



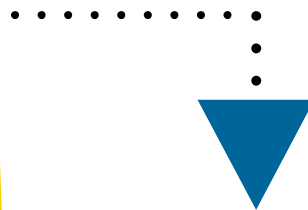
Family Matters

A parents guide to the
magic of music theatre

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*Adapted from (but left 99.9% intact) the Family Matters
booklet by Music Theatre International.
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Introduction



It happens in a moment. A flyer is posted reading “**Auditions next Monday for the all-school musical.**” Anticipation bubbles as visions of singing, dancing, acting, and standing ovations run rampant in minds of children near and far!

Participating in a musical is one of the most rewarding experiences a young person can have. The director and other adults working on the production care about your child's future and want to invest time and energy into his or her development.

Your child is about to take a journey that, with a little help from you, could have a positive long-lasting impact on her or him and the community in which you live.

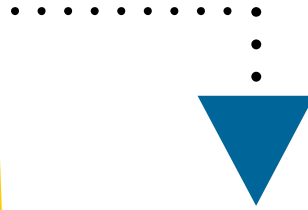
This booklet is designed to provide you with information to assist your child from auditions through closing night. It's also an overview of the process of producing a musical and suggests ways in which you can get involved. Most importantly, it's an opportunity for you and your child to share some quality time together on an activity that is fun and inspires the imagination.

Curtain Up!

Light the Lights!

Let's Begin

Why A Musical?



Musicals are fun! They also provide young people with many valuable development opportunities.

A musical brings together all of the arts in one comprehensive program. Music and dance introduce basic performing arts. The design and creation of sets, costumes and props integrate the visual arts. Rehearsing and performing dialogue develops language skills. Integrating sound and lighting explores the use of technology. As you can see, a musical celebrates many diverse disciplines in one arena.

In addition, the process of presenting a musical offers young people the opportunity to develop social skills and learn valuable life lessons. Some examples follow:

- In a musical, **everyone's contribution is important**. The child operating the sound system is as important to the overall success of the production as the child who plays Cinderella, Annie, or Aladdin.
- Everyone must **work together for the greater good**, encouraging **collaboration** and **community**.
- Children learn the importance of **listening** to each other speak and **waiting one's turn**. They take **positive risks** and **conquer fears** while building self-confidence.
- **Assessment** in a musical is nearly instantaneous in the applause and standing ovations participants receive at the end of the show, meaning they don't have to wait months for a grade, praise or feed back.

But the best part? A musical is a lot of fun for everyone involved, whether your child creates sets, sings in the chorus or plays a lead.

Audition Announcement & Preparations



When signing up for an audition, there are a few things to keep in mind...

- A musical is a **commitment of time and energy**. Make sure you review the rehearsal and performance schedule in advance. Do you anticipate any conflicts with soccer, piano or other activities? If so, it is important to be honest and **let the director know of conflicts in advance**. If this is the case, you might also want to encourage your child to take on a less time-consuming position with the production. Remember, every contribution is important.
- **What function or job is your child curious to explore?** For example, does your child want to perform onstage as an actor or offstage as a part of the crew? (A detailed list of various functions and tasks follows.)
- Aside from the **support and guidance** you're bound to offer your child, any extra time you have to volunteer on the production is more than welcome!

THE PROCESS

Each director is going to approach producing a show in a different way, but you can generally expect the following:

Audition Announcement
Auditions and Call Backs
Posting of the Cast List
Rehearsals
Technical/Dress Rehearsals
Performances
Strike
Post-show Blues

Who's Who & Does What?



Stage Manager— Assists the director in all aspects of the show

Stage Crew — Works backstage during the show

Dance Captain—Assists the choreographer

Wardrobe—Helps costume the show

Actor—Performs in the show

Props— Designs and builds props

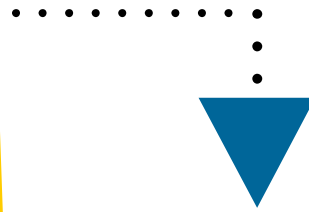
Public Relations—Helps create programs & posters

Sets—Helps build and paint the sets

Sound—Plays sound cues

House Manager—Takes care of tickets and seating

Don't Be A Mama Rose!

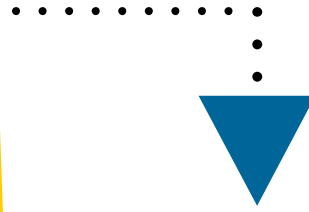


Mama Rose is a character from the musical *Gypsy*. She's a bossy "stage mother" (a term for a parent who pushes her child into the performing arts in a negative manner). We've all seen these types at Little League games, beauty pageants and everything in between. Some of us have probably even acted this way to some degree without even knowing it. When our heart is in the right place, we're sometimes blind to the fact that we might be stepping on someone else's toes or pushing just a little too hard.

Theatre is a collaborative effort, but it's important to remember that it's the director's role to see the big picture and guide every aspect of the production. In the case of your school's production, the roles of costume designer, set designer and director will likely be played by one person who is volunteering "blood sweat and tears" to make it all happen. If the cast, crew and parent volunteers do their best to **work within the director's vision**, your school's production will be a rewarding, resounding success!

Remember, having your child participate in theatre has little to do with creating a "star." **The objective of rehearsing and presenting a musical is to provide children with opportunities to develop life skills and have fun.**

Auditions



Most likely the director has sent home information about the audition process. Auditions are held in many different ways, but in general you can expect the following:

Students will sing a small part of a song or be asked to prepare a number of measures (or bars) from a song of their choice. They may also be asked to learn a short dance, prepare a monologue (a scene in which only one character speaks), or do a cold reading (a scene the director provides the actor to review for a minute or two prior to reading it aloud).

Audition Techniques:

Directors respond positively when your child can do the following:

- Be Prepared! Memorize the lyrics and melody of your song.
- Smile and enjoy the audition! The director and the audition team want you to do well.
- Show good behavior! Directors are often more concerned with how you behave than how well you sing, act or dance.
- Trust the director's choices! Do your best at whatever you are asked to do, even if you are reading for a role that you find challenging or awkward!

Callbacks & Casting



The director may hold another set of auditions after the initial round, called "callbacks." At callback auditions the director may ask certain auditionees to sing again, read another scene, dance some more or any combination of these. They will often ask pairs or groups of actors to read scenes to see how different combinations of actors work together (often referred to as having "chemistry").

Callbacks can be a source of stress and confusion for young actors. If some kids aren't invited to callbacks, they may think they did something wrong or are not being considered for a part. This may or may not be the case. Some roles may have been cast after the initial audition and may not require a callback.

ANNOUNCING... THE CAST!

The announcement of the cast can be a difficult time since the role offered may not meet your child's expectations. You know your child best. If your child is upset about the casting decision, empower your child to talk to the director one-on-one to discuss the decision and how to enhance future auditions. You'll ultimately know best how to comfort your child, but the next page offers some tidbits that might help open new avenues of conversation.

Making the Best of Casting Decisions



- **Trust the director's judgment.** The director is casting an ensemble, not just one or two "lead roles." It's important for the cast to understand the importance of working together as an ensemble and to see the production as a whole — not as individual parts that seem less or more important than others.
- Remind your child that **everyone's contribution is important** and valued.
- Let your child **brainstorm ideas** for characteristics for his or her role. Is she peppy or indifferent? Is he confident or awkward? Ultimately, the director might have specific character qualities in mind, but this will introduce your child to the basics of acting.
- Take the role to another level by encouraging your child to **create a "back story"** for his or her character. Where is the character from? Why is the character in the show? Half the fun is that the audience never has to know the character's back story, but this exploration by your child will round out the character even more. Again, have fun, but create a story that works realistically within the director's vision for the show.

Surviving the First Rehearsal

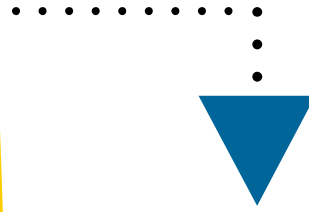


At the first rehearsal, kids in the cast receive their scripts and get to know the rest of their collaborators. Some cast members may want to count their lines, but this should be discouraged. The authors created every character for a reason, and each role impacts the entire production.

As the famous Russian director and acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) advised (in Russian, of course),

**“There are no small parts,
only small actors!”**

A Note On Copyright ©

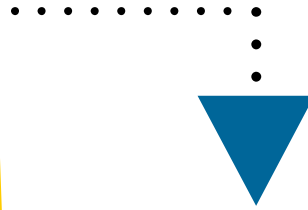


The work that your child is presenting is what's known as "intellectual property." Intellectual properties are unique ideas and concepts, such as copyrighted literary or musical works, trademarked business names, and patented inventions. Intellectual property may seem like an odd concept, but just as there are laws to protect the tangible things you own, there are laws to protect one's intellectual property as well.

To better understand the concept, we can loosely compare licensing a musical to renting an apartment. The tenant (organization presenting the musical) and the landlord (the authors and their representatives) sign an agreement that the apartment (the musical) will be rented for a specified amount of time (number of productions in a specified time period) for a specified rental fee (the licensing fees). Staying in the apartment longer than the agreed terms or making any unauthorized renovations (changes to the script or music) would be a breach of contract and could involve fines or eviction (production rights being revoked.)

Video and Audio Recording of Performances is a violation of copyright unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

Rehearsals & Memorizing



REHEARSALS

The cast is set and now it's time to get to work. Here are some ways that you can help your child:

- Place a copy of the rehearsal schedule on the refrigerator or family bulletin board.
- Make sure your child arrives at rehearsal on time, dressed appropriately and prepared for the rehearsal.
- After rehearsal, ask your child how it went and if there's anything you can do to help.
- If your child is assisting with tech or management, encourage the director to provide you with a schedule of when he or she is needed at rehearsals and meetings. Again, make sure your child arrives on time and is dressed appropriately for the task at hand.

MEMORIZING

Usually, children memorize lines, songs and dances easily. If they are struggling, here are some solutions:

- Encourage your child to review songs, dances and scenes outside of rehearsal and in front of a small supportive group or mirror. You can even do it at dinner time and you'll have your own dinner theatre!
- To memorize scene work, have your child break down the point of the scene: what is it about? What's the most important information presented or action taking place? Answering these questions will help your child better understand the scene and improvise if something goes awry!
- Have your child read over scenes before going to sleep at night and first thing in the morning. This is a great way to memorize parts.
- It's helpful to practice dialogue, songs and dances out loud and in front of a mirror rather than "in your head." This enlists kinesthetic (muscle) memory as well as visual and aural memory to help learn the part.

Technical Rehearsals



At these rehearsals, known as "tech rehearsals," the director adds the technical elements to the production. These may include sound, lights, props, and even special effects such as fog. Tech rehearsals can seem long and tedious, but are where the important details of the show are ironed out. If your child is on the tech crew, this is the time to shine! Here are some ways you can help:

- Send your child to rehearsal well-fed, but avoid sugary snacks and soda.
- If you have an interest and the time, volunteer to assist with technical needs of the show.
- If allowed in the auditorium, ask the director if you can assist by bringing snacks and drinks to the rehearsal.
- Because there will be a lot of down-time, encourage your child to bring homework, a book or another quiet activity to help prevent excess noise that could distract the director and fellow cast and crew.

Dress Rehearsals



By the time the production reaches dress rehearsals, the show is really coming together! Costumes are now added to complement the technical elements already in place. With actors in "dress," their characters come to life in a magical way.

COSTUME HINTS

- When your child is scheduled for a fitting, make sure he or she **wears appropriate clothing**. For girls, a unitard or tights work well. For boys, a t-shirt and short pants should fit the bill.
- If you have the time, **volunteer to help the costumer**, even if you can't sew. You'll be amazed at what can be accomplished with a hot glue gun and some safety pins! Shopping at local thrift stores can be fun, and you may find that long-lost childhood reassurance is exactly what's needed to complete a costume.
- Since your child has spent a lot of time rehearsing and developing her or his character, it's possible that a costume might look or feel awkward at first. But it's important to **be patient and grateful for the costumer's hard work**, since many hours have been spent sewing and hopping for costume pieces. While a costume might seem silly by itself, it will blend in or stand out beautifully in the overall design of the show.
- Because some fabrics stain easily and are difficult to clean quickly, it's a general rule in theatre to **avoid eating or drinking while in costume**.

Performances: Places Everyone!



There are very few events in life as exciting as opening night. Cherish it, embrace it, and make a big deal out of it! Your child will experience a range of emotions and look to you for support and encouragement.

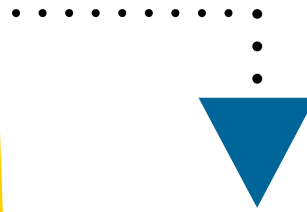
After opening night, your child will still need your assistance and guidance. A musical is a lot of physical and mental work, so children need helping pacing their energy. Make sure your child eats well, takes vitamins, drinks plenty of water, and gets enough rest.

While it's tempting to throw a cast party on opening night, try to hold off until after the show closes.

OPENING NIGHT CHECKLIST

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest prior to opening night. A good night's sleep or a nap will help.
- Make sure your child arrives at the performance fed, but avoid sugary foods or junk foods. A light meal might serve better than a heavy one.
- You may want to present your child with flowers or a small gift directly after the performance. (As a fundraiser, you might want to organize a flower sale in the lobby before the show or at intermission—a lot of other parents will thank you!)
- Invite lots of family and friends!

A Note About Video Recording



The desire to capture your child's performance on video is understandable. Grandma Josephina can't make the performance, Mom has a business trip, or you just want to be able to relive the moment over and over — after all, your child is only going to be this age once.

If you plan to record a performance, there are some things you should be aware of:

- For many shows, a separate video license must be issued to the presenting organization. Check with your director to ensure that a license has been obtained.
- No profit can be made from the video, and copies may only be made for family members.
- The video may not be distributed via television or the Internet.
- The director may arrange for one recording of the performance to avoid dozens of cameras in the audience.

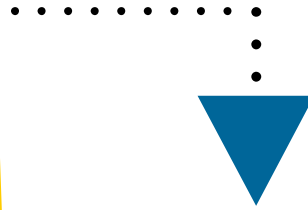
Closing Night & Post-Show Blues



The closing night performance is as exciting as opening night, but also bittersweet. It's the last time the show will be performed and marks the end of what can be months of mental and physical investment. After final bows, the cast and crew will take down—or "strike" - the sets that helped bring the musical to life.

It is normal for your child to be emotional leading up to, during and after the final performance. This lingering sadness after a show closes is called "post-show blues." You can help relieve these feelings by planning a cast gathering after the closing performance and strike...and ease their separation anxiety.

What's Next?



After the last performance many kids will immediately ask, "What's the next show?" These words are a good indication that your child has had a wonderful experience.

It's our little secret that they also learned a great deal and explored some very important life lessons...

Congratulations on a job well done!

P.S. Let us know about your experience!

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