

Elise Arsenault!

Bio - Elise Arsenault is a classically trained actor, singer, and voice-over artist. She has worked throughout the country with various regional theaters. Elise holds a BA from George Mason University and received further training at the British American Drama Academy at Oxford University. Her performances have been praised as high-strung, versatile and full of flair.

6:45 - She has become the bread winner of her family because of Audiobooks!

7:45 - She is always seeking more tools to add to her actor belt - accents, sports - learning to play baseball because of the new League of their Own reboot! Look projects ahead.

8:14 - Her other skills include playing Cello, Trombone and she is an avid rock climber. She also just discovered that she likes to paint! She never thought of herself as a visual artist because of her performance strengths.

8:45 - She was inspired to paint by Julia Cameron's 'The Artist's Way'! We have had so many guests speak about this book! It helps connect you to your inner child, Elise said. It encourages you to take yourself on 'Artist Dates' so she did a paint tutorial and because she thought she was going to be bad at it and had nothing to lose, she was putting no pressure on herself creatively and found out she was actually good at it!

10:17 - When she began, she consumed as many books as she could on becoming an actor and how to be a working actor to prepare, and they all said NYC or LA (only 2 choices) So she moved from DC, where she was working a lot, to NYC during the recession and only stayed a year because of accruing credit card debt.

11:17 - She also felt exhausted, like she had 'no cup to pour from'

11:40 - So she 'hit rock bottom' and moved back in with her parents in her late 20s, which turned out to be the best thing she could have done for herself.

12:20 - She started doing some Standardized Patient work and found that it was easier to break into Equity/Regional Theatres in this smaller market. So she was able to join Equity and found she was working, but not making enough. She still had to teach and wait tables and give lessons.

13:30 - She then discovered audiobook narration.

13:50 - Her VO career then began, and she found this subject a joy to teach. She believes it is a huge untapped market and has so much work for actors!

14:40 - She has recorded over 130 audiobooks! And she coaches VO

15:40 - When you start out, Elise says ask yourself, 'What do you want more of?' She wanted more income and more freedom - both of which were supplied when she began recording audiobooks. Audiobook work is acting work! Plus, it has a very flexible schedule - you make it yourself.

16:30 - If you're not sure if audiobooks are for you, grab a book (she also recommended the app Libby, free ebooks) and READ ALOUD for 15-20 minutes, and really know who you are reading it to - a friend, anyone, just someone specific. You want the person listening to experience the book, not feel as if they are just being read to. If reading aloud was fun for you, then it's for you! If it made you miserable, then maybe not!

17:30 - Don't give up because you are intimidated by tech or the fact that there are 40 characters in some books, start from where you are, and simply do you enjoy it?

18:10 - Elise doesn't think the industry is getting over-crowded! Her coachings teach you how to obtain multiple clients. ACX is online audible service where you can meet authors, but she thinks of this as the "wild wild west" - She really teaches you how to translate the craft of acting from theatre or film to audiobook work, building up the marketing tools you need to get started, and building a client base.

19:51 - Networking events are returning on zoom to meet other narrators, producers, and publishers.

20:30 - Tech stuff stops some people from trying... don't let that happen. Almost every book is becoming an audiobook! That is a lot of work.

21:22 - Colleen talked about someone who was hired because he sounded like the author's father and it was a book about his father. Elise loved this! Everyone has their own flavor, she said, and you may not be right for everyone, but you will be the right fit for many people.

22:00 - Elise is a fan of building relationships! As an actor, she said you just need, like, 6-12 directors to like you and that's a career. Build relationships with authors - they choose the voice, not casting directors. One that maybe sounded like the voice in their head. The 130 audiobooks Elise has done are from just a handful of authors, many of whom write series!

24:00 - Her course takes you through the tech! You can get started with just a few hundred bucks in treatment and basic equipment. Don't over invest! Re-invest once you have work. Your first gig should pay for it.

25:00 - 100% YES to the question, 'should you read the book before you record it' She has learned the hard way, that you could get up to chapter seven and it's the first time they mention a certain character has, say, an Irish accent!

26:00 - There isn't time to prep it like it was theatre, so it has really helped improve her cold reading and improv skills and the skill of trusting one's self!

27:09 - Try not to be super precious with audiobook recordings. They are looking for the human experience. They do a "Punch and Roll" recording where you read, read, read until you make a mistake, stop recording, then you back it up to just before the mistake, and pick it back up from there. After that, she will send it to the publisher or producer and someone listens to make sure it is exactly word for word, and then they will send her pick-ups (any mistakes or re-records she has to do) and she will do those, send them along, and that's that.

29:00 - She hasn't been asked to use Source Connect - she records on her own and if they are directing, they are doing so via skype or zoom - then you would do an "Open Roll" where if you make a mistake, you re-do that line but keep recording.

30:00 - How much time she spends recording: She does 20-30 books a year (1-2 a month). First you set up a timeline with the publisher, like recording from the 1st to the 16th, and prep ahead of time (i.e. character names, pronunciation, storyline). Depends on efficiency!

32:00 - It takes her about 2 hours on a good day to record 1 finished hour of material. If it were a 10 hour book over a two week period mon-fri she would try to record 1 finished hour per day. She makes 40,000-60,000 a year from audiobooks alone. She also gets benefits from SAG because she consistently makes more than 27,000 which is their rule.

34:00 - Her husband was able to leave his teaching job and pursue his dreams! Thriving actor!

35:30 - There are audiobook opportunities for children's books, but you are paid by the finished hour in this industry, so it's not a lot. Scholastic would be one to check out.

37:00 - Do research on the books you want to narrate!

38:30 - Do you have to ocean up you recordings for audiobooks? You don't need to take out breaths, they want the breath. "Clean, Raw, Punched" Send wav of each chapter. She works with a post production professional and gives him a cut.

41:30 - Best way to learn accents? She recommends working with a coach, but Paul Meyers IDEA archive online consists of examples of real people from all regions of the world speaking English. Helpful, especially if you have a good ear, but if it's just a few lines for one character in a book, youtube should help. Elise is working on her accents this summer with a coach to really take her skills to the next level. Start with what you have, though!

44:40 - She has a system for keeping track of characters voices - does Stanislavski work, like what do people say about that character voice, what do they say about themselves, et cetera, and then she casts it! Literally asks, who would play that character if it were a movie?

45:44 - She also records the 1st line of each character and sets it aside as a reference guide for herself, so there is one line from every character in a file.

46:40 - She resisted coaching at first. She struggles with her family understanding her craft and her parents always wanted her to be a teacher.

48:00 - She always wanted more of a creative voice in any given project than just being in the show, especially if it was an ensemble role. She did Avenue Q and was also the puppet coach and she felt then that all sides of herself were being satisfied.

50:10 - She needs to be directing or coaching or helping in some way to feel like herself, and she gave a shout out to Issa Rae! We are entering the age of multi-hyphenates!

51:15 - She loved our slates! She said we all seemed comfortable on zoom and in our own skin!

51:36 - She appreciated that structure (the slates). She felt known and welcome! She gave us all notes! Paul is so funny, she said, he joked about Rich not being there, which made her feel welcome.

52:28 - Shelby has such a warm presence! Lindsay has such a gross/memorable bagel order! She remembered Mike was a twin and said he was very grounded. Dina she said was very approachable, Shelley was also so warm! Kelly, she remembered you are a massage therapist and thought it totally fit your vibe and suggested a headshot reflecting that! Sandra, she said have we met before?! She loved that you are a space nerd. She did a play with Armin Shimmerman.

58:28 - Ana, she loved that you were a peace corp baby! She asked if you have a Ghanaian accent and definitely suggests marketing that! Gabi, she can see you in a John Greene movie! YA narration for you, for sure. Rosalyn, she wrote down that you sound like a broadcaster and she was right!

1:01:37 - She says there is no need for an agent for audiobook narration! She has one for commercial and industrial stuff, but often it is direct relationships with CDs and authors. Develop your relationships!

1:02:57 - She initially found work by asking someone in the industry to sit down with her and someone did and gave her names of CDs to check on and gave her referrals - still took awhile. Referrals are helpful!

1:04:00 - Harriet, you are a grandmother and so fun!! She loved your colors and your authenticity and could really tell that you own who you are. Big personality, suggests working with accents. Colleen is so friendly! She wrote 'camp counselor' and loved your little bossy choir teacher moment!