

Auditions

Auditions can be stressful. It is, therefore, important to set yourself and your students up for success in the audition room. This chapter is designed to help eliminate unnecessary stressors and insure a positive audition experience for all involved.

Regardless of experience, some things to keep in mind are:

- Post your auditions with plenty of time to allow yourself and your students to prepare.
- Be very clear in terms of what the expectations are of the students in advance.
- Set up an environment that encourages students to be creative and allows them to relax.
- Be clear with the students in terms of what being cast means—provide a tentative rehearsal schedule, as well as an audition form, conflict sheet, and student/parent consent form before the audition (see supplemental resource materials).
- It is always nice to have other people in the room to help with organization and decision-making.

NASCENT

At the beginning level, it is sometimes appropriate to forgo auditions altogether and simply cast based on what you have seen in class and/or after school Drama Club. If you decide to go this route, you may skip ahead to the Casting chapter. If you feel strongly that you would like for your students to have the experience of auditioning, or that you need it in order to make informed casting decisions, please continue reading.

If your students have never auditioned for a play before, they probably have no idea what to expect. Therefore, your job is to make it as seamless as possible.

➤ NASCENT ACTIVITY

For these activities, you'll need resources, found as both addendums and additional resources at the end of this document.

- **Addendum 1:** Template Audition Form
- **Addendum 2:** Template Audition Notice
- **Addendum 5:** Template Student/Parent Contract
- **Web resource 1:** Monologues

Before the audition:

- Provide students with a short and simple monologue or an excerpt from the script to look over. Emphasize expectations, and what being cast would entail.

At the audition:

- Have students fill out an audition form.
- One by one allow them to perform the piece for you.*
- Thank the students for being brave and having fun.
- Let them know when to expect a cast list.

*After students have performed the piece one time and gotten the nerves somewhat out, you may want to ask if they would like to try once more. You might provide a little bit of simple direction if you would like, but make sure not to overwhelm them. Some good, basic instructions are things like, *“That was great. This time, can you perform the piece as if it is the most important thing you have ever said in your life, and everyone needs to hear it?”* Simple adjustments will help you to see if the students are able to make a strong choice and take your direction. It also begins to get them in the mindset of thinking about what the character wants.

INTERMEDIATE

► INTERMEDIATE ACTIVITY

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Before the audition:

- Provide your students with something to prepare ahead of time—a monologue from the play itself is always a good choice.

OR

- Allow your students to prepare a monologue of their choosing—this will show you who is able to plan and prepare ahead of time and do the work outside of rehearsal.
- Encourage your students to come into the audition with their monologue (either the one you provided or the one they chose for themselves) memorized.
- Emphasize expectations, and what being cast would entail.

At the audition:

- Have students fill out an audition form.
- One by one allow them to perform the piece for you.*
- Thank the students for taking the time to prepare their piece and come out to audition.
- Let them know when to expect a cast list.

*If students seem particularly nervous or unable to perform from memory, allow them to hold the monologue in their hand. Once they have performed one time, allow them to give it another shot. You should provide them with some simple direction for this second try. If possible, allow the direction to come directly from the monologue, and ask questions. Things like *“What does your character want in this monologue? Great, so for this next try, can you do it as though if your character does not get that, the world will literally come to an end?”* This type of direction may seem extreme, but it will show you how far the students are willing to push themselves and how bold they can be. As a general rule, it is almost always easier to bring a performer back down from an extreme choice, than to get them to go bigger when they are stuck being small.

ADVANCED

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Before the audition:

- Ask students to prepare a monologue of their choosing ahead of time. It is not uncommon to ask students to prepare two contrasting monologues, though this decision should be left to the discretion of the director.
- Emphasize that the monologue(s) should be memorized and show the students' range in terms of acting ability.
- Choose sides from the play. **Sides** are the specific set of lines from the script of an acting project that must be learned prior to an audition. Try to keep them at one page or less.*

At the audition:

- Have students fill out an audition form.
- One by one allow them to perform their prepared piece for you.
- Allow students to read sides from the script.*
- Thank the students for taking the time to prepare their piece(s) and come out to audition.
- Let them know when to expect a cast list.

*After everyone has performed their monologues, you may want to hear students read scenes from the script. There are a few different ways to approach this. In the interest of time, you might have a “reader” in the room with you. A reader is someone who is not auditioning for the show, but who reads with the auditionees so that they have someone to play off of. You may also choose to pair your students up and allow them to read scenes with one another. This can be particularly helpful if you are on the fence about how two students may look or work with one another. Should you go with this second option, it is very important to manage your time well and not waste the time of the students by spending too much time with some of them and not enough with others. When you are looking at students read with a reader or one another, pay attention to how they play off of one another. Are they connecting with their scene partner and reacting and responding to what he or she is giving them, or are they in their own world and too focused on what they are about to do to be present and in the moment? Do not be afraid to point these things out to the students to see if they are able to make adjustments.

MUSICAL THEATRE

➤ MUSICAL THEATRE ACTIVITY

For these activities, you'll need resources, found as both addendums and additional resources at the end of this document.

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Before the audition:

- Ask your students to prepare a song in advance. It is customary to ask for 16-32 bars of a song in the musical style of the show.
- If your students do not have much experience with musical theatre auditions, you may want to provide them with cuts from the show and allow them to prepare in advance.
- Secure an accompanist to play piano at the audition. Remind students that, though an accompanist is available, they are still responsible for bringing in their own sheet music, in their own key.*

At the audition:

- Have students fill out an audition form.
- One by one allow them to perform the song they have prepared.*
- Give your music director (if you have one) the opportunity to test the students' range by doing a simple scale. This will allow you to see if they are able to hit all of the notes necessary for the particular characters in the show.
- Depending on the number of students auditioning, you can teach a short dance routine and/or have them read from the script. Typically, however, these are saved for callbacks.**
- Thank the students for taking the time to prepare their piece(s) and come out to audition.
- Let them know when to expect a cast list.

*Encourage the students to *act through the song* rather than just standing and singing. Remind them that a song is just like a monologue, in that there is something that they *want* and a *reason that they are saying the things that they are saying*. In some cases, students will not have sheet music and will ask to perform acapella or with a recording. Though this is not ideal, and it is ultimately up to the discretion of the director, we suggest allowing them to do so as a last resort. It would not be inappropriate to follow-up by allowing them to sing something well-known and simple (perhaps “Happy Birthday” or “The Star Spangled Banner”) with the accompanist to be sure that they are able to match pitch and stay in rhythm with a musician.

**CALLBACKS

Not every audition process requires a callback. For a small, straight play (a non-musical), it is often very clear who will fit best into each part based on the initial audition. However, if there are certain roles that you simply cannot choose between, a callback may be necessary. The point of a callback is not to pit students against one another, but rather to help determine the best way of putting together the casting puzzle pieces. For this reason, we suggest calling back between three and five students for each role you are unsure about. Calling back only two makes it a competition, and calling back more than five makes it somewhat overwhelming and nearly impossible to give everyone the same consideration.

It is important to be very organized and not waste time at callbacks. Go into the callbacks with a clear plan in terms of who you would like to see read what and with whom. If you anticipate a longer callback, structure it in such a way that allows you to stagger the call. For example, if you are casting *Romeo and Juliet*, you can bring in the students called back for the characters of Juliet and Romeo first, have them read together in pairs (trying different potential Juliets with different potential Romeos), and allow those called back for Mercutio, Tybalt, Nurse, etc. later, so as not to waste their time by having them sit around.

Time management is particularly important for Musical Theatre callbacks. Because there are likely more things that you are going to need to see at a callback for a musical, organization is key. There may be some students who you would like to hear sing for a certain character. There may be some students you need to see read together or dance together. Plan. Plan. Plan. You cannot be too organized. Set up the expectation from the beginning of the callback. Let the students know “This may be a long process. Please be patient. We are going to first hear these people, sing, then, we are going to have these people read, and then we are going to dance.” If possible, allow multiple things to happen at once. For example, if you are casting “Little Shop of Horrors,” while the Audreys and Seymores are singing, those called back for The Urchins can be learning a dance routine with the choreographer. Be strategic. And always, be aware of everyone’s time. Let people go as you no longer need them. See template callback schedule for more information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEB

Simple, free monologues can be found at <http://www.ace-your-audition.com/free-monologues.html>

ADDENDUM 1: Template Audition Form

(SHOW TITLE)

By _____

(Performance Dates)

Name: _____

Grade: _____ Age: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Hair Color: _____ Eye Color: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ Text: Yes / No

Role Preferred: _____ Will you accept another? _____

If cast are you willing to cut/dye your hair? Yes / No

Are you currently employed? If so where? _____

What is your availability? Please list any major time commitments between now and the show. (Athletic Events Weddings, etc...) ****Performance Dates are _____ Rehearsals will typically run _____.**
(The week prior to opening night rehearsal will run 5 days a week including one Saturday with extended hours.)

(Any other important dates/times) _____

Please List any theatre experience below:

If not cast in the show are you willing to be on crew? Yes / No

What crew area interest you? _____

Do you have an interest in stage management? _____

ADDENDUM 2: Template Audition Notice

Auditions
(SHOW TITLE)

By _____

(DATE, TIME, PLACE)

Performance Dates

What to prepare

(Optional) Please sign up for a 5 minute slot

6:00 _____
6:05 _____
6:10 _____
6:15 _____
6:20 _____
6:25 _____
6:30 _____
6:35 _____
6:40 _____
6:45 _____
6:50 _____
6:55 _____
7:00 _____
7:05 _____
7:10 _____

ADDENDUM 3: Callback Schedule Example 1

SONNETS FOR AN OLD CENTURY Callbacks

Introductions/ Explanation of Process

Group Work

- Kiersten Van Horne
 - » Mark, Melissa, Donut, Seth, Kathryn
 - » Julianna, Kara, Lavour, Dani
 - » Geo, Amanda, Amy, Blythe, Tristan

Choreography with Women

- Amanda, Kara, Melissa, Blythe, Julianna, Kathryn, Amy, Dani

Monologues with Men

(while the women are learning choreography)

- Seth - Javi
- Lavour - Javi
- Donut - Geno
- Tristan - Geno
- Seth - Geno
- Lavour - John
- Geo - John
- Seth - John
- Mark - Kevin
- Geo - Kevin
- Seth - Kevin
- Lavour - Kevin
- Tristan - Karenjune
- Seth - Ana
- Lavour - Ana

Choreography with Men

- Seth, Lavour, Donut, Tristan, Mark, Geo

Monologues with Women

(while the men are learning choreography)

- Amanda - Javi
- Blythe - Maricela
- Julianna - Maricela
- Kathryn - Maricela
- Amy - Camilia
- Dani - Camilia
- Amanda - Camilia
- Julianna - Camilia
- Kara - Ana
- Dani - Ana
- Melissa - Ana

ADDENDUM 4: Callback Schedule Example 2

WILD PARTY Callbacks

Sides

- Leiney, Samantha, Kyle, Rachael, Pua, Danielle, Garrett, Seth, Geo, Lavour, David, Melissa, Leon, Joe, Kathryn, Kalau, Stacey
 - » **Side 1 - Queenie and Burrs**
 - Samantha and Lavour
 - Leiney and Garrett
 - Kyle and Seth
 - Samantha and Geo
 - » **Side 2 - Queenie and Kate**
 - Kyle and Rachael
 - Samantha and Pua
 - Leiney and Danielle
 - » **Side 3 - Queenie and Black**
 - Leiney and Lavour
 - Kyle and Garrett
 - Samantha and David
 - » **Side 4 - Kate and Burrs**
 - Rachael and Garrett
 - Pua and Lavour
 - Danielle and David
 - Samantha and Garrett
 - Leiney and David
 - Kyle and Lavour
 - » **Side 5 - Dolores and Sam**
 - Melissa and Leon
 - Pua and Joe
 - Kathryn and Kalau
 - Stacey and Leon
 - Rachael and Joe

Songs

- **Ensemble Work**
 - » **Group 1**
 - Luigi, Eric, Rachael, Danielle, David, Lavour, Kristi, Kathryn, Melissa
 - » **Group 2**
 - Leon, Kalau, Pua, Stacey, Joe, Sharlene, Garrett, Ashlynn
- **Madelaine (All called in at the same time)**
 - » Amy
 - » Stacey
 - » Kyle
 - » Pua
 - » Rachael
- **Oscar and Phil (All called in at the same)**
 - » Leon and Kalau
 - » Eric and Luigi
- **Eddie and Mae (All called in at the same time)**
 - » Garrett and Melissa
 - » David and Kristi
 - » Lavour and Sharlene
 - » Joe and Amy
 - » David and Kathryn
 - » Joe and Danielle
 - » Lavour and Ashlynn
- **Queenie (All called in at the same time)**
 - » Samantha
 - » Kyle
 - » Leiney
- **Kate (Add Danielle, Pua, Rachael)**
 - » Leiney
 - » Danielle
 - » Pua
 - » Rachael
 - » Kyle
 - » Samantha
- **Black (All called in at the same time)**
 - » David
 - » Lavour
 - » Garrett
- **Burrs (Add Seth and Geo. David leaves)**
 - » Seth
 - » Geo
 - » Garrett
 - » Lavour

ADDENDUM 5: Template Student/Parent Contract

I _____ understand that active participation in the *(Year) (School) Production of (Show)* requires many responsibilities. Those responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. The preparation that is required of my role before, during, and after rehearsals.
2. Being punctual with all scheduled rehearsals and events in relation to the production.
3. Showing active respect for self, other students, and adults.
4. Abiding by all rules set forth by *(school)* and the *(school board)*.

I understand that failure to show responsibility in these areas may result in my being removed from and unable to participate in the production.

(Upon returning this contract I understand that I will be issued a libretto that is to be returned at the end of the production process. I will only mark in the libretto with pencil and will erase all marking before returning said materiel. Failure to return materials in the same condition they were delivered will result in a fine of \$25 paid to the (school) Drama Club. I agree to this charge in the event I do not return my libretto.)

Please list all known rehearsal conflicts here:

Student Signature

Date

I _____ as the parent/guardian of the above student fully support and understand their commitment to the *(Year) (School) Production of (Show)* and will encourage them to actively participate, show continued respect for all involved, and be prepared and on time for all rehearsals and performances.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date