

Memorization Selections for Theatre Auditions

Stivers School for the Arts

The following pages contain monologues for male and female actors in the high school program. The audition candidate should select and memorize **two** selections.

A Fair Country

by Jon Robin Baitz

The Play:

Spanning ten years, this hard-hitting story features a family compromised by greed and, finally, destroyed in the process. The Burgess family is 'living in Durban, South Africa, while father (Harry) serves as a cultural attache' - bringing artists to South Africa to improve America's image. In an attempt to get the family out of Africa and secure a better position, Harry betrays his oldest son's (Alec) radical friends to the government. As events play through the next ten years, bitterness consumes the family, compounded by an emotionally overwrought mother, Patrice. The consequences are devastating.

Time and Place:

1977-1987. Southern Mexico; Durban, South Africa; and The Hague, Holland.

The Scene:

Near the end of the play, Patrice encounters Gil (early twenties) at an archeological excavation site in Southern Mexico. Many unresolved issues exist between mother and son, particularly surrounding the horrible death of Gil's brother, Alec.

Gil:

You know it was a bullet...to the back of the neck. Behind a grocery store in Soweto. I imagine it was painless. So you don't have to worry about that (Beat.) I think it was a simple assassination. I was in Kenya with him a few days before, and begged him not to keep going down there. He knew there were many people, with great, vast reasons to kill him. But he kept going anyway. It reached the point where I simply could not stop him. Even Carly couldn't stop him. God knows she stuck it out. (Beat.) He kept going back to South Africa again and again and again. They might have just let him fade away but he wouldn't allow them. (Beat.) And that was that. At least in the end, he got what he wanted. (Beat.) I left Kenya, got to Jo'burg at four in the morning, went to their morgue, and I said "Yes. This is my brother, Alec Dalton Burgess." They gave me his stuff. And I left.

A Bird of Prey

by Jim Grimsley

The Scene:

We find Evan (Monty's fourteen-year-old brother), alone. He faces the audience and rages about his brutal family.

Evan:

I hate them for bringing us here. I hate Mama as much as I hate Daddy, and I hate Daddy all the time. I hate him when he sits around the house in his stinking tee shirt spilling beer all over everything and throwing up in the toilet. I hate the look in Mama's eyes when I'm at home, I hate the way she hides. This place stinks and she knows it and he knows it and they act like it's going to be different someday but it never will, and they know that too, they know they're lying and we shouldn't have come here, they know it will never get better here, but they won't take us home, I know they won't, they'll just sit here, and Daddy will keep getting drunk all the time because his job stinks and Mama will keep crying because he drinks so much and because we don't have any money, and they'll fight all night and we'll have to listen, me and Monty and Marie, we'll have to lay in that stinking apartment and listen to him screaming at her and her begging him to go to sleep. Begging him not to hit her. I know. Things can never get better here, not for us. And they ought to know it and do something about it, they ought to take us home, but they won't. So I hate them almost as much as I hate this place. It's all I can feel, this ball of hate that's on fire, till sometimes I wish I could just go away somewhere. Some place where I'd never have to think about anything again.

Marvin's Room

by Scott McPherson

The Play:

Bessie has committed her life to caring for others, among them her invalid father and aunt. When she discovers that she has leukemia, she is forced to contact her long-estranged sister, Lee, about the possibility of a bone-marrow transplant. Lee arrives with her two sons, Hank and Charlie, who have problems of their own, and a difficult reunion ensues. Throughout the play, Bessie meets the challenges of facing her own death, as she has always lived-by giving love to others.

Time and Place:

The present. Various locations in Florida and a mental hospital in Ohio.

The Scene:

Hank (seventeen) speaks to aunt Bessie of his dreams to be free of the psychiatric hospital where he has been placed because he burned down the house.

Hank:

Most of the time I keep to myself. Most of the time I sit in my room. I've got a roommate, but most of the time he's got his face to the wall. Most of the time I think about not being there. Someone I see on TV or in a magazine, or even walking the grounds. They can keep me as long as they want. It's not like a prison term. I've already been there longer than most. A lot of time I think about getting this house with all this land around it. And I'd get a bunch of dogs-not little ones you might step on, but big dogs, like a horse-and I would let them run wild. They'd never know a leash. And I'd build a go-cart track on my property. Charge people to race around on it. Those places pull in the bucks. I'd be raking it in. And nobody would know where I was. I'd be gone. Most of the time I just want to be someplace else.

Henry IV, Part 2

by William Shakespeare

Epilogue:

The stage has been cleared. The epilogue is spoken by a dancer to the audience.

Dancer:

First my fear, then my curtsy, last my speech.

My fear is your displeasure; my curtsy, my duty; and my speech to beg your pardons. If you look for a good speech now, you undo me; for what I have to say is of mine own making, and what indeed I should say will, I doubt, prove mine own marring. But to the purpose, and so to the venture. Be it known to you, as it is very well, I was lately here in the end of a displeasing play." to pray your patience for it, and to promise you a better. I did mean indeed to pay you with this; which, if like an ill venture it come unluckily home, I break," and you, my gentle creditors, lose. Here I promised you I would be, and here I commit my body to your mercies. Bate me some, and I will pay you some, and, most debtors do, promise you infinitely.

If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my legs? And yet that were but light payment, to dance out of your debt. But a good conscience will make any possible satisfaction, and so would I. All the gentlewomen here have forgiven me; if the gentlemen will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which was never seen before in such an assembly.

Epilogue:

The stage has been cleared. The epilogue is spoken by a dancer to the audience.

Dancer:

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katherine of France; where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat - unless already a be killed with your hard opinions. For Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man. My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good night, and so kneel down before you - but, indeed, to pray for the Queen.
(He dances, then kneels for applause. Exit.)

Death Comes to Us All, Mary Agnes

by Christopher Durang

The Play:

A bizarre, biting, darkly humorous look at the Pommés, a family on the periphery of life.

Time and Place:

The Pomme's decaying mansion. The present.

The Scene:

Margot conjures up a painful memory with Grandma, who has just suffered a bad episode herself.

Margot: (Bringing Mrs. Jansen- Hubbell to sofa.)

Grandma, do you remember me? It's your little Margot. Sit down, let me look at you. Do you remember me? I remember you, way back before you you first feigned madness. Do you remember that summer I was fifteen, and Daddy and I came to visit right after he'd found the French orphanage my mother had put me in? And Grandad had just got the first of his secretaries. Remember? It was Miss Willis. then, I think. And I asked you why Mama had put me in an orphanage like I didn't belong to her, just so she could go to Italy with her two boys, her two sons, my twin brothers! She left me there for five years!

(Getting teary and hysterical.)

And I said to you, Grandma, will there ever be anyone in the world who will love me? Love me for what I am, and love me, not pity me? And you looked at me and you said, "No," and I said, "But Grandma, Why?" And you said, Because there never was for me!" Do you remember, Grandma? There never was for me!

Laughing Wild

by Christopher Durang

Time and Place:

The present. New York City.

Woman: But you know how hard it is to hail a taxi. I waved my hand, and then this terrible man who came to the street after I was there waved his hand, and the taxi stopped for him because he saw him first, and the injustice of it made my eyes start to well with tears again. So I lost that taxi. So I raised my hand again, and the next three taxis were already full, although one of them still had his "free" light on, which made me angry, because if he had had it off, I probably wouldn't have raised my arm, which was getting tired now, I think hitting the man with the tuna fish used some muscles I wasn't used to using. And then this other taxi started to get near, and this woman with groceries came out, and she started to hail it and I went right over to her and I shouted smack into her ear: "If you take this taxi from me, I will kill you!" And she looked really startled, and then the taxi stopped, and I got in, and I said, I want to go crosstown to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I must have culture. and quiet, and things of value around me, I have had a terrible time in the supermarket. And then the taxi driver, who was Greek or Muslin or Armenian or something, said to me, I have to go downtown now, I'm about to get off work. Well, I thought my head would explode. I mean, was his taxi available, or wasn't it?

As You Like It

by William Shakespeare

Epilogue:

The stage. Rosalind delivers this speech to the audience after the actors have left the stage. It is really her only soliloquy in the play of any length.

Rosalind: [to the audience]

It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue; but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord of prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, tis true that a good play needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine they do use good bushes, and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues. What a case am I in then, that am neither a good epilogue nor cannot insinuate with you in the behalf of a good play! I am not furnished like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me. My way is to conjure you; and I'll begin with the women. I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you. And I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women-as I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them-that between you and the women the play may please. If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not. And I am sure, as many as have good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths will for my kind offer, when I make curtsy, bid me farewell.

Hamlet, Act 4 / Scene 7

by William Shakespeare

The Scene:

Elsinore. The castle. Queen Gertrude reports to Laertes the drowning death of his sister, Ophelia.

[Queen Gertrude

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes
Laertes Drowned? O, where?]

Queen Gertrude:

There is a willow grows aslant a brook
That shows his hoar leaves in the grassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious silver broke,
When down the weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

Julius Caesar, Act 2 / Scene 2

by William Shakespeare

The Scene:

Rome. Caesar's house at night.

Calpurnia enters to try and prevent Caesar from leaving home at daybreak. She has had nightmares of Caesar's murder and here tells him of these portents.

Calpurnia: What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house today.

[Caesar

Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me
Ne'er looked but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Caesar, they are vanished.]

Calpurnia: Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead.

Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.
The noise of battle hurtled in the air.
Horses do neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.

[Caesar

What can be avoided Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?
Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.]

Calpurnia: When beggars die there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.