



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE MAGIC OF THEATRE!

It happens in a moment. A flyer is posted, and announcement is read over the loudspeaker. . .
“Auditions coming up for this year’s LOJ musical!”

Anticipation bubbles as visions of singing, dancing, acting, and standing ovations run rampant in young minds.

Participating in a musical is one of the most rewarding experiences a young person can have. The director and other adults working on the production care about your child’s future and want to invest time and energy into his or her development.

Your child is about to take a journey that, with a little help from you, can have a positive, long-lasting impact on her or him and the community in which you live.

This packet is designed to provide you with information to assist your child throughout the process of creating a show. It’s also an overview of the process of producing a musical and suggests ways in which you can get involved. Most importantly, it’s an opportunity for you and your child to share some quality time together on an activity that is fun and inspires the imagination.

**CURTAIN UP! LIGHT THE LIGHTS!
LET’S BEGIN!**



Why a Musical?

Musicals are fun! They also provide young people with many valuable development opportunities.

A musical brings together the arts in one comprehensive program. Music and dance introduce basic performing arts. The design & creation of sets, costumes and props integrate the visual arts. Rehearsing and performing dialogue develops language skills. Integrating sound and lighting explores the use of technology. As you can see, a musical celebrates many diverse disciplines in one arena.

In addition, the process of presenting a musical offers young people the opportunity to develop social skills, relationships and learn valuable life lessons. Some examples:

- In a musical, everyone’s contribution is important. The student operating the sound system is as important to the overall success of the production as the child who plays a leading role.
- Everyone must work together for the greater good, encouraging collaboration and community.
- Children learn the importance of listening to each other speak and waiting one’s turn. They take positive risks and conquer fears while building self-confidence.

- Assessment in a musical is nearly instantaneous in the applause and ovations participants receive at the end of the show, meaning they get immediate feedback and praise.

But the best part? A musical is a lot of fun for everyone involved, whether your child creates sets, takes tickets, sings in the chorus, or plays a principle role.

Before you commit:

Before your child makes a firm commitment to a show, there are a few things you should discuss:

- A musical is a commitment of time & energy. Make sure you review the rehearsal and performance schedule in advance. Do you anticipate any conflicts with soccer, piano, or other activities? If so, it's important to let the director know of conflicts in advance. If your conflicts are significant, you might also want to encourage your child to take on a less time-consuming position with the production. Remember, every contribution is important!
- Many of the adults involved in creating the sets, costumes, props and overall learning environment for your kids are volunteers who generously donate "blood, sweat and tears" to make it all happen. It is important to remember these sacrifices, as well as your own time and energy when encouraging your child to give the highest level of respect and commitment to the show, the adult volunteers and their fellow cast & crew members.

Academics:

While it is great to keep the show as a high priority, it's vital that school work comes first!! It's never OK to use participation in the play as an excuse for late work or as grounds to ask for an extension from your teachers. It is also important to remember that no one may participate in a rehearsal or a performance if they were absent from school that day. Allowing your child to miss school or sleep in due to the play could result in the school pulling them from the show. Clearly, if your child is ill, then time off is warranted, but they would also need to miss that day's rehearsal. (This is why we allow up to 3 last-minute, or 'unexcused' absences from rehearsal)

Don't Be a Mama Rose!

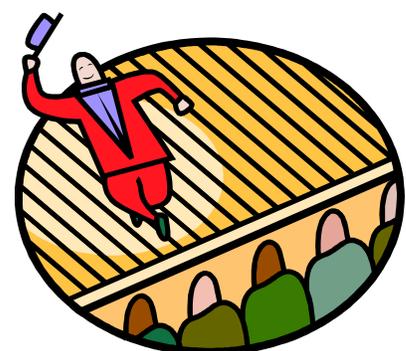
Mama Rose is a character from the musical *Gypsy*. She's a bossy "stage mother" (a term for a parent who pushes their child into the performing arts in a negative manner). We've all seen these types at Little League games, beauty pageants and everything in between. Some of us have probably even acted this way to some degree without even knowing it! When our heart is in the right place, we're sometimes blind to the fact that we might be stepping on someone's toes or pushing just a little too hard.

Remember, having your child participate in theatre has little to do with creating a "star". The objective of rehearsing and presenting a musical is to provide children with opportunities to develop life skills and have fun. When parents lament with their kids over the size of the role they receive, or let kids think they have been "slighted" in any way, the benefits of the collaborative effort can be undermined.

Announcing the Cast:

The announcement of the cast can be a difficult time since the role offered may not meet your child's expectations. You know your child best. If your child is upset, empower your child to talk to the director one-on-one to discuss the decision and how to enhance future auditions. You'll ultimately know how best to comfort your child. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Trust the director's judgment. The director is casting an ensemble, not just one or two "lead" roles. It's important for the



cast to understand the importance of working together as an ensemble and to see the production as a whole – not as individual parts that seem less or more important than others.

- Remind your child that everyone’s contribution is important and valued.
- Let your child brainstorm ideas for characteristics for his or her role. Is she peppy or indifferent? Is he confident or awkward? Ultimately, the director might have specific character qualities in mind, but this will introduce your child to the basics of acting.
- Take the role to another level by encouraging your child to create a “back story” for his or her character. Where is the character from? Why is the character in the show? Half the fun is that the audience never has to know the character’s back story, but this exploration by your child will round out the character even more. Again, have fun, but create a story that works realistically within the director’s vision for the show.

Surviving The First Rehearsal!

At the first rehearsal, the cast will receive their scripts (if they haven’t already) and get to know the rest of their collaborators. Some cast members may want to count their lines, but this should be discouraged. The authors created every character for a reason, and each role impacts the entire production. As the famous Russian director and acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavski advised (in Russian, of course), “There are no small parts, only small actors!”

Rehearsals

The cast is set and now it’s time to get to work. Here are some ways that you can help your child:



- Place a copy of the rehearsal schedule on the refrigerator or family bulletin board
- Encourage your child to arrive at rehearsals on time, dressed properly and prepared for the rehearsal.
- After rehearsal, ask your child how it went and if there’s anything you can do to help.

Memorizing

Usually, children memorize lines, songs & dances easily. If they are struggling, here are some solutions:

- Encourage your child to review songs, dances and scenes outside of rehearsal and in front of a small, supportive group.
- To memorize scene work, have your child break down the point of the scene: what is it about? What’s the most important information presented or action taking place Answering these questions will help your child better understand the scene and be able to improvise if something goes awry!
- Have your child review scenes, songs, and choreography before going to sleep at night and first thing in the morning – this is a great way to memorize parts!
- It’s helpful to practice out loud in front of a mirror rather than “in your head.” This uses kinesthetic (muscle) memory as well as visual and aural memory to help learn the part.

Technical Rehearsals

At these rehearsals, known as “tech rehearsals” or simply “techs”, the director begins to add the technical elements of the production. These may include sound, lights, props, and even special effects. Tech rehearsals can seem long and tedious, but are where the important details of the show are ironed out. If your child is on tech crew, this is the time to shine! Here are some ways you can help:

- Send your child to rehearsal well-fed, but avoid sugary snacks and soda. (For after school rehearsals, an extra snack and water bottle are great!)
- If you have the interest an time, volunteer to assist with technical needs of the show.

- Because there will be a lot of down-time, encourage your child to bring homework, a book or another quiet activity to help prevent excess noise that could distract from the rehearsal.

Costume Hints:

- When your child is scheduled for a fitting, make sure he or she wears appropriate clothing. For girls, a modest camisole or snug-fitting t-shirt might be helpful for trying on some costumes. For boys, briefs and undershirts are best. (Boxers can wreak havoc on the fit of many items!)
- If you have time, volunteer to help the costumer, even if you can't sew. There are many other tasks – craft projects, shopping, etc. that you can do!
- Since your child has spent a lot of time rehearsing and developing his or her character, it's possible that a costume may feel awkward at first. But it's important to be patient and grateful for the costumer's hard work, since many hours have been spent sewing and shopping for costume pieces. While a costume may seem odd by itself, it is specifically designed to either blend in or stand out beautifully in the overall design of the show.
- Because fabrics can stain easily and are difficult to clean quickly, it is a general rule in theatre to avoid eating or drinking while in costume. Costume-safe snacks and water will be provided backstage during shows and long rehearsals.

Performances: Places Everyone!

There are few events in life as exciting as opening night. Cherish it, embrace it, and make a big deal out of it! Your child will experience a range of emotions and look to you for support and encouragement.

After opening night, your child will still need your assistance and guidance. A musical is a lot of physical and mental work, so children need help pacing their energy. Make sure your child eats well, takes vitamins, drinks plenty of water, and gets enough rest.



Opening Night Checklist

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest prior to opening night. A good night's sleep can make a world of difference!
- Make sure your child arrives at performances fed, but avoid sugary foods or 'junk' foods. A light meal will serve performers better than a heavy one.
- You may want to present your child with flowers or a small gift directly after their first performance.
- Invite lots of friends and family!