

Rehearsing and Performing in Class and On Stage at Bellevue College

Every acting class and rehearsal process should be a safe and welcoming space for all participants. Actors must feel supported, informed and collaborative members of the process. While the Instructor/Director is in charge of the class or rehearsal, all actors should feel that they are in a challenging yet safe and supportive environment. This document is designed to introduce all student theatre artists to the production journey at Bellevue College. All theatrical terms are defined when first used. "Play" will be used to denote a play or musical.

There are "norms" (accepted ways of doing things) in the practice of rehearsal and production. Many of them are outlined below. More may be outlined or collaboratively decided when the rehearsal process begins. These are the expectations of any performer at Bellevue College.

As a part of that collaboration, each actor will review and sign the attached ***Statement of Understanding*** concerning the physical and emotional relationship between Instructor/Directors and the actor and actors between each other.

The Rehearsal Calendar or Schedule is an important tool. Most of the dates will remain fixed while individual rehearsals may change due to artist illness, school closure or other weather events and artistic needs. All actors are required to attend all rehearsals when called, tech (when the lights, set and costumes are added,) all performances and the strike (taking down the set.)

The Challenges and Rewards of Auditioning which outlines how the audition process works and ways to prepare for the audition and the casting outcomes is attached.

When Cast:

- Check out a script/libretto (script for a musical) and music from the Stage Manager or from Tammi and find out if it has been bought or rented. If bought, it is yours. If rented then you will need to erase all markings (done in pencil) and return it at the end of the performances.
- Write your name inside the front cover.
- Check your email and the callboard daily after you are cast until the strike after the final performance. Please remember that the only conflicts that have been scheduled around are the ones that were discussed from the information on your audition sheet.
- Highlight your lines (not the name of your character) if the script is yours and underline them lightly if the script is rented.

During Rehearsals:

- Come early and be warmed up and ready to go on time. On time in the theatre means early.
- Learn lines early and carefully. Go for word-perfect status. Be sure to be off book by the scheduled date. When learning music or choreography, off book means ready to go with music

or dance steps learned, as well as text. Do not use off book rehearsals to learn lines, music or blocking, but rather to review what is already learned. When you need a prompt, simply say "line" and nothing more. Do not argue with the prompt, apologize for making a mistake or say anything that takes up time or distracts from the rehearsal. After rehearsal, always be sure to thank the Stage Management staff for assisting you with prompts and line notes. It is an arduous task on both ends and one made easier by a gracious attitude.

- Bring pencils to rehearsal and write down all notes given to you and review them before each work session.
- You may be directed by a number of people. The Music Director, Choreographer, Fight Director, Designers all will give you help, training and direction that will connect the words/music/moves to your character and the narrative of the play. The Director has the final word on everything that is on the stage including the nuances of your performance. These theatrical leaders may respectfully disagree artistically but will always be working for only two things: to serve the playwright/composer and their story and to produce the best work that each individual on the team and cast can.
- Warm ups are the beginning of rehearsal. Attend to your physical, emotional, musical warm ups with focus and energy. They will help you have a good rehearsal and rehearsal process.
- Write down all blocking (staging) in your script and keep track of changes. Review blocking prior to rehearsal. When in doubt, check with the Stage Manager to make sure you have the blocking correctly notated. We will go over how to write down blocking.
- Try to be sensitive to times when you can explore moments in rehearsal and times when the Director needs to accomplish specific things. Remember we are all there to serve the needs of the play.
- When artistic differences come up during rehearsal remain open minded. Always be willing to try whatever is being suggested. A moment might be revealed to you in exciting new ways through the doing of new blocking or business.
- When you have a concern or idea about the direction of the show, the designs, the stage management or other areas, arrange for a meeting with the Director. It is Industry Standard that there is a hierarchy the theatre. This allows everyone to be artistically adventurous while keeping true to the common outcome of this particular production. Your ideas, suggestions and concerns need to be brought to the Director and sometimes the (student) Stage Manager. They will pass it on if need be to the designers or technicians.
- If another actor voices concern about the direction of the show, encourage that actor to talk to the Director or Stage Manager. Also do so if you think that another actor is not performing their job or not understanding the direction.
- Only speak well or not at all about all members of the production team. Learn what each member's job is and find ways to express appreciation for what others do.

- Always check in with the Stage Manager before leaving any rehearsal or performance. This includes going to the restroom, in case you are needed and can stay for a moment. During technical rehearsals stay backstage after your scene until certain that they are moving on. Often a sequence is reviewed several times and the crew does not have the time or patience to find you each time.
- Unless dictated as stage business by the Director, eating, drinking, and gum chewing are not permitted on stage or backstage, in the seating areas, shops, or in costume.
- Be responsible for maintaining an environment that promotes good concentration during rehearsals. When in the rehearsal room and not onstage please work on your script quietly.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear to rehearsals. Properly hang up and put away rehearsal garments at the end of each rehearsal. There are lockers available for cast members. Ask your Stage Manager or Director.
- Out of politeness to others, brush your teeth, use deodorant, mouthwash and keep clothing washed and clean. Foot powder is sometimes indicated.
- Be familiar with rehearsal props and return them to proper areas at the end of each rehearsal or scene. Only touch or play with props that you are not instructed to use and then only when in rehearsal.
- Visitors are not allowed in rehearsals without prior permission of the Director.
- Never touch a piece of stage combat equipment unless told to do so by the Director, Stage Manager, Fight Choreographer or Fight Captain.
- When working on a combat scene involving weapons of any kind, **listen carefully to all safety rules and follow them explicitly.** Your life and that of others may depend on extreme discipline and caution in this area.

Stage Combat, Dance, Physical Contact and Intimacy Protocols

The Director may be in charge of staging all stage combat, physical contact and intimacy scenes and moments in the show or there may be another professional choreographing, staging and teaching one or more aspect of the show in which two or more actors will have physical contact. This “Contact” can include but is not limited to fighting, slapping, dancing, tumbling, wrestling, kissing, hugging or simulating sex. There are a series of steps that will be taken, some many times, in order to work these moments through performance.

- By reading the play and accepting the role, you have agreed to playing the moments indicated by the playwright. In addition, the Director might mention added moments during the audition and callback process. These are as important as the moments written into the play.
- The Moments of Contact will be discussed during the early readings and table work (when the play is discussed and research is done and shared). Although more moments might come up

during the process through collaboration and discovery, most moments will be outlined at the beginning.

- The actors will begin work with the Director/Choreographer/Fight Director/Intimacy Director. This work will include discussion and background movement work between the actors who will play the Contact Moments.
- At some point during the process a Dance Captain and/or Fight Captain will be designated. This person is in charge of making sure that the actors are ready to work and later in the process, that the required warm-ups are performed.
- The Contact Moments (entire dance or simple kiss) are slowly staged. These are not moments that are decided anew each performance, they are choreographed and safely done the same way each rehearsal and performance.
- Rehearsal of these Contact Moments is only to be done in the presence of the director of the Contact Moment, the Stage Manager or the Captain.
- Each and every time that the Contact Moment is to be rehearsed or performed, the director of the moment or the Stage Manager or Captain will schedule what is called a “Fight Call,” “Warm-up” or “Intimacy Call” (Sometimes called a “Kiss Call.”) During this call the Contact Moment will be done at half speed until the Captain or Stage Manager is satisfied then up to full speed. Full Speed for a fight is always slower than an actual fight would be.

Production and Tech Rehearsals

- Hair and facial hair should remain as worn for the audition unless discussed with the Director.
- It is the responsibility of the actor to communicate any changes of size during the rehearsal period and after the costume designer has done body measurements. Let the Director know and they will pass the information on to the Costumer.
- All actors should attend all design meetings, especially costume design meetings and fittings with the upmost respect for the designer and willingness to serve the play.
- Be sure to wear all rehearsal clothing as asked and protective gear (knee or elbow pads, helmets...)
- Always keep track of deadlines for hair and nail coloring (if asked.)
- Tech or Technical Rehearsals are the long days when the scenic elements, lighting, sound, costumes and special effects are added. The actors are asked to stay focused, calm, energetic, patient and generous. Please remember that after 5-6 weeks of rehearsals for the actors, the Design and Tech crew is adding their contribution in a matter of days.

- Tech rehearsals are usually all day Saturday and Sunday the weekend before the show opens but can start as early as the previous Wednesday night. At BC usually the cast has been rehearsing on the set for one-three weeks. Costumes are added and then taken for more work. The actors are asked to play their scenes on the set under the lights with the sound sometimes a number of times and sometimes only once. Please work at performance energy until asked to “hold” (stop) and then quietly wait for the next moment.
- Around this time the rehearsal become very long and it is wise to schedule work, homework and social time with this in mind. Costume and make-up must be ready by 7:00 each evening and notes must be given after the rehearsal so that each rehearsal moves toward a fabulous performance.

During Performances

- Be prompt for all calls and sign in on the call board sheet provided by the Stage Manager.
- Always check the backstage call board for announcements.
- Use the lists on the backstage callboard to record any problems with props or costumes. Telling the Stage Manager or Asst. Stage Manager is a good idea but note your issues as well so that nothing is left undone.
- Acknowledge all in person calls given to you by the Stage Management staff with a “Thank you.”
- Follow the schedule on the call board. Be on time and ready for warm ups.
- Telephone conversations, Loud music, and loud talking in the dressing room is never a good idea. It may cover important announcements and disrupt the other actors’ preparation.
- After warm ups and upon returning to the dressing room all music, phone calls and group discussions should cease. This is a time for quiet focus.
- Stay in designated areas until you are instructed to go on stage or backstage. Remain in a location where you can hear Stage Manager’s calls and the show in progress.
- Do not go to the booth to check and see who is in the audience. Do not peek out to see the audience. If you have friend who wishes to see you after the show, request that he or she notify the House Manager, who will then bring the friend to a safe meeting place backstage. We do not want audience members wandering around backstage-ever. If you would like to show someone around the theatre after a performance, clear it with the Stage Manager.
- Do not go into the lobby in costume before, during, or after the show unless instructed to do so by the director.
- When waiting in the hall for an entrance during the production, do not engage in conversation with audience members or other production staff. Keep quiet, focused and ready for your next entrance.

- If a problem arises during the show, alert the Assistant Stage Manager or appropriate staff. Remain as cool and collected as you can. Emergencies arise and are only hindered by hysterical behavior.
- Stay off headsets unless instructed by the Stage Management staff to use them.
- If you have a concern about how the show is developing in performance, speak with the Stage Manager or Director. If unable to get satisfaction, see the Artistic Director. Never change or add any direction, dialogue, new business, props or costumes without the permission of the Stage Manager, Director or Artistic Director. Once the show has opened it is your job to maintain the interpretation achieved during the rehearsal process, even if you disagree with its intent or content.
- Remember that your performance time extends until you have left the stage after the curtain call. Maintain decorum until the show is over.
- Be responsible for cleaning up your makeup area and putting away your makeup after each performance. This includes hanging up costumes, putting dirty laundry in the designated area and returning wigs and other hairpieces to their designated storage areas. Be sure to note any problems that the wardrobe crew will need to fix on the appropriate note area. Torn costumes will not be mended if no one knows that they need repair. It is also wise to mention that you have left a note to the wardrobe crew head and Stage Manager.
- Attend and participate in strike. Look for ways to be useful and stay through the strike until dismissed by the Technical Director or Stage Manager.
- If scripts or musical scores need to be returned after the show closes, it is the actor's job to erase all markings (which should have been made in pencil). Scores must be returned the day of final meeting/strike. If materials are not returned or are lost, the student will be charged to replace the materials.

Strike

- All actors must attend the final meeting of the cast and the strike at which time the set, lights, sound and costumes are taken apart, cleaned and put away. The final meeting is a time to reflect on the process and the performances.
- Be on time for meeting/strike.
- Wear appropriate clothing (t-shirt and jeans) and sturdy closed toed shoes.
- Talk to the Director or Technical Director about any physical issues you might have around lifting, carrying or moving heavy objects. There are plenty of jobs to be done and we don't want anyone hurt.
- Be ready to stay until the strike is finished.

- Help out everywhere you can. This is a big job- you are going to help tear down in one day what it took weeks to put together.