

Audition Monologues

Little Women

Adapted from the novel by Louisa May Alcott

Audition pieces for the principal roles

Jo • Meg • Beth • Amy • Marmee • Aunt March
Friedrich Bhaer • Laurie • John Brooke • Mr. Laurence

JO MARCH

Age range 16-25 (Mezzo-Soprano / Strong Belt — G3–A5)

CHARACTER

Passionate, headstrong, and fiercely independent. Determined to face the world on her own terms, Jo is an aspiring writer who resists societal expectations and longs for adventure and purpose. She is deeply devoted to her family, bold in her conversations, and incredibly imaginative in her writing, stories she often acts out on stage .

CONTEXT

After Laurie has proposed marriage, Jo tries to explain to her mother why she cannot love him as he wishes — even though it breaks both their hearts.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Strong choice for actors comfortable with passion and contradiction. Jo isn't cruel here — she's grieving the friendship she fears she's losing. Don't play the speech as defiance; play it as a girl trying to be honest with the person she trusts most.

MONOLOGUE

I don't know why I can't love him as he wants me to. I've tried, but I can't change the feeling, and it would be a lie to say I do when I don't. I know I ought to be glad and proud and grateful — and somehow I'm not. I can't bear to disappoint him so dreadfully, but I can't help it. I just don't love him that way.

I love him dearly; he's been my brother and my best friend since we were children. But not as a husband, Marmee. Never as a husband. I'm homely and awkward and odd and old, and he'd be ashamed of me.

We should quarrel — we can't help it even now. I shouldn't like elegant society and he would. He'd grow tired of my scribbling, and I couldn't live without it. We should be wretched, and we should wish we hadn't done it, and everything would be horrid.

Marmee, I am not a girl who marries. I shall paddle my own canoe. The only love I want is yours, and Father's, and my sisters'. That's enough. That has always been enough.

MEG MARCH

Age range 18-25 (Soprano — A3–F5)

CHARACTER

The eldest sister, responsible and warm-hearted. Meg values family and tradition but wrestles with desires for refinement and material comfort. Poised, graceful, and grounded.

CONTEXT

Meg has just returned from a week at the Moffats', where the wealthy girls dressed her up, laced her into a borrowed gown, and let her flirt at a ball. Sitting with her mother afterward, the shame catches up with her.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

A wonderful piece for showing vulnerability and a quick, intelligent mind. Meg is confessing, but she's also defending herself — she felt admired for the first time, and she liked it. Don't skip past that. The turn comes when she repeats Mrs. Moffat's words.

MONOLOGUE

Mother, I want to tell you something. I've been weak and silly, and I'm so ashamed.

The girls at the Moffats' dressed me up. They curled my hair, and powdered my neck, and put cosmetics on my cheeks till I shone like a wax doll. They tightened my waist till I could hardly breathe, and laced me into a silver-blue gown that wasn't even mine. And I let them. I told myself it was only for one night — that I just wanted to know how it felt to be admired.

And people did admire me. They called me a beauty and a charmer, and I was so foolishly pleased that I forgot every word you've ever taught me.

Then I overheard Mrs. Moffat say to one of the others that you had — plans. That you intended to marry me to Laurie because he was rich. Mother, my heart turned cold. Do you have such plans? I couldn't bear it if you did. I would rather wear my old tarlatan a hundred times over and be poor my whole life than be married off like a parcel.

I don't want a fine house. I want a true heart. Forgive me, Mother.

BETH MARCH

Age range 13-18 (Soprano — A3–G5)

CHARACTER

Gentle, selfless, and shy. Beth is the emotional heart of the family, with quiet strength and deep compassion. Requires a pure, lyrical tone and sincerity.

The shy, quiet musician. Gentle but not weak — her courage runs deep and steady.

CONTEXT

On a quiet afternoon by the sea, Beth finally tells Jo what they've both been avoiding: she knows she is not going to recover, and she is not afraid.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Resist the urge to play this sad. Beth has been carrying this secret a long time, and there is real relief in finally saying it out loud. The power of the speech comes from her steadiness. Stillness reads as strength here — don't cry; let Jo (and the auditors) do that.

MONOLOGUE

I'm not afraid, Jo. I can be brave — like you. I knew you would find me out. I tried to keep it to myself, but I can't anymore.

I'm weaker than ever this morning. And I think you have always known, deep down, that I would not stay long. I'm not like the rest of you. I never made any plans about what I'd do when I grew up. I never thought of being married, as Meg and Amy did. I couldn't seem to imagine myself anything but stupid little Beth, trotting about at home, of no use anywhere but here.

I never wanted to go away. And the hard part now is the leaving you all. I'm not afraid — but it seems as if I shall be homesick for you, even in heaven.

Don't grieve, Jo. It isn't dreadful. It's like the tide going out — slow, and easy, and natural — and there is something beautiful at the end of it.

Only love me. And remember me. That's all I want. Sit with me a little. The waves are so quiet today.

AMY MARCH

Age range 12-20 (Soprano — G3–A5)

CHARACTER

The youngest sister, ambitious, artistic, and strong-willed; a trait which shows through clearly when in scenes with Jo. Amy desires beauty and success, often masking insecurity with confidence and charm. Requires both comedic timing and emotional growth.

CONTEXT

In Rome, studying art and beginning to suspect she will never be the genius she wanted to be, Amy tells Laurie that she has decided to give up painting — and explains, without apology, the kind of life she intends to make instead.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Strong piece for showing intelligence and self-knowledge. Amy is not bitter and not defeated — she is choosing. The line, 'I am Amy. Small, plain, and practical. And I am, at last, content' should land like a quiet door closing, not a sigh.

MONOLOGUE

Don't laugh at me, Laurie. I've made up my mind. I'm going to give it up.

A taste of Rome has taken the vanity out of me. I see now that talent is one thing, and genius is something else entirely. I have talent. I will never have genius. And I will not be a common-place dauber, painting pretty little nothings to hang in pretty little parlors. I want to be great, or nothing at all. So it shall be nothing.

Don't look so sorry for me — I'm not sorry for myself. I have always been the practical one. Jo has her stories. Beth had her music. Meg has her dear little house. I shall have a home of my own, and beautiful things in it, and people who love me. And that will be enough.

Mother used to say I was selfish, and perhaps I was. But I've learned, even here in Rome, that what I most want is not fame — but to be useful, and loved, and at peace. I shall marry well, if I can. I won't pretend otherwise. A woman in my position has so few honest ways to make her own way.

I am Amy. Small, plain, and practical. And I am, at last, content.

MARMEE

Age range 40-55 (Soprano — G3–E5)

CHARACTER

The wise and loving matriarch, a devoted mother and wife. Marmee is a pillar of strength, offering compassion and guidance through hardship. Requires warmth, emotional vulnerability, and vocal control.

The mother. Warm, principled, the moral spine of the family. Strong without ever being severe — and far less serene underneath than her daughters realize.

CONTEXT

Jo has just confessed she is afraid of her own temper after nearly letting Amy drown. Marmee, instead of scolding her, finally tells Jo the truth about her own lifelong struggle with anger.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

One of the most beloved Marmee speeches in the canon — useful because it shows she is not a saint, only a woman who has worked at it. Resist the urge to play wisdom. Play the memory of the girl she used to be. The strength comes from letting Jo see Marmee's own shame.

MONOLOGUE

I am angry nearly every day of my life, Jo. But I have learned not to show it. And I am still hoping to learn not to feel it — though it may take me another forty years to do so.

My temper is naturally quick. It used to grieve me dreadfully when I was a girl. I was so ashamed of myself when I lost it; I used to think that I would never conquer this fault.

But your father, Jo. He helped me. He never lost patience — never doubted, never complained — but always hoped. He helped me, and comforted me, and showed me that I must try to practice all the virtues that I would want my little girls possess. A startled or surprised look from one of you, when I spoke sharply, rebuked me more than any words could have done. The love and respect and confidence of my children was the sweetest reward I could receive for my efforts.

My Jo, don't be discouraged because you have a fault. Watch yourself. Be patient with yourself. And remember — there is no person on this earth who loves you better, or hopes for you more, than I do.

FRIEDRICH (FRITZ) BHAER

Age range 35-55 (Baritone — A2–F4)

CHARACTER

Thoughtful, sincere, and principled. Bhaer values integrity and intellect, challenging Jo to grow. Requires maturity, warmth, and a solitary bacheloresque, grounded presence.

CONTEXT

Bhaer has come from New York to Concord under a thin pretext — to deliver a book — and finally, standing with Jo under an umbrella in the rain, he tells her the real reason he came.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

An extraordinary audition piece because the actor must walk a line: tender without sentimentality, accented but never comic. Bhaer is not asking from strength; he is asking from honest poverty — of money, of youth, of certainty. The dignity is in how plainly he says it. A light German lilt is fine; a heavy stage accent is not.

MONOLOGUE

I have nothing to give, Jo. Only a full heart, and these empty hands.

I am not a young man. I have no fortune. I have no fine house to bring you to — only books, and students, and small rooms in a city that is loud and not always kind. I came across the ocean to find work, and I found it. I did not come to find a wife. I had given up that hope long ago. I told myself, ‘Friedrich, you are too old. You have your boys to raise. Do not be foolish.’

And then I met you. And every foolish hope I had set aside came back to me, like an old friend at the door.

I should not speak. I have nothing to offer that a girl like you should accept. But I cannot any longer pretend I do not love you. I love your work. I love your honesty. I love the way you laugh — which is not a small laugh, Jo. It fills a room.

So I ask you — only once. Is there any little place in your heart for an old fellow like me? If you say no, I will go, and I will not trouble you again. But if you say yes — Jo, then I will work, and I will wait, and I will love you, all the days that are given me.

LAURIE (THEODORE LAURENCE)

Age range 18-25 (Tenor — B ♭ 2–A4)

CHARACTER

Charming, energetic, and kind-hearted. Laurie is playful and loyal but struggles with direction and unspoken feelings. Feelings made obvious to the audience, if not to his fellow characters. Strong acting and romantic lead presence needed.

CONTEXT

Out walking with Jo, Laurie has finally said what he has been holding in for years. She has tried to deflect him; he refuses to be deflected. This is the moment he stops being a boy.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Don't play it as wounded vanity — that flattens the role. Laurie genuinely believes he and Jo are meant for each other, and he is asking with his whole life. The actor's job is to make the auditors hope she says yes, even though they know she won't.

MONOLOGUE

Jo. Listen to me. Please — just this once.

I've loved you ever since I've known you. I couldn't help it. You've been so good to me — you let me in when no one else did, you laughed at me, you scolded me, you treated me like a brother — and now I can't bear to be only that, not for one more day.

I've tried to show you, and you wouldn't let me. So now I'm going to make you hear me, and you're going to give me an answer, because I can't go on this way any longer. I've finished college. That's something. I'm going to be a credit to Grandfather, and to you. I'll work — I will, Jo, I swear it. I know I'm a careless fellow. I know I've wasted time. But if you'll have me, I'll be steady as a rock. I'll do anything in the world for you.

Don't tell me I'm too young. Don't tell me I'll get over it. I won't. I've thought about nothing else for years. There has never been anyone but you. There never will be.

Jo. Just — say you'll try. Say you'll try to love me a little. That's all I'm asking. Please. Don't break my heart.

JOHN BROOKE

*Age range 25-35 (Baritone — B ♭ 2–E4)**

CHARACTER

Kind, earnest, and dependable. Meg's love interest and Laurie's tutor. Represents stability and sincerity of affection for Meg.

CONTEXT

John has come to the March house to return Meg's glove. Aunt March has just upset Meg by warning her against him, and Meg has been short with him out of confusion. He calls her on it — gently, but he calls her on it.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

John is not a romantic in the sweeping sense. He's direct. The audition power comes from how little he embellishes. Don't rush the silences — he is a man who is comfortable waiting for an answer. Then, when she softens, let him be surprised by his own joy.

MONOLOGUE

Meg. Forgive me, but — I have to ask. Are you angry with me? You won't look at me. A week ago we were friends, and now you turn away when I come into the room.

I'm not a clever man. I can't read between your words the way Laurie does. So I have come to ask you plainly. If I have done something to offend you, tell me. I would rather hear it and bear it than wonder another hour.

I know what I am. I am a poor man. I tutor a rich boy and I live in a hired room, and I have no name and no fortune to lay at your feet. Aunt March has told you, I'm sure, exactly the kind of match I would be — and she is not wrong about the money. She is wrong about the rest.

Because I love you, Meg. I have loved you almost since the first afternoon I came into this house. I did not mean to speak yet. I meant to wait until I could offer you something more than my two hands and a steady heart. But I cannot watch you turn away from me one more day without knowing.

So tell me. Is there any hope for me at all? Look up, Meg. Just — look up.

AUNT MARCH

Age range 50-70+ (Alto / Mezzo — F3–D5)

CHARACTER

Sharp-tongued, wealthy, and formidable. Blunt and commanding, but ultimately cares about the family's future. Strong character role with comedic bite.

CONTEXT

Meg has come to tell Aunt March that she has accepted John Brooke — a poor tutor with no name and no fortune. Aunt March, alone with her in the parlor, lets her have it.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Big, juicy, comic monologue with a sad heart. Don't make Aunt March a cartoon. Yes, she is bullying Meg — but she is also genuinely terrified for her, because she has seen what poverty does to a young woman in her world. Find the moment, somewhere in the middle, where the actor lets the audience see that.

MONOLOGUE

You will marry that penniless tutor? Sit down and listen to me, Margaret March, because I am the only one in this family with the sense to say what needs saying

You will not marry that man. He has no money. He has no name. He has no prospects. Do you imagine, child, that love feeds a household? It does not. Love is very fine in poetry. In a kitchen, with a screaming baby on your hip and a stack of unpaid bills on the table, love is rather less impressive.

Don't tell me I do not understand. I understand better than any of you I have buried two friends who married for love and lived the rest of their days in regret..

Now hear me out, for I do not say this lightly. If you marry John Brooke, I will not give you one penny. Not one, Margaret. Not in life, and not in death. You will lose every advantage I might have given you, and your sisters will lose every advantage too. You will scrub your own floors. You will mend your own stockings. And in twenty years, when your beauty is gone and your hands are red, you will think back on this very afternoon and remember that your old Aunt March — that absurd, hectoring old woman — was right.

Well? Speak up, child. Have you anything at all to say for yourself?

MR. LAURENCE

*Age range: 65+ (Baritone — A2–E4)**

CHARACTER

Laurie's grandfather, reserved yet warm beneath the surface. Carries grief but finds joy through the March family. Requires emotional subtlety.

CONTEXT

Mr. Laurence is alone with Jo in his study, having just decided to give Beth the small piano that once belonged to his granddaughter, who died young. He is explaining why.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

A wonderful piece for a character actor. The audition power is in the restraint. Mr. Laurence is not a man who weeps in public — or anywhere. The whole speech is him trying not to feel what he is feeling and being unable to keep that up. The last line should land quietly, almost as if to himself.

MONOLOGUE

That little piano in the parlor belonged to my granddaughter. She was about your sister Beth's age. She used to sit at it for hours when she thought no one was listening. I would leave the door of my study a little open, and I would sit at this desk with a paper I was not reading, so that she would think the music was hers, and the room was hers, and the afternoon was hers. She has been gone a long time now, Miss Jo. The piano has stood there, closed, for — I do not know how many years.

Last week your little Beth came in. She did not say a word. She did not even look up at me. She walked across the room as if she had been doing it all her life, and she put her small hand on the lid of that piano the way one puts a hand on the shoulder of an old, half-forgotten friend. And then she played. Only a few notes, that is all.

I am an old man. I have been a hard man. I have not been kind to my grandson, and I have not been kind to myself, and there is not very much left in me anymore that surprises me.

But your sister — your sister has done what I did not believe could still be done. She has opened a door I had nailed shut. Tell her the piano is hers. Tell her it was always hers, and only waiting. And tell her, if you can find the words for it — tell her she has done a fine thing for an old fellow, though she will never quite know how fine.