

Guidelines for Auditions

Principal Auditions

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The principal audition itself may count as a society audition provided it has sufficient element of solo singing, otherwise a society audition may be required before an auditionee can be cast. Members and past members who have not performed for the society for more than two years may also be required to undertake a society audition.

Those who are unsuccessful in obtaining a principal part must undertake a chorus audition in order to be considered for the chorus.

Chorus Auditions

Chorus auditions will take place after principal auditions.

Any chorus auditionee who is a prospective new member must have completed a society audition before they can be cast. Members and past members who have not performed for the society for more than two years may also be required to undertake a society audition. The chorus audition itself is not eligible as a society audition.

Advice to Auditionees

- You will be judged on both singing and acting, so your songs should be presented in character.
- Words for both songs and dialogue may be carried or put on a stand without penalty, providing they do not significantly affect the overall performance.
- It is better to use a libretto, a photocopy or handwritten words than it is to carry a full score when singing, as this allows more scope for acting.

Rules for Auditionees

You may apply to be considered for as many parts as you wish, but you are limited to performing an audition for a maximum of two of them.

You should ensure that the audition pieces actually performed are equivalent to or larger than the others that you wish to be considered for. The audition panel would not expect to allocate a principal part to someone who had only auditioned for a smaller part.

If you wish to be considered for a dialogue part, you must perform an audition for a dialogue part. Similarly, if you wish to be considered for a singing part, you must perform an audition for a singing part.

Directors' Preparation for Auditions

The Musical Director, together with the Stage Director, must prepare a list of musical audition pieces for each part being cast, and for the chorus.

The Stage Director must prepare a list of dialogue pieces for each part being cast. He or she must also prepare a character sketch for each part which gives an insight into the character and the playing age (not actual age) required. It is not sufficient to simply describe the place the character has in the plot of the show.

The musical and dialogue audition pieces, together with character sketches, must be made available at the first pre-audition rehearsal. They should also be made available to all members of the society and other interested parties by publication on the website.

Minor roles may be cast from successful chorus auditionees. The audition form must give the option to state whether the auditionee is willing to undertake a small part.

The audition pieces for each character should reflect the performing requirements of that character and a balance should therefore be struck between music, dialogue and dance accordingly. There should be a maximum of two songs, two sections of dialogue and 1 dance routine per character; in most cases, it will be sufficient to hear only 1 song and 1 section of dialogue. It is not necessary for the whole of a long song to be heard. E.g. 3 verses of a 5 verse song will be enough upon which to make a judgment. Auditionees need to be made aware of any possible curtailments to their audition pieces.

Pre-Audition Rehearsals

The Musical Director will arrange a set of pre-audition rehearsals, to allow prospective members of the cast to rehearse their parts.

Encouragement to Attend Auditions

Directors and others involved in a show may encourage people to come to audition, but they must be careful of the following:

There must be no "tapping up"; they must not invite people to audition for a particular part. This implies that the person being approached is preferred for the part, and this will lead to problems if the part is not given to them. This has occurred in the past, and experience shows that it brings significant problems.

Composition of the Audition Panel

The principal audition panel is composed as follows:

Chairman

The Chairman of the audition panel is the Chairman of the society at that time. If the Chairman is not available, the place will be taken by the vice-Chairman, another member of the Executive Committee or a vice-president of the society.

Stage Director

The appointed Stage Director is a member of the audition panel. If there are joint directors, they both sit on the audition panel, but only have one vote.

Musical Director

The Musical Director for the show is a member of the audition panel.

Two members of the society

Two members of the society, one female and one male, are appointed by the Executive Committee as members of the audition panel.

Choreographer

If there is a movement audition, the choreographer may also be present on the audition panel. The choreographer is only invited to participate in discussion and decisions relating to parts where the movement audition is relevant.

If there is a double or triple bill, the audition panels for each show will be composed exactly as described above, with no additional personnel from the other shows.

The chorus audition panel is composed of the chairman, stage director and musical director as given above. If there is a movement audition for chorus, the choreographer may also be present on the audition panel.

Basis for Decisions

When deciding on parts for the show, artistic merit should be the basis on which the decisions are made:

- Clarity and projection in both singing and speech.
- Ability to convey the essence of the character as required.
- Suitability of general appearance for the character, especially when compared with other characters.
- How the auditionee interacts with others, especially with those with whom they are closely linked.

The following criteria may also be taken into account:

- History of unreliability.
- Inability to remember lines or moves.
- Insufficient commitment to rehearsal attendance.
- Auditionee is participating in another show which is so close to this show that it will affect rehearsal attendance.

The following criteria may not be taken into account:

- Past history of not being able to make it through a full week of performances (e.g. voice breaking down, etc).
- Difficulty in relationships with Stage or Musical Director.
- Giving a very small part to a capable, though not the best, auditionee (to develop their talent, etc).
- Giving a part to a member of the society in preference to a non-member.
- Having already gained a part in another show if there is a double or triple bill.
- Inability of auditionee to get on with another in the cast.

- Whether the auditionee actually auditioned for this part, as distinct from asking to be considered for it, but auditioning for another.
- Known to be willing/unwilling to be in the chorus.

Decision Making

The audition panel should come to a consensus about all decisions.

Any member of the Audition Panel who has a close link with anyone auditioning for a particular part may not participate in the discussion or decision about that part. Examples of 'close links' are partners, parents, offspring, or, indeed, themselves.

In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, the following options should be undertaken:

More than one suitable auditionee

Voting: The Stage Director(s) (one vote), Musical Director (one vote) cast votes. The Chairman makes a casting vote if required.

Note that it is not acceptable to use one of the "criteria that cannot be taken into account" to break a deadlock, nor is it acceptable to ask for a re-audition, since the candidates are deemed to be acceptable.

No suitable auditionee

Open re-audition: The part is re-auditioned, and any previous auditionees for the part are allowed to re-audition. If an auditionee asks "is it worth while re-auditioning?", the response should answer the question "why didn't I get the part". It is up to the auditionee to decide whether it is worth re-auditioning.

Any re-auditions would normally be announced at the Tuesday rehearsal following the principal audition on a Sunday, with the re-auditions taking place on the following Tuesday. It is permissible for the Directors to ask people to consider auditioning for a part that is being re-auditioned, providing they make it clear that the part is not theirs for the taking.

Invitation with audition: The part may only be filled by direct invitation to a single person to audition after an unsuccessful open re-audition has taken place.

Invitation without audition: If the above steps have proved unsuccessful, the part may be offered to a suitable candidate without audition.

Note: It is not acceptable, in the first place, to ask an auditionee (or anyone else) who did not ask to be considered for the part if they would like to take it before an open re-audition has taken place, even if their audition for a different part indicates that they might be suitable.

General Guidelines

The deliberations of the audition panel should be considered a "closed box". Once the auditions have been completed, there should be no contact with anyone outside the panel by phone or other means.

Confidentiality

All conversations held by the audition panel, and all performances seen by the audition panel, must remain completely confidential. They are not to be communicated to anyone outside the audition panel, including the Executive Committee.

The only exception to this is in the case where a failed auditionee asks why they did not get a part. In this case, the Chairman of the audition panel should normally provide the answer.

Note that auditionees should not be given any feedback unless they specifically ask for it.

Organisation and execution of auditions (additional considerations since January 2017):

It may be possible and desirable for some principal dance routines to be performed for audition before the audition afternoon at the final pre-audition rehearsal to make the scheduling of auditions easier and to lessen the waiting time for auditionees.

At the point of working out suitable audition pieces, the Stage Director needs to work out a sensible running order of music, dialogue and dance for the audition afternoon. Auditionees should perform music and dialogue together in the same "visit" where these items run into each other. This running order needs to be shown to the Musical Director, Choreographer and Audition panel chairman. A guiding principle should be to minimise the amount of waiting around auditionees have to do.

The Musical Director must liaise with the accompanist before the audition afternoon and ensure that the latter's score is clearly marked with the requisite audition pieces. This needs to happen at least a week before the auditions so the accompanist has time to rehearse.

A sign up sheet for auditions, stating for which part(s) auditionees wish to audition, is made available at the first pre-audition rehearsal and thereafter.

After the final pre-audition rehearsal finishes, the sign up sheet is then turned into a timetable (based on the running order previously established) for auditions by the production secretary and auditionees should be emailed or telephoned the following day with the running order. The timetable needs to reflect that people may decide to audition on the day so enough slack time must be allocated to allow for this.

The running order needs to reflect realistic timings. As a guide, allow 4 minutes per musical number, dialogue section, dance routine (1 minute to come in and out + 3 minutes to perform). It is better when working out timings to have the audition panel hanging around than to keep auditionees waiting because of a backlog. Therefore, extra time should always be built in to allow for any catch up.

Whilst an individual/ group is auditioning, the next individual/ group should be ready and waiting (though not within earshot if possible) as requested by the production secretary.

Audition guidelines are going to be amended to allow the audition panel to check with an auditionee that he/she has filled in his/her form correctly in order to satisfy the audition panel's mind that an auditionee did not intend to tick any boxes other than the ones he/ she did.

Between the Chairman and the Production Secretary, the following need to be sorted out for the day of auditions (a checklist):

- Venue is opened up early and set up according to requirements (e.g. auditionee's room, tables and chairs for audition panel, refreshments etc.) The doors and windows of the audition room are suitably "masked" from anyone else being able to see in.
- Each member of the audition panel has a copy of the running order, a score and lib (should they wish to refer to these), note paper, pen and a copy of the Society's rules for auditions.
- Copies of the audition forms for auditionees to fill out on the day.
- Welcoming auditionees.
- Getting forms filled out and passing them to the panel.
- Marshalling auditionees promptly to audition room.
- Adjusting the running order to allow for changing circumstances.
- Auditionees are contacted with the verdicts of the audition panel within 24 hours of the auditions finishing.