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Dear Parents,

If you read our “On Casting” letter, you know that casting is a careful and thoughtful process. Our goal is to place a large number of students into a small number of roles, serve the integrity of all the shows and make everyone happy. We hope this letter helps to give you some context for the phone call your child will receive from us regarding casting, as well as some guidance on how to support your child as we head into rehearsals.

**When we cast the shows we are looking at the following:**

- *Numbers.* Do we have the right number of actors to fill each show?
- *Skills.* Who can play these parts? Who has the range to sing each role? Who has the emotional depth – or the comedic timing? Who has the physical qualities that are required? Who is right, in a variety of ways, for which part?
- *Age.* Different roles or shows may require different ages. Some shows are not appropriate for younger kids, in which case they won’t be cast in them. Some shows are not appropriate for older kids, in which case they won’t be cast in them. Older does not mean a better actor. Some of our youngest students are working at the same artistic level as our oldest students. Actors of all ages learn from each other, and become friends, when they are cast in a show together.
- *Gender.* Is there a gender requirement – does the role need to be played by a boy or a girl? Or can we mix it up and cast non-traditionally?
- *Who needs to be challenged in a specific way and what challenge is each actor ready for in this moment?* Some actors may play two leads in a row. Some actors may often be in the ensemble. We must do what’s best for each individual actor, as well as what is best for the play as a whole. An actor may wish for a bigger role but if the requirements of that role are going to present challenges that the actor, at this point in her process, is not ready to tackle – on a stage, in front of an audience – we will find a role that will challenge, but not defeat that actor. It is our job in casting to always stretch our kids as far as we can - to challenge them as much as we can - without ever crossing the line and casting them in a role in which they will not be successful.
- *The ensemble.* Do these actors fit together—will they all work well together and will they sound or look right together?
- *Type of show.* Has an actor been primarily only in one type of show – a musical, a large cast, a comedy – and do they need to have the experience of another type?
- *Schedules.* The schedules of the shows (when they are performed and when they rehearse) and your schedules play a HUGE part in casting. Often, we may want an actor for a part in one show, but he can only rehearse on the nights of another show, thus taking him out of the running for a role we are considering him for.

**When we cast a show, we do NOT pay heed to the following:**

- *“My child has paid her dues...”* If a child is participating in the program, we assume that she is doing her best, working to hone her creative skills so that she will grow as an artist and best serve the play in which she is appearing. They have all paid their dues.
- *“My child is graduating, so he/she deserves a lead role.”* This is definitely possible. He may deserve one and he may get one. It would depend on the shows being cast and how he fits in. There are no guarantees.
- *“My best friend is in a different show” or “I don’t have any friends in that show!”* Make them. This is the safest place to make new friends and to develop lasting relationships. Open up to new people and experiences.

- *“My friend got a good part and I didn’t. That’s not fair.”* Actors get cast in the roles that will challenge them and in the roles we feel they can accomplish well, to best serve the play. There simply aren’t enough “big” parts for those who deserve them. That is the reality of the theatre. Good actors/dancers/singers who prepare excellent auditions get cast in the ensemble every single season. Ensemble roles can be as much fun and as challenging as “lead” roles...and can steal the show when played well!

**What to tell your children when they are upset because they didn’t get cast in the role they wanted:**

- Talk about what is good about how they were cast...a new challenge, a great director, friends in the cast. Find the “known” positive aspects of the casting and focus on those—the “unknown” positives will reveal themselves throughout the process.
- Remind them that just because they may not have gotten the role they wanted does not mean they weren’t great or right for the role. There are many ways to cast every part...keep in mind that we are casting a whole season of shows that need to succeed with good casting. Holding onto that artistic integrity throughout all of the shows influences the casting.
- Point out that their busy schedules also affect casting. You must be able to rehearse the show, and to be in it.
- Emphasize that we look out for all the actors, no matter how “big” or “small” their role may be. Just because they don’t have lines does not mean they won’t have plenty to do or that they won’t have a great time during the process. We work to feature everyone in the result, but it is the process that is most important. Actors cannot possibly know based on casting what the process is going to be like – they have to experience it to know how much fun it will be! And the truth is that the amount of fun an actor has in a show has absolutely nothing to do with the size of his part.
- Speak with them about how they felt their auditions went. Talk about possibly preparing better or taking more creative risks the next time. Make sure they also think about what they did well at their audition – about what went well! Remind them that auditioning is a skill, and actors get better at it each time they do it!

Our mission at PGT reaches beyond just putting up shows or creating good actors. We hope that the actors come away having a greater sense of themselves, buoyed by a healthy self-esteem. We hope they feel comfortable expressing themselves, and trust that their ideas are important and worthy of being heard. We hope they feel strong and brave enough to take risks on stage and in the world. We hope they can work well in an ensemble with humility, while retaining their sense of individualism. We hope they can learn from others, regardless of age, and respect them as creative beings. And when they hear the applause, along their life journeys, we hope they can take a moment to revel in their success, and then smile and thank their audience for supporting their efforts.

We hope this helps smooth out any bumps that could arise during casting time. We want everyone to have a great time here at PGT and to know that there is a method to this casting madness, as well as the best of intentions behind every decision.

*The PGT Artistic Staff*