

"Sparkle, Shirley, Sparkle" or Parent Do's and Don'ts

In an effort to help our new parents better understand the process of being involved in a theatrical production; we put together some information about what happens from Auditions to Production. The PACE Artistic Directors are first of all parents, as well as being professional teachers and directors. So we understand what it means to venture into that uncertain world of the theatre with our own children.

At PACE, we care about your child and his/her future, and want to make the experience of being involved in a show fun. Additionally, we invest countless hours and energy to further your child's personal development. This is a life changing adventure for your child to embark on, and with your help, it will become a positive event that will enhance his/her life for years.

Auditions: before you even sign up for auditions, there are things you need to know.

- A production is a big time commitment. Please let us know any and all conflicts. There is nothing harder for a director to deal with than working out a rehearsal schedule anticipating that the actors will be there, and then having someone suddenly spring a conflict on them. Of course, this does not include emergencies and illnesses.
- Be prepared to volunteer. Some organizations do not see the value of parents helping, but we love having you around, and so do your kids. You are giving them a strong message that you care and want to be involved in their activities.
- All roles are good roles. Hopefully you have not already had a negative experience before you come to us, but whether your child is singing, dancing, acting or observing others, they are in learning mode. No child ever "just sits around" with us.
- "Mama Rose" is a bossy stage mother from the musical *Gypsy* who pushes her child into performing in a very negative manner. Shirley Temple's mother would sit off camera and say "Sparkle, Shirley. Sparkle." We have all seen some of these parents (little league, pageants, music competitions, dance studios, etc.) Sometimes we may have even acted this way without meaning to and stepped on some toes, or pushed a little too hard. Parents don't realize that they can hurt their child's chances of being cast with negative or pushy attitudes.

At Auditions:

- Be prepared. Have all the forms filled out completely. Be on time. Be patient.
- Be positive. Wish your child the best, and send them in with a smile on your face.
- Trust our choices. We have many reasons we cast the way we do. They range from singing/acting ability, prior experience, amount of conflicts, vocal volume, size, age, gender - all kinds of things. You may see your child in a role that in the big picture will not work for the director.
- Remind your child that just because they have prior experience, it will not guarantee a part if they are not prepared for the audition. Make sure they have had plenty of rest and a good meal before they come to auditions.

Callbacks: When we hold callbacks, we have already made some decisions about roles. This can be very stressful; especially if a child does not get to read for a part he/she wants. When there are many actors called back, everyone needs to be patient, and understand that they may read many times for a part, or one time for a part. As directors, we are not always looking at how well a young person reads the part, as much as we are looking to see if he/she would fit the part. In fact, **reading well aloud is not a prerequisite to being cast** - after all, you will memorize your part, not read it.

Announcing the Cast: This is also a very stressful time for young people because they may not get the part they want. You know best how to comfort your child but the following may also be helpful:

- **Trust the director's judgment.** As directors these decisions are very hard to make, especially when we have worked with a young person in other shows. As actors, we know what it means to be turned down for a role. Have the good cry, and then move on.
- Remind your child that **every role is important**, because everyone contributes. One of our favorite things to hear from cast and from parents is how well everyone treats everyone else. Be positive, and embrace that role, and have fun with it. Frankly, some of our favorite times on stage have been being in the chorus, or in smaller parts.

Rehearsals:

- **No counting lines.** Sometimes children are tempted to count their lines and discuss how big their part is compared to someone else's part. Please discourage this. We are trying to teach them life skills and to be positive role models, not to see themselves as "stars."
- **Be early for rehearsal** - We heard this from a band teacher; "if you are early, you are on time, if you are on time, you're late, and if you're late, you're in trouble." Many of our students perform in other venues. Our goal is to have them prepared to meet the demands of other directors, schools, and companies.
- **Begin memorizing the lines and/or songs immediately.** The other actors in the ensemble need your child to come to rehearsal prepared as much as your child needs the other actors to be prepared. Help them review on a regular basis - the best times are before bed and first thing in the morning.
- **Remind them to be respectful of all those who are helping with the production.** For example: it is not appropriate for an actor to tell the costumer that he/she doesn't like the costume or doesn't want to wear a hat, wig, glasses, etc. Our Assistant Directors, Stage Managers, and technical people are students also, but they still deserve to be treated with respect for the job they do and for who they are.
- **Watch their health.** Rehearsals are work, and you are the first line of defense for gauging your child's physical, mental and emotional health. Do not allow them to stay up all night before a rehearsal. During the summer, monitor how much sun they have before an afternoon rehearsal because it can sap energy. During the school year, make sure homework assignments are taken care of early because it can add to stress levels. Monitor how many extra curricular activities your child is involved in - too much depletes energy. Your child may love doing a million things, but eventually something will suffer. Water, sleep, and good nutrition are best during this time.

Technical Rehearsals:

These are the two rehearsals that happen just before the dress rehearsals. This is when we add all the elements such as lights, sound, special effects, set changes, etc. These rehearsals can be long and boring for the actors, because it is not an actor's rehearsal, it is a "techie" rehearsal. Here's how you can help:

- Make sure your child has had a good meal and is well rested. Avoid snacks such as soda, junk food, etc. which saps energy.
- Volunteer to help. We love our backstage parents. They have told us how much they enjoy helping the cast with costume changes, makeup, and just being an encourager.
- Ask if you could bring in healthy snacks and drinks. The cast and crew love to be pampered during this time.
- Encourage your child to bring a book or other quiet activity to pass the time.

Dress Rehearsals:

We have two dress rehearsals before the show opens. We are adding costumes and makeup, hair styles, hats, gloves and other accessories.

- Remind your child to take off all personal jewelry; earrings, watches, bracelets, etc. and leave them at home. If you don't want to lose it, leave it at home.
- Remove all nail polish, do not dye your hair (unless you have been asked to) and do not get your haircut unless you have been asked to. All makeup, unless your child needs specialty makeup, should be done at home.
- The costumer will discuss makeup with the cast prior to the show. Regular "street" makeup does not work on the stage because of stage lighting, which is brighter and hotter than normal lighting. This is why we will ask you to get a "stage base" makeup that is designed to be worn on the stage. Makeup and hair brushes should not be shared, so make sure your child has the following: brush/comb, bobby pins, hair ties, deodorant (if they need it), base, blush, eyeliner (brown), toothbrush/toothpaste, a few pairs of socks, or tights. A mesh tote bag that can be hung on his/her costume hanger is helpful. Please make sure everything is clearly marked with your child's name.
- Remind your child that, with the exception of water, there is no eating or drinking in costume. No food is allowed backstage.

Performances:

Our favorite time - all the hard work your child has been doing is now going "on the boards."
Make a big deal out of it.

- Make sure your child is well rested, has taken care of homework assignments, has had a light dinner (no milk, soda, chocolate, or rich foods). An afternoon power nap can help, or maybe just some quiet time.
- Flowers are so much fun to receive on opening night, or perhaps a memento of the show.
- Invite all your friends and family. It means a great deal to a child to have parents and family in the audience on opening night - more than you realize, because we hear them talk backstage with excitement over "who is out there tonight."

Cast Parties:

We normally have our cast parties on the weekend. This is a time to get together and celebrate our success. We eat and give gag gifts. A gag gift exchange works like this: each cast member draws a name (crew also draws for crew members), which is a secret. Then they make or buy a gift to "spooof" the other actor. It is a very creative, fun event that the cast looks forward to.

Strike:

This is when we take everything apart and put it away. At PACE we have adopted the Girl Scouts motto of "we leave it better than we found it." This means everyone from the youngest to the oldest is assigned a job that helps clean up the theatre. Please do not ask to be excused from strike - we equate it to "did you help pick up before you came home?"

One of the hardest things to do is put the show "to bed." It is bittersweet because all the hard work and fun is over. You can help your child if they get the post show blues by reminding them of the fun, and of the new friends they have made. Many times we will get together again to go to a movie, have a pool party, or a picnic. Just be prepared for them to say "when are the next auditions?"

Most importantly, talk to the directors or any of our board members, if you have questions or concerns. We are all here to help you and your child have a great experience!