

Acting out

Auditions take actors to depths of despair



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Today I'd like tell you about one of the greatest abhorrences known to mankind. It is the scourge of many, and has more than once caused its share of blood, sweat and tears.

It is the audition.

The audition was basically invented to weed out musicians, dancers and actors who are having bad hair days and smell funny. Acting handbooks will tell you auditions were created to help auditors find the true talent they are looking for; to single out that one special person who could "make" their production.

This is a myth and every actor knows it! (Here's why, by the way.)

It is a well-known truth that auditions help the auditors get rid of people who resemble their exes or other people they've come to hate over the course of their seasoned lives. If you look anything like their evil fourth-grade teacher or a Spice Girl, you will not get cast.

Also, your audition experience can be severely hindered if the auditors had a crappy bagel sandwich for lunch. Your performance may be stellar compared to the aftertaste in their mouths, but they will never know it. They'll be too busy trying desperately to remove the leftover dried onion pieces caught in their teeth and entirely miss your show of skill.

Because I've been lucky enough to have gone through a small slew of auditions, I will share with you what my typical experience is like.

We'll begin at the (very) beginning. Since the UNL theater department is quite good at "putting the smack down" as I like to call it, they enjoy scaring everyone by scheduling auditions during the first two days of class.

This means that, in addition to scurrying around campus lost and getting into fistfights at the bookstore over the last copy of "Biochemistry

for Dummies," UNL actors get to worry about this annual ritual, the lucky schmucks.

Monday, 10:00 a.m.

Me: Holy guacamole, auditions start today, don't they?!

Everyone else in the department who has a clue: Duh.

This is about the time my stomach and most of the rest of my inner workings start churning, and I realize that, once again, I am not fully prepared. You would think after awhile it would sink in that auditions are held at the same time every year. It hasn't. I always manage to forget. Nothing matches the beauty of a college mind, I tell ya.

Thinking I can rely on my prowess and skill as a young actor, I race home to consult my numerous plays and monologue books. After all, my scheduled time is not until Tuesday evening, so with an early start, I can pull off the greatest audition of all time!

(I like to keep telling myself this until I start to believe it.)

Upon arriving home and realizing that at the start of the summer I packed all my books away and took them home to North Platte, I start screaming.

Because I consider myself to be a courteous person (and I don't want the gals on my floor to think of me as being any more psychotic than I've already demonstrated), I stop screaming and run my butt over to the library.

I consult IRIS for any possible source of theatrical genius, and begin my desperate hunt for the perfect piece. Because it takes me approximately 10 hours to locate what I am looking for in Love Library, I find the monologue books at 11:57 p.m.

Editor's Note: Maybe that's why they offer a class in it. Did you skip that one?

If you are a good UNL student, you are aware that the library closes at midnight and are probably thinking to yourself, "Three minutes to look through the books and find the right material and manage to make it up the stairs and down to the circulation desk? There's no possible way."

But, my doubting friends, you are wrong! I have become an expert at instantaneously figuring out which texts I need and getting them checked out with minutes to spare. (I generally just pull an entire section off the shelf and figure out what I have when I get home. The odds of getting the right book really aren't half bad!)

Tuesday, 12:10 a.m.

By now I am walking back home (and drag-

ging my backpack on the ground) trying to think how I am going to manage to get any sleep between this time and 8:55 p.m. (my scheduled audition time). Since I am a seasoned college student, however, I know that sleep is severely overrated, and all I really need to function is lots of caffeine.

After putting the coffee on and dumping the contents of my backpack on the floor, this is what I see: "101 Great Monologues for Men Over 60", "The Best Scenes Ever Written For the Group of Sixteen," and "Easy Portuguese for the Beginner, Vol. 6."

My life is over.

Wait! What's that hiding under the Portuguese book? Score! It's "Fifty Perfect Monologues for the Horrifically Unprepared Actress"! The luck I have is sometimes amazing.

After a few minutes of skimming the work, I have found my piece. I read and re-read for about an hour, until I can say it (almost) perfectly without glancing at the book (OK, so there's a glance here and there, but it's no big deal! I'm an actor - I'll find a way). I can now get some sleep, confident that I will be ready for my audition.

Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.

I wake in the morning not able to remember a word I read at 2 a.m. But I am not scared (yet), because I have nine hours to get the job done.

Fast-forward to 8:30 p.m.

I am in the basement of the Temple Building jumping up and down with anxiety, wondering how in the heck I'm going to pull this one off. The lovely assistants hand me my stat sheet to fill out and let me know where they are on the list, and, unfortunately, they are right on schedule. (Only when I am not ready to go does this freak occurrence happen.)

I jump up and down some more, run my lines a few times, and suddenly, BAM! I am ready! I look great, I have con-

fidence, I know my lines. Just show me the stage and let me demonstrate the art of acting.

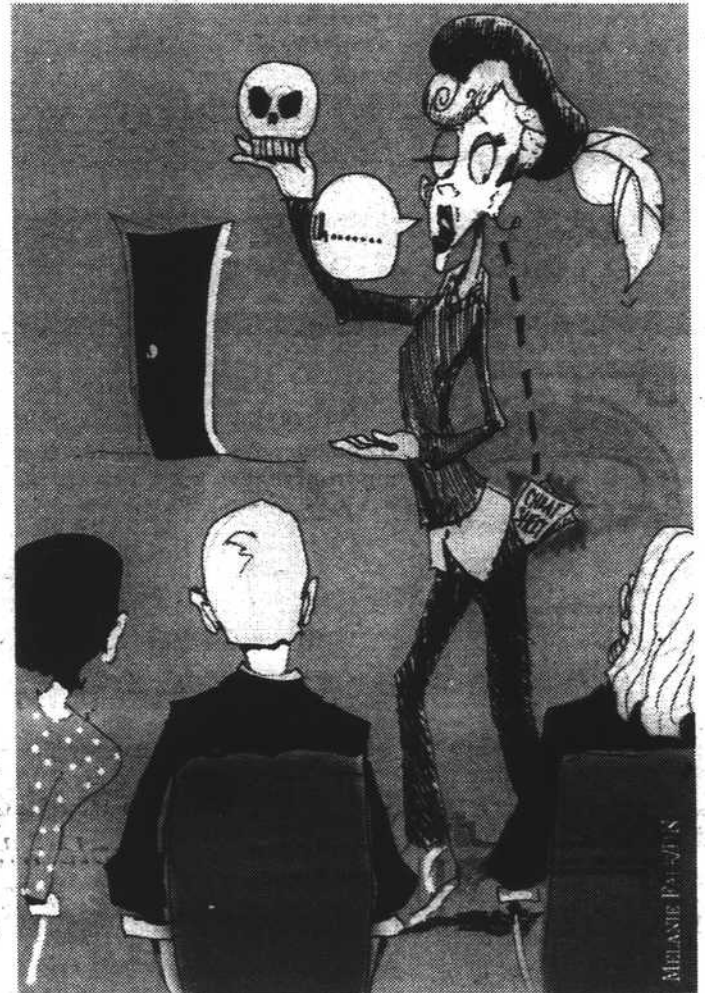
Tuesday, 9:00 p.m.

It's over, thank God, it's finally over! I stunk.

Somehow I managed to forget a few lines and screw up my blocking entirely, but that's OK. There will be a million other auditions for a million other plays.

I have a distinct feeling that I won't get any callbacks for roles, but I can now take rejection with a smile on my face (and the occasional punching of some inanimate objects), and life will go on.

Just point me to the nearest sign-up sheet.



Last call for alcohol

Establishment of drinking age is a disservice to youths



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It's absolutely pathetic that the University of Nebraska joined forces with the Lincoln Police Department to enforce the prohibition of alcohol. This does not sound like the land of the free and the home of the brave, but rather the land of the restricted and the home of the frightened.

I thought individuals in high positions of law, government and education were learned individuals who objectively viewed situations and formulated reasonable solutions; I was mistaken. The recent actions of UNL and the LPD show me a few ignorant elders trying to lay down a fatherly fist to control the youths who will soon control the country.

The sooner the United States removes the absurd law governing the age of alcohol consumption, the faster we will remedy many of the problems that have been created by these same prohibitive laws.

Policy-makers in the U.S. have always seen youths as members of soci-

ety who should not be allowed adult responsibilities. Because of this, they are not allowed the opportunity to gain the experiences that precede the acquisition of those responsibilities, the classic Catch-22.

The issue of alcohol consumption and age has been accepted as "the way things are" and, as we have recently witnessed, an area to be dealt with forcefully.

The only lesson I have been taught from the recent activities of Lincoln's ever-flourishing authoritarian state is individuals in authority positions have no idea how to work with youths to produce effective youth-related policies. Furthermore, the recent Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant of \$700,000 is simply a Band-Aid that doesn't address the root of the problem: Prohibition simply does not work.

Had youths, whom these prohibitive laws guard against, had a more realistic socialization with alcohol use and responsibility, they probably wouldn't be acting in a manner that causes these prohibitive laws.

An organized and responsible approach is needed to seriously reevaluate this law and its severe faults, and this must precede legitimate policy formulation and social change.

It is obvious an age-based law on alcohol consumption is fundamentally flawed and actually causes problems like binge drinking. The absurdity with an age-based law is that it claims to equate a number with a certain level of maturity; however, those who have studied youth development understand that "maturity" is far more complex than an arbitrary number.

In the United States, alcohol is

regarded as a forbidden fruit, but this fruit is easily attainable. Alcohol has been built up to represent an object of desire and strong curiosity and under these circumstances, usually far more is consumed than is necessary.

This instills a binge consumption mentality, and also treats alcohol as an especially interesting and possibly abusive substance, which then allows the policy-makers to continue making protective, prohibitive and controlling policies. This is totally unnecessary, because alcohol is nothing more than grapes, cactus or another distilled item.

Because of modern prohibition, an important component of maturation—the internalization of responsible alcohol consumption—is dangerously delayed in this country. Instead of having youths socialized early with an understanding of alcohol, socialization is postponed, delaying this process significantly by five to 10 years.

This delayed socialization allows alcohol to be looked upon as a tool for indoctrination into "mature" adulthood, rather than just another fact of life. The mentality actually encourages irresponsible binge drinking that often occurs on a person's 21st birthday. This fact exemplifies a very "immature" attitude toward alcohol and proves the danger of delayed socialization.

The array of problems associated with prohibition would neither be as severe nor as common if alcohol were socialized at an early age. I base this on proof from every European nation, Canada and Mexico and their policies on alcohol consumption.

The youths in these countries are allowed the responsibility of consum-

ing alcohol at an early age. These nations understand that the only way to produce responsible adults is to allow youths adult responsibilities.

Around the world, youths are respected as people who will be in charge of the future. Nine- and 11-year-olds can drink beer in Europe, but they don't because it isn't something 9- and 11-year-olds like to do. However, when a youth turns 16 or 19, drinking beer or wine becomes a legitimate beverage because they have acquired a taste for it and know its effects.

Ending age-based prohibition of alcohol also would initiate a much stronger role of the parent/guardian in the youth's life. The position of the guardian as a role model would be enforced, and the guardian's interest in the youth's activities would increase.

I sat in on the luncheon when the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation supervisors visited the campus, and I expressed the following ideas to them and hope I helped convince them to donate the \$700,000, which they did.

I suggested that the university implement an 18-and-over policy for drinking only on campus so individuals from all living establishments can gather and enjoy having beer and wine with each other and enjoy the safety of the campus, therefore improving the social environment of campus. It would improve the physical environment too, because all living establishments would be able to recycle the abundance of beer cans and bottles that otherwise would lead to academic expulsion. I also suggested that drinking-age deregulation must be handled responsibly and all involved individuals must have

a clear understanding of the benefits.

In short, the benefits are: responsible behavior, respect of university property, campus community bonding, moderate enjoyment of alcohol, realistic socialization of alcohol and the most important thing: really, really fun student-run parties. This would be an enormous step for the university, allowing people to be accountable for their actions and allowing younger individuals to witness the benefits of an open party and moderate alcohol consumption.

Lowering or removing the age of alcohol consumption on campus is a legitimate possibility, but it will have to be taken up on the state level and can be adjusted without infringing on national rule. Because UNL contains such a large population of individuals who would be directly affected by the end of alcohol prohibition, we should have a significant position in the readjustment of this law through organizational and responsible methods.

I hope UNL will creatively use the \$700,000 grant it received for alcohol awareness and begin shifting toward actual policy change, rather than just talking about how bad alcohol is, because it is not. I vote for more parties and responsibility, because it's better than further cooperation and enforcement by UNL and the LPD of this ridiculously prohibitive law.

We're being deprived of the rational method for socialization and need to begin changing the way things operate, so future generations can concern themselves with more important issues, and so the global community doesn't continue to laugh itself silly.