

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are about to begin rehearsals for a production of “*Beauty and the Beast*”. “Rehearsing” refers to the process of learning and practicing a **dramatic work** (such as a play or musical) in order to perform it for an audience. It involves a great deal of time, hard work and commitment and is far from easy! Because a musical uses spoken words, songs and dances to tell a story, you may be called upon to act, sing *and* dance in your production – there’s a lot to rehearse! But there’s nothing more exciting than opening night, when all the effort pays off in front of a cheering audience.

The main sections of this packet contain the **dialogue**, **lyrics** and **stage directions** for the musical.

- **Dialogue** refers to the words the characters speak in the show. The complete dialogue of a show is called the **book** of the show.
- **Lyrics** are the words the characters sing in the show.
- **Stage directions** describe how the show will look to your audience, including the physical appearance of the stage, the location and position of each character *onstage*, and any important physical actions performed by the characters. Sometimes stage directions also help the actors and the **director** (the person responsible for guiding the entire production) understand why characters say and do certain things. The reason behind a character’s actions is called his or her **motivation**.

Together, dialogue, lyrics and stage directions make up the **libretto** (or **script**) of the show. The script is usually divided into two main sections called **acts**, which are in turn divided into **scenes**, each scene usually taking place in a different location (or **setting**). In performances, acts are often separated by a brief ten to fifteen-minute **intermission**, during which members of the audience can get up, stretch their legs, visit the restroom and otherwise refresh themselves.

How to start talking like a big-shot actor

As you read and rehearse *Beauty and the Beast*, you will no doubt encounter some unfamiliar theatrical terms. People who work in the theatre have coined many words and phrases that make it easier for

them to talk about what and where things happen on a stage or in a theatre. You should try to learn and use these terms, as rehearsing is much easier when everyone speaks the same language.

The term “**theatre**” (sometimes spelled “theater”) can be used in many different ways. It may refer to a play or musical, a performance of a play or musical, the quality of such a performance, a building in which plays and musicals are presented, a room in which plays and musicals are presented, or the community of people who work to create and perform plays or musicals. This means you can go to a “theatre” to see a piece of “theatre” which is very good “theatre” and which represents the best “theatre” has to offer!

“**Curtain**” is another word with multiple uses. Usually, it refers to the heavy curtain that can be lowered across the front of the stage to hide the stage from the audience. It may also refer to the beginning of a show (or act), when the heavy curtain is raised to reveal the stage. It may also refer to the end of a show (or act), when the heavy curtain is dropped!

The **stage** is, of course, the area from which actors perform for an audience. The **house** is the area where the audience sits to watch the performance. Anything on the stage and within view of the audience is said to be **onstage**; anything outside the view of the audience is said to be **offstage**. The entire area offstage is the **backstage** area. “Stage” can also be used to describe the action of planning out how something will be carried out onstage; a director “stages a scene” by planning out where and how the actors will move and interact onstage during a particular section of the play or musical.

The various onstage, offstage and backstage areas vary from theatre to theatre. Some theatres have an **apron**, a section of the stage that extends forward in front of the main curtain. Some theatres have a sunken area in front of the stage called the **orchestra pit**, from which any musicians involved in the production perform.

Most theatres have **wings**, which are areas to the side of the stage, just out of the audience’s view. Actors who are about to come onstage are often said to be “waiting in the wings.” Also hidden from the audience is the area above the stage, called the **fly** or **fly space**. Sometimes long black curtains called **legs** hang from above the stage and at its sides, to further hide the wings and fly space. Just beyond the backstage area are the **dressing rooms**, where the actors change into and out of their costumes before, after and during

the performance. Most theatres also have a **green room** close by, where actors can rest while waiting for their scenes.

The areas of the house also vary from theatre to theatre. Most theatres have a house consisting of one level, called the **orchestra section** (because it sits on the same level as the orchestra pit). Larger theatres may have a house with two or more levels (or **tiers**). The second tier is usually called the **mezzanine**, the third the **balcony**.

In addition to learning the names of the different areas in a theater, you should familiarize yourself with the various theatrical equipment that will surround you onstage and offstage. **Backdrops** are large pieces of painted paper, cloth or other material which hang behind acting areas to represent different locations. They usually hang from metal pipes suspended overhead called **battens**. **Cycloramas** or **cycs** (pronounced “sykes”) are special backdrops that hang at the back of the stage and are often lit to represent the sky. Sometimes backdrops and cycloramas are supplemented with **flats**, wooden frames with material stretched across them. These, too, are painted to represent different settings. The entire physical environment onstage in any given scene is known as a **set**, and may include backdrops, flats, furniture and **props** (onstage objects used by the actors during the show).

The set is usually lit by **floodlights** and other types of theatrical lighting equipment, which hang from the battens and from the sides of the house. These lights are controlled by a **master lighting board** at the back of the theatre. Most theatre lights are fixed on one area of the stage and never move or change their focus. **Spotlights** or **follow spots**, on the other hand, can be used to follow a person who is moving around onstage. These powerful lights are usually located at (and operated from) the back of the house.

Microphones may also hang from the battens, to amplify the sound of the actors’ voices. Special types of microphones that may be used include **foot mics** (flat microphones which are arranged along the front edge of the stage) and **body** or **lavalier mics** (portable microphones strapped to the actors’ bodies). Like the lights, the microphones are controlled from the back of the theatre by a **sound board** or **mixing board** (so-called because it is used to “mix” the sounds from the various microphones onstage into one sound, which is then played through amplifiers in the house). Sometimes onstage actors want to hear the

“mixed” sound the audience is hearing, so they can adjust their volume onstage accordingly. An amplifier placed onstage to allow actors to hear what the audience hears is called a **monitor**. Sometimes monitors are also placed in the dressing rooms and the green room, so actors backstage can keep track of what is happening onstage.

The most important terms you must learn are the ones theatre professionals use to describe the position of people and things onstage. Each section of the stage has a specific name. When you stand at the center of the stage and face the audience:

- **Upstage** is the area behind you
- **Downstage** is the area in front of you
- **Stage right** is the area to your right
- **Stage left** is the area to your left,
- **Center stage** is the area where you are standing

These terms can be combined: for example, the area to your right and behind you is **upstage right** (sometimes shortened to **up right**). They stay the same no matter what direction you face or where you are located onstage or in the theater; for example, the section of the stage farthest away from the audience and to its left is always **upstage right**.

Another useful set of terms describes what happens onstage during a show:

- An actor **enters** or makes an **entrance** when that actor steps onstage
- An actor **exits** or makes an **exit** when that actor leaves the stage
- An actor **crosses** when that actor moves from one place onstage to another
- An actor **counters** when that actor moves to fill the space left by an actor who has just **crossed**
- A **cue** is any line or action that triggers another line or action

How to destroy your script like a professional

Most professional actors feel libretto/vocal books are worthless until marked up, under-lined and run-through with a highlighting pen. The reasons for this will become clear as you begin rehearsals.

As you rehearse, you will find although your script provides you with lines, music, lyrics and basic stage directions, it leaves countless details to the imagination of you and your director. This is part of the excitement of live theatre: unlike film and television (where performances, sets, costumes and camera shows are forever frozen in place), a piece of live theatre changes with each production and performance. The same words and music may be interpreted in countless different ways, making each production and performance unique. It is up to you and your director to make the final decision as to which interpretation is right for your production. To this end, your director will give you instructions (or **notes**) on your **blocking** (where, when and how you move onstage), **stage business** (the action you perform onstage) and **line readings** (how you interpret your lines and lyrics). Your director will also help you understand your character (or **role**), why your character does certain things (your character's motivation), how your character interacts with other characters, and the significance of your character to the entire musical. Meanwhile, your music director and choreographer will teach you your character's songs and dances (the dances in a show are known as the show's **choreography**) and give notes on how to perform them. You will be responsible for remembering *all* of these notes and carrying them out in rehearsal and performance!

The best way to do this is to copy any notes you are given into the margins of your script. In marking up your script, you are “completing” the script of the show as it is interpreted by your director, music director, and choreographer, and creating a guide to which you can refer if you should forget what to do during rehearsals. So don't feel bashful about writing in your book or on your music – that's what it's there for.

What to expect in rehearsals

It is important to know a little about the rehearsal process, so you can plan ahead and make the most of your time. Although your exact rehearsal schedule will be determined by your directors, there is a general rehearsal plan which is followed by almost all productions:

1. At the first rehearsal, forms are turned in, measurements are taken, general rehearsal begins with all in attendance – wear appropriate clothing daily.
2. The cast learns the music, blocking and choreography to the show. Not everyone is called at the same time but you should keep the block 2:30-5:30 open everyday.
3. The cast rehearses the book, songs, and dances separately. Each song and dance is rehearsed separately, as is each scene in the book.
4. The cast rehearses each scene complete with all its components (book, songs and dances).
5. The cast rehearses the show in its entirety. A rehearsal in which you rehearse the entire show is called a **run-through**.
6. The cast rehearses “in costume”. These rehearsals are known as **dress rehearsals**. It includes makeup – you are responsible for your own shoes, your own makeup and your own leotards/dance belts.
7. The cast rehearses with the lights, sets, and sound equipment. These rehearsals are known as **technical rehearsals** or “**techs**”. They go long and late BUT there is a lot of “down time” which means you should be sitting and doing homework while you wait. It is only one week so please do not use it as an excuse to stay out late any other time. Budget your time wisely and you’ll be fine.
8. The director stages the **curtain call** at the final dress rehearsals. The curtain call is the last moment of the evening (after the show is over) when the cast and crew members return onstage to take their bows.

The structure of each rehearsal will be about the same. You will learn or practice the scene, song or dance indicated on the rehearsal schedule. Your director will then give you notes on your

performances, and you will continue to practice the scene, song or dance keeping the notes in mind. Your early rehearsals will be **on-book** (i.e. you will rehearse with your script in hand). The sooner you get **off-book**, the better; it is much easier to act when you don't have to carry your script! We expect you to try to be off book within 1-2 rehearsals of blocking the scene. Don't be afraid to start rehearsing from memory even on day one – your stage manager will always have their script open to remind you of your lines and blocking should you forget them (this is known as **prompting**). If you forget a line, simply call, “*Line!*”

When you begin to rehearse in your performance space, be aware that the theatre can be a dangerous place, especially when the technical elements (lights, sets, and props) are in place. The typical stage is filled with heavy equipment, ropes, wires and potentially hazardous electronic equipment, and is not a place for horseplay or goofing off! It is also not a place for food or drink! Since working on a show can be very tiring, make sure you eat well and get enough sleep.

Being a member of the company of a show carries with it an enormous amount of responsibility. You are responsible not only to yourself, but also to your creative team and other company members. Every member of the cast and crew is vital to the success of the show. Because your actions affect those of the entire company, it is vital that you show up at each **call time** (the time at which you are expected at rehearsals or at the theatre before a performance), that you be punctual, and that you concentrate and follow instructions at all times.

A final word...

The preceding pages contain a great deal of information, and you may feel a bit overwhelmed at how complicated it all seems. Don't worry, though – you'll be amazed how quickly you pick it all up once you start rehearsing. And the most important thing is to have fun. So get out there and “break a leg”.