

BACKSTAGE



Audition Insider

Debunking Audition Room Myths

with casting director Elaine Del Valle

Introduction



Actors hold some preconceived notions about what goes on in the audition room, but how many of those notions are actually true?

For this episode of The Slate's Audition Insider, New York City-based actor, writer, director and casting professional Elaine Del Valle offers her thoughts on some of the audition room's biggest myths, and what her experience--in every aspect of the industry--has taught her about nailing that perfect performance.

As the owner and operator of Del Valle Productions & Casting, Elaine has become the go-to person for up-and-coming diverse talent and rising stars for many high profile brands, agencies, and studios. She led the original casting on Arturo Castro's Alternatino (Comedy Central Digital) and Sonia Manazo's Alma's Way (PBS Kids, Fred Rogers Productions). Both series highlight the multicultural talent in New York City.

In 2020, Elaine's original drama pilot, The System, landed a development deal with CBS. Written by Elaine, in The System, a compassionate yet jaded social worker navigates the same broken New York City system she grew up in as she advocates to resolve issues for every family she encounters while struggling to fix her own. Elaine also serves as co-executive producer.

Audition Insider is part of Backstage's The Slate Watch + Learn Video Programming. We're taking you directly to acting and casting industry power players through Instagram takeovers, Q&As, live-streamed seminars, and interactive group classes to ensure you're hitting all the right marks in and out of the audition room! For more from The Slate, visit [backstage.com](https://www.backstage.com).

How do you view the audition process?

Like most people in the casting profession, De Valle started her career as an actor. She says that she takes the work very seriously because of the time she spent studying, and honing her craft.

This has helped her understand the process of auditioning better than someone who has never been on the other side of the table.

“There’s an empathy we have for the actors when they come in,” De Valle says.



Try this exercise:

Next time you record a self-tape, watch it back and make sure you’re grabbing casting’s attention immediately. Also use it as an opportunity to learn what the camera is picking up from your performance. What facial expressions are coming across? Are they too big for the camera? Are you communicating the emotions the scene is intending to capture? Take notes and apply them to your next audition or even your next take!

Member Questions

Should you introduce yourself to casting directors?

De Valle encourages actors to be friendly, and introduce themselves in the audition room. But that doesn't mean you have to shake everyone's hand, she says. De Valle recommends that actors read the room, because even before COVID some people prefer not to be touched.

What is your number one pet peeve?

"When actors come in ill prepared," De Valle says.

She advises actors to take every audition seriously, knowing that your career can change in unexpected ways at any moment.

"If you don't want it, just decline the audition."

“ [Casting directors] really do have the time. We want to take the time to get to know you, and be wowed by you. Every time I press play, I want that person to be great.”

Elaine Del Valle
Casting Director

[READ: 14 Casting Directors on How To Impress in the Audition Room](#)

How much time do you suggest to take after the slate and before you start the scene?

De Valle reminds actors that every audition belongs to you. Take your time, she says, and give it everything you have from moment one.

She suggests that actors hold after the slate “right until after the moment that you become uncomfortable.”

And she encourages actors to lean into the fun of the audition: “Let the experience be joyful for you. I like to linger in character before and after.”



READ: [How To Slate in an Audition](#)

De Valle's Top Tips

- Wear as little makeup as possible. The camera picks up everything, so let yourself shine through.
- Get headshots that represent the characters that you want to play. Casting directors need to see your personality stand out amidst the hundreds of other submissions.
- Take improv classes. Acting is reacting, and your performances will benefit from spontaneity. Also, improv will help you build a “moment before” for your characters to feel more lived-in.
- For scripts that call for actions like hugging or running, don't pantomime those actions. Simply capture the emotion and sensation those activities elicit. On the flip side, if the scene calls for you to talk on the phone, just grab your phone and use it as a prop!
- Have fun! Remember to lean into the joy of acting. Everyone in the room is rooting for you, and no one forgets someone who makes them laugh.



Additional Resources

[Your Guide To a Perfect Self-Tape](#)

[Actor Headshots: Everything You Need To Know](#)

[How To Approach Script Analysis](#)

[How To Get an Acting Agent](#)

For more from our Actor's Toolkit series—including upcoming sessions—[click here](#).

*For more on our casting director advice series **Audition Insider**—including upcoming sessions—[click here](#).*

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