

Award Monologues for Women

Edited by
**Patrick Tucker and
Christine Ozanne**

AWARD MONOLOGUES FOR WOMEN

The effectiveness of a performance is always influenced by the quality of the writing. We wanted to provide a treasure-house for actors of wonderful speeches with unique practical tips on how to perform them. We trust this collection of 54 monologues from plays nominated for:

- the Pulitzer Prize
- the Tony Award
- the Drama Desk Award
- the Evening Standard Theatre Award
- the Laurence Olivier Award

will help all of you who are looking for up-to-date speeches for auditions, acting class, or who just want to enjoy extracts from some of the new plays that have arrived in the last 25 years.

– Patrick Tucker and Christine Ozanne

Patrick Tucker is Director of the Original Shakespeare Company and author of *The Actor's Survival Handbook* (with Christine Ozanne, 2005), *Secrets of Screen Acting* (2nd edition, 2003) and *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare – the Original Approach* (2002).

Christine Ozanne is an actor, co-founder of the Original Shakespeare Company and co-author of *The Actor's Survival Handbook*.

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First published 2007 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2007 selection and editorial matter: Patrick Tucker and Christine Ozanne;
individual monologues: the authors

Typeset in Parisine by
Keystroke, 28 High Street, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Award monologues for women / chosen and edited by Patrick
Tucker and Christine Ozanne.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Monologues. 2. Acting. 3. American drama—20th century.

4. English drama—20th century. 5. Women—Drama.

I. Tucker, Patrick. II. Ozanne, Christine.

PN2080.A97 2007

808.82'45—dc22

2007012605

ISBN13: 978-0-415-42839-2 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-42840-8 (pbk)

Award Monologues for Women

Fifty-four speeches from plays that have won, or been nominated for, major Awards in New York and London from 1980 onwards; or from a performance by an actor similarly honoured

Chosen and edited by Patrick Tucker and Christine Ozanne

This book of various and varied speeches is dedicated to our various and varied siblings:

Martin, Nicholas, Elisabeth, Andrew and Gordon.

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INTRODUCTION

This book contains over 50 speeches.

These monologues are to help you:

- 1 to find a really good audition piece;
- 2 to find a suitable piece for classes which extend and improve your acting;
- 3 to find pieces that give you range and opportunity;
- 4 to see a selection of pieces from some well written plays.

SOURCES

Plays first presented since 1980, with the latest having its first performance in 2005.

WHICH

Those plays that have won or been nominated for major Theatre Awards in New York and London, or contain a speech performed by a similarly awarded actor. Two-thirds of the plays chosen are by American authors.

WHY AND HOW

We wanted all the speeches to come from well-written plays, and have read 328 of the 336 plays so nominated, plus most of the additional 199 plays that contain nominated performances. Because they are all plays connected with Awards, the writing is of a high standard – and we all know that the better the writing, the better your performance will be.

TEXT

We have reproduced the text exactly as it appears in the published script. Sometimes other characters have lines, but in all cases it is possible to perform the piece without someone else saying them.

DETAILS

The speeches are collected into four age-bands, and each speech has full details of when and where it was first performed and by whom, plus background details as to the character and situation.

NOTES

We have included specific notes and helpful hints at the bottom of each speech, along with definitions of any unusual words or references. There is a separate list of numbered notes for general use, and some Quick Advice on Auditioning.

LISTS

We have made a record of all the plays listed in the main New York and London Theatre Awards from 1980 to 2006, so you can see where the plays and playwrights come from, and when it was they received their accolades. We have also included an Index to all the plays used, plus all the individual actors who originally performed the speeches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea and inspiration for these two related books (there is a companion volume *Award Monologues for Men*) comes from our long-time publisher and friend William Germano, who has been a constant supporter of our work.

Our editors at Routledge, Talia Rodgers and Minh Ha Duong, have been very helpful and supportive to the mammoth task of getting all the plays and permissions together.

Our research into the Award plays was mostly done at what we found to be the best source of play scripts in London, the library of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, whose staff were extremely helpful.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

FIVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF FINDING A SPEECH:

- 1 Go to the **Contents** (page vii) to find the age bracket that suits you.
- 2 Go to the **Index of Playwrights** (page 141) to look up a specific writer.
- 3 Go to the **Index of Plays** (page 142) to look up a particular play.
- 4 Go to the **Index of Actors** (page 143) to look up what speech was originally performed by an actor similar to the type you are looking for.
- 5 Read through the speeches in your chosen age bracket to find the one that suits your purposes.

The text is as the author intended, with standardised stage instructions in italics inside square brackets. There has been no editing – all the other characters' lines are included, and the spelling (American or English) is as in the original text.

The speeches are arranged according to the age of the character: 20s, 30s, 40s, and over 50s, and then by alphabetical order of playwright. At the beginning of each section, all the speeches in that age range are listed.

DETAILS OF THE SPEECHES

At the top of each speech we name the author, and when it was first performed in a major city. The awards which the play or the performance gathered are listed, as is the character's name, and who first performed it. The age range for the character is listed according to the author (or failing further information, the age of the original actor who created the role), but these can often be just guidelines, and you should not feel restricted to looking only at those roles in your actual age range.

The type required for the part is stated, as well as a brief note as to the situation from where this speech comes. This is not gone into in great detail, as your performance will not be a re-creation of what you might do were you to be

performing the role, but as a launch pad and platform for you to display all your acting abilities, and thrill the auditioners, and yourself, with the sheer joy of acting. A speech by itself cannot have the same effect as the same speech in the context of the play, and so it cannot be performed just as a slice of that play.

We have made a few comments at the bottom of each speech, including an explanation of any unusual words, and refer to the numbered **Notes on speeches** where applicable.

Although certain parts may be written for specific backgrounds of nationality, race or class, do not let this stop you from using one that will show YOU off to your best advantage, simply because you do not fit the exact requirements as asked for by the author.

QUICK ADVICE ON AUDITIONING

We as director (Patrick) and actor (Christine), have participated as performer and/or adjudicator in hundreds of classes, workshops, competitions, and auditions. Our advice and notes are drawn from these experiences.

- 1 The people judging you will be your 'audience' and need to be entertained as such.
- 2 If you need to announce the name of the piece you are doing, make it short: character, play title, author. There really shouldn't be any need to 'set the scene'. Exceptions should be only where appropriate, but whatever you do keep it brief and natural (not 'recited').
- 3 Start at once. Do not spend time getting into character; do not stand there with your eyes closed, breathing deeply and so on. Just get on with it. In other words, make an impact right from the start.
- 4 Use the simplest costume possible required for the character.
- 5 Use only those props that are absolutely necessary. Do not mix real props and mimed props in the same piece. Either one or the other.
- 6 Never apologize in advance for anything. Health problems, especially with the voice, will be obvious enough. *Never* give any hint that you don't know the piece very well, whatever the excuse might be. Again it will be obvious enough if you don't. If you have to take a prompt do it with aplomb, and don't come out of character. *Never re-run a line, just plough on regardless.* Chances are they won't notice your mistake if you do it with skill and confidence.
- 7 If you have to start again, either at their request or yours, try to do it differently to show what a flexible actor you are.
- 8 Be sensitive to the auditioners' remarks, don't argue a point, treat their comments as good advice.

- 9 Have an amusing anecdote ready if it refers to the audition piece, but only use it if you feel absolutely sure it will get a favourable reaction. Otherwise leave, quickly and cheerfully.
- 10 Before you begin, imagine that you have just done the audition and you are now going to do it even better!

NOTES ON SPEECHES

We realise that many of the notes we will be giving you will be repeated for different speeches, so instead of duplicating all the information onto each page, we give here all our main notes, numbered as [Note 1](#), [Note 2](#), etc. and then for each speech we will give some specific notes, followed by: [See Note 1](#), [See Note 2](#) and so on, as appropriate.

NOTE 1 OTHER CHARACTER'S LINES

All the text is included. You can leave a gap where the other person is speaking, as it gives you a chance to do some good 'listening' acting. You can either act the information in the other lines, or add a few words so that the audience will know what it was that they were saying – such as putting them in the form of a question at the start of your next speech. A good alternative is to act the second character yourself, with a strong indication that this is what you are doing, such as using a change of voice. This can be a very effective short-cut to clarifying the other lines.

NOTE 2 LENGTH AND STYLE OF SPEECH

We have printed the speech up to a natural ending point, but it may be a little too long for your particular needs. Be unashamed in cutting a monologue down to suit those talents and abilities you wish to present or to work on – that is more important than presenting a coherent story.

NOTE 3 CONFUSING OR RUDE WORDS

Be happy to change any reference in the speech to one your audience will understand, such as place names or a specific cultural reference. If the language

in the piece is inappropriate for your purposes (such as the use of profanities or swear words), then again be happy to change it.

NOTE 4 JOURNEY

Make sure your character goes on a journey, and that you end up in a different place to where you began. To stay the same leads an audience to wonder why they bothered to watch you, as you have not changed from first to last. If your character appears not to change in the speech, then make sure that the audience have gone on a learning journey as they watch your acting; someone must change, so if it is not you, then it must be the audience. Try not to be consistent – it is the enemy of good acting. If you hit one note and stay on it, the audience can easily guess the conclusion – and if they get there before you do it, it is a bored audience.

NOTE 5 THEORY OF OPPOSITES, AND SURPRISES

If you are to do something, do the opposite first. If you are about to be happy, then find a truthful way of being sad just before; if sad, then find a reason for your face to be smiling just before the 'sad' thought occurs. This will make the moment clearer and more fun for the audience to understand and enjoy. Also, try to find an unexpected way to deliver a line or certain word to surprise the audience. Let all interruptions catch you by 'surprise'. This is a good technique, especially at auditions.

NOTE 6 TALKING TO THE AUDIENCE

If you are alone on stage, then a few muttered words can be spoken as if to yourself – but a long speech never can: it is a soliloquy.

There are two schools of thought about how to deal with a soliloquy – you can either speak to a 'generalised' audience, never exactly catching anyone's eye, or you can speak to the audience directly. Some auditioners are uncomfortable if you include them in this, so if you plan to do so, check beforehand that this is going to be acceptable.

NOTE 7 ACCENTS AND VOICE

If the speech requires an accent which is not your natural one, be sure that you have a good reason for choosing it. Make sure you can sustain the accent effortlessly throughout, as any suspicion that you are not totally at ease with it will reflect badly in your performance, and good acting energy can be wasted on maintaining an accent. This also applies to 'character' voices that are not natural to you.

NOTE 8 STAGING

Always place the person you are speaking to downstage, so that when you talk to them the people watching you can see the changing thoughts on your face. If necessary, place chairs downstage of you to indicate where these other people will be.

NOTE 9 USE OF PROPERTIES (PROPS) AND COSTUMES

Either use real props, or mime them all. You do not have to have the exact prop, just something that will stand in for it. Doing a speech that leaves a broken prop onstage is not a good idea. An exception to mixing real and imaginary props is for food and drink, which are best mimed, for handling them when auditioning can be impractical. It is usually not a good idea to have a full costume, but an element of the correct one (a coat, a scarf, a hat) can be used to good effect.