

DB COOPER VO

# *DEVELOPING VOICES*

*AUDITIONING, CASTING, AND DIRECTING VOICES  
FOR GAME NARRATION AND DIALOGUE.*

Hey- I'm DB Cooper. VO Director, and voice talent, We are going to talk a little about the prep for getting voices into your game.

GDC 2019

*DEVELOPING VOICES*

CASTING

We are going to take a look at some of the rudiments of casting and directing.

#1 rule about casting:

**DEVELOPING VOICES**

**CASTING**

**DO IT.  
DO SOME CASTING.**

#1 rule about casting:

DO IT.

Do some damn casting. Don't ever assume friends and colleagues, etc

DEVELOPING VOICES

CASTING

*Casting Scripts*

First thing to think about is what kind of script you'd like to send to your potential talent.  
The most common types are Movie style, Spreadsheet, and Sides

You'll want to include the character's name or role in the game (like: shopkeeper)

A bit about their personality

Accents and age specs

physical attributes

Character art if at all possible!

Lines that reveal the character's range of emotion in the game

Exertions, if the character is expected to fight and die.

# DEVELOPING VOICES

## Orlana Corvail

Masquerada

**Gameplay** – Isometric Tactical RPG      **Genre** – Fantasy

**Setting** – Ombre is a city strongly divided by class, bloodlines, and a hierarchy not designed for upward mobility. The Masquerada rule and wield masks that provide them with powerful magic. The Contadani do not, and therefore serve the city in less glamorous positions. For centuries this has been the status quo, but recent outbreaks of revolution have sprung up. Rebellious factions of Contadani have seized masks for themselves and are disrupting the peace, society, and the hierarchy.

**Physical** – Female, 25, Caucasian, athletic build

**Voice** – General American English or Light British (RP), sharp, quick, aggressive

**Character** – After her brother's mysterious death Orlana, even now years later, obsessively seeks to uncover the circumstances of his murder. It has become her sole, desperate purpose in life in order to gain closure so that she can move on.

**Recording** – First sessions in mid-June with the remaining scheduled for mid-July through September. Most work will be small group/ensemble and recording is currently planned to take place at a private studio in the west valley.

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Orlana notices Kalden leaving and thinks she recognizes him.

ORLANA

Kalden?

Kalden catches himself.

~~KALDEN~~

~~Tides, please... Not now.~~

Orlana catches up to them. She definitely recognizes him.

ORLANA

Kalden!

~~KALDEN~~

~~I have nothing to say to you, Orlana.~~

ORLANA

Please, Kalden. I have spoken with so many of my brother's contacts but every lead points back to you.

~~KALDEN~~

~~They should not. I knew little of your brother.~~

ORLANA

I know there is something you are not telling me.

~~KALDEN~~

~~There is nothing more to tell, Orlana.~~

~~CICERO~~

~~Kalden, who is this?~~

Orlana catches herself, as if just noticing Cicero. She recognises Cicero for his position and bows.

ORLANA

Inspettore! I apologize it took me so long to recognize you. My name is Orlana Corvail, Songstress of the Hall of Songs, and sister of Jaxus Corvail.

~~KALDEN~~

~~Orlana, do not involve the Inspettore, please.~~

Orlana ignores Kalden and continues speaking to Cicero.

ORLANA

I had once tried asking the Registry for assistance, but they turned me aside. Perhaps you will be kinder?

~~CICERO~~

~~My hands are currently full, but if it is small-~~

ORLANA

It is. My brother, Jaxus Corvail-

Kalden puts a hand on Orlana's shoulder, gently guiding her away.

~~KALDEN~~

~~Orlana, you must move on.~~

She pulls away from him.

ORLANA

(suddenly)  
How?! My brother is dead and I know not why or how and the only lead I have w

## DEVELOPING VOICES

Event	Audio Line	Range
Revived by non-Medic teammate	Back from the dead!	10m
Defibrillated by Medic	Thanks, Doc!	10m
Defibrillated by Medic	You're a lifesaver, Doc!	10m
Defibrillated by Medic	Send me the bill later!	10m
Defibrillated by Medic	I owe you one, Doc!	10m
Call Medic	Medic!	50m
Call Medic	Help!	50m
Call Medic	I need a medic!	50m
Total ammo < 5%	Getting low on ammo.	20m
Total ammo < 5%	Need some magazines.	20m
Total ammo < 5%	Only got a few rounds left.	20m
Boarded vehicle	Okay, I'm in.	Vehicle
Boarded vehicle	Let's go!	Vehicle
Boarded vehicle	Hit the gas!	Vehicle
Exited vehicle	Disembarking!	10m
Exited vehicle	I'm out!	10m
Exited vehicle	Hoofing it!	10m
Vehicle hit by enemy fire	We're taking damage!	Vehicle
Vehicle hit by enemy fire	She's getting beat up!	Vehicle
Vehicle hit by enemy fire	Gonna need a fresh paint job after this!	Vehicle
Generic class ability	Activating module!	10m
Generic class ability	Activating ability!	10m
Generic class ability	Burning a module!	10m
Generic Deployable	Dropping deployable!	20m
Generic Deployable	Deploying hardware!	20m
Generic Deployable	Deployable up and running!	20m
Overcharge	Roar (like a roar of power)	10m
Overcharge	Overcharging!	10m
Overcharge	Killing time!	10m
Overcharge stack	More!	10m
Overcharge stack	<Evil laugh>	10m
Overcharge stack	More power!	10m
Medic Defibrillates downed ally	Clear!	20m

## DEVELOPING VOICES



**Name:** Oska  
**Union:** AFTRA  
**Rate:** Scale + 10%  
**Role:** Wise  
**Species:** Norm  
**Gender:** Female  
**Age:** 50 (Adult)  
**Social Status:** Middle

The norm are a race of shapeshifting half-giants from the distant north. They believe in personal strength, individual victory, revenge and purifying the soul through battle are universal amid all of the scattered families. Oska is a scholar, and a shaman. She always has a bit of advice, or a poignant question.

**Character Traits:** Thoughtful, inquisitive, knowledgeable  
**Celebrity Essence:** Diane Venora (Queen Weilew from *The 13<sup>th</sup> Warrior*), Liv Ullmann (Kate Ter Horst in *A Bridge Too Far*)  
**Voice Quality:** Patient, friendly, mature  
**Accent:** None

**Oska**

(Greetings)

**Take a seat by the fire. What's on your mind?**

**Oska**

(During battle)

**I can handle them on my own. Help the little ones.**

**Oska**

(Talking about hunting)

**Hunting artifacts is nothing like hunting animals.**

**Oska**

(About accomplishment)

**I've learned too much to throw it all away for empty glory.**

**Oska**

(Idle chatter at an inn)

**Some pay for a warm meal with gold. Some pay with heroic deeds.**

Another kind of script- single character "side"  
bit of personal info and suggestions, and context for sample lines

# DEVELOPING VOICES

**Name:** William Barns  
**Union:** AFTRA  
**Rate:** Scale + 10 %  
**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** Early 20's  
**Voice Quality:** friendly but with a personal agenda



Appears normal, cooperative, friendly, but has a personal agenda.

**Name:** Susan Faraday  
**Union:** AFTRA  
**Rate:** Scale + 10 %  
**Gender:** Female  
**Age:** Early 40's



Early 40's, emotionally isolated, just divorced soccer mom, cynical towards men.

**WILLIAM**  
 Cover me! Reloading!

**WILLIAM**  
 Nice shot!

**WILLIAM**  
 Keep it together, soldier!

**WILLIAM**  
 All done. We gotta keep moving.

**WILLIAM**  
 Hope we don't have to do that again.

**WILLIAM**  
 Blip at twenty meters!

**WILLIAM**  
 I got somethin', but it's pretty far out there.

**WILLIAM**  
 Multiple hostiles closing in!

**WILLIAM**  
 Target in front!

**SUSAN**  
 Cover me! Reloading!

**SUSAN**  
 Nice shot!

**SUSAN**  
 Keep it together, soldier!

**SUSAN**  
 All done. We gotta keep moving.

**SUSAN**  
 Hope we don't have to do that again.

**SUSAN**  
 Blip at twenty meters!

**SUSAN**  
 I got somethin', but it's pretty far out there.

**SUSAN**  
 Multiple hostiles closing in!

**SUSAN**  
 Target in front!

Sides — for this game, many characters had this script as their audition.

## DEVELOPING VOICES

**NAME:** Tricia Rains (Female)

**OCCUPATION:** Young, Local newscaster

**PERSONALITY:** Overly dramatic, Nancy Grace, a real go-getter ☺

**DIALOG SAMPLES:**

"Tricia Rains here, on location in downtown Manhattan, where a massive ghost sighting has just occurred."

"Can you describe what you saw exactly?"

"You heard it here 1<sup>st</sup>... Ghosts... flying out of a big, giant spiraling rift... thing. Live, from downtown Manhattan, I'm Tricia Rains."



### Freya the Green [Botanist]

Hello everyone! I'm Freya the Green and I am the botanist of the School of Dragons. I'm a middle-aged woman, and lots of people tell me that I remind them of their mother. I think it's because I'm so warm and caring to everyone I meet.

I really love plants and animals, and I have a real gift for caring for them. You might even say that I have green thumbs! I run the greenhouse and the farm here, and I would love to teach you how to care for the plants when you come by.

*Warm, motherly*

- Mrs. Trelawney from Harry Potter
- Mrs. Garrett from the Facts of Life

### Sample Lines

- Hello love! I'm Freya the Green.
- Oh my word! How wonderful!
- Be a dear and help me.
- Have you explored the island?
- There are so many types of plants and animals here!

Character Name and Archetype Character art. Very short, to-the point descriptions  
Described in first person. Spiffy!

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Battlegrounds

#### The Blood Mage Spec:

Female

Age: 32

Accent: South African accented English. The voice should have a serious, mystical, regal bearing

Some Accent Reference:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKqgH8jUo3k>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hsgvE1XwE>

Character Traits:

- Cold
- Superior
- Emotionless
- Condescending
- Genius trapped among barbarians

The Blood Mage is the descendant of an ancient, glorious, and nearly-extinct culture. Surviving in the ruins of crumbling cities, they possess knowledge still undreamed of in other lands. She holds herself superior to others, and for the most part she is.

Her people don't birth children, but create them through a process of magical "genetic engineering."

#### Copy:

"You exist at our sufferance."

"Ill-formed whelp. Remove yourself from our presence."

"We remember when the east was the glory of the world."

"What is the secret? The blade is illusion,"

## DEVELOPING VOICES

Lisbeth is the only child of Robert and Rebecca Hutchins. Her mother is of American Indian descent. She grew up in the small town of Newport Oregon where both her parents were employed by the fisheries; her mother in the processing plant and her father as a mechanic. Their family has always lived their lives teetering on the poverty line and at a very early age Lisbeth began working odd jobs wherever she could find them to help support her family. She and her father would spend time together hunting in the coastal forests both to fill their freezer with meat and to sell to local markets.

Her parents are very caring and supportive. They have treated her as an equal almost her entire life. This has fostered in her a great confidence; a sense of being capable of anything she sets her mind to. Growing up hunting with her father, working the fisheries and a number of other "hands on" physical and mechanically minded jobs has made her a bit of a tom-boy. She pays little mind to make-up or pretty things, but even in her most unkempt state her beauty is inescapable.

Three years ago her father was injured in an accident and has been out of work ever since. This placed an enormous strain on the family, but because of their dedication to and support of one another, served only to strengthen their bond. A recent Weyland Yutani recruitment advertisement led to the opportunity for employment for the entire family off-world so they sold most everything they had, signed the standard seven year colonization contracts and departed Earth in hypersleep aboard the Weyland Yutani Research Vessel Legato headed for the outer rim.

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**LISBETH**

[Strong, persuasive, reassuring]

I'm not going to stop you and I'm not trying to change your mind. You head for the ship, find help. My family is waiting for me and I'm not going to let them down.

**LISBETH**

[Controlled devastated seething rage]

"They're gone, both of them...I was too late, I was just too late. Get clear, get the message out. I don't have much time left, but...(choking back tears) God dammit. They're gonna pay, they are all gonna pay.

Back story overload

philosophy of warring factions, character's hopes and dreams, "motivations" overall history of the world or universe this character inhabits, —> reference doc. DC Universe and Atlas Reactor do this.

the audition scripts really need to be lightweight. You're looking for character, clarity, and range, not interpretations of interstellar politics.

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Personality Descriptors

- Youthful
- Cunning
- Dignified
- Clever/Witty
- Machiavellian
- Vengeful
- Deliberate
- Brilliant
- Slow to Trust

### Touchstone Characters

- Varys (Game of Thrones)
- Number 6 (early Battlestar Galactica)
- Madame Web (Spider-Man comics)
- The Baroness (G.I. Joe)
- Lord Vetinari (Discworld books)

### Vocal Touchstones

- Kathleen Turner (especially in War of the Roses)
- Morena Baccarin in Firefly
- Monica Belluci in The Matrix Reloaded
- Marina Sirtis as Deanna Troi (Star Trek: TNG)

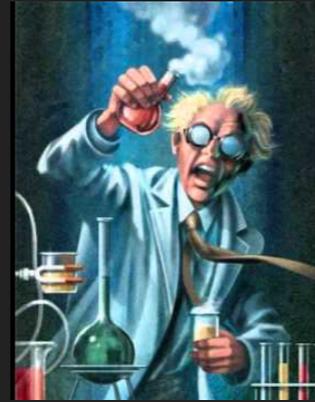
Going overboard and

Star Serving Suggestions. Actors want to be good Dogs and will attempt to replicate a performance rather than find that facet of personality you are looking for.

What you are really looking for— is an Archetype

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Archetypes



Femme Fatale, Tough guy, wise warrior, mad scientist, snooty rich lady, Super dad

These engage the actor's own frame of reference.

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### *The Stuff to Include*

Name of Character  
Character Art  
Age  
Physical attributes  
Personality Traits (within reason) and/or Archetype  
Bit of history  
Accent

Sample lines that are key to the range of the character  
Soft to LOUD

Deaths  
Exertions

Deaths don't go last unless you're setting someone on fire.

THIS IS HALFWAY

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### AUDITIONING

#### *Directed auditions*

- Requires scheduling
- Requires personnel
- Requires time
- *Can they take direction?*

#### *Freestyle Auditions*

- + Speed
- - Comprehension (possibly)
- *Quality of acting*

*You are auditioning the sound of their studio as much as their acting ability.*

Scripts and actors— who is good to play which part? **You may be surprised. Story of Audition for Spiderman.**

Once you get to know your actors, you won't need to direct the auditions unless it's a really special project

DIRECTED AUDITIONS Take more time but lets you know straight away if an actor can take direction

Freestyle: Actors can get auditions back to you more quickly when they can do it in their own time

Actors auditioning on their own may not understand what you want

You are auditioning Quality of acting AND the quality of the actors' home studios

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*DEVELOPING VOICES*

*Don't cast a rôle based on*  
**ONE LINE**

It can be tempting! Don't cast a role based on one line. This is what callbacks are for.  
Kendra's / My experience with the witch for Dead and Buried. Also Lake.

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**DEVELOPING VOICES**

**DIRECTING**

ON TO DIRECTING! Once you've made your casting decisions, you'll be diving in with the actors.

**DEVELOPING VOICES**

*Speaking Actorese*

Use ACTIONS

Emotional States

Allow for corrections and self-interruptions.

Some things to consider as you guide your actor's performance.

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### *Speaking Actorese*

#### Use ACTIONS

Snide: to belittle, to patronize, to scoff

Commanding: TO Command, to interrupt, to lead

Angry: To explain, to encourage, to influence  
to dismiss, to disregard, to disparage, to warn, to threaten

#### Emotional States

Allow for corrections and self-interruptions.

Emotional states are the “how”

Actions are the “WHY” ← this is much more valuable

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Speaking Actorese

#### Use ACTIONS

Snide: to belittle, to patronize, to scoff

Commanding: TO Command, to interrupt, to lead

Angry: To explain, to encourage, to influence  
to dismiss, to disregard, to disparage, to warn, to threaten

#### Emotional States

Not just Angry, but...

Not just disappointed, but...

Allow for corrections and self-interruptions.

If you are indeed looking for an emotional state, make it vivid.

Like: "As a teenager, How mad were you when your Father wouldn't let you use the car?"

Not just angry, but THWARTED.

Or when you didn't even make the callback sheet at a big audition?

Not just disappointed, but **deeply devastated**.

"like your soul has fallen." is something I would say.

Tom Keegan is a genius for drawing out ways to give the character honest connections to the actors life.

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Speaking Actorese

#### Use ACTIONS

Snide: to belittle, to patronize, to scoff

Commanding: TO Command, to interrupt, to lead

Angry: To explain, to encourage, to influence  
to dismiss, to disregard, to disparage, to warn, to threaten

#### Emotional States

Not just Angry, but...

Not just disappointed, but...

#### Allow for corrections and self-interruptions.

"You are not going to believe what just happened. "

"You are not going to believe— OH MY GOD I can hardly believe it!— you are  
not going to believe what just happened."

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### *Fine Tuning*

#### Use Music Terms

Tempo

Accent

Attack

Decay

Pitch

Melody

## DEVELOPING VOICES

### Troubles

from your side of the glass

Line-reading

Interrupting

Ask the group: Do you know what line reading is?

Don't jump directly into a "line read" — this is where you read the line as you want it to sound. It may seem like the most expeditious thing to do, but it's perceived as an insult to an actor.

You're going to get a far better result for the whole session if you take the time to engage the actor's own frame of reference.

Otherwise you're asking him to simply parrot back your inflection in his voice.

And if the actor is truly stumped, that's when a line read is appropriate. If an actor isn't hitting the mark after 3 or so tries, he's likely to ask you for a line read himself.

When you need to make a directorial adjustment — wait until the actor reaches the end of the line. There aren't a lot of full-scale "paragraphs" in game dialogue.

Interrupting an actor may seem like a time-saver, but just be patient for a few seconds! What interrupting does is alarm the actor and undermines his confidence— which can lose you a strong performance, or it will irritate the actor and make him less likely to be receptive.

**DEVELOPING VOICES**

*Troubles*

from the acting side

Racing



White-Lining



Example script next page

## DEVELOPING VOICES

PA (Announcer)	Skull is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Skull
PA (Announcer)	Thermo is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Thermo
PA (Announcer)	BigBang is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_BigBang
PA (Announcer)	Guardian is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Guardian
PA (Announcer)	GroundShock is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_GroundSh
PA (Announcer)	Nuke is now King of the Hill	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Nuke
PA (Announcer)	You are King of the Hill!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_General
PA (Announcer)	Comander 1 is King of the Hill!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Comander
PA (Announcer)	Comander 2 is King of the Hill!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Comander
PA (Announcer)	Comander 3 is King of the Hill!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Comander
PA (Announcer)	Comander 4 is King of the Hill!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Comander
PA (Announcer)	Red Team has the crown!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Red_Tea
PA (Announcer)	Blue Team has the crown!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Blue_Tea
PA (Announcer)	You have the crown!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_You
PA (Announcer)	You have lost the crown!	VO_PA_KingOfTheHill_Lead_Lost
PA (Announcer)	Crashbot wins.	VO_PA_Winner_1_Crashbot
PA (Announcer)	Cam wins.	VO_PA_Winner_2_Cam
PA (Announcer)	Brick wins.	VO_PA_Winner_3_Brick
PA (Announcer)	Gaston wins.	VO_PA_Winner_4_Gaston
PA (Announcer)	ShadowX wins.	VO_PA_Winner_5_ShadowX
PA (Announcer)	Metro wins.	VO_PA_Winner_6_Metro

You may need to remind your actor that the player is hearing all this for the first time.

**DEVELOPING VOICES**

*Take a break*



DB COOPER VO

***DEVELOPING VOICES***

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