

GROWING YOUR ACTING CAREER

“Don’t just not do something because you’re sick of seein’ that image. If you’re sick of it, then change the way, or change the rules, or change the purpose that sent you into that situation.”

—Samuel L. Jackson

SUBCHAPTERS

- Student Q&A: Take Every Chance to Act
- Student Q&A: Getting Un-Stuck
- Choose Your Roles Thoughtfully
- Get Creative in Stereotypical Roles
- Set Rules for Your Agent
- Prioritize Getting a Manager
- Stick-to-it-iveness
- Your Responsibility As an Actor
- Everything Leads to Something Else

CHAPTER REVIEW

Sam encourages the students to seize any opportunity to act, as those small roles they accept today may lead to big breaks tomorrow. If you’re struggling with a stereotypical role, try injecting that ordinary character with an extraordinary quality. In *Coming to America*, Sam imbued an otherwise stereotypical robber with an idiosyncratic goal and backstory that informed his character’s thoughts and behavior. Treating small characters with the same degree of care and consideration that you would a larger role can impress the director and producers with your acting ability and make them remember you.

Finding an agent is an important step to kickstarting your professional acting career, but scoring representation can be difficult. Today, the best way to get in front of a casting director is to put yourself on tape for a role you know you’re right for, and try to get it to them via email. Even though the process for getting in front of a casting director has changed, the spirit of Sam’s advice remains the same: be persistent and get creative. Put yourself out there, network, and follow up. If you’re cast, remember that everyone, from the producers to the audience, holds you to the expectation that you will do your job well.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch how Sam played the robber from *Coming to America* and study how his choices informed the way he manifested his character’s psychology. What would this character have looked like if Sam had chosen to play him as a stereotypical junkie?
- Sam doesn’t chase award bait. He feels like his biggest reward is knowing that people want to watch him act. Put some thought into what kind of roles you’re drawn to and why. Then make a list.

ASSIGNMENTS

18.

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- Revisit the small roles in your chosen script. Are any of them rooted in racial, ethnic, or gender stereotypes? Using what you learned in previous lessons, approach the character as if you had been cast. How could you make this minor character interesting? Write an imagined backstory for them and give them a goal. What are they doing in the scene? What are they trying to accomplish? What moments in their lives prompted them to be there?
- Make a list of your top ten dream agencies. Who do they represent that you like? Know that setting your sights on a bigger and top tier agency sometimes is not the best when starting your career, because those agents are only interested in your bankability, not in helping you build an acting career. You'll be better off searching for a boutique agency with a smaller roster.
- Make a list of your top ten dream managers. Who do they represent that you like?
- Pick two agencies and two managers from this list and write them a query letter. Be sure to follow up!

