

How to Audition Children for a *New Artists Productions* Stage Production

This piece is written with the assumption that these youth are not professional actors who rely on an agent or parent to cast them in a production for money. Community Theater is the goal of *New Artists Productions* (NAP) where the actors are not charged for their participation, nor are they paid for their participation and/or performance.

When an announcement is made that there is going to be a stage production casting for the local NAP youth theater program, there are many questions asked either by seasoned participants or new participants. Below are some answers to potential questions and some description as to how NAP conducts rehearsals and productions. Of course, if there are additional questions, they can be emailed to: naprod@yahoo.com

- **Performance structure for a *New Artists Productions* (NAP) production?** Our stage productions run for 2 sequential weekends on Friday, Saturday evenings and a Sunday matinee. The production on Friday and Saturday start at 7:00 pm and the Sunday matinee is at 2:00 pm.

The production generally runs 2 hours with intermission. All actors are expected to attend all performances unless there is an emergent situation which prevents their attendance. In such a case, there is a juggling act that takes place with the rest of the cast to bring the production to the stage.

Parents are asked to volunteer during the shows – ticket takers, snack bar servers, make-up, supervision, stage crew, etc. Some parents prefer to sit in the audience and watch the show so we ask a nominal entry price for audience members: Adults - \$10; Children (12 and over) - \$5; Children (under 12) – Free or donation.

- **Production supplies for production?** Scripts, costumes, make-up, props, tools, etc. are provided by NAP for the actors and the stage crew. We have found that some actors are allergic to certain make-up products and request to bring them from their home, which is absolutely fine and preferred for the safety of the actor. Between weekends the costumes are taken home by the director and washed and readied for the next weekend.
- **What are the ages for participation in a NAP production?** We at NAP generally start with K–12 participants, but sometimes we have occasion to need performers who are younger as ‘extras’ for the production.
- **Are the production scripts age appropriate?** NAP is a vanilla operation – the scripts are clean as far as language, actions required by the cast, costuming that is designed for the script scenes presented. We would never ask an actor to participate outside of their comfort zone or that of their family.
- **Dialogue changes deemed necessary for the actor and for the audience?** Not all scripts take into consideration the ages of the young actors. Occasionally a word might be used in a line that is not appropriate for the actors to say or for the audience to hear from the stage. The director has license to change the word without changing the meaning of the dialogue line. We never put an actor (regardless of age) in a situation where they are uncomfortable in reciting their lines or acting out a scene.
- **Could an older student ask for a younger age role?** Casting for a production is dependent on who signs up for participation. There are occasions where a role might call for a certain aged actor, but none apply. So, from the actors who do sign up to participate, the casting is made and, if need be, the level of acting is adjusted for that. The goal is to cast everyone who wants to participate, and then

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the director works with the actors to learn about the character portrayal to get the full purpose/intent of the character.

- **How essential is it that the child's parents are cooperative?** Parents are vital to the success of the production. Parents have their own schedules and we understand that, so if the parent is available then we utilize them as much as we can.

All parents are welcome to attend rehearsals or to work with the director to participate in other ways. Some parents use **NAP** as an opportunity to utilize their skills as an artist, seamstress, make-up artist, dancer, or as a baker for products for the snack bar.

- **Parent attendance at auditions for the production?** Parents are welcome at all times. However, if an actor prefers that their parent not attend auditions, we honor that request. Parents sometimes make their child feel uneasy when auditioning, that is ok – we take that into consideration if the parent wishes to stay.
- **Can parents sit in on rehearsals?** Parents are welcome to all rehearsals. Many are helpful in working with actors to learn lines or to understand the expression needed to get the meaning of the line across.
- **Rehearsal scheduling?** **NAP** directors know that young actors have bedtimes, homework, school activities, social activities that must be addressed. When the auditions take place, the director asks about conflicts which need to be recognized and accommodated as best as possible. Based on this information, casting is assigned and rehearsal schedules are designed.

Rehearsals generally last 90 minutes and are generally scheduled 2 weekday nights and a Sunday afternoon. Dependent on the part assigned to the actor, they are told when their part is being rehearsed, so not every scheduled rehearsal day requires their presence.

100% presence is required during the dates that the full production is rehearsed and during Tech Week when the sound and lighting workers need to see how the entire production comes together and where the actors will be placed on stage during the production.

- **Release from rehearsals?** A child is never sent home early unless ill or their parent comes to pick them up at a prescribed time previously organized with the director. When the production rehearsal is over, actors are kept in the rehearsal room or escorted to the door and are not allowed to leave without an arranged ride provider.
- **Material used for auditions?** **NAP** advertises what the production being cast is about – many of the Disney or Broadway productions are known to the family of the young actor or the older actors auditioning. The director generally has a script available for the actor to use if they are auditioning for a specific part. If the production is unknown to the actor, or 'any part' is suggested, then a host of reading materials will be available that are reading age.
- **Preparation for the audition?** Young actors sometimes bring in a prepared statement, poem, reading that they are comfortable with to audition for a part. That is fine with the director, but then they will be given something from the production script or other materials to see how they do with a 'cold' reading. Young actors are never discouraged from preparation for their audition.
- **Musical productions?** There are times that **NAP** presents a musical production. If that occurs, then music from the production will be used in the audition process. If the actor can sing and wants to audition for a certain part, then time will be taken for that audition to occur. This is not to discourage

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any other actor auditioning. Not all youth can sing, so only those who want to audition for a song, will be asked. The musical production has many group song presentations, so young actors who want to participate in those groups are more than welcome.

- **Double casting a role? Understudy assignments?** In our 24 years of operation, this has only happened one time and involved high school age actors. Now, that is not to negate a young actor from attending rehearsals for a part they are interested in. That is how the younger actors learn about role approach. We never discourage young actors from learning during our productions.

Again, if there are additional questions or comments, please contact us by email at:

naprod@yahoo.com