

arts  
education  
**njpac**



**nicole i.**  
**thompson**

**the david g. berger  
master class series**

A photograph of Nicole L. Thompson, a woman with curly hair, wearing a red jacket, interacting with a group of people. She is leaning in and talking to a woman with long dreadlocks who is also wearing a red jacket. Other people are visible in the background, including a man in a white jacket and a woman in a white sweater.

## about nicole l. thompson

**Nicole L. Thompson** is a Hollywood film director known for her dynamic storytelling, eye for talent, and commitment to elevating underrepresented voices in film and television. With extensive experience behind the camera, Thompson brings a unique and invaluable perspective on what truly makes an actor stand out during auditions.

## accolades

Lifetime Movies directed by Nicole L. Thompson:

- *Suitcase Killer: The Melanie McGuire Story* (2022)  
This true-crime drama delves into the chilling case of Melanie McGuire, a New Jersey nurse convicted of murdering her husband and disposing of his body in suitcases. The film premiered on Lifetime as part of their “Ripped from the Headlines” series.
- *You’re Not Supposed to Be Here* (2023)  
A suspenseful thriller that explores themes of identity and belonging, this film was nominated for a GLAAD Media Award, highlighting its impactful storytelling and representation.

Additionally, Thompson contributed as the Second Unit Director for *Envy: A Seven Deadly Sins Story* (2021), Lifetime’s anthology inspired by the seven deadly sins.

## workshop overview

This masterclass focused on understanding the audition process from the director’s point of view. Participants explored how to:

- Convey emotional range authentically
- Use silence and stillness as powerful tools
- React and listen actively
- Express subtext through eyework and body language
- Take direction with flexibility and intention
- Deliver adjustments quickly and effectively

# takeaways & techniques

## What directors are really looking for

- Authenticity over perfection
- Ability to stay present and connected
- Confidence, even in silence
- Respect for direction and collaboration

## Tools for stronger auditions

- Scene analysis: Break down the script to understand objectives, stakes and beats
- Subtext mastery: Learn to communicate with what isn't said — use your eyes, breath and physicality
- Emotional recall: Tap into personal experiences to enrich your performance
- Improvisation: Be ready to adapt quickly and make bold choices

## In-the-room skills

- First impressions: The moment you walk into the room, you're auditioning. Bring grounded, open energy
- Slating tips: Be clear, concise and personable
- Taking direction: Directors want to see how you adjust. Listen closely, process quickly and shift with purpose

## Exercises to Practice

- Mirror work: Practice emotional shifts and subtle eye movement in front of a mirror
- Scene rehearsal: Record yourself performing a scene and review your reactions and use of silence
- Director's challenge: Have a friend give you different directions mid-scene and practice adjusting naturally



Be brave enough to make strong choices. Even if it's not the final choice, **it tells me who you are as an artist.**

— Nicole L. Thompson





## resources

### Self-tape Platforms

WeAudition  
[weaudition.com](http://weaudition.com)

Casting Networks  
[castingnetworks.com/talent-2a](http://castingnetworks.com/talent-2a)

Actors Access  
[actorsaccess.com](http://actorsaccess.com)

**Script Libraries**  
 The Monologue Database  
[monologuedatabase.com](http://monologuedatabase.com)

StageMilk  
[stagemilk.com](http://stagemilk.com)

**Articles**  
*Backstage* — “How to Shoot a Self-Taped Audition”  
[backstage.com/magazine/article/guide-perfect-self-tape-1758](http://backstage.com/magazine/article/guide-perfect-self-tape-1758)

*Headshot Hunter* —  
 “Facing Rejection and Thriving Anyway”  
[headshothunter.co.uk/blog/actor-mental-health](http://headshothunter.co.uk/blog/actor-mental-health)

*Entertainment Assist* —  
 “Managing Mental Health in the Audition Process”  
[entertainmentassist.org.au/articles/2023/4/3/managing-mental-health-in-the-audition-process-tips-for-actors#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20it's%20not%20shut%20down'%20in%20your](http://entertainmentassist.org.au/articles/2023/4/3/managing-mental-health-in-the-audition-process-tips-for-actors#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20it's%20not%20shut%20down'%20in%20your)

### Videos:

Casting Director Tips and Audition Tips  
[youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS6eD87ig540sRZaD-crtgPY1CDnV2Kz-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS6eD87ig540sRZaD-crtgPY1CDnV2Kz-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji)

How to Self-Tape for an Audition  
[youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS6eD87ig540sRZaD-crtgPY1CDnV2Kz-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS6eD87ig540sRZaD-crtgPY1CDnV2Kz-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji)

YouTube Audition Tips Playlist  
[youtube.com/playlist?list=PLya91cpj-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLya91cpj-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji)

How to Self-Tape Audition with Examples, Set Up and Tips  
[youtube.com/watch?v=LT43wmDZNs&list=PLya91cpj-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji&index=4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LT43wmDZNs&list=PLya91cpj-6DXwjiFUD101VhIXFF3GW1ji&index=4)

### Books

*Audition* by Michael Shurtleff

*The Intent to Live* by Larry Moss

*How to Stop Acting* by Harold Guskin

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Creative Lead, On-Site Programs

## the arts in your school

**In-School Residencies:** NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

**Professional Development:** Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at [artseducation@njpac.org](mailto:artseducation@njpac.org). Or visit [njpac.org/education](http://njpac.org/education)

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## study the arts at njpac

**Saturday Programs:** NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

**Summer Programs:** Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.