

BACKSTAGE

What Tyler Perry's Go-To Casting Director Looks for in Voiceover Talent

By Kelley Buttrick



Casting 10-20 voiceover roles per series and at least three-to-five voice actors per film, Rhavynn Drummer is an expert when it comes to the casting process. The Atlanta-based producer/casting director genuinely loves actors and great performances—and it shows.

Her career started in casting at Tyler Perry Studios, which is where I met her after being cast as a voice actor for an episode of “The Haves and the Have Nots.” She’s been a part of casting 15 feature films, seven television series and seven theatrical productions, including “The Family that Preys,” “Why Did I Get Married Too,” “The Marriage Counselor,” and many others. She is also the creator of two digital series—as if she wasn’t doing enough already.

Despite her busy schedule, Drummer chatted with me about her work, what she looks for in a voiceover actor, and so much more.

What’s the difference between casting a voice actor and an on-camera one?
When I cast a voice actor, I’m listening to hear how the actor connects to the dialogue and scene vocally. When I cast an on-camera actor, I’m looking to see how they connect vocally, physically, and emotionally.

What are you listening for when playing back VO auditions?
I’m listening for [an] understanding of the material and scene, and the character choices that were made vocally.

Is there anything voice actors do in their auditions that elicits an immediate no from you?
Since I work mainly in the scripted space, most of the voiceover roles I’m casting are characters. Immediate nos are usually because the actor is just saying the line(s) and nothing else.

What do you think about voiceover talents taking liberty with the script?
I like multiple takes [that] allow the actors to give me different versions of the scene. The multiple takes allow the actor to have some liberty.

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Do you ever go to an on-camera actor you've worked with for a VO project?

I work mainly with agencies that represent on-camera and voice actors. Many times, I receive voice auditions from actors that we've also auditioned for on-camera roles.

Where do you find your VO talents?

Mainly talent agencies.

Do you listen to all auditions or do have agents narrow down your options?

Both! I've had agents send me their top 20 auditions but I've also had agents send me all the auditions that were submitted.

Why is the turnaround so fast for TV series VO casting?

There's ALWAYS a fast turnaround for everything in TV.

How is VO performance different from on-camera performance in a television program?

I think the only difference is that you don't see the actor. The best VO performances are the ones that feel as though you can see the actor's performance.

Do you have voice actors record in a studio or on set? Why?

I've experienced both. It depends on the time constraints, the VO role, and what the creative team wants.

What is your favorite VO performance lately and/or one VO performance all voice actors should hear/watch?

One of my favorite VO experiences was when we did an episode that was about 50 percent VO performance. The scene revolved around a VO character calling into a suicide helpline at a church. It was a really awesome role to audition and really beautiful to witness on set.

Any dos and don'ts for voiceover talents who are cast for a TV program?

Do get your audition in early. Don't simply just read lines off the paper.

Any tips or advice for voice actors who want to get cast on a TV program?

Listen to great VO performances and reels. Learn technique, learn the craft—and then toss it out the window.