

## **NATIONAL YOUTH THEATRE**

### **What happens at a National Youth Theatre audition day?**

#### **Podcast Transcript**

##### **Presenter:**

Hello and welcome to this podcast, brought to you by the National Youth Theatre.

We are just going to explain and demystify some of the questions you might have about auditioning to be a member of the company. If you don't already know, the National Youth Theatre is an organization which offer opportunities in theatre to young people aged 14-25 across the UK.

In order to gain a place at the National Youth Theatre, you'll need to apply for what is called an intake audition at one of our many venues around the country.

So, I headed down to an intake audition to find out what happens on the day from those running it and those auditioning, like this person.

##### **Auditionee:**

I think that the initial reaction is just buzzing, that adrenaline rush will wear off eventually, I'm sure, hopeful, excited nervous. I got some really good feedback.

##### **Presenter:**

Lets go.

Okay, so I've already arrived and it's already starting to fill up a bit, as you can hear. Now when you arrive, you are greeted by some NYT staff members and volunteers who will sign you in and tell you where to go. Don't worry if you are feeling a little nervous or worried, so will everyone else. But don't take my word for it.

##### **Auditionee:**

I'm really excited, I've got my nervous energy obviously, but when I walked in I saw everybody had that nervous energy so I decided to go up and say hi to somebody and they said hi and I think we got all of our nervous energy out the way because it was a nervous situation.

But ultimately excited to get some good work done and learn from this experience.

**Presenter:**

So, there you are, exciting, nerve wracking and all the rest of it.

Now, there's two members of staff who run the day who are called Associates, let's catch up with them to find out a little bit more about their roles and how the day is going to work.

Okay so, I'm here with Aaron and Connor who are our workshop leaders and I just want to ask you what is the role of the workshop leader?

**Connor:**

Well I would say their job is to just to facilitate the room for the day whilst making sure we're giving them an insight into the Company ethos of NYT and how we work.

So, making sure they're aware we are heavily ensemble based, it's about looking after each other, having fun. Taking things away, learning.

It's not necessarily about whether you're successful or not. It's about what do you gain from the day, what can you take away that might help you with future auditions, applying to future companies, applying the year after.

**Presenter:**

And in terms of the schedule of each day how does the audition day work?

**Connor:**

So, we ask the participants to arrive at 10 o'clock in the morning. They then take part in a three-hour workshop.

It will include things such as name games, getting to know you games right up to a devising task in the second half. It's split in two, we'll do an hour and a half, have a break and then do another hour and a half. We incorporate everything a bit of text, a bit of voice a bit of movement, a bit of singing even, why not?

And then they'll have an hour for lunch after we've given them their time slots for the afternoon and answered any questions or quelled any worries or apprehensions they may have.

In the afternoon they come and have a 10 minute slot each with us individually. They have an option to perform a classical or a modern speech. We often ask for a speech no longer than 2 minutes.

Occasionally we make work on it work them and give them a bit of re-direction, but not always. I would just suggest not to read in to it too much. And then once they're done, they're free to go.

**Presenter:**

So, Aaron, if I'm a participant and I'm nervous, what do you recommend me do?

**Aaron:**

Breathe. I think when people are nervous, when everyone gets nervous, is a real tendency to hold and be tense. A nice thing to do is imagine breathing in a flower and blowing out a candle, that's a trick in a highly tense situation.

The bit of advice I've always remembered when you're in an audition situation is how can I make the other people feel better so that it takes the focus of yourself and on to other people in the space.

**Presenter:** Anything to add to that Connor?

**Connor:**

I think, particularly for the audition itself, if you're really nervous tell me, acknowledge it. I would much rather you sat down in that room and have a conversation with me. Even if I didn't see the speech because you were too frightened. I hope you would push yourself out of that comfort zone to at least come and talk to me.

**Aaron:**

Nerves can be good sometimes as well. Even if it's the first thing you've ever done or even if you've been acting for 50 years. I think nerves show that you care about something, so nerves can be used as well.

**Presenter:**

So, if I'm an auditionee what advice would you give to me on how best to prepare for the audition day?

**Aaron:**

I think it's a common rumor that the people behind the desk have a tick box. Oh they did that thing so there's an x by their name. It's really not the case. For me everybody behind the desk they are looking for you to be the best version of yourself.

As much as everybody says, be yourself. Be unapologetically yourself. Don't be afraid to play, even if you've rehearsed it in a particular way.

On the day, we might get you to do something else, so don't be so held, yes be prepared know what you want, how you're going to get it, tactics, know who you are, where you are, but be prepared that somebody might get you to do something different with it.

**Presenter:** So if I'm struggling to find an audition piece, where is the best place to start?

**Connor:**

I think it's really important that you know your taste as an audience member. Know who you like and why and I think that's a really good place to start, going on I like that playwright, so get their works, read them.

You might find that there's a character of a similar age or experience. So it's always important to try and pick something that you connect to, or that you have a natural instinct – that you've experienced. It gives you a bit of grounding and experience that you can portray. And once you've got your speech it's I think really important to think about who you are talking to.

**Presenter:**

Boom, lots of great advice there from our associates. Now as Connor mentioned before, the day starts with a workshop. So I'm going to take you into the workshop you can found out what happens in the room.

{Gentle warm up music}

**Connor:**

Remember to breathe, in through the nose, out through the mouth. And if you have the space and you're feeling a bit looser you can stretch out. Remember to breathe in through the nose, send that weight into the floor, let gravity do it's job. You can hear that outbreath let it out.

{Sounds of participants playing a game; singing a song together; devising a piece of theatre}

**Presenter:**

How did you find the workshop and what did you enjoy? How were you feeling going into the workshop and how do you feel now that you've done it?

**Auditionee:**

Going into the workshop, I was really nervous and I didn't know what to expect because I've never done an audition like this before, but everyone was so lovely and we got on our feet straight away and did loads of fun games and exercises and really just got into the group as a whole.

**Auditionee:**

Going into the workshop I found was very physical and explorative so I got very sweaty (laughs) but it was very fun and relaxing to be weird and experiment and now I feel very loose and limber and I'm in a happy place.

**Auditionee:**

I thought it was very productive, eventful. Loads of new faces so it was good to talk to people who have the same interests as you. It breaks the ice.

**Presenter:**

After you're the workshop is done, everyone will have a lunchbreak which is your chance to relax, get to know some of the other people with you on the day and prepare for the afternoon.

I caught up with some people who were auditioning to see how they were getting on part way through the day.

So far has the day been what you expected it to be and how have you found it?

**Auditionee:**

It has been what I expected, the three hour workshop I knew we'd be playing games to start with and getting to know each other's names. Quickly enough Aaron and Connor got us playing quickly together, we managed to do some devising work and sing songs, it was a lot of fun.

**Presenter:**

Have you ever auditioned for the National Youth Theatre before and if you have, what made you come back again to audition another time?

**Auditionee:**

Yes, so I auditioned around this time last year as well.

I thought I'd come back because it was such a great day. You learn so much throughout the day and it wasn't just an audition which was in and out, it was a full day of workshops and meeting people as well, it wasn't just do your monologue and interview and leaving. It was a lot of fun and a great experience as well even if you don't make it.

Yes I have, this is my third time auditioning. The reason I keep coming back is because the day itself is so much fun and useful. I've taken away the exercises from it and I've made friends and I love the workshops so much. You also get critiques on your monologue by people who do it all the time which is useful. It's not going to be a hinderance to you, coming back.

**Presenter:**

During their lunch break there is also the opportunity to chat to some current NYT members who help out on the day called Ambassadors. I chatted to one of them to find out what being an Ambassador is all about.

**NYT Ambassador:**

So the role of the Ambassador is to basically be a role model on the day for the applicants, to make them feel welcome, answer any questions they might have.

To be an example of the Company's ethos and what we represent so we really get involved do all the ensemble work, devising aspect, demonstrating the tasks so people don't feel confused they can just go for it, be themselves.

And when we are in the audition room, I will be there to make you feel comfortable and be someone you can direct your monologue to. And if you have any directors notes I can be there to help you with that, giving you an intention and a way to express.

**Presenter:** What advice would you have for people auditioning?

**NYT Ambassador:**

I'd say in your workshop, makes sure you be yourself, try to get rid of your nerves you might have going into the day and take the day for what it is.

Take those skills away with you and use it as an opportunity to build yourself as an actor.

For your monologue really choose something that represents you because the Company is about celebrating individuals and coming together as a whole.

**Presenter:** if you just tell us a bit about when you auditioned for the NYT and when you got in. What was that day like?

**NYT Ambassador:**

Going into that day, I was really nervous. But because it was in my home theatre, there were some familiar faces.

We started off the day with the workshop and as soon as we started doing the activities, I really loosened up and started being myself.

The facilitators from NYT were so welcoming, they really created a good atmosphere in the room. It felt like everyone really came together and got to know each other by the end of it.

Then during the lunch break I got chatting to the Ambassadors and other applicants, there was such a mix of people and ages that it was so interesting to find out what other people's experiences are because I was new to acting at the time.

When it came to doing my monologue I was torn between two on the day and when I went into the room I did the one I felt most comfortable with which I think is the most important thing I took away from the day, which is at an audition you just have got to be yourself, because you can't have anybody take that away because they're looking for you at the end of the day.

**Presenter:**

At the end of lunch, the day moves into the second half which is the one-to-one auditions. Let's check back in with our Associates, Connor and Aaron to gain insight into what happens when you're in the room.

**Connor:**

It's the participant's opportunity to come and present their 2-minute monologue, be that classical or modern.

Every auditioner has a different approach, a different way of running their room. I would argue that it's your time, you've paid for this audition, so feel confident to come in and run it how you want to run.

So if you want to perform first tell us, if you want to speak first, then we'll do that. I don't think there's anything wrong there.

Occasionally we'll ask you a few questions, we'll get to know you, special skills, interests, quirks, we often like to know what makes you - you – your personality. You'll then do your speech, which we'll watch. I like to redirect people, see how they respond, see how they work with me. I often like to try and give them something to try and take away for whatever reason. Really it your all, be brave.

**Presenter:**

Now of course I'm not going to record anyone in the room whilst their doing their audition, but let's hear from a few people before their audition on how they're feeling.

**Auditionee:**

Right at this moment I'm feeling quite nervous, but it's a good nervous because once you get into the audition you don't know what's going to happen, you don't know what you're going to do because you can make so many different choices. I feel like if you were completely comfortable then there would be no fun behind it. So yes, nervous but excited.

**Auditionee:**

I feel nervous but, more confident than nervous. Going through my mind, I'm trying to remember lines and thinking of character and making sure I put some personality into it and not just say the lines. And also to relax and breathe, sounds weird, but I've learnt how to properly breathe. To breathe into my stomach and say words. Remember my articulation and diction, not thinking too much and trying to stay present.

**Presenter:** And now how they are feeling after their auditions.

**Auditionee:**

I'm going to try and put it out of my mind for a while, and come back to it later. Connor who was my auditioner gave me some really good feedback, and yeah I think it's gone well.

**Auditionee:**

Yeah it was fun and a lot more chilled that I thought. From I moment I walked into the room, I was relaxed and my nerves calmed down a lot. And they were really helpful as well. After I did

my monologue they redirected so that was really helpful as I learnt things about my monologue I hadn't thought about before.

**Auditionee:**

I feel really good. They said it went well, so I hope it was. I can only hope, so we'll see.

**Presenter:**

And was it what you expected in the audition room?

**Auditionee:** I thought it was going to be a massive flop in all honesty, and they liked it.

**Presenter:**

So there you have it, not as bad as they expected it to be. It's so important to remember that the people auditioning you want you to do your best and that they're just people so there is nothing to be afraid of.

That's the end of the day, you can breathe a sigh of relief because you've done it. And whatever happens after that, at least you've hopefully had a really wicked day that you'll have got a lot from.

What happens now is that your individual audition and how you were in the workshop will be considered in assessing on whether you're offered a place on the summer course.

The auditions are pretty competitive, so if you're not successful one year you are more than welcome to apply again.

Not getting in the first time around doesn't mean you don't have a lot of potential. It's all a learning process and the National Youth Theatre would love to see you apply again in the future.

Also you can expect to know the results of your audition in early May of the year you audition in.

Also if you're aged 16-25 and have an interest in exploring technical theatre, the National Youth Theatre run Backstage Interviews across the UK for Backstage Courses every year. So check that out on the website too if you're interested.

Finally, if there is anything you're still unsure on, then head to the FAQs on the website. Or if your question isn't answered there you can get in touch with NYT by finding the relevant email address online.

Thank you so much for listening, and good luck.