

YTN Parents' Guide for Auditions 2020-2021

The audition process is often intense and nerve wracking, even for seasoned professionals. At Youth Theatre Northwest, we do our best to make it smooth and welcoming, but it would enhance the experience even more to have your help. Here are some things for you and your child to think about:

Hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Encourage your child to try their best and have fun at the audition and any callbacks. All of the directors want every actor to do well and have fun during the process. Help your child focus on having a great audition rather than on getting in to the play. It is also a good idea to help them prepare for the possibility that they might not get into a show (we turn away approximately 10% of the students who audition depending on the overall number). For example, it may be wise to have an alternate activity lined up so that they can see it as a win-win situation. Your positive attitude around this subject will affect your child's outlook on the whole process.

Directors look for students who are talented but also students who are easy to work with.

If it comes down to an actor who is talented but has a bad attitude, and an actor who has a few rough edges but a good attitude, we will always take the actor with the better attitude. Our directors get an indication of a child's personality in how they listen and follow directions, how they interact with the staff outside of the room and how they interact with others in callbacks. Professional courtesy is very important, especially in the small world of theater.

Directors, Musical Directors, and other YTN staff talk to each other.

Please know that there is a lot of thought that goes into casting shows at YTN. After callbacks, we have a casting meeting with all the directors present and we discuss every child who auditioned. We share what we know about returning students and share our impressions of new students. This is a very important decision for the theater and for the students, and we do not take it lightly.

Respect the casting decision.

Casting decisions are based on each director's individual vision. Please also know that our directors are experts and have years of experience working in theatre and with children. If a child does not get cast or does not get the role they wished, some of the reasons why might include:

- They are not right for the show or the role (meaning the director needs a specific type for the role and your child did not fit into that, or their skills were not quite up to the level that the role requires)
- They are truly not ready (meaning, they were unable to follow directions or behave properly)
- There is a severe scheduling conflict.

It makes the process extremely difficult when we are challenged on casting decisions. As a student of theatre, your child needs to learn the perspective of the director in this process and your help in understanding this is immeasurable.

Don't give up.

If your child is not cast, we will send audition feedback to aid them in preparing for next time. Help your child to get the right experience before they try again. We always take note of kids who come back. There are many who did not get in the first time but kept trying and were cast again and again, often in leading roles. We feel it is an important life lesson to know that sometimes, things don't work out exactly as you want, but to keep working towards a goal.

As our mission states, "Youth Theatre Northwest nurtures the intellectual, artistic, and personal development of children and youth through drama education, performing opportunities, and live theatre experiences." We are first and foremost invested in the education of the students who come to us. We appreciate your support in our mission and through this important process.

Sincerely,

The YTN Directing Team

FAQ's - These questions and answers have been compiled by parents for new parents like you

How does YTN manage auditions for its plays? How can I plan my child's schedule?

YTN appreciates that parents and children lead busy lives and need to know how to plan a child's summer or academic year. So, quite unique to YTN, auditions for all plays during the academic year are in September, and auditions for all plays during the summer are held in March. Casting decisions are made soon after and thus give parents (and kids) solid planning dates and peace of mind in planning for summer or the academic year. Does your child play soccer and can't commit to a play in the fall? No problem, just check one of the plays in the spring on the audition application. That way, the directors will not consider your child for a fall production.

What is the inside scoop -- is there a way to boost my child's chances to get into a play? Are there factors determining whether my child has a better (or lesser chance)?

YTN administrators and staff assure parents that there is no favoritism, no special fast track, no behind-the-scenes deals to get one child cast over another. YTN also listened to parents and instituted a new policy a couple years back which limits each child to no more than 2 plays during the school season and 2 plays during the summer stock. This way, more parts are available to more kids -- no hogging!

OK, my child filled out the audition paperwork and now I realize my child cannot live up to these promises. When, if at all, can my child back out?

If after the first audition your child decides that the timing or a particular play for which he/she received a callback was not his preferred choice the child should call Youth Theatre Northwest withdraw his name from consideration, **before the call back**. YTN staff will know not to expect him at the call back, and casting decisions for other actors still will not be affected and there will be no casting holes. Remember, a child who pulls abruptly out of a production after casting decisions have been made, or worse, after rehearsals have started will negatively impact his chances of being cast in future productions. ***If a student pulls out after rehearsals start, parents are responsible for full payment of all tuition due.***

My child has soccer/choir/gymnastics/horseback riding/volleyball/band practice/an after school job/etc. and can't be at all the rehearsals/classes/performances. Can s/he still audition?

YTN understands and respects that your child has commitments outside of theatre. On the audition form, you'll see a place where you list **all** your child's prior commitments and conflicts. This information may affect the director's decision to cast the child but it also will give the director a chance to see if they can be worked around. YTN makes it very clear that you need to be upfront with disclosing these conflicts as they are the only ones they will work around. Genuine emergencies, of course, will be considered. Also, your child will not be considered for a role in a show if s/he will have to miss performances for that show.

What will happen after the audition?

After the auditions, YTN will send out emails with callback lists for each show (a callback is a second round of auditions). These callback lists will be individual emails for each production, you will only receive an email for a show you are called back for. If your child is called back for a show, their first initial and last name will be listed with the specific time slot for their callback. Casting will be announced in the same way after the callbacks.

What are callbacks? What happens at them?

After the initial audition, directors will select certain students they wish to see again to consider for their play. Your child does not need to prepare anything for callbacks unless requested by the director. At the callbacks, depending on the play, the director may have your child read from 'sides' (parts of the script), learn some music or choreography, or play drama games and do character exercises.

Is there tuition for YTN plays?

Yes. The fees for plays vary from depending on the length of rehearsal/class time involved and whether or not the play is a musical. We have instituted a tiered tuition system during these trying financial times, which is explained and outlined on our website. For specific tuition information, please call the registrar, or refer to the website. Tuition is due upfront and is not refundable; this is a reflection of YTN's dependence on your child to perform their part in the production, and your commitment to follow through.

Do you offer financial aid?

Yes. We offer need-based financial aid. To apply, pick up a financial aid form at the front desk. We also offer yearly, month-to-month payment plans. To set up a payment plan please call the registrar.

Looking ahead, what is expected of me as a parent of a child in a production?

Cast parents have the following obligations:

- First and foremost, ensure that your child is ready and prepared for rehearsal and performances. Sounds like a no-brainer, but rehearsal schedules can fluctuate and lines need to be learned.
- A production's costs far exceed the tuition and ticket revenue. For most of our plays, YTN hosts a silent auction table during the production run. Each cast parent is responsible to contribute one item.
- Help celebrate Opening Night. Cast parents are required to provide one dessert platter of for the Opening Night Gala; this makes for a free and tasty intermission for the entire audience
- Volunteer! Just like volunteering in your child's classroom, this is a great way to see what it takes to put up a production, meet other parents and get to know staff. YTN is has an online, real-time volunteer scheduling service so you can pick your volunteer shifts and activities that best suit your schedule and skills. Each activity has a point value, and as a guideline, cast families should pick at least 5 points of activities. Your activities accumulate as a family, so find something for everyone.