

## CASTING THE PLAY

Few phases of production are more important to the ultimate success or failure of a play than the choice of the cast. Casting demands tact, sincerity, fairness, and sound judgment. Those planning to audition should fill out an audition form similar to the one shown on the following page. The director must cast not solely on the basis of the tryout but also from past experience with the individual and especially from a projection of what that actor will be able to do after weeks of rehearsal and direction. This ability to look ahead goes hand in hand with a director's ability to visualize the final production even before the first rehearsal. A successful production demands that actors be equipped physically, mentally, and temperamentally to give convincing interpretations of the roles assigned to them.

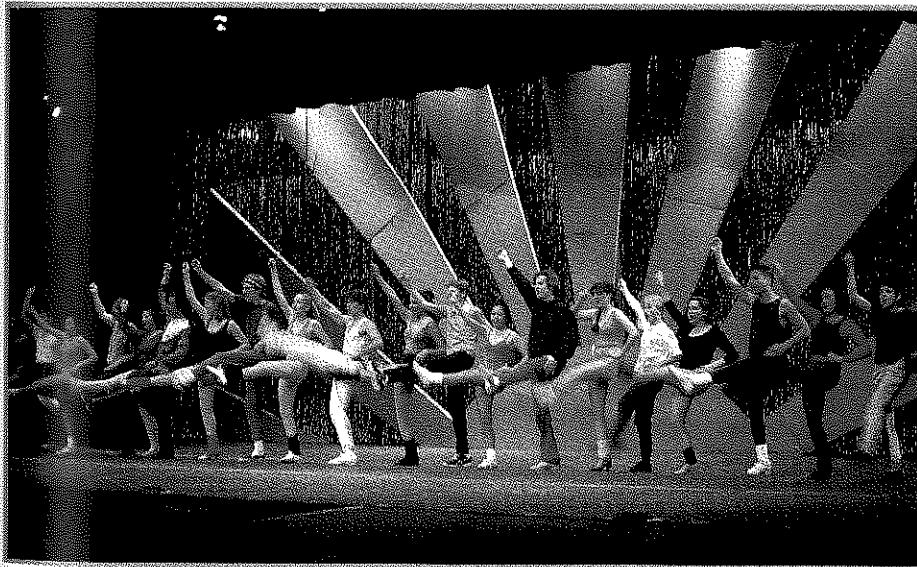
One of the most important experiences for an actor is the **audition**. Some of the most talented actors fail to get parts because they give poor auditions. In some public schools, auditions are limited to drama and speech students. In others, they are open to all students. This is a matter to be decided by the director or by the individual school. Perhaps the director will want to use a point system based on stage experience and service to help determine eligibility for roles. In some schools, scholastic standing in other departments and good citizenship are considered before an applicant is allowed to audition.

Every possible means of publicizing the roles to be filled should be used prior to the tryouts. Posters, articles in the school newspaper, and

## FROM THE PROS

"The actor who is talented and interesting and committed is more likely to get the role than someone who is 'right.'"

—MICHAEL SHURTLEFF,  
CASTING DIRECTOR



*A Chorus Line* is a play about the drama and anxiety that accompany an audition and the necessity to relax and just be yourself.

| TRYOUT INFORMATION FORM  |                     |   |        |
|--|---------------------|---|--------|
| NAME (LAST NAME FIRST)   | CLASS               | AGE   | PHONE  |
| ADDRESS  | SEX                 | HEIGHT  | WEIGHT |
| PREVIOUS ACTING EXPERIENCE   |                     |   |        |
|  |                     |   |        |
|  |                     |   |        |
| WHAT VOCAL PART DO YOU SING?<br>S A T B  |                     | WHAT MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DO YOU PLAY?<br>EXPERIENCE: |        |
| WHAT DANCE TRAINING HAVE YOU HAD?  |                     |   |        |
| LIST YOUR CLASS SCHEDULE   |                     |   |        |
| 1  | 4                   | 7   |        |
| 2  | 5                   | 8   |        |
| 3  | 6                   | 9   |        |
| WILL YOU BE ABLE TO ATTEND ALL REHEARSALS? YES _____ NO _____<br>IF NOT, WHAT CONFLICTS ARE THERE? |                     |   |        |
| ARE YOU INTERESTED IN WORKING ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES?                                  |                     |   |        |
| MAKEUP   | PROPERTIES          | SCENERY CONST.                                      |        |
| PUBLICITY  | COSTUMES            | STAGE CREW  |        |
| ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING STUDENT DIRECTOR?  |                     |   |        |
| PROMPTER?  | TECHNICAL DIRECTOR? | STAGE MANAGER?                                      |        |
| DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS  |                     |   |        |
| VOICE (QUALITY):   | IMAGINATION:        | STAGE PRESENCE:                                     |        |
| VOICE (PITCH):   | ANIMATION:          | PHYSICAL APPEARANCE:                                |        |
| VOICE (VARIETY):   |                     |   |        |
| PARTS CONSIDERED FOR:  |                     |   |        |
|  |                     |   |        |

posted descriptions of the characters are all good ways of circulating the information. If possible, the director might place a copy of the play on reserve in the school library for all applicants to read or might make the play available in some other way.

The audition arrangements must be determined by the number of people who wish to read for the play, the length of time that can be devoted to casting, and the kind of play to be presented. When possible, it is usually preferable to hold tryouts in the auditorium or theater in which the play is to be performed.

When the applicants have assembled, the director can explain all details of the tryouts, discuss the play briefly, and describe the characters. Each applicant should be asked to fill out a form giving name, address, phone number, height, weight, past experience in school plays, and any previous commitments that might interfere with attendance at rehearsals. Stress that applicants should complete *all* requested information.

Methods of conducting auditions vary with directors. Some directors combine audition formats. This is especially true of tryouts for musicals because actors very often have to be able to act, sing, and dance.

## CUE

When auditioning, it sometimes pays to know something about the director. What shows has that director done? What are his or her favorites? Be careful in your choice of material. You may strike a responsive chord, or you might find yourself competing with "ghosts of the past."

### Types of Auditions, Tryouts, or Readings

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Open audition</b>            | For professional nonunion actors<br>For entire school student body   |
| <b>Closed audition</b>          | For only professional union actors<br>For only certain school students, such as drama club members   |
| <b>Prepared audition</b>        | May use rehearsed material, including memorized lines and actions  |
| <b>Textual tryout</b>           | Material from manuscript or printed play, may be either monologue or scene<br>Same as prepared audition  |
| <b>Cold reading</b>             | Uses unfamiliar material. Must read with imagination, feeling, and confidence<br>Not penalized for errors in interpretation if director does not summarize material<br>May be textual or improvisational |
| <b>Improvisational audition</b> | Must improvise scene around assigned character and situation   |

## CUE

If the cold reading uses a scene, the actor might have the disadvantage of playing with another actor with whom he or she is unfamiliar. On the other hand, the actor has the advantage of playing against someone.

After preliminary auditions, the director will make a list of those considered for parts. These individuals will be invited to **callbacks**, auditions to read again from the script, sometimes with candidates for other roles. Occasionally, there may need to be further callbacks until final casting can be determined. By this time, any problems concerning rehearsal attendance, dependability, responsiveness to suggestions, and general attitudes should be solved as completely as possible.

Perhaps the most important aspect of auditions is that they be conducted in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Each student who tries out must know that she or he is being given a fair chance. Good auditions can set morale at a high level for the rest of the production.

## Application ACTIVITIES

1. Pretend that you are preparing your own material for an upcoming prepared audition. Choose the text, either monologue or scene, and then plan your actions and memorize your part. Ask a classmate to take the role of the casting director and give you friendly feedback.
2. Look at the sample Tryout Information Form. Write a brief description of the committee on which you would like to work or the particular position you would like to fill in the production of the play.

## YOU AND YOUR AUDITION

Planning for your audition will take time and careful preparation, especially if the production is professional. Those of you wanting to pursue acting as a professional career should have a **résumé**, such as the one shown on the opposite page, and a portfolio. Your résumé should include an eight-by-ten-inch black and white headshot photograph of you as you appear offstage, not as a character in costume. The résumé should also include all the important information a casting director wants to know: name, address, phone number, type of voice (if you sing), vital statistics, experience, education and professional training, and special skills. Since all actors are typed by class of performer, include at the top of the résumé your type classification. For