

The Following are copies of a couple Blog Posts Coach Banks' wrote on the topic of MONOLOGUES. If you would like to read more recent posts please visit <http://old.claybanksstudio.com/blog/>

All about Monologues

October 17, 2013 By Clay Banks

Let's face it, who really wants to spend time listening to someone pretending to be someone? That is of course unless you're a parent watching your young child play. Well, I don't believe you're a child and we (the observers) are certainly not your parents! It's the actor's responsibility to do the work necessary to make their character believable and of course...interesting. So, how do you do that? For almost six weeks now, we've been discussing *all* that goes into a strong monologue performance. What the ingredients are for a successful experience auditioning a piece *all on your own*. It's a process of building layer upon layer of character understanding...along with story understanding. If you don't have what you're talking about, *down*, if you don't own it, we're going to have a difficult time staying with you. **YOU HAVE TO DO THE WORK!**

Assuming now that you've already found and are working on your final chosen piece – and you have your character in place, let's look at some other areas that will help you with your presentation.

RANGE – Does your piece *travel*? Does it take you from one place to another? Does your character go through anything? And, if so, what? How is your character changed because of this experience? Take some time to analyze your performance and see that you can effectively answer these questions.

EMOTIONALITY – We've been covering



this in depth. There needs to be an emotional journey. The piece needs to be *effective* — meaning it needs to effect us, your audience. How does it make us feel, think, react??? Know what you want your monologue to do and see that it does it.

CHARACTERISTICS – Where do *you* come through your character in your chosen piece? Does your monologue allow for your own special qualities to be showcased? See that it does. If not, why are you choosing to go with the piece in question? Make certain that your monologue showcases your own uniqueness.

HEART & SOUL – Unless you're doing something witty, comedic or something to that effect, you don't want your monologue to just ride along the top. This isn't the time to be glib. See that your performance has depth. For it to touch us, it needs to come from the inner recesses of your being. Make it mean something. Care deeply. Feel deeply. Leave it all on the stage floor. Or, as I more affectionately like to say...*burn some calories* while you're performing your piece.



PRACTICE – All of this isn't going to happen through osmosis. You have to work it. And, work it. And, work it even more. Think along the lines of arranging a vase filled with different flowers. You have to keep moving everything around until you get just the right arrangement of color, size, height and so on. Continue to *play* with your performance until you get it right where it needs to be.



GET COACHING – Now, you can only do so much of this on your own. At certain points along the way, it's crucial to get with a coach, someone who knows what they're doing, a professional who will place an objective eye on it. Inevitably, they will see things that you aren't able to. Doing so will build your confidence and help keep you from freaking out. The better you know your monologue performance, the less chance of you being overly nervous. A good coach will let you

know where you stand so that you can make adjustments or settle into what's working.

OWN IT – Take that character into the world...(See *The Actors' Free-Way below*). This will help show you how much pressure your character can hold up to and where you still need to do some more work. You want to be as comfortable with your character (and your chosen piece) as you are with yourself. For some of you, you have to become *even more* comfortable with your character than you are with yourself. Ultimately, we need to experience the moment you're creating — not an actor *trying* to do something. This is not the time to *try* anything! It's execution time. Remember, **DON'T TRAIN ON HIRING GROUND!**

SUMMERY – Plan your work and work your plan. In your monologue work, if you put in more than you're expecting to get out of it, you inevitably *will succeed*. If you're expecting great things to come from your monologue performance and you're only doing mediocre work, you're still dreaming. Either that or you're so incredibly brilliant at your craft that you can do it in your sleep...and if that's the case, what are you doing reading this article, you should be off polishing your Oscar.



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

“THEACTORS’ FREE-WAY”

Free Weekly Acting Exercises (a free way to train)

Taking Your Character into Public Situations.

Once you feel you have your character sussed out, travel to a distant location. Go someplace that you don't usually frequent or most likely won't frequent anytime in the near future. Once there, if you haven't already, get into character. Now, very important, set an **IN-POINT** and **OUT-POINT**. In and out-points are extremely important in keeping



the assignment just that, an assignment. This way there isn't any confusion as to who you are and what you're doing. The IN-POINT begins the exercise and the OUT-POINT ends the session. Now that you have that sorted out, when fully in character, go interact with the public. Purchase groceries, try on some clothes, have a meal, stand in line in a coffee shop, test drive a new car.

See how you do in these situations. Notice where you're able to hold character and where you may begin to break. Doing this several different times in different situations will help you to not only strengthen your character, but also know your character better. NOTE: It's extremely important that you do this exercise in a non-familiar location. There will be a certain amount of self-consciousness you'll have to deal with if you do it in your own neighborhood. Going out of your own community will allow for more freedom with the character work. Also, make sure to set your IN and OUT POINTS. Not doing so may cause complications. And in some cases injury and possible bouts with DID*.

**Dissociative Identity Disorder – only occurring in extreme cases where the actor loses track of where they leave off and the character picks up.*

MONO LOG POWER!

November 8, 2017 By [Clay Banks](#)

The Power of The Monologue

It's important for actors to understand that *acting* is very much an action word. Too often those seeking work in the entertainment industry easily slip into the trap of working 'at' acting more than the actual process 'of' acting. Actors will go to countless seminars and workshops but how much acting the actor is actually doing? It's far too easy for us to think we worked on our instrument for three hours in a workshop when in actuality, we only acted for five minutes.

One of the biggest challenges for so many actors coming-about is balancing the juggling act of trying to act every day, handle the survival job, pay for classes, and balance finances when not working on set. This is not very easy to do.

Enter — The Monologue!

Although often misunderstood by the on-camera actor, the monologue offers many answers to so many of the actor's many challenges. It's not just a performance piece but also a *training tool*. When an actor decides to learn their first monologue, add a new monologue to their repertoire, and/or improve an existing monologue, they will embark upon an amazing journey of self-discovery, continued training, personal growth and overall craft improvement. That is if it's done correctly.

A little over ten years ago I became hyper-inspired and looked for specific ways to empower my students to reach their next levels of performance. So, I started a friendly little in-house competition. I asked them to prepare and deliver a thirty-second monologue performance to compete with one another. It worked! Within a week, they all went to work, found new monologues and unbeknownst to me, I was on my way to becoming a Monologue Specialist.

So, let's take a look at the importance, applications, and benefits of the monologue.

You Get To Choose — Until you become a 'name', picking a monologue is one of the very few times you, the actor, will actually get to choose your own character and scene to perform. That right there ought to be enough motivation to make monologuing a significant part of your regimen. You get to develop your strongest character and place yourself in that perfect situation!

You Get To Show Your Best Stuff — More often than not, one of the most difficult parts of the *monologuing* process is finding just the right solo piece. Locating a monologue that will showcase your strongest attributes and talents and put you in your best light is not an easy task. Choosing anything less than the best is not wise. The actor should always be in pursuit of that *perfect* piece.

It Forces You To Read — My professional observations are that actors generally don't read enough. Reading, especially stories aloud, strengthens the instrument and increases knowledge on so many varied levels. When you're on the hunt for that perfect piece (which should be an ongoing mission), you'll be reading all sorts of genres. As a result, your understanding of the three-act story structure will greatly improve.

You'll Learn More About Your Character — What characters do you play best? Where are you the strongest? How does the world (the Industry) see you? Having the correct answers to these questions will largely affect the advancement of your career. Proper monologue preparation can do just that.

They're Pithy — A film/television monologue doesn't have to be all that long -- maybe for certain plays, but not during your pursuits for theatrical roles. Theatrical agents, managers, and casting directors get the gist of you very quickly. They also have short and precise attention spans. A one-minute monologue will generally do the trick. Two minutes max.

Build The Proverbial Arc and Creating Moments — Monologues need to be rich and full of life. Even if the piece is about death. They need to go somewhere and they have to have moments. What else can offer you all of this but a tight one-minute performance piece? In a very measurable and concise space, you can do all the work necessary to execute brilliance. And, because it's so compact you can really focus your attention on finding and filling those moments and executing an effective arc.

All The Attention Is On You (gotta love that) — The word monologue comes from the Greek word, *monologos*. *Mono* which means single, alone, one and *logos*, speech or word. So, monologuing is when one person (you), have all of the attention while telling us about the appropriate events of the story. Your growth as an on-camera artist from under-fives to co-stars and guest-stars, right up to leads and starring roles is largely determined by your ability to 'carry' the role further and further through the story.

Monologue training gives actors all the necessary preparation needed to reach the ultimate goal — executing an impactful monologue in a feature film or television show, shot in ECU (extreme close-up), delivering an award-winning performance. Are *you* ready for your close-up?

It Doesn't Cost Any Money — Need I say more? Having a killer monologue comes by way of research, preparation, and execution. That's it! And, the return on that investment of your time and effort is priceless!

When I was working as an actor, there was hardly a time you'd catch me without at least one monologue piece in development and several in the can ready to go. As an artist with a strong business mind, it just didn't make any sense not to work monologues. Start with one, build to three and shoot for five. If you're already there or beyond... that's sensational!

As a coach, I expect and encourage the working actor to have, at any given time, at least five monologues ready to go (or in various stages of development). I'll let actors know that I personally can't take them

very seriously if they don't have even one. I mean, really? What are you doing with all of your time?

Actors! Work your monologues, and work them often. They don't imposition you, they don't cost you any money, and they'll make you a better actor! I highly recommend two things: Downloading my complimentary e-book, [*Mastering The One-Minute Monologue*](#). And, entering LA's 1Minute Monologue Contest. It's happening right now! 1MinuteMonologue.com

Self-Written Monologue Requirements

IF YOU PLAN ON WRITING YOUR OWN MONOLOGUE

There are several stages to building/developing a powerful and effective monologue performance. There's the **WRITING** and the **PERFORMANCE**. The structure of the monologue (the writing) needs to be looked at completely separate from the actual monologue performance (the acting). If a monologue performance isn't approached properly, it's very similar to grabbing a bunch of sticks, throwing them together in a pile and expecting to have a well built house. That's simply not gonna happen.

If you plan on having Coach Banks coach you with a self written monologue, the monologue requirements below must be met *before* being coached. Reason being, not everything that's written as a real life experience or an interesting extended paragraph qualifies as an actual *monologue*. And... the closer the piece is to a personal real life experience, the better the chances it's not going to adhere to story structural or monologue integrity.

Considered *the writing* as the tracks the train (you) will be riding on. If the tracks aren't solid and structurally sound, you'll be in for a bumpy ride... and more than likely, derailment.

If, during the coaching of your monologue, it's realized that the piece doesn't meet the necessary requirements, you (the actor) will be politely asked to take a seat and the coaching of that piece will cease. If you feel you'd benefit from some writing coaching to help you structure your idea, you can set up a one-on-one coaching session with [Coach Banks HERE](#).

Necessary Structural Dynamics:

- **Your monologue must not come in any longer than 150 seconds.**
- **1 Minute Monologues, no longer than 80 seconds.**
- **There must be a clear Beginning, Middle and End.**
- **It must have a sound story structure.**

- There needs to be a strong *Who, What and Where*.
- *Who* you're talking to (relationship) – *What's* it about (plot) – *Where* it's taking place (location)
- The piece must present a strong story/character arc.
- It's got to go somewhere (travel) with noticeable *moments* in place.

Coach Banks can not be expected to conduct a writing session or have to rewrite the piece for you during these *performance* sessions. If you're in need of a custom written monologue, or you require a writing session, once again, you can easily set that up [HERE](#). In your **MONOLOGUE PRIVATE COACHING SESSION**, Coach Banks will be more than happy to help you develop and customize your piece to your character. *Appropriate session fees will apply.*

Remember — **BUILD** from the ground up.

1. **Level the ground – THE PIECE MUST FIT YOUR CHARACTER – RESEARCH & EXPLORE**
2. **Build the tracks – THE PIECE MUST BE WRITTEN WELL**
3. **Test the tracks you've built – GOOD WRITING ISN'T WRITTEN... IT'S REWRITTEN**
4. **Build the train – THE ACTOR IS ACTIVATED AND READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE**
5. **Condition and prep the train – THE PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN WORKED OUT**
6. **Run the train on the tracks several times – DISCOVER SEVERAL WAYS TO ATTACK IT**
7. **Put some turns in the tracks and decorations on the train – TWEAKING THE PERFORMANCE**

An effective monologue will serve the working actor in immeasurable ways throughout their career. Do the work correctly the first time and you can expect sensational results for many years to come!

Clay Banks Productions & Studio