

Solo Monologue Prompts: Writing From the “Gut”

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The best writing for theatre comes from a very personal place. It comes from the writer’s memory and experience. Here is a list of prompts to help playwrights tap into that personal place when writing monologues.

Writing from smell:

Take a deep breath and pull in a memory from a holiday. Focus on the scents around you. Do you recall the smell of particular food? A fragrant tree? Something unpleasant? Sit with the memory for a moment, then start writing about the smell and the actions around it from your memory. Don’t be afraid to embellish with fiction. It doesn’t have to be completely accurate.

Writing from an emotional moment:

Take a deep breath and go back to the thing that scared you most when you were younger. What kept you up at night? Write about it as though you’re talking to a trusted loved one and describe it in vivid detail.

Writing from a significant song:

Think about a song that brings up strong memories for you, one that takes you back to a specific place and time. Listen to the song with your eyes closed and let the memories wash over you, then start writing with the song playing on a loop. Write from memory, but give yourself permission to fictionalize around the real-life circumstances.

Writing from family stories (interview):

For this monologue, you will be interview someone and record them (be sure to get their permission before starting). Your own family stories are the best option for this activity. These can be fictionalized with name changes, but they should start with verbatim raw material. Try to keep the character of the interview, including idiosyncrasies like chuckles, “ums,” interruptions, etc.