



Auditioning at the Southeastern Theatre Conference as an Undergraduate Student

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What is SETC?

The Southeastern Theatre Conference is the largest national theatre conference in the United States. Taking place in a different city in the southeastern region of the United States each year, SETC brings in over 4,000 people to its weekend conference to attend job fairs, professional auditions, keynote speakers, and workshops. As the conference says, SETC is a celebration of the art of theatre by theatre people from around the nation.

How does an undergraduate student attend SETC?

Any undergraduate can attend SETC, however depending on what the student is there for determines the process they must undergo to be permitted to attend. For a theatrical designer, technician, stage manager, playwright, director, and student willing to learn, the only requirement is that you register to attend the event.

How does an actor audition for the Professional Auditions at SETC?

One of the biggest things that SETC has to offer is its professional auditions for actors wanting to get into an internship or apprenticeship, or possibly be cast in shows at dozens of theatre companies around the United States. It is a requirement for undergraduate students wanting to audition at SETC to undergo a pre-screening audition. Essentially, each student has to be pre-auditioned by a panel of judges to determine whether or not they should be able to attend and audition at SETC. In this "pre-audition", each student must prepare a monologue and/or a song to perform in 90 seconds or 60 seconds depending on what type of audition they choose to do. In order to attend the conference, a student needs to earn a cumulative score of 125 out of 180 points based on a certain set of criteria.

What else is there besides the Professional Auditions at SETC?

At the conference, there are several workshops that take place. From welding classes to talks about breaking into the industry as an actor, each hour of SETC has something of interest for a theatre practitioner in their field to attend. SETC's job fair is also an incredibly opportunity for technicians, designers, and stage managers to hold interviews with theatre companies for potential jobs. There are also keynote speakers each day of the conference as well that everyone is encouraged to attend.



How I Prepared:

For my audition, I decided that I would perform a monologue from *Belleville* by Amy Herzog. I spent time with a few of my professors working on this piece for SETC. They also coached me on a few other monologues in case any theatre companies asked me for extra material during callbacks.

In preparation for SETC, I did a massive overhaul on my acting resume and retook my head shots. I also made sure to take time and research all of the theatre companies that were attending the professional auditions so that I could better prepare myself for what they might be looking for.

The final thing I did in order to prepare for SETC was to practice for interviews that I could possibly have with my professors, and was a huge help when I went to my callbacks at SETC.



My Experience:

My road to SETC began in late October of 2018 when I learned of the conference. From there, I traveled to Jackson, Mississippi to attend my prescreening audition. Since I only auditioned with a monologue, I had just 60 seconds to perform my piece. A few days later, I found out that I scored at 150 out of 180 points and was permitted to audition at the national conference in Knoxville, Tennessee, at the end of February along with 780 other undergrad and postgraduate students.

In the months leading up, I went through an extreme amount of anxiety surrounding my audition at SETC. While I knew that it was just an honor enough that I was selected to audition at the conference, I became paranoid thinking that theatre companies would ask me to do ten different monologues at my callbacks, or that I just would not get called back to any company at all. Going into the conference I knew this was a possibility as well, especially considering most of the professional companies holding auditions were seeking out musical theatre actors, which I am not. When it was time for the conference, I felt like I was constantly "on", meaning that I felt I could never relax and that I always had to watch what I was saying. The day of my audition only multiplied this feeling, and I felt a giant weight on my chest throughout the day.

When it came time for my actual audition, I was honestly at peace. It was the moment of the conference where I was doing what I love and sharing my art with others in the industry. The nature of the audition was a lot more relaxed than I initially thought it was going to be. Though I knew the stakes were high, it was the part of the conference where I gave my all. No matter what, I knew that in those 60 seconds I was a professional actor.

When I was waiting for my audition and on the days following my audition, I attended several workshops at the conference. The majority of the workshops I attended dealt with breaking into the industry and how to go about auditioning for film and TV. I learned a lot about what the life of any actor actually is after graduation, and these workshops I attended have really prepared me and helped me understand what my future will hold.

What I Learned:

The biggest thing that I learned by auditioning at and attending SETC is that my life is not determined by 60 seconds of my time. There will always be another chance. If I were to attend this conference again, which I plan to, I would take in more of what the actual conference has to offer and not worry so much about the audition itself. While it is important, SETC has so much more to offer besides the professional auditions. The conference's workshops and what I learned at the ones I attended have already helped my career as an actor as well, the the experience I had at SETC will influence my decisions as a theatre artist for years to come.