National Theatre PUBLIC ACTS

For community members

18 TIPS FOR LEARNING LINES AND LYRICS

Learning lines and lyrics can sometimes feel like a big and scary task! Here are a few tips to help with your learning process. Try out some different methods and see what works for you. And remember – you've got this!

1 START WITH STORY

If you know what the song or scene is about, you're more likely to remember the words. Before trying to memorise anything make sure you understand what your character is saying or singing at this point in the story and *why*. Understand the intention and emotion behind each moment.

2 BREAK IT DOWN

Instead of trying to memorise all the lines at once, break your script into smaller sections (sentences or paragraphs) and songs into 'chunks' or phrases. Focus on learning one chunk at a time. Once you've gone over one section move to the next, then go back and connect them.

With songs, the chorus is often repetitive and easier to remember. Learn this first to anchor you.

3 RECORD YOURSELF

Read your lines or sing your song out loud whilst recording yourself on your phone (or in rehearsals), then play the recording back to yourself while you are walking to work, sitting on the bus, cleaning the dishes...anything at all! Your brain will start to absorb the words without actively trying to memorise them.

4 WRITE THEM DOWN

Write your words out over and over again. Try speaking the words out loud as you do so.

5 MOVE AROUND

Move around while you're saying or singing your lines. Getting into your body will help your brain absorb the words.

6 CUES COUNT!

Always learn the line that is spoken or sung by someone else before your line. This means you will know when it is your turn to speak or sing, which is just as important as knowing what your line is!

7 ASK A FRIEND

Speak your words or lyrics out loud in front of a friend or company member while they read along with the script. They can correct you on any mistakes, give you your cue lines and go back over anything that you found hard to remember.

8 LOOK FOR THE RHYMES

Sometimes lyrics or spoken lines rhyme. When they do, use the rhymes to help remember the next lines.

9 BEFORE BED...

Studies show that learning before sleep helps with memory, so before you go to bed gently go over the lyrics or lines in your head – but be sure to then do something nice to decompress and switch off afterwards!

10 LITTLE AND OFTEN

Doing small amounts of learning regularly is much more effective than doing large chunks less regularly. Go over your words first thing in the morning, a few times during the day and last thing at night if you can. Start learning your lines as soon as you can to give them as much time as possible to sink in.

11 PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE

The more you practise, the more confident you will be. The key is patience and repetition. Try to make your practice sessions enjoyable rather than a chore, and give yourself lots of treats and rewards along the way!

12 USE THE TEACHING RESOURCES

Don't forget the handy videos and music tracks made for you by the Dance and Music teams which will guide you through practicing the big show numbers.

13 ABOVE ALL, BE KIND TO YOURSELF AND STICK WITH IT!

Learning any kind of new material takes time and can be frustrating. Even professional actors find learning lines difficult. It won't all go in straight away. Turn up for yourself, give yourself lots of grace, and be patient – you WILL get there! And remember that we are with you and here to support and champion you every step of the way!

