

A Few Minutes With...

ANDREA TOYIAS

As each year passes, video games become more and more like cinematic films, and with that, the standard of the voice acting required continues to be more demanding. This is why for you, we continue to scour the earth for the best of the best, and if we do say so ourselves, we have done it again... (please pardon our self-congratulatory pat on the back, but we're excited)! Welcome to the Voicetrax Guest Director fold Andrea Toyias, Senior Casting and Voice Director for the video game developer Blizzard Entertainment. If you know anything about video games then you know that Blizzard is a behemoth with some of the most successful titles in the history of the industry including World of Warcraft, Diablo and Overwatch. We were pumped to sit down and chat for a few minutes with our newest teacher to see what's what...

Voicetrax: Were you a "gamer" growing up?

Andrea Toyias: Right out of the gate and you've already hit on my dark little secret. The answer is no, not at all.

VT: So how did you end up working at one of the most successful video game developers?

AT: I worked at an ad agency and I just knew my career was going in the wrong direction, mostly because I felt my soul dying a little every day. I knew I was not where I was meant to be. So, I answered an online job posting for a production assistant at a game company, not even knowing what that job was. But the assistant was for the audio and video department and I'm an audiophile, so I thought... ok, let's try this. I had none of the skills they were looking for. I walked into the interview and somehow, I guess my ability to BS and my hot pink hair got me the job at a video game company that did educational videos for teachers. I got coffee, did hair & make-up, props, whatever they needed. Then the two female school teachers that owned the company bought Blizzard Entertainment. Fast forward, another company came in (we hadn't created World of Warcraft yet) and bought Blizzard, moved our offices and built us a beautiful recording studio. They needed a recording engineer and instead of hiring an adult, they sent me to school to learn the job. That's when I fell in love with acting, directing and the collaboration that goes into the creative process. So, it wasn't the gaming that got me, it was the raw, vulnerable connection between actor and director that got me. That's my jam. Gaming is the medium I happen work in, but my true love is working with actors.

VT: I'm sure this story of "where am I going?" sounds familiar to a lot of our students.

AT: We've all had those moments in life where we think, this is fucking wrong. I'm not supposed to be here. There's gotta be something else, we make the change and here we are. All of us have to be a little crazy to be here and I fit that mold pretty well.

VT: What's it like to work on something as successful as World of Warcraft?

AT: It's never ending. We are always in some stage of production, every single minute of every single day. We're either planning it, recording it, closing it up and then writing a new chapter. It's a constant cycle. And I love it.

VT: The WoW fans are so devout. Do you feel the pressure to keep it fresh?

AT: Sure, there's pressure, but that's because nobody at our company ever wants to rest on our laurels or take the success for granted. At Blizzard it's not just a job. Every single one of us eats, sleeps and lives these stories. At every level we're always trying to make WoW and all of our games better. Even if I'm directing "background villager #2" with two lines, those two lines need to be fucking phenomenal. We know our fans live and die with this game which continually and happily challenges us to do our best work.

VT: What piece of advice would you give voice actors currently auditioning for video games?

AT: That's easy to answer. Hands down, what I most want to hear from actors is their soul, their life experience, their story. It's not about doing voices. I was just recording an actress today who is based in London and she brought so much heart and soul to her performance, that a ten-line character suddenly became even more valuable to the story. It's easy (and lazy honestly) to think that voice acting is all about the voice. I wish it was just called "acting" because that's what it is. In auditions and session work I'm always listening for you, your wins, your failures, your life story. The greatest actors know how to bring their life into every character. If all you come with is a voice, I can't do anything with that. If I can discover someone who's a great actor with true emotional depth and connection, I'll cast that over "the perfect voice" every time.

Will you be one of the lucky students who gets to be there when Andrea spills the beans on everything from the other side of the glass, as she teaches in the San Francisco Bay Area for the very first time?!? Be the beneficiary of her valuable, real-world experience and mentoring. Find the description of her world premiere class Wizzard of Blizzard: End Game on page 18.