

# How to Act Up

By **Karen Kondazian**

Casting directors hold the key to actors' careers, so what does it take to impress one? Actress-writer Karen Kondazian surveyed award-winning execs for her book, *The Actor's Encyclopedia of Casting Directors: Conversations with Over 100 Casting Directors on How to Get the Job*. Here's what some of them told her:

## **Valorie Massalas, CSA**

Valorie Massalas Casting  
(*Annie*, *Serving in Silence: The Margarette Cammeyer Story*)

"There's an old saying in Hollywood, 'Ten percent of actors in this town are dying to be discovered and ninety percent are scared to death they will be.' I guess you have to ask yourself whether you are part of the ten percent or the ninety."

## **Donna Ekholdt, CSA**

Vice-president, talent, development and casting, Big Ticket Television  
(*And the Beat Goes On: The Story of Sonny and Cher*, *NYPD Blue*)

"Walk in, shake hands, sit down in a chair and make it about the close-up. That's what the audition is anyway. Unless you're talking physical comedy, it's all in the close-up."

## **Mike Fenton, CSA**

Fenton-Conwitt Casting  
(Hallmark Hall of Fame *Arabian Nights*, *The Simple Life of Noah Dearborn*)

"More than anything, what an actor needs is an agent who can open doors. That is the key to a career."

## **Jeff Greenberg, CSA**

Jeff Greenberg & Associates  
(*Frasier*, *Cheers*)

"Unfortunately in television,

it's more about results. They really want to see the performance in the audition room. The beauty of *Frasier*, though, is that the words are everything. It's so beautifully crafted that if you're right for the part and you understand it, you can just say the words and it will be funny."

## **Jane Jenkins, CSA**

The Casting Company  
(*The Museum Project*, *Parenthood*)

"Hardly anyone directs at auditions anymore. A lot of directors wait to see the part walk in, as opposed to an actor who, with direction, could play it. So they just come in and have a good time. Ron Howard always says that he thinks the audition is the actual job and getting the role is just icing on the cake."

## **John Levey, CSA**

Vice-president, talent and casting, Warner Bros. Television  
(*The West Wing*, *ER*)

"If an actor doesn't invest his authentic self, what else does he have? If you can't bring your own powerful self to the work, you're probably not going to be a great artist. So your responsibility is to become as interesting a person as you can. Actors spend far too much time at the gym. While it's nice to have a good body, actors should be interested in developing themselves spiritually, emotionally and intellectually."

## **Junie Lowry-Johnson, CSA**

Junie Lowry-Johnson Casting  
(*City of Angels*, *NYPD Blue*)

"Nine out of ten casting people would say that they

# THE ACTOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CASTING DIRECTORS

KAREN KONDAZIAN

Foreword by RICHARD DREYFUSS

with TEOFI SHAPIRO

Foreword by Richard Dreyfuss

can tell whether someone will work out or not from the first two sentences the actor utters. I love people who simply come in, do the scene, and leave quickly when they're finished. The actor leaves us with the memory of what they just did and not with the awkward feeling of their lingering."

## **Barbara Miller, CSA**

Senior vice-president, casting and talent, Warner Bros. Television  
(*ER*, *Friends*)

"I've done shows with the best actors in the world that nobody watched. So often we have to hire certain actors for their pleasant looks, personality and appeal alone. The first thing people sitting in front of their television sets see is a personality. They begin to think, 'I like the way this looks. I'll watch it.' They make up their minds whether to stay tuned or not, even before they hear the actors talk."

## **Barbara Claman, CSA**

BCI  
*Pensacola*, *Silk Stalkings*

"Don't lie on your resume. It's very embarrassing when I've done the show and you haven't!"