

Dear Parents,

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 the show, and make everyone happy. We hope this letter helps to give you some context for the posting of casting, as well as some guidance on how to support your child as we head into rehearsals.

When a dancer auditions, the dancer is committing to participate in the production regardless of casting. Only dancers enrolled as students at NEAD can be casted in productions. No refunds can be given after casting has been posted. This is because every role is important to our show, and if a dancer drops out they will have to be replaced.

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

- *Skills.* Who can dance these parts? Who has the level of skill developed enough to dance 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?
- *Numbers.* Do we have the right number of dancers to fill each role?
- *Age.* Different roles or parts may require different ages. Some parts are not appropriate for younger kids, in which case they won't be cast in them. Some parts are not appropriate for older kids, in which case they won't be cast in them. Older does not mean a better dancer. Some of our younger students are working at the same artistic level as our older students. Dancers of all ages learn from each other, and become friends, when they are cast in a show together.
- *Who needs to be challenged in a specific way and what challenge is each dancer ready for in this moment?* Some dancers may play two leads in a row. Some dancers may often be in the ensemble. We must do what's best for each individual dancer, as well as what is best for the show as a whole. A dancer may wish for a bigger role but if the requirements of that role are going to present challenges that the dancer, 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 dancer. It is our job in casting to always stretch our dancers 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 dancers fit together—will they work well together and will they look right together?

**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 a dancer and best serve the role in which she is performing. They have all paid their dues.

- *"My child is graduating, so she deserves a lead role."* This is definitely possible. She may deserve one and she may get one. It would depend on the shows being cast that year and how she fits in. There are no guarantees.
- *"My best friend is in a different role" or "I don't have any friends in that role!"* Make them. This is a safe 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."* Dancers get cast in the roles that will challenge them and in the roles we feel they can accomplish well, to best serve the show. There simply aren't enough "big" parts for those who deserve them. That is the reality of the theatre. Good dancers 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 approximately 150 or more dancers that need to succeed with good casting. Holding onto that artistic integrity throughout the entire show influences the casting.
- Emphasize that we look out for all the dancers, no matter how "big" or "small" their role may be. Just because they don't dance in many scenes 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. Dancers 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 a dancer has in a show has absolutely nothing to do with the size of her part.
- Speak with them about how they felt their auditions went. Talk about possibly preparing better or taking more creative risks 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 dancers get better at it each time they do it!

Our mission reaches beyond just putting up shows or creating good dancers. We hope that the dancers 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 NEAD and to know that there is a method to this casting madness, as well as the best of intentions behind every decision.

Beyond this letter, if the need should arise, you may schedule a meeting with a director through the office no sooner than three days after the release of any casting.