



Parent / Actor Handbook

2019 EDITION



www.YoungStarsTheatre.org

Young Stars Theatre (YST) Parent/Actor Handbook

Congratulations for being cast in a Young Stars Theatre show! We hope that you are as excited to be in our show as we are to have you! Now the real work begins.

We love theatre, from rehearsal through performance, and love to guide our actors to produce the best show possible. Our philosophy is that theatre is fun, and the better show you put on, the more fun you will have. To that end, we have established the following practices, procedures and rules. While they may not be perfect, we have found over many years and more than 200 productions that these procedures best accommodate the way we work, and make our shows the best they can be.

Our goal for YST is to provide a more professional experience for our performers, regardless of their age. To put it succinctly, at YST, theatre with children/youth is never just children's theatre. We know that there are many options for children/youth to do theatre out there, ranging from glorified babysitting to high-level, sharp and entertaining. YST strives to be at the top of this range.

What we *have* found is that some children may not be ready to be pushed to find their very best as they will be at YST. There is nothing wrong with this, but YST is probably not the place for them to start. We have also found that this is not necessarily a function of age, as we have had actors as young as three years old that did fabulously at YST, while there are some actors as old as teenagers who will not be cast in the near future in a YST production, because they simply are not ready for level of responsibility that is required of them to succeed in our productions.

With that being said, the overwhelming majority of actors cast in our shows are ready, because if we have cast you, we believe that you are ready! Most of our kids truly enjoy being pushed to do their very best, and keep coming back for more after they have experienced the rewards of their hard work.

The purpose this handbook is to make sure that you as the parent of an actor, or as an actor, have a wonderful experience with YST. This handbook strives to 1.) answer the most frequently asked questions, and 2.) explain our rules and practices as well as the reasons behind them. By spending a few minutes reading through this handbook, we hope to save you a *lot more* time and confusion in the long run.

Let's do some theatre!

Gloria Bennett - YST Executive Director and Co-founder
Jack J. Bennett - YST Artistic Director and Co-founder

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BEFORE THE SHOW: REGULAR REHEARSALS

Communication with us

If you have not already been notified of when rehearsals begin, you will be soon. We communicate primarily through email. Please make sure that we have an email address for you that you check frequently, hopefully at least twice a day. If this is different from the email address you put on your audition form, **PLEASE** send the best address to *yst@musicandtheatre.com* ASAP. This will ensure that you receive all important information regarding your child (or yourself) and this production.

You will be given a phone number for time-sensitive emergencies only, but for non-emergencies **please use email**.

The reason for this is simple math: If we have 40 families that we are dealing with in a typical production, and each family calls with questions that take just 10 minutes each week, that works out to 3 hours and 40 minutes that week that we don't have to work on the production. These same questions can be dealt with in a fraction of the time with email. Also, many of the questions are the same, and one answer can be sent to everyone at once.

Most of the general questions you will have will be dealt with in this handbook, and the more specific questions (dates, times, etc.) will be answered in regular emails and/or a dedicated web page the whole cast will be receiving from us or checking during the course of the production.

Rehearsal times and days

Conflicts

We do our best to plan our rehearsal schedule around your conflicts and availability. We look carefully at these while casting, and try to arrange casts and rehearsal schedules based on your reported conflicts. Unless otherwise stated, any day listed on your availability form is a potential rehearsal day, even if it may be a holiday. Please do not assume that we know you have a conflict unless you have let us know on your sheet, and please do not assume that we will not have rehearsal because it is a certain holiday/holiday weekend. We try to

plan the bare minimum rehearsal required so as not to waste any one's time, and sometimes that requires that we have rehearsals on holidays. If a rehearsal for your cast falls on one of these days, and it is a conflict for you, and you have not already listed it as a conflict, please let us know asap. Conflicts not listed on your audition sheet (except in *very* limited circumstances which require documentation), are not excused. One unexcused absence will make your actor ineligible to be considered for YST membership (more on that later) for this show, and exclude them from auditioning for the next show. A second unexcused absence will result in removal from the show.

Other auditions and gigs

We know that many of our actors also do television and film, and that these conflicts seldom come with much notice. We simply ask three things: 1.) That you not take an audition for a non-paying job that conflicts with an already scheduled rehearsal, 2.) That you book-out as soon as possible for final rehearsal, tech rehearsal and performance dates, and 3.) If you get an audition, callback, or booking for a paying job (*extra work doesn't count*) during regular rehearsals that you let us know as soon as possible. We don't want anyone to miss a great opportunity for that national commercial or big feature film, but we take what we do very seriously. When we know ahead of time - even shortly ahead of time - it helps us to change plans if necessary, to make sure that we use everyone's time efficiently.

Non-paying jobs can be (or at least should be) much more flexible, because they need you to work for free and may be able work around your schedule. Many times a phone call from you or your representation can work around potential conflicts.

Rehearsals

1. BE EARLY TO BE ON TIME!

At every rehearsal, we have a very specific idea of what needs to be covered - and we cover *a lot* at every rehearsal. The first thing we do at every rehearsal is to call roll to make sure everyone is there that needs to be. When we have people that are absent that we do not have any listed conflicts for, we look up numbers and text/call them. If someone has forgotten (it happens) that they have rehearsal, at least if we let them know as soon as possible, they will miss as little as

possible. If there has been an emergency, we can adjust as much as possible on the fly.

The first day of rehearsal, we will give all actors a contact phone number, usually of the stage manager. **If you know when you are on the way to rehearsal (or before) that you will unavoidably be late, even one minute, we ask that you please text this number to let us know.** Again, the reason is simple math: If just 3 people are late to each rehearsal, and we spend just 10 minutes looking up phone numbers, calling and leaving messages, over 6 rehearsals we have lost an entire hour of rehearsal time. If we already have a text or message, it takes seconds.

The directors will always be at the rehearsal 15-30 minute before rehearsal time, and they certainly don't mind actors being early as well. **If you plan to be there 10 minutes early, even if things happen, you can usually get there on time.**

2. What do I, the actor, need to bring?

Always bring your **script** and a **pencil** (not a pen-things might need to be erased). You will need your script at every rehearsal, and you will need to write things down at almost every rehearsal. So, again, **always** bring your script and a pencil.

You are free to bring your own snacks and water (please, no soda), and we will always have bottled water and snacks (chips, candy bars, etc.) for sale at rehearsals, so you can send money with your child if you wish. This money goes directly to the theatre budget, and because of this, we do ask that you don't bring food for everyone.

Cellphones, iPods, video games and other things of this nature: Generally, we encourage you to leave these devices at home, or if you must bring them, actors 18 and under will store them in their own slot in our locked office. In a typical rehearsal, there will be very little opportunity for these devices to be used, and when they are used they quickly become a distraction. I know I've said it before, but we need all the time we can get to do what needs to get done, in the safest and most efficient way possible, and we want to eliminate distractions of any kind. If for some reason you need to reach your child in an

emergency, you will always have the emergency number to call and we can get you in touch with them.

There is also the risk of these items being lost, stolen or damaged at rehearsals, and we are not responsible for what happens to electronic devices brought to rehearsals.

Later in the rehearsal process, you may need to bring things regarding costumes, but I will cover this in that section.

3. Who can come to rehearsals?

Cast and crew only. Our rehearsals are closed and no parents or visitors are allowed in the rehearsal space during rehearsal, so please don't ask. There is unfortunately not an area where parents can wait in our building.

Why? First, children simply act differently when their parents are in the room, and they need to recognize and get used to their directors as the authority in that room, not Mom or Dad in the corner. A mother said to me once, "If my children are not listening then I will be the first to get them in line." And I said, "I'm sure that is true, but can you imagine what would happen at a rehearsal if we had 30 sets of parents doing this?" And if we allow one parent in rehearsal, it is not fair not to allow all parents who want to come in to come in.

Second, we want you to be able to enjoy the finished product – to still be surprised. It's like a magic act. If you know how all the tricks are done, it takes away the magic.

Third, we as directors need to be free to do what needs to be done in rehearsal. Believe it or not, we might even need to raise our voice to *your kid* a little bit sometimes. I confess that it is flatly impossible to have a rehearsal with 30-40 kids without having to raise your voice for them to be quiet once in a while.

Yes, we do raise our voices once in a while because we have a job to do, and if we didn't we would waste so much time we would never get it done. Part of what we strive to do is to train young actors to be professionals, and part of being a professional is learning the

difference between random, non-productive yelling and correcting an issue to make the end product as good as it can be.

We love kids and wouldn't be doing this if we didn't. Our reward is seeing the look on a child's face who we have worked with (and possibly yelled at!) finally "get it". When they reach that new level of ability, when they realize that the hard work has been worth it, they are grateful for having been pushed to do something they may not have known that they *could* do before. Bottom line, we care enough to yell once in a while. We care enough to push them a little. We think kids are worth it.

4. Rehearsal progression

The first rehearsal, we start the process of directing the actors when and where to move on stage, whether it is simply moving place to place (blocking) or dance type movement (choreography). This is one important reason why **the actor always needs their script and a pencil.**

Actors carry their scripts with them as we block a scene. We teach the blocking once, and it is the actor's responsibility to get it written down in their script in a way that they can understand. If an actor is too young to read or write, or is just not able to keep up, we have an older actor (usually a YST member – more about that later) help make sure they get everything clearly marked in their book, so that their parents can help them at home, and we can help them later in rehearsals if there is a question.

Once a scene is blocked, it is the actors' responsibility to have their lines and blocking for that section memorized at the next rehearsal where we go over that same section. They can still call "line" if they need help getting started on a line, but they don't carry their scripts. The third rehearsal where we go over the same section, there are no scripts and no calling for a line. This is the progression for each section:

1st time: Scripts and pencils on stage, writing blocking in as we go.

2nd time: No scripts on stage. Actor can still call for line,

but should have section basically memorized.

3rd time: No scripts on stage. No calling for line. Actors get through it the best they can.

This progression is necessary for us to keep rehearsals as few as possible and still produce the best show possible. We adapted this progression directly from the schedule of an Equity theatre that we worked at for many years. We move fairly quickly, covering a lot of ground each rehearsal, and this progression helps actors keep a realistic idea of whether they are keeping up or need to work harder.

We do not waste time in rehearsals memorizing lines, because that is something the actors can do at home. We use rehearsal time for the things that can't be done at home. This is another way we help nudge our actors to be professionals. If your actor needs help learning how to memorize, we have included one basic script memorization technique in appendix A in the back of this book.

If an actor misses a rehearsal, **it is their responsibility** to get whatever they missed by contacting the person playing the same part in the other cast, if available, or the stage manager if not – before the next rehearsal.

We do not accept “I wasn't here for that” as an excuse for not being prepared for a rehearsal. We make sure that actors exchange phone numbers/email addresses with their other cast counterpart at the first rehearsal, and make sure that everyone has the stage manager's phone number. We give our actors a great amount of freedom and flexibility – and the increased responsibility that goes along with that.

If an actor misses choreography, although we don't re-teach it, choreography does tend to be rehearsed more than blocking, and the actor simply learns it as they go when they come back, or gets it from their counterpart just like blocking.

5. Rehearsal Rules

These are a few basic rules that everyone needs to follow to make rehearsals safe, while also being fun and productive.

- ◆ Do not touch another actor unless you are directed to do so for the show. Touching leads to poking, hitting and eventually injury and/or hurt feelings.
- ◆ Absolutely no hitting, kicking, or shoving of any kind, even in play. Depending on the seriousness of the incident and at our discretion, we may give the actor a warning, but we reserve the right to remove an actor from the production immediately. No second incidence will be tolerated in any case. If we are forced to remove an actor from the production, no refunds for any tickets purchased will be given.
- ◆ Do not give another actor notes. This means that it is not the actor's job to correct other actors, or to tell them what they should or should not be doing. That is the director's job, and when actors correct each other, it can lead to bad feelings on both sides. Each actor needs to focus on what they themselves should be doing. The only exception to this is when an actor feels that another actor might actually be injured at that moment if they do not say something. If another actor's behavior becomes a recurring issue, the actor can let the directors know in private.
- ◆ Do not talk when any of the directors are talking. Our time in rehearsal is precious and spending time getting everyone quiet is time wasted. When a director starts talking, the actor needs to stop talking and listen.
- ◆ Do not leave the rehearsal space without permission. Our bathrooms are just outside the theatre, and this counts as the rehearsal space, but actors who are minors must stay in the building while they are in our care.
- ◆ No gum. It just gets in the way – and sometimes on the carpet or in someone's hair.

Programs – Ads, Bios and Headshots

YST does a full program for every show, with a full-color front and back cover, and black and white (grayscale) inside.

Program Ads – We will send home a program ad form early in the rehearsal process, and you can also print one available on the “Donate/Ads” page of our website. This form details ad sizes, current rates, and other information.

Program ads are one way that YST raises funds. Sometimes we have ad

sales contests for our actors, such as the most number of ads sold, most \$\$ amount, or maybe just a random drawing for anyone who sells an ad. Our ad rates are extremely reasonable, and there are many small businesses that will be more than happy to purchase an ad, especially when presented to them as an opportunity to help a children's theatre program. While we have no requirements, we do ask each family to try to sell at least one ad.

Also, many parents, grandparents, and friends like to get a program ad for actors in the show, such as a "Congratulations" or "Break a Leg" type of ad, and these are encouraged as well.

Ads must be submitted by the ad deadline to get them in the program. You will be informed of the deadline for ads via email, and ads received after the deadline will not be in the program, and any money paid will be refunded (no refunds for late discount package ads).

Bios (biographies) and headshots – All actors can have their headshot and a bio in the program free of charge. This is not a requirement, but if you want your bio and picture in the program, it is up to you to send it to us by the same deadline as the ads.

You will be emailed a link to a page with a form to upload headshots, bios and program ads (ads only if you purchased the package or an ad separately). The deadline for headshots/bios and ads will be the same, and as with ads, bios received after the deadline will not be included.

Specifications:

Headshot - minimum 200 dpi for best results, color or black and white doesn't matter, but the picture will be black and white in the program.

Bio - A brief blurb about the actor. 70 word maximum. Bios exceeding 70 words will be returned or edited at our discretion. For sample bios, you can see a sample program on our website also at the Donate/Ads tab

Costuming

1. Clothing

Depending on the show, costuming may be very simple – say, jeans and t-shirts – to specialty costumes – say, the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland* – to everything in between. There is no need to email us about costumes – unless you have questions about something specific once we have started costuming, which won't be until midway through rehearsals or later. YST will make sure that everyone's costume is taken care of.

We might at some point email a list of basic pieces that we ask the actor to bring for their character **if they have them already**. This would usually be common items that your actor might already own, like a white button down shirt, or blue jeans, or black dress shoes, and so on. We do not want you to have to go out and buy these things *unless* you think that it would be something they might want or need anyway. If we ask for items that your actor doesn't already have, let us know. YST has an extensive collection of costumes, and we can try to find what you need there, or we will get it some other way.

If you have access to costumes, or have experience with costuming, and would like to help, please let us know. We may or may not be able to use you, but if we can, we will!

2. Makeup and Hair

Makeup – Most characters in most shows will not require specialty makeup, but if they do, they will know what they need to do ahead of time, or we will do it at tech rehearsal. This is not a dance recital, so please don't waste any time piling heavy makeup on your 8 year old on show day. It will just get wiped off and wasted. If it isn't specialty makeup, and it isn't something we've already seen and approved for the show, don't come with something new on show day. Most characters in our shows, most of the time, will be fine with nothing, a little powder, or very light street makeup.

Hair – Like makeup, specific hairstyle may have little or nothing to do with your character, or it may be **very** specific. **The basic rule in theatre is: If you plan on changing hairstyle, color, or length, always ask the director first.** A few examples: We cast an older girl in a younger part because her longer hair helped make her look younger. I wish I could have seen my own face when she walked in with a good

10 inches cut off, leaving her hair shorter than shoulder length. It looked great on her, but ruined the look she had for that character. A girl who was cast in a role where blonde was specific to the character decided to go red a couple of days before performance. Don't get me wrong, boys do the same thing, suddenly deciding to get a crew cut or shave their heads.

Of course we can't stop you if you really must change your hair, but be aware that it may change your character. If we haven't said anything specific about your hair, it is probably because it works for where you were cast, or we can at least visualize it styled the way we want. **Please, please, for the sake of the whole cast and show, ask before changing your hair.** Ok, enough about that.

But please ask.

Tickets

How do I purchase tickets? – We double cast almost all of our shows, meaning that we will have at least two mostly or completely different casts rehearsing at the same time for the show. All casts get the same amount of performances. What this means is some or all roles will be played by different actors in different shows. We give the different casts different cast names (like “Milkshakes” and “French Fries”) so that the actors know what part(s) they are playing in what cast(s). They may only be in one cast, or they may be in both casts playing the same role, or they may be in both casts playing different roles. Your actor should be clear on exactly where they are and what they are doing after the first rehearsal, but if not, please email us.

On the discount package form (more about this in a minute), and on the website, you will see the shows listed first by cast name, then by day and time.

To purchase tickets online, simply go to:

www.YoungStarsTheatre.org/tickets

We do our own online ticketing through PayPal. You can purchase tickets there with credit/debit card, checking account, or PayPal. The transaction is guaranteed secure. *We* never even see your information, just the name and what you are ordering. If you are ordering multiple

tickets for a single show, you can change quantities in the shopping cart. We don't print physical tickets but keep a list of tickets sold at the door for each show.

If you are purchasing tickets online the day of the show, for safety, just print your receipt and bring it with you. Show days are very hectic for us, and we may not be able to check the day of for notification of tickets purchased online.

We do not hold seats without payment, so please don't ask. We have done this in the distant past, and don't anymore because we nearly always end up holding the bag. We have had "sold out" shows where we held seats and actually turned ticket buyers away, only to have those seats end up unused and unsold. YST operates on a very small margin, and most of our budget comes from ticket sales. We cannot afford to lose potential revenue on available seats.

Ticket sales are final, and we do not refund tickets. This is one reason we strongly recommend that you do not purchase tickets for someone else – unless you are prepared to eat the cost when they don't show up. Unfortunately, the reality is that this happens every show. For example, a parent buys 10 tickets for their 10 friends who swear they are coming, 5 actually show up, and the other five don't usually offer to pay the parent back for the seats purchased on their behalf. We do not refund tickets, so again, we strongly recommend that you only purchase tickets for yourself and your immediate family, unless you really don't mind losing that money.

On show days, the theatre entrance on the Fremont side will open for the audience at 30 minutes prior to show time. We won't be set up to sell tickets before then, and won't be able to sell tickets when you drop your child off, so please don't ask. If there are seats available, you can purchase them when the box office opens at 30 minutes before the show or online on your device. In the case of a sellout, reserved seats not claimed by 5 minutes after posted showtime may be made available to walk-ins for purchase.

Word of warning: Any show can of course sell out at any time, but opening Gala shows and closing shows of a cast very often do sell out

before the doors open, so please don't plan on tickets being available at the door for these shows.

Best option: To guarantee your seats, buy your tickets in advance.

What is Gala? - Opening night for each cast, we have a lovely after party with lots of food and drink in our beautiful courtyard for the audience, cast and crew. These tickets are \$5 more to help cover costs. We ask that you please respect that this event is intended only for ticket holding audience members and the cast and crew.

Who needs a ticket? - Everyone that sees the show. Our policy is that if a child is old enough to enjoy the show, they are receiving value and we feel it is fair that they purchase a ticket. If they are not old enough, many times they end up getting bored and restless and causing a disruption to others enjoyment of the show. In this case, we ask as a courtesy to everyone that you make other arrangements for them.

When we apply for rights and royalties for a show, one thing we have to report is how many seats are available, and the rights and royalties we pay are largely based on that number. In other words, we are paying for every seat whether we sell a ticket for it or not.

We charge a flat rate for every seat to keep it simple - to avoid having a complex age/price ticket schedule. This is why you won't see those options on the website, ticket order forms, or in emails that we send to you.

We usually offer an early bird discount package that includes tickets, a video, pictures, and a program ad. We also offer group discounts. If you are interested in bringing a group, email us for rates.

These policies are the best solutions we have come up with to keep it fair for everyone and to ensure the enjoyment of our audience. Thanks for understanding.

BEFORE THE SHOW: FINAL AND TECH REHEARSALS

Final rehearsal and Tech rehearsals are absolutely mandatory for everyone who will perform in the show. There are no exceptions.

Let me say that again:

**Final rehearsal and Tech rehearsals are ABSOLUTELY MANDATORY
for everyone who will perform in the show.
There are NO exceptions.**

If you think I am going a little overboard, maybe we can get together sometime and look at the stack of emails I have gotten a day or two before (sometimes the night before) a tech rehearsal, asking me if everyone has to be there, telling me they can't be there because of a conflict that has been scheduled for months, but they just realized it was the same day, etc., etc. That doesn't count the phone messages.

No one can miss final or tech rehearsal. It is simply unsafe for the actor who misses and unfair to the rest of the cast. Tech rehearsal is where lights and sound get set, set pieces move on and off, often very quickly, often in the dark, at the same time actors are moving on and off stage, changing costumes, getting props and so on. We care too much about our kids to risk their safety by letting them "wing it" on show day. We have never had a serious injury on or off our stage, and we fully intend to keep it that way, so yes, we are very inflexible on this issue.

Please do not accept any auditions on tech rehearsal day(s). If you have representation (agent/manager), let them know as soon as you can that you are booked out for this day.

Please plan to be early to be on time. We set a certain number of hours for tech rehearsal, but we reserve the right to go as much later as the last person to arrive is late. In other words, if the last person is 45 minutes late, the rehearsal may go 45 minutes longer. We simply cannot shortchange the time we spend at this rehearsal for the safety of your children. We will be sending you detailed instructions about when and where to drop off and pick up your actor, and as with regular rehearsals, only cast and crew is allowed in the performance

space during this rehearsal.

Make sure your actor brings everything they will need for the performance to the tech rehearsal, including script and pencil. This means if they are using any of their own clothes or shoes, bring them. If you need to fix their hair a certain way, please send them with their hair fixed this way. This may be the only time they get to practice under exact show conditions, so we want to make everything as near show conditions as possible.

We do not allow cellphones backstage. We will collect cellphones and devices before the show, hold them during the run, and give them back after the show - or they can leave them with you. It simply does not work to have these devices available backstage.

At the initial audition, you signed an availability form agreeing that your actor is available for the final rehearsal and every tech rehearsal date. **Please double check that date now and put it down in every calendar that you keep.** If you find on double checking that there is an unavoidable conflict, let us know as soon as possible.

Finally, please don't think that if you wait long enough to let us know about a conflict that it will be too late for your actor to be replaced. Not only is this incredibly time-wasting, stressful and rude to us, we have replaced people on tech rehearsal day, and those people we replaced can no longer audition for YST shows in the future. If you let us know well ahead of time we will be grateful. We may be able to help you with a solution, OR, at least you give us more time to find a replacement.

And, if I haven't already mentioned it:

Final rehearsal and Tech rehearsals are ABSOLUTELY MANDATORY for everyone who will perform in the show.
There are NO exceptions.

THE SHOW: PERFORMANCE DAYS

Hurrah! Show day! Exciting *and* a bit nerve-wracking! Here's how you can help make everything go smoothly for you, your actor and the whole cast.

- ◆ First, as with everything else, plan to be early to be on time. **The cast call time is always (unless you are otherwise notified) one hour before the showtime**, and with everything else going on, the last thing the crew needs to worry about is where the cast is. And if you are thinking, “Oh come on, of course everyone is going to be there for the show,” think again. It doesn't happen often, but over nearly 20 years and 1000's of performances, it has happened to us four times. Four times where an actor simply did not show up for a show. Three of those times, *I had to call them* to find out that they weren't coming, and none of the four was an actual emergency. So again, if you are going to *unavoidably* be even one minute late for your call time, please call or text the stage manager as soon as you know.
- ◆ Second, the theatre area of the building will not open to the audience until 30 minutes prior to showtime, so please don't plan to hang around in the theatre *or* theatre lobby until showtime. We have a massive amount of things that have to be done in those 30 minutes and extra people in the theatre simply is not conducive to us getting ready for the show. Help us by dropping your actor off, quickly kissing them goodbye outside at the Fremont entrance. At approximately 30 minutes prior to showtime, we will open the doors at the Fremont entrance, and check-in, ticket sales, concessions and theatre seating will begin at 30 minutes prior to showtime.
- ◆ Third, please send your actor in ready to go. Make sure they have already eaten before they get there. Please don't send them in with bags of fast food, because they won't have time and will be going backstage where food is not allowed anyway. Make sure their hair is fixed the way it needs to be (if you are doing it – if we're doing it, don't worry about it), and so on. You will not be allowed to come in with them after the one-hour call time, so get everything finished before they come in. And remember, **no**

cellphones will be allowed backstage, so if you don't want us to hold it during the show, have them leave it with you.

- ◆ Fourth, the backstage area is for cast and crew only - before, during and after the show. One, this is a long-standing theatre tradition that we respect. We will make sure they get ready for the show. If you have a card or flowers, we will be more than happy to take them backstage for you, or you can give them yourself after the show. (*Please don't run onstage during bows with flowers! We have had actors nearly injured by people doing this. The actors don't know it's coming, and have been whacked in the head and nearly poked in the eye.*) Two, the actors mentally need their own space where no one else can come, need a space where they are separate from the audience. Three, you don't know how the dressing rooms are divided up and could be very embarrassed by stumbling in on someone changing, not to mention the actor's embarrassment and humiliation. Please respect this backstage policy for everyone's sake. The actors are also expected to respect the backstage area by keeping all their own costumes hung or folded neatly in their area when not in use, leaving props on the prop table until it is time to use them, not touching other people's props or costumes *at all*, and keeping their belongings and themselves out of walkways and doorways as much as possible for everyone's safety.
- ◆ Fifth, if you are not coming to a show that your actor is in, we will let you know when to be back to pick them up afterward. If we are doing two shows in a day, as we often do, and your actor is in both shows, you will have a few options. You can come pick them up between shows and bring them back for their call time for the later show. You can send lunch with them and they can stay between shows. Around our theatre, there are many available food options in walking distance. You can send a note with your actor giving them permission to go *with a group* to get lunch. We do not allow any actor who doesn't drive themselves to leave between shows by themselves. There is always a large group of actors who go together to nearby establishments between shows when they are available. When they are not, they may still have the option of bringing money for pizza. The specifics may vary somewhat, but

this is the general procedure.

- ◆ Sixth, if it is the last show of the run (or your actor's last show of the run even if it is not the last overall), plan for a little extra time after the show for us to check every actor out before they leave. It is each actor's responsibility to leave their costumes that belong to YST neatly hung up or folded, to leave all props neatly returned to the prop table or prop box, and to take all pieces belonging to them before they leave. If they can stay a few minutes to help us get cleaned up, that is appreciated as well.
- ◆ Seventh, if you want a video of the show, you can pre-order (pre-orders \$5 off) with an order form in the program or at the front desk. The video is filmed with closeups and wide shots and edited together. If you pre-order, you will be emailed a link and a unique code, or the video file will also be available online for purchase, shortly after the show closes. The whole cast will be emailed to let you know when it is available online with the link.

AFTER THE SHOW

YST Membership Company

In the Los Angeles area, there are several theatrical membership companies for adults. These groups consist of actors, writers and directors who collaborate to produce theatre. They share the work, and share the costs by paying monthly dues, and in exchange they get a great deal of creative control over projects that the company produces, and more opportunities to practice their craft.

Jack joined one of these and was involved with it for about a year, until it became too much of conflict with YST. While he was involved with the company, Gloria started wondering if there were any similar membership companies for youth. They wondered and researched, not really finding anything that fit that description in L.A. This eventually led them to the decision to start the Young Stars Theatre Membership Company in 2008.

YST members pay monthly dues, elect officers and hold monthly meetings, and have responsibilities such as work hours when they are needed. As members, they can attend a weekly two-hour improv class

for free, get free periodic workshops from industry professionals, get to produce their own show about once a year, and have outings and parties. The full list is at www.YoungStarsTheatre.org. YST members are the youth leaders of YST.

Within about a week or two after the close of the show, the YST leaders will meet and decide who they will invite to join the company. This decision is not based strictly on talent, but more on work-ethic, attitude, commitment and dedication. Once the list has been made of who to invite, we will send an emailed letter of invitation. At this point, it is up to the actor and their parents to decide if being part of the YST membership is right for them. The invitation is open until the deadline outlined in the email.

If the answer is yes, we're happy to have you! Simply sign up for monthly dues (a link will be sent to you - we do a recurring payment via PayPal that can be canceled hassle free anytime), sign up for *Remind*, our text group for quick messages and reminders (also a link sent to you), and start enjoying the other activities and benefits. We do improv because it is our belief that a solid grounding in improv will make the actor ready for almost any challenge. We have noticed in our productions (and other productions) that our membership company members tend to stand out, because they are pretty much ready for anything on stage.

If the answer is no (or not right now), no problem. We certainly enjoyed having you in the show, and would love to have you come audition for us again in the future! We don't invite a second time, but you can still apply for membership after completing another show with us.

If your actor doesn't get a letter, please don't feel bad. It doesn't mean we had any specific problem with them, it just means we aren't quite sure they are ready yet. We consider membership to be a privilege, and we very careful as to who we invite. So please, come play with us again!

Lost and Found

While YST is not responsible for items left behind, we will do our best

to hold anything found after the production that may belong to an actor or crew for at least 30 days. If you think something was left behind, please contact us. If we have found it, we will make every reasonable effort to get it back to you.

FINAL THOUGHT

We have tried to cover everything we could possibly think of, but if you have questions about general policy or procedures not covered in here, or if you feel something in this handbook is not clear, please email me at *jack@musicandtheatre.com*, because I may be able to include it in future updates of the handbook. Of course, each production will have its own specific information, so again, please check your email at least daily. We try diligently to keep all of our families informed as we go to minimize confusion, and we encourage you to print out the emails about the production and keep them together (like in a folder or a file) so that you can reference the specifics as needed. Thanks for reading! Can't wait to see you at the show!

Appendix A : Basic Memorization Technique - Rule of 5

Over the years, it has been our pleasure to work with many fairly new actors. Often, these actors have never been given a process of how to memorize, at least not for a show. For this reason, we include the following basic technique that will help any actor preparing for performance.

If I tell you five words to remember, can you remember them? Almost anyone's answer is yes. This truly is how simple it is to memorize lines in a script. You just have to learn five words, several times in a row. As you do more theatre, and have more things in general that must be committed to memory, you will start to develop your own methods that work best for you, but this process works well for many people.

1. Start with the first scene your character is in. Read the whole scene over at least once, or until you basically understand what is happening. You should always do your best to understand the scene before you start memorizing. This will make your lines make more sense, and make them easier to memorize.
2. Take your first line of the scene. Read the whole line aloud from the script five times.
3. Go back to the first four or five words of the line, preferably a chunk that doesn't really make sense by itself. Say that phrase 5 times without looking at the page.
4. Go to the next four or five words in the sentence. Say these five times without looking at the page.
5. Now add the first and second section and say them together five times without looking at the page. Add the next section in the same way, first by itself five times, then adding it to the parts you've already done for five times, until you have done the whole line five times. Then move on to the next line, and repeat the process.
6. When you have finished a whole scene, find someone who will "run lines" with you. This just means they hold the script and read the other lines and you say your lines at the correct places. They can give you the first word or two if you have trouble remembering. Try and get through the whole scene a least twice without any big mistakes before you move on to the next one.

Step 6 is *very important* to test yourself. Many times actors come to rehearsal thinking that they are ready because they have worked on lines by themselves and feel like they know it, but when they are tested on stage for the first time, it is a different story. The actors who test themselves *at home* for the first time **always** do better.

Make sure that the actor also knows their “cues”. A cue is whatever they are waiting for to know that it is time to say their line. Usually, it is another actor's line, but it could be a sound or an action. Whatever it is, **it is just as important to know the cue as it is to know the line.**

Also, once a scene is blocked, the actor will need to memorize this movement along with the lines. These will consist of hand-written notes that they have made in the margins. Encourage them to explain to you what the notes mean – this will help *them* remember – and encourage them to move when and where they are supposed to move. Your living room may not be as big as the stage (or maybe it is!), but just moving in the right direction and at the right time and putting it together with the lines will speed their whole memorization process.

A few tips for parents of very young children – Children who are too young to read or read well will obviously need more help from you. While they may not always be able to fully understand exactly what is going in a scene, they can usually understand on some level. Take them through some version of the above process, and you will often be surprised at how quickly they memorize! After the initial memorization, the important thing for young kids to review is their cues. If you can know their cues (or keep the script handy) and give them different random cues throughout the day and have them give you the correct line, this is a good way for them to lock in the association between cue and line, and create an automatic response. Go back at some point before the next rehearsal and run things in the correct order.

Appendix B : Actor's Cheat Sheet

Actor's Cheat Sheet? You mean you want the actors to cheat? Well, yes... Sort of.

A cheat sheet is simply a piece of paper that lists each "next thing" for an actor, from the start to the finish of the show. It quickly lists cues (a line or song or other cue), entrances (where do I enter the stage at that cue?), costume changes (do I have to change any clothing before then?), props (do I have to bring anything with me here?) and pretty much anything that an actor needs to know so they can quickly reference it backstage without having to find a script and go through a whole book to see what's next.

In the heat of a performance, it is very easy to lose your place and forget what to do next. (It's happened to me!) The cheat sheet makes it easy for even the novice actor to reference the sheet, glance quickly at their notes, and get back on track.

Here's an example (that I made up):

Train scene after the party:

Cue: "That's the way the cookie crumbles."

Enter: Upstage Right, cross to right of tree

Costume Change: Add yellow top hat

Prop: rubber chicken

The actor repeats this progression throughout the script until they have their entire show boiled down to these essential points that keep them on track. I have done thousands of hours on stage, and I have rarely done a show without a cheat sheet. I put mine in as small a type and on as small a sheet as I can still clearly read, so that it's easy to carry around. Gloria likes hers on a full-size sheet in her dressing room, because her costumes don't always have pockets. Either way, we highly recommend it for all our actors, and may require it for an actor who is having trouble to help them feel more confident.

This cheat sheet may not be complete until after the last rehearsal, as things do change, but if the actor starts putting it together right away, it's pretty easy to do, and enormously helpful.

Appendix C: A Brief History of Young Stars Theatre

Young Stars Theatre was originally formed in Jacksonville Beach, FL in 2000. The program founders, Jack and Gloria Bennett, were doing a yearly summer musical theatre and drama camp with 40-50 youth (18 and under) every summer. Gloria was a voice teacher and private studio owner with a full roster of her own private voice students and several teachers working for her, and Jack was a professional actor who, with Gloria, taught acting classes to youth. It hit them after a few years of doing the summer camps that there was very little opportunity for these youth to participate in theatre the rest of the year.

This realization inspired the idea to create a community theatre just for youth actors, and Young Stars Theatre was born. They literally carved out a performance space in Gloria's private studio. That first theatre had a stage 13.5 feet wide by 8 feet deep, and could seat up to 42 audience members. They did regular shows there, a new show about every 2 months, 2 to 3 weekends of performances for each show, and raised a dedicated following of audience members who were consistently impressed with the high level of the youth productions.

After a little over 2 years of this, the building where the theatre was located was sold, and the new owners wanted to raise the lease by nearly 30%, which made it prohibitive to stay at that location. The studio moved to a smaller space, and YST was in limbo.

In 2004, Jack and Gloria moved to Los Angeles. Their daughter, Miranda, who had been active in the theatre in Florida (including professional Equity theatre) wanted to get into theatre in California. They were somewhat shocked to learn that although there was an abundance of children's theatre, every theatre charged fees in some way to the participants, some as high as \$800. While they understood the reality that theatre costs money to produce, they also realized that fees this high would likely exclude many youth from ever participating. So in 2007, Young Stars Theatre made its Southern California debut with a production of *The Sherlock Society*, an original play by George Demme (Gloria's father) at The Actor's Workout Studio in North Hollywood.

The idea of community theatre for youth actors seemed to strike a real chord in Los Angeles. Soon, YST was looking for a theatre to call their own. At the beginning of 2008, Gloria found a retail space on Sherman Way. Where other people saw a big empty room with little but a front door, a toilet and a sink, Gloria saw a theatre. With the help of donated labor from a contractor, Bill Lippold, donated pews and other building materials found on Craigslist, and a few thousand dollars in new materials, they were up and running with their first show in February of 2008.

Young Stars Theatre produced 11 shows in 2008 in their new space, nearly one a month, most with at least two and sometimes three completely different casts. Jack was working a full-time day job, and spending nearly every night at the theatre, either rehearsing, teaching, or building, and Gloria maintained a full roster of private voice students while also spending nearly every night at the theatre.

This schedule proved exhausting, and both Jack and Gloria ended up in the hospital at different times at the end of the year. These health issues, along with the slipping economy, forced Jack and Gloria to scale back to just 10 shows for 2009. The economic reality of 2009 still caught up with YST, and their final show in that space was *A Christmas Carol*. They shut the doors for the last time on December 15, 2009. The ray of sunshine came at almost the same time. They received their final letter of determination from the IRS that YST was a full 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, thanks to the efforts of attorney Karla Shippey.

THE GOOD NEWS:

As of January 2016 YST is back in their own theatre! The beautiful Fremont Centre Theatre in South Pasadena is YST's home for the foreseeable future, and they couldn't be more thrilled!

How You Can Help:

Donations to YST are tax-deductible:

www.YoungStarsTheatre.org



YOUNG STARS THEATRE

www.YoungStarsTheatre.org

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