

CONFIDENTIAL

For Parents Only

Taking the “Drama” out of Auditions **~ A guide to getting through audition week ~**

Whether this is your child’s first theatrical experience or their 50th, it is safe to assume that auditions make them anxious. The process of auditioning is one that asks a performer to open himself/herself up to others for evaluation.

I know that it is your goal, as a parent, to help your child through any anxiety, stress, or feelings of self-doubt that may arise from their brave choice to audition for a production. I also know that middle school in particular includes an added element of being in the throes of developmental, physical, and hormonal changes. With all of this in mind, I would like to be your partner in this endeavor and make this audition process as “drama” free as possible.

I know that no one knows your child like you do, and that you have the best idea of how to help them. As you guide them through the process of auditions, I would like to share with you the perspective I have gained from performing, teaching, and directing theater. It is my goal to help you instill healthy and realistic expectations in your child as they enter audition week.

Casting...It’s a Puzzle, Not a Ladder

Directors of children’s theatre have to treat casting like putting together a puzzle. This is because, unlike professional theater, children’s theater has a closed pool of talent auditioning. Auditions are the time for directors to get an idea of each child’s capabilities and potential. It is then their job to put those students together into a cast that utilizes everyone’s skills in the best way possible while taking into consideration other factors, like how a trio of characters will look and sound when together. It is likely that the puzzle has many different possible configurations, but it is important that students trust that it is the director’s goal to utilize everyone to their fullest potential. Some students and parents think that theater is like the business world in the way that you can climb the corporate ladder, like this: “If I had an ensemble role the first year, a featured dancer role the second year, then I should get a lead role the third year.” While this *may* happen, it also may not. Why? Because it’s a puzzle, not a ladder.

It Isn’t Fair

The hard part about theatre is that it is never fair. You can get a small part from the best audition in your life or a big part from one that you felt was terrible. It is not possible for the actors to know what the directors are looking for or how the show will come together. There are also often factors that are out of your control, like physical or personality characteristics.

The Numbers

Almost everyone who auditions for a show has an idea of what they want the outcome to be. Your child may want a specific role, a “lead”, a solo, a dance feature, etc. The bottom line is that while directors would love to make everyone happy, it just isn’t possible. If 40 students audition for a show that has 4 “lead” roles, and all 40 enter that audition process wanting one of those leads, then only 10% will walk away happy and 90% will be disappointed. However, there is nothing wrong with working hard and hoping for the best or even choosing audition pieces with a specific role in mind.

Setting Students up for Success

As in anything, students have a wide variety of abilities and skills. Part of the director’s job is to set each child up for success based on what they see and hear at auditions. In youth and

educational theater, however, the goal is that students will learn and grow throughout the process and at their own pace. Often times when there is not one clear choice for a role or there are multiple students who could play one role, directors have to weigh their options and make the best choice based on the potential, maturity, and overall work ethic each student displays. In addition, directors also try their best to give students roles that can maximize their potential and grow their overall abilities.

An A+ Attitude

It has been my experience that students who enter the audition process with the overall goal of: 1) Simply doing their best, and 2) Enjoying the experience of being a part of the cast no matter what the role, have the easiest time committing to their role when the cast list comes out, enjoying the rehearsal process, and leaning into the growth that can happen in the role they've been given.

You are the Leader

A parent's attitude, seen in the things they say and the attitude they display before, during, and after the audition process, will greatly influence the child's perspective and attitude. I am a parent too, so I know! They are always watching and taking their cues from you.

A New Style for Auditions

We follow the lead of iTheatrics and use an "open audition style" geared specifically for middle school age students. The goals are to make auditions less stressful, more fun, natural, and have less waiting-around time. You'll hear your child say that we played games and it was more casual. We plan to take fewer notes and interact with them more. I want to see how they take direction and participate in the group activities. This style of auditions worked very well for us last year and helped to ease the amount of stress students felt.

Call Backs are Different

We want to help parents and students understand that Call Backs are very different from regular auditions. It is "its own beast" as they say. First, know that not everyone will be called back. We only call back the people that we need to see more from. If a student is not called back, that doesn't necessarily mean he/she was not cast. Second, Call Backs aren't going to allow each student to have equal time, the way regular auditions did. While it's still in the open audition style (everyone is together), there may be long periods of waiting and watching, while we listen to others. This simply cannot be helped because we are busy putting the puzzle pieces together, and as you know from experience, puzzles take time to configure and re-configure. You may put down a puzzle piece and not pick it up again until 45 minutes later. There will, however, be breaks and even a time for pizza.

How to Help Prepare, Cope, and Decompress

Prepare

See the Audition Prep document for all of the details. Students can practice the song and script excerpts given on the website IF THAT HELPS THEM FEEL MORE CONFIDENT going into it, but they do not HAVE to. We will also teach them during the audition. We want to foster a "less hype, more fun" atmosphere. It is important that they get a good night's rest the night before,

and it is also a good idea to pack a healthy snack for them to eat right before auditions. They do not need to bring any materials other than a pair of gym shoes or jazz shoes.

Behave Professionally

Help your child to understand that directors care about the way actors behave and treat one another. This is true of all types of theater, from youth to professional and everything in between. Being respectful, polite, and supportive of others at all times makes more of an impression than most people would think.

Leave it all on the Stage

Encourage your child to really “go for it” in their audition and “leave it all on the stage” (or in the cafeteria, in our case)! No matter what, if they do their best they can walk out of the audition proud of themselves.

Speculation and the Gossip Mill

Students often try to get into the directors’ heads by making assumptions based on what they feel happened at auditions and call backs. This process of speculation, especially when students do it together, can often create an emotional build-up that will set students up for disappointment later. Anytime you can discourage this, it will greatly benefit your child and others.

Distraction

Find a way to distract your child from thinking about auditions and casting if possible. It may be helpful for them to spend time with friends that aren’t involved in theater until the hubbub dies down.

Take it ALL with a Grain of Salt

No doubt you will hear all about auditions and call backs—who did well and who your child (and their friends) think should get what role. Keep in mind that everyone has their own version of the story. While it is certainly healthy for students to vent their feelings to a mature and caring adult, most of it will be based on each student’s own emotional reality. Also, remember, your child will be tired and over-stimulated by the time auditions are through. There may be tears no matter how well they think they did, and that is understandable as well as normal.

Accepting Results with Grace

The final stage of auditions is the posting of the cast list. This is both a difficult and joyous time, for both students and directors. Even though it may be disappointing, this is also an opportunity! It gives students the opportunity to practice self-control over their reactions, to both comfort and congratulate their peers, but most of all, to accept the outcome of the audition process with grace. You may want to practice what this looks like with your child (i.e. Ask: What will you say when you see so-and-so tomorrow at school?).

A Healthy Perspective: Three Good Reminders

- **“It isn’t personal.”** It may feel that way, but directors are concerned with putting together the best cast as a whole.
- Think of every audition and show as an opportunity. When I used to get a role I didn’t like or expect, I’d tell myself **“It’s a privilege and an honor.”** This was my mantra no matter how I felt.
- Another mantra of mine is **“There is always more theatre!”** No one part is the end of anything and there will a lot more parts and auditions if you choose to audition again. We are all growing and getting better at what we do every day, even adults.

Decompressing

Again, you know what would be best for your child, but here are a few ideas of what you can do in the days after the cast list comes out:

- 1) Talk about it. As with anything, talk about how they might be feeling.
- 2) Pray with them. Remind them that there are always surprises in life, but we can trust that our heavenly Father is guiding our path.
- 3) “Let it go!” Sometimes after a good talk, what kids need most is to move on! Think of a happy topic. Bring up something that lifts their spirits. Make them laugh.
- 4) Celebrate the effort of trying. Go out for ice cream, go to a movie, or do something fun to celebrate their effort!

Our Partnership

Throughout auditions, casting and creating a youth theater production, we are all working toward the same goal – for students to be happy, fulfilled, and growing in the art of theater. CHCA wants to be your partner in making this goal a reality.