eyes are featured in the screen. Do not place your focus too high, or you will look like you are talking to someone taller than you. For singing auditions, place the top of your head at the very top of the frame, and the bottom should hit at the waist or mid-thigh. If you wear glasses, you might have to play with camera angles to prevent glare. Your scene partner or other should be placed just slightly to the left or the right of the lens.
7. **The video should be no longer than 90 seconds.**

The Creative Act

1. Embrace the luxury of time. Teach yourself the combination and take an extra moment to let it marinate before you record. Sleep on it! Do not rush.
2. **Begin your submission with an introduction/slate - say your name and the song you will be singing. If it is a dance please say your name and your height.**
3. Adrenaline is key. Stay energized – stay physical while you are waiting so that your energy does not fizzle out.
4. The video is about your performance. It can be harder to make a connection with a person you are not physically in the same room with. It requires more concentration, and close listening. The energy and intensity in your listening must carry over into your work.
5. **Trial Run:** Do a dress rehearsal to see what works in terms of playing space, lighting, energy, etc. You can also record yourself doing an audition side, and self-critique, but do not do this if you have a hard time turning off the self-defeating voice in your head. You want to feel confident and grounded going into this audition.
6. We recommend you only do three takes. We do not want to see an “over-rehearsed” audition that lacks spontaneity.
7. Do not race to submit your video early. We encourage you to learn the material appropriately and submit work that you feel confident in.

Post Filming

1. Choose the best take and upload to YouTube. Focus on clarity of audio and video.

2. Separate YouTube instructions to follow.

This video submission is FOR CASTING PURPOSES ONLY and will be destroyed after casting is complete. Only people with casting authority will be viewing your submission.

Lastly, auditioning can sometimes be stressful, and though we do as much as possible to put the performer at ease, be sure to breathe. Remain confident, grounded and most importantly, true to yourself. Have fun!

Any technical questions or concerns can be directed to education@muny.org