

THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF AUDITIONING

An actor trains and works to learn to analyze a script, control their body and speech and comprehend emotional states and working with an acting partner. That is all so that the actor can perform in a play or musical on stage in front of an audience. All the work, effort, time and energy to become and grow as an actor is but the first part of the process. In order to actually perform, one of two things must happen, either the actor creates their own performance opportunities or they audition for a director who must choose them for an upcoming production. This process is crucial, tense, fast and subjective. But if the actor has a passion to perform, then they need to acquire a passion to audition.

HOW CASTING IS DONE AND HOW IT AFFECTS ACTORS

Casting a show is a very complicated process.

To pare it down to its most basic components: a director chooses the cast member that they believe will best

- Portray the character
- Connect with their scene partners (the other actors cast)
- Potentially exhibit a variety of needed skills
- Help create a collaborative space for rehearsal.

Being cast means that at the specific moment in time of the process those actors fulfilled the requirements collectively of that director. Those choices will be a combination of the readings at callbacks, the energy at callbacks, prior experience and training and prior rehearsal and performance behavior.

The time of casting is a time for reflection when cast as well as not cast. Reflect on audition and callback preparation, prior training and collaboration and self-care prior to the readings.

From the actor's point of view, casting is hard to understand. It is tough on the self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem of the actor. It can hurt the heart and soul. The actor might get a great reaction from the director and other actors then not be cast and can feel betrayed. But auditioning in its many forms is the "interview" process by which actors get the job of acting in a show. The more the actor auditions the more proficient the actor will become at auditioning and the more they will understand that many choices go into casting and that it is common and correct to audition many times in order to be cast. But it is hard work. The very act helps build the resilience needed to create art and find success in a difficult process.

If cast, work should be done immediately to review personal schedules so that time and energy can be devoted to the role and research and memorization should begin.

If an actor decides to take a role that the actor is not happy with, then the above must be done as well. But it is important to take time to process the loss of the role wanted and work towards a process that respects the decision of the director and good will toward the rest of the

cast. Doing the best work possible will be more fun, result in good work for all and get the actor better roles in the future.

If not cast there is also work to do.

It is hard to understand why any actor is not cast. They prepared and gave a good audition. Perhaps the callback went well and the director seemed happy and appreciative of the work. The actor might even know the director and/or has worked with them and has a good relationship.

All casting is the result of many decisions.

The reasons that a specific actor is not cast may not be shared with that actor and also should not be shared with anyone outside the production/casting team. It is a norm within the theatre community that the actor not pursue the director or anyone else on the production/casting team for the reasons.

If not cast, take some time. If there are feelings of grief or anger or confusion – let them honestly flow. The actor should try to keep these feelings to themselves or to those very close to them. (Hopefully not also in the Theatre.)

They should reflect on the audition process to be sure that the preparation was thorough. Then use that information and move on to the next audition. Training, coaching, reading, watching may be the next useful steps.

If the audition process feels overwhelming, the actor can find resources on campus through the BC Counseling Center. The counselors are available to talk for just one session or over a short series of sessions. They can be reached at <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/counseling/> or by calling 425-564-5747.

The audition and casting process is most personal. And yet not being cast is not a reflection of an actor's worth or value as a person. The act of casting is one of putting together a puzzle as the picture is being revealed. Sometimes alone and sometimes in a group. The director tries to optimize the skills and energies of all who are working on the show. An actor's skills are embedded within their body, heart and mind thus that person must exhibit themselves for judgement in order to be cast. It is tough and challenging and worthwhile. Train. Work. Audition. Repeat.

Auditioning is a brave act.

Learning the best practices around auditioning for a play or musical is a most important step for any actor.

Many plays and musicals use a three step system to cast a show.

STEP ONE: Open Audition

The actor signs up for a specific time in which to prepare and perform the following:

- Monologue
- Two contrasting monologues
- Song
- Two contrasting songs
- Song and a monologue.

The actor may also be asked to tell a joke or a story. They will be told this when signing up for the audition time.

The actor should bring a headshot or photo and resume if they have one. They should be ready to fill out the audition form with any conflicts. Conflicts with rehearsal or performances may not be allowed and must be mentioned at the audition. The actor may be asked to read and initial a statement of needed physicality including combat or intimacy. Questions are always accepted but reading the play ahead of time is helpful.

The actor should do all they can to find out about the play or musical for which they are auditioning. They should read or listen to the show and if it is new, try to read something else by that writer.

The monologue and song should be memorized, well prepared and follow the parameters set forth by the producing organization (school, community theatre, semi-professional or professional theatre.)

These parameters should include:

- The length of time the actor has for each piece and/or the entire audition.
- If there is to be an accompanist for singing. (The actor should always bring easy to read music.)
- The type or style of monologue or song.

Monologue:

Comic or Dramatic
Classic or Contemporary

Song:

“Uptempo” (fast) or “Ballad” (slow)
Classic or Rock or Contemporary

The actor needs to “slate” their audition piece. This means that they clearly, confidently and genuinely state their name and the title of the piece they are going to perform. They may also state the playwright/composer/lyricist but not always.

End the audition with a “thank you” to the auditors which may include the Director, Stage Manager, Artistic Director/Producer and others connected to the show.

The actor should be sure to find out from the Stage Manager or the person who checked them in how and when they will hear about Step Two – the Callback.

STEP TWO: Callbacks

Callbacks are the time that the director gets to see specific actors read specific roles from the text. The director may also ask for some singing (whether or not the play is a musical), some improvising or some conversation with the actor.

The actor will be called, emailed or check a list to see if they have been asked to read for the show and for what role.

Most producers need to know that actors who attend callbacks are ready and willing to take the role for which they are called back or any other role in the show. This lessens the situation in which actors may find out they were not the first choice. It is also important that the actor realizes that directors cast pairs or teams of actors who work together in their minds for the specific show. This is a reputation making moment and should be handled with respect.

It is important to know that the actor may read for the role(s) on the call back list and may read other roles and may not read exactly what was on the list. It is acceptable for the actor to read for a role for which they were not called back but also acceptable for the director not to honor that request.

In order to get ready for the callback:

- (Re)read the play and listen to the music.
- Read, print off or pick up the scenes that are to be read. Most organizations will provide the scenes or pages when they post the callback list.
- Research the play so that the actor knows the time period and style of the play.
- Be prepared to read generously with actors with a variety of skills.
- Read with energy and focus for all roles. Reading “badly” in order not to be cast in a specific role can backfire, and may resolve in you not being cast in any role.
- Positive energy, generosity and risk taking are all welcome and noted in the callback room.

STEP THREE: Casting

The Cast list will often be posted where the callbacks were: by phone, email or on a board.

The actor will be told what to do in order to accept the role and within what timeframe: initial the list on the board, email a reply or call with a reply.

It is important to reply as fast as possible for the reasons stated above.

The cast list should also note or reiterate the date of the first rehearsal, may include the rehearsal schedule, the performance dates and where and how to get a script.