

1 audition by michael shurtleff

Unlock your acting potential with the groundbreaking techniques of Michael Shurtleff's legendary acting guide, "Audition." This comprehensive article delves deep into Shurtleff's transformative approach, offering actors a powerful roadmap to conquering the audition room. We explore the core principles of his method, from understanding the "Truth" and "Life" in a character to mastering the art of "Surprise" and "Objectives." Discover how Shurtleff's insights can help you move beyond mere memorization and tap into authentic, compelling performances. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just beginning your acting journey, mastering the strategies presented in "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" is key to unlocking your best work.

- Understanding Michael Shurtleff's "Audition"
- The Core Principles of Shurtleff's Approach
- Breaking Down Key Shurtleff Concepts
- Applying Shurtleff's Techniques in the Audition Room
- The Impact of Shurtleff's "Audition" on Modern Acting
- Resources for Further Exploration

The Transformative Power of Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" for

Actors

Michael Shurtleff's seminal work, "Audition," stands as a beacon of guidance for actors navigating the often-treacherous waters of the audition process. It's more than just a book; it's a philosophy, a practical toolkit, and a deeply insightful exploration of what it truly means to connect with a character and communicate that connection to a casting director. For countless actors, delving into the principles outlined in "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" has been a turning point, transforming their approach from one of anxiety and guesswork to one of confidence and creative expression. This article aims to illuminate the enduring relevance and practical application of Shurtleff's wisdom, empowering you to approach every audition with clarity, intention, and authenticity. We will unpack the fundamental concepts that made "Audition" a revolutionary text and explore how its tenets can be effectively implemented in today's demanding acting landscape. Understanding "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" is not just about learning techniques; it's about discovering a more profound way to engage with the craft of acting and with yourself as an artist.

Deconstructing the Pillars of Shurtleff's "Audition"

Methodology

Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" is renowned for its ability to cut through the noise and address the fundamental elements that make a performance resonate. His approach is rooted in a deep understanding of human behavior and the psychological underpinnings of acting. He doesn't just teach actors how to deliver lines; he guides them towards finding the genuine emotional truth that fuels compelling performances. The book is a departure from more traditional, rote memorization techniques, instead championing an organic and intuitive process. By focusing on concrete, actionable principles, Shurtleff equips actors with the tools to unlock their own creative potential and bring characters to life in a way that feels both authentic and impactful. This section will explore the foundational concepts that form the bedrock of his celebrated "Audition" method, providing a clear understanding of its transformative power.

The Shurtleffian Pursuit of Truth and Life in Performance

At the heart of Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" lies an unwavering commitment to finding the "Truth" and "Life" within a character and a scene. Shurtleff argues that the most captivating performances are not those that are technically perfect, but those that are imbued with genuine human experience. This means digging beneath the surface of the script to uncover the character's inner life, their desires, their fears, and their motivations. He encourages actors to imbue their characters with a palpable sense of existence, making them feel like real people with real stakes. This is achieved by understanding the character's "objectives" – what they want and why they want it – and by allowing the actor's own emotional life to inform the portrayal. The pursuit of truth is not about imitating but about inhabiting, about allowing the essence of the character to flow through the actor's being.

Understanding Objectives: The Driving Force in Shurtleff's "Audition"

A cornerstone of "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" is the concept of "Objectives." Shurtleff posits that every character, in every moment, wants something. These desires, whether conscious or unconscious, are the engines that drive the narrative and propel the performance forward. Identifying and understanding these objectives is crucial for an actor. It provides a clear direction and purpose for every action and line of dialogue. Shurtleff emphasizes that objectives should be active and specific, articulated in a way that suggests a clear path of action. For example, instead of "I want to be loved," a more effective Shurtleffian objective might be "I want to make him feel guilty for leaving me," or "I want to convince her to stay." This focus on active wanting allows actors to approach scenes with intention and create dynamic, engaging performances that resonate with audiences.

The Power of Obstacles and Choices in Shurtleff's Acting Philosophy

Shurtleff's teachings in "Audition" stress the importance of obstacles in creating compelling dramatic conflict. Characters are not meant to achieve their objectives easily; they are meant to struggle, to overcome challenges, and to make difficult choices. These obstacles, whether they are external factors or internal conflicts, create tension and provide opportunities for the actor to reveal the character's resilience, vulnerability, and inner strength. The choices an actor makes in response to these obstacles

are what truly define a character. Shurtleff encourages actors to explore a range of possibilities, to embrace the unexpected, and to make bold, definitive choices that illuminate the character's personality and their journey. It is through facing and navigating these obstacles that characters become fully realized and their stories become captivating.

Exploring Emotion and Experience: Shurtleff's "Inner Life" for Actors

Beyond the mechanics of objectives and obstacles, Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" delves deeply into the actor's "Inner Life." This refers to the rich tapestry of emotions, memories, and experiences that an actor draws upon to bring a character to life. Shurtleff advocates for a process of honest self-exploration, encouraging actors to connect with their own feelings and experiences and to find parallels within the character's circumstances. This is not about mimicking emotions, but about understanding the universal truths of human experience and allowing those truths to inform the portrayal. By tapping into their own authentic emotional landscape, actors can imbue their characters with a depth and nuance that makes them relatable and compelling. The goal is to move beyond superficial emotion and to access the raw, visceral feelings that drive human behavior.

Embracing Surprise and Spontaneity in the Audition Room with Shurtleff

One of the most potent concepts in "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" is the embrace of "Surprise." Shurtleff understood that the magic of acting often lies in the unexpected, in moments where the actor, and by extension the character, discovers something new or reacts in a way that is not predetermined. This requires actors to be fully present, open to the moment, and willing to deviate from their preconceived notions. It encourages a sense of spontaneity and allows for genuine discovery within the performance. By cultivating an attitude of playful exploration and a willingness to be surprised by what emerges, actors can inject a vibrant, unpredictable energy into their auditions, captivating casting directors and showcasing their ability to think and react in the moment.

Practical Application of Shurtleff's "Audition" Techniques for Today's Actor

The principles outlined in Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" are not confined to historical acting theory; they are remarkably relevant and applicable to the contemporary acting landscape. In a world where auditions are often fast-paced and require actors to quickly establish character and intention, Shurtleff's focus on clarity, truth, and active engagement proves invaluable. Whether preparing for a stage role, a film audition, or a television scene, the actor who understands and applies Shurtleff's methods possesses a distinct advantage. This section will bridge the gap between Shurtleff's foundational teachings and the practical demands of modern auditioning, offering actionable advice for actors seeking to elevate their craft and secure the roles they desire. Mastering "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" means developing a robust toolkit for navigating the complexities of the industry.

Preparing Your Monologue: Shurtleff's Guidance on Choice and Clarity

When preparing a monologue for an audition, Shurtleff's teachings on objectives and choices become paramount. Instead of simply reciting lines, actors are encouraged to make specific, active choices about what their character wants and how they intend to get it. This involves identifying the central objective of the monologue and then breaking down the text into smaller beats, each with its own mini-objective and action. Shurtleff would advocate for clarity in these choices, ensuring that the actor's intention is readily apparent to the casting director. This focus on purpose and action breathes life into the monologue, transforming it from a recitation into a compelling scene. The goal is to present a clear, dynamic, and engaging portrayal that showcases the actor's understanding of the material and their ability to connect with the character's journey.

Navigating Film and Television Auditions with Shurtleff's Principles

Film and television auditions often demand a different kind of presence and energy than stage auditions. Michael Shurtleff's emphasis on truth and the inner life is particularly beneficial in these mediums, where subtle nuances and authentic emotional responses are often prioritized. Shurtleff's

techniques encourage actors to be present and reactive, to find the "life" in the character's circumstances, and to make specific, grounded choices. Even with limited screen time or the pressure of a self-tape, understanding and applying Shurtleff's principles can help an actor create a memorable and impactful performance. This involves focusing on the character's immediate objective and making active, believable choices that convey the essence of their situation and inner state. The ability to embody truth and life, as taught in "Audition by Michael Shurtleff," is a significant asset.

Making Bold Choices: Shurtleff's Advice for Standing Out

In a competitive field, making bold and clear choices is essential for an actor to stand out in an audition. Michael Shurtleff consistently advocated for actors to commit fully to their decisions, even if they felt unconventional. These choices should always be rooted in the character's truth and objectives, not simply for the sake of being different. Shurtleff's approach encourages actors to explore the full range of possibilities for a character, to take risks, and to trust their instincts. By making deliberate and well-considered choices, actors can demonstrate their understanding of the material and their ability to bring a unique perspective to the role. This conviction in their choices, a direct result of engaging with "Audition by Michael Shurtleff," is often what captures the attention of casting professionals.

The Importance of Listening and Reacting: Shurtleff's Collaborative Spirit

While Shurtleff's "Audition" focuses heavily on the actor's internal process, it also implicitly champions the importance of listening and reacting. In any scene, especially in on-camera work, an actor's ability to truly listen to their scene partner and respond authentically is crucial. Shurtleff's emphasis on being present and alive in the moment naturally extends to this collaborative aspect of acting. Actors who are deeply connected to their character's objectives and the realities of the scene are better equipped to listen and react in a way that feels genuine and enhances the overall performance. This makes them valuable collaborators and individuals who understand the interconnectedness of storytelling. The principles within "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" foster this vital skill.

The Enduring Legacy of "Audition" by Michael Shurtleff in Modern Acting

The impact of Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" on the craft of acting is undeniable. His groundbreaking approach has shaped the training and practice of countless actors and acting coaches for decades. The book continues to be a staple in acting schools and a go-to resource for performers seeking to deepen their understanding of the art. Shurtleff's ability to articulate complex psychological and emotional concepts in a clear, accessible manner has made his techniques universally understood and highly effective. This section will explore the lasting influence of "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" and its continued relevance in an ever-evolving industry, highlighting how his timeless wisdom continues to guide actors toward more authentic and powerful performances.

How Shurtleff's Insights Enhance Character Development

Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" provides a robust framework for developing nuanced and believable characters. By focusing on elements like objectives, obstacles, and the character's inner life, actors are equipped to move beyond surface-level interpretations. Shurtleff's methods encourage a deep dive into the character's motivations, desires, and fears, leading to a more complex and human portrayal. This thorough approach to character development ensures that every action and line of dialogue feels motivated and purposeful. Actors who engage with "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" learn to create characters that are not just figures in a story but living, breathing individuals with their own unique histories and internal landscapes.

The Influence of Shurtleff on Acting Pedagogy

The influence of Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" on acting pedagogy cannot be overstated. His teachings have been integrated into the curricula of numerous acting programs and workshops worldwide. Instructors often utilize his exercises and concepts to help students unlock emotional truth, clarify objectives, and develop a stronger sense of presence. Shurtleff's emphasis on practical application and his clear, direct language make his methods particularly effective for teaching. Many contemporary

acting coaches consider "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" a foundational text, using its principles as a springboard for their own unique approaches to actor training. His legacy continues to be felt in the way actors are taught to approach their craft.

"Audition" as a Tool for Emotional Connection and Authenticity

At its core, Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" is about fostering emotional connection and authenticity. In a profession that can sometimes feel artificial, Shurtleff's techniques provide a pathway back to genuine human experience. By encouraging actors to tap into their own emotional truths and to find the "life" in every moment, he helps them create performances that resonate deeply with audiences. The book empowers actors to be vulnerable, to take risks, and to embrace the messiness of human emotion. This commitment to authenticity is what makes Shurtleff's teachings so enduring and why "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" remains an indispensable guide for actors seeking to connect on a profound level.

Resources for Deeper Exploration of Michael Shurtleff's

"Audition"

For actors eager to further immerse themselves in the profound teachings of Michael Shurtleff, a wealth of resources exists. Beyond his seminal book, "Audition," understanding his philosophy often involves exploring related materials and engaging with the broader community of actors and coaches who have been influenced by his work. This section aims to provide a starting point for those who wish to deepen their practice and unlock even greater potential in their acting careers. Exploring these avenues can significantly enhance one's understanding and application of "Audition by Michael Shurtleff."

- Reading "Audition" by Michael Shurtleff: The primary and most essential resource is, of course, the book itself. It offers a comprehensive exploration of his theories and techniques.

- **Studying with Shurtleff-influenced Coaches:** Seek out acting coaches and teachers who have studied directly with Michael Shurtleff or who have a strong grounding in his methodologies.
- **Watching Performances by Shurtleff Students:** Observing actors who have trained with or been heavily influenced by Shurtleff can provide practical examples of his techniques in action.
- **Exploring Related Acting Texts:** While Shurtleff's work is unique, it often complements and expands upon principles found in other influential acting texts, offering a broader understanding of the craft.
- **Engaging in Acting Workshops:** Participating in workshops that specifically focus on or incorporate Shurtleff's approach can offer hands-on experience and personalized feedback.

Conclusion: Mastering Your Audition with the Wisdom of Michael Shurtleff

Michael Shurtleff's "Audition" remains an unparalleled guide for actors striving for authenticity, clarity, and power in their performances. The principles of truth, life, objectives, obstacles, and surprise, as detailed within its pages, provide a robust framework for conquering the audition room and bringing characters to vibrant life. By embracing Shurtleff's transformative techniques, actors can move beyond superficial portrayals and tap into the profound emotional landscapes that resonate with audiences. Whether preparing a monologue or navigating the complexities of on-camera work, the enduring wisdom found in "Audition by Michael Shurtleff" offers a clear path to unlocking an actor's fullest potential. This comprehensive exploration has illuminated the core tenets of his methodology and underscored its vital relevance for today's performers, equipping you with the tools and insights necessary to excel in every audition.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the core premise of Michael Shurtleff's 'Audition'?

Shurtleff's 'Audition' isn't a single, linear narrative, but rather a collection of exercises and principles designed to help actors discover and unlock their authentic selves for performance. It focuses on breaking down barriers, finding personal truth, and allowing actors to be truly present and responsive.

What makes Shurtleff's approach to auditioning 'trending' or relevant today?

In an industry often focused on external polish and specific 'types,' Shurtleff's emphasis on internal authenticity, emotional honesty, and the actor's unique perspective offers a refreshing and powerful alternative. This focus on genuine connection resonates with contemporary desires for more relatable and nuanced performances.

What are some key exercises or concepts from 'Audition' that actors find particularly useful?

Key concepts include 'Accepting the Game,' 'The Goal,' 'The Obstacle,' and 'The Action.' Exercises often involve physical exploration, moment-to-moment responsiveness, and breaking free from preconceived notions of how a character should be played, encouraging a more instinctual approach.

How does Shurtleff's 'Audition' differ from traditional audition preparation techniques?

Traditional techniques might focus on memorization, hitting specific emotional beats, or catering to perceived casting expectations. Shurtleff's approach prioritizes the actor's internal life, finding the 'why' behind actions, and using the given circumstances to fuel genuine impulse rather than external performance.

What kind of actor benefits most from studying Michael Shurtleff's 'Audition'?

Actors who struggle with self-consciousness, who feel they are 'acting' rather than 'being,' or who are looking to deepen their emotional range and connection to material will benefit greatly. It's valuable for both beginners seeking a strong foundation and experienced actors looking to break through creative blocks.

Can the principles from 'Audition' be applied to on-camera acting as well as stage acting?

Absolutely. While the exercises may be developed in a workshop setting, the core principles of authenticity, responsiveness, and finding your unique truth are universally applicable to all forms of acting, including on-camera work where subtlety and internal life are paramount.

What is the overarching philosophy behind Shurtleff's methodology in 'Audition'?

The overarching philosophy is about liberating the actor's natural instincts and emotional truth. Shurtleff believed that actors often get in their own way, and his work aims to remove those inhibitions, allowing the actor to be fully present, courageous, and uniquely themselves in their performance.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to Michael Shurtleff's Audition, along with short descriptions:

1. Acting as a Business: NYC Edition by Joan See

This practical guide offers essential advice for actors navigating the professional landscape, particularly in the competitive New York City market. It covers building a career, marketing yourself effectively, and understanding the business side of acting. Like Shurtleff, it emphasizes proactive career management

and creating your own opportunities.

2. The Actor's Scenebook: Serious, Comedic, Classical by M. William Nolan and Linda Donn

This book provides a curated collection of scenes specifically chosen for actors to practice and showcase their skills. It offers a diverse range of material, allowing actors to explore different emotional landscapes and character types. The emphasis on exploring character motivations and finding truthful expression resonates with Shurtleff's core principles.

3. Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation by Charna Halpern, Del Close, and Kim Johnson

This seminal work on improvisation delves into the philosophy and techniques that underpin spontaneous comedic performance. It emphasizes listening, reacting truthfully, and building relationships on stage, which are crucial skills for any actor, even in scripted work. The book's focus on being present and authentic in the moment directly mirrors Shurtleff's "doing."

4. The Power of the Actor: The Rediscovery of the Acting Craft by Ivana Chubbuck

Chubbuck's book explores a highly structured approach to acting that focuses on overcoming personal obstacles and tapping into raw emotional truth. It guides actors in creating compelling characters by understanding their psychological makeup and motivations. This method, like Shurtleff's, aims to unlock authentic and powerful performances through deep character work.

5. On Directing Film by David Mamet

While focused on directing, Mamet's insights offer invaluable lessons for actors about storytelling, composition, and the director's vision. He breaks down the craft of filmmaking with a direct and no-nonsense approach. Understanding how a director shapes a scene can profoundly inform an actor's choices and collaboration, echoing Shurtleff's emphasis on clear objectives.

6. Your Film Acting Career: Direct Your Career from New York to Hollywood by Jeanette L. Horn

This book provides a roadmap for actors aiming to build a successful career in the film industry. It covers essential elements like headshots, resumes, agents, and navigating auditions from an industry perspective. The practical, career-focused advice aligns with Shurtleff's belief in an actor taking ownership of their professional journey.

7. **The Actor's Handbook: A Complete Guide to Success in the Performing Arts** by Barbara Houseman
Houseman's comprehensive guide covers a wide spectrum of knowledge for aspiring and working actors. It touches upon technical skills, industry practices, and mental preparedness. The book's holistic approach to the acting craft and career development shares Shurtleff's commitment to nurturing a well-rounded and confident actor.

8. **The Artist's Way: A Fourteen-Week Program and Journey to Discover and Recover Your Creative Self** by Julia Cameron

This influential book is designed to help individuals overcome creative blocks and reconnect with their inner artist. Through guided exercises and journaling, it fosters self-discovery and creative expression. The emphasis on inner exploration and nurturing one's creative spirit is fundamental to the deep, personal work Shurtleff encourages in actors.

9. **Audition, Workbook** by Michael Shurtleff

This is the direct companion to Michael Shurtleff's seminal work, providing practical exercises and prompts to help actors apply his theories. It offers a hands-on approach to exploring concepts like objectives, obstacles, and tactics. For actors seeking to deeply internalize and practice Shurtleff's transformative techniques, this workbook is indispensable.

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