

Casting Productions & Presentations at Centre Stage

Dear Parents

Sometimes, we have a few questions from parents regarding our decisions when casting for productions. This letter is to clarify the process to help you understand our approach.

Firstly we are a school rather than a production company and so fairness is paramount. As you will know most musicals and plays are written with main roles and supporting roles so we often adapt and change scripts, double cast roles and work as an ensemble wherever possible, to give the students more of an equal role. Occasionally, there are cases when we can't do this and some one ends up with more lines to say than others. This is not necessarily an indication of a "better" part and we always take time to explain this to the students that it is about what you do with a part that is the important thing. This is a very important and necessary lesson for all the students to understand both in the profession of acting and in life that often actors with one or two lines can steal a show! We treat the students as young professionals to prepare them for a fiercely competitive world where they will have to be prepared to take the knocks and disappointments. Obviously as students, they are young and still learning so our approach is appropriate to their stage of development, but they do need to understand that if, for example, eight people want the role of say, Juliet, Hamlet or Orphan Annie, then seven are going to be disappointed. Again we explain this to the students from the beginning. If children don't want to go in to the profession then this is still part of life, unfortunately we don't always get what we want. Yet it is still important to work hard to master something and to strive for it.

There is a saying in the business "There are no small parts only small actors" and this means that it is an actors' job to do the very best with every part they play and have pride in it. This is one of the fundamental lessons to be learnt as an actor and performer. As a parent, we would hope that you would support and encourage your children in this. If you have any concerns, or your child shows some disappointment, have that saying in mind and if you are still not sure how to handle it then ask the teacher for some advice.

Casting is a very, very, difficult process, one which we don't take on lightly. We have to take in to consideration many varying factors. We look at how many girls to boys there are in a group, how committed and keen a student is, we often give parts as a personal challenge to some, to play to a particular person's strengths, give a role to someone to build their confidence or merely because they are well suited to it and will do a good job. The teachers work hard and carefully, to make the casting as fair

as possible and give all students something they can shine in. It is then up to the students to seize the role and make something of it, with the help, guidance and encouragement of the teacher.

Please remember all our teachers have worked as performers in the profession, they know all too well how tough, competitive and disappointing this profession can be! Therefore they are meticulous at being as caring and encouraging as possible when they cast. The teachers take care to make informed value judgments as to where a student's strengths and weaknesses lie and you have to trust that they know best as to what is a good role for your child. We try to make sure everyone is as busy and challenged as possible, but of course rehearsals aren't always as glamorous as a student thinks they will be. Rehearsals are sometimes long, hard, repetitive, in some cases tedious in order to perfect something. It is up to a student to find the self-motivation to push themselves, to improve, to master something set for them that is tricky and to find within themselves a great deal of discipline to focus. Most students, we are pleased to say, rise to the occasion.

There are many great benefits from performing, the camaraderie felt from being involved with everyone from the beginning all in pursuit of the same aim, being part of a team and working hard to achieve something together and the sense of real achievement for all the hard work you have put in. We aim for your child to gain a positive experience from performance not a negative one. Remember we love and support the arts and it gives us great pleasure to enable others to do so too!

If you have anything you wish to discuss regarding this, or anything else please don't hesitate to contact us and we can discuss by mail, phone or set up a meeting.

Best wishes,

Ali & Pete