

Bonus Tips and Resources for Various Roles

Directors

Auditions/Casting

- Consider “pairs” of performers (i.e. a performer with and a performer without a disability in complementing roles) to support one another.
- Ensure that everyone has a chance at every role. Instead of focusing on the perceived weaknesses someone may have that would “detract” from their ability to tackle a role, instead consider all of the strengths they may bring to a role.
- Consider avoiding reading sides in the audition and instead do an improvisational game to see how a performer speaks with you, acts, etc. Reading sides, even if sent out ahead of time, can be very challenging for many performers for a variety of reasons. Trust that they will have lots of practice and help in rehearsing lines, and instead see what they’re capable of!
- If you decide to read sides, highlight the roles they’ll be reading and send them out ahead of time. Also consider retyping them to offer large print. Bonus points for making and sharing a brief instructional video on how to practice sides!

Rehearsals

- Try to “chunk” your rehearsal into 45 minute - 1hr sections to keep everyone invested.
- Try to change as little as possible after something is taught. Un-learning something can be much more challenging for some performers. Instead, it’s best to stick with what you created the first time and practice it through lots of repetition.
- Use a whiteboard to establish your agenda for each rehearsal, and go over it at the start of every night. This can help performers know what to expect each night.
- Be cognizant of who is blocked where and how accommodations may impact where they should be. For example, if someone has a hard time using the stairs, it would be best not to make them climb stairs in a scene in which they have the option to stay on the main stage. As another example, a performer may have trouble standing for long periods of time. Is it possible for them to sit in specific scenes? And if it’s not, is it possible for them to sit periodically at least while rehearsing this scene?

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Music Director

Auditions/Casting

- A capella singing of a minute of a performer's favorite song is often a great way to see how they sing. Some may bring in their own karaoke tracks or sheet music. Others may get really nervous- in this case, something familiar with the piano like "Happy Birthday" is always a great option.

Rehearsals

- Teach one more harmony than you anticipate will stick. If you get them, great! If the melody is the only thing that sticks, that's fine too!
- Teaching the structure of the music will be a great asset to you, especially when you can identify which performers will be your strongest leaders in maintaining the structure of the song. What cues should they listen for in the track to move onto the next section of the song? How long is the break in the music for lines? etc.
- Rehearsal tracks are a great tool. Anything they can use to sing and practice at home is great.

Costumer

- Layers are your best friend. Request early in the process that performers bring a base layer and add layers to these.
- Be aware that buttons and other clothing accoutrements may be challenging for performers. Elastic and Velcro will be your best friend, and theirs! No need to change all of your costumes right away- gauge what everyone needs and focus on necessary changes.
- Ask your actors' preferences. If the costumes are older, some might need a costume purchased that hasn't been worn because of smell or texture adversity. Just communicate to determine what they prefer.
- Find a time separate from rehearsal to do fittings if possible - performers LOVE costumes, and if one person is getting costumed while others are rehearsing, your rehearsal may go off course very quickly. Understandably so! Costumes are fun!
- Help performers coordinate costume changes backstage. Find a couple of performers who are nearby to help every time, or designate a stagehand. Whatever it is, rehearse it and ensure the performer knows who will be assisting. For this, it's important to meet with your costumer early on.

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- Be ready with quick fixes to easily fix on the spot. Consider having a crew member wear a utility apron with safety pins, bandaids, tide pen, etc., as well as things a performer may need or want close by.
- Be prepared to adjust, adapt, and replace a costume or costume piece quickly if the need arises. Have several options (a jacket, hat, accessories, etc.) available for a quick change to an existing costume.
- Resource: [Tailored Solutions: Supporting Neurodiversity Through Adaptive Clothing and Uniforms](#)
- Resource: [Mainely Curves: Clothing Rental for Stage, Screen, and Special Occasions](#)

Stage Manager

- Establish a sign-in and sign-out system. Make it an “opt-in” system. In other words, make it required for minors. Then, allow families and caretakers to request that their performer be required to have their ride sign them out. This is great for any performer whose family may anticipate they may try to leave without permission.
- Record all blocking and choreo. Share to a shared Google Drive or private YouTube channel. It’s a wonderful tool for learning and memorizing at home.
- Work with the costumer to arrange who will assist with costume changes- technicians or available performers?
- Consider what supervision and support might look like backstage. Parents/guardians? Technicians? See if these volunteers can attend rehearsals throughout the process and not just in the final week so that they are familiar with the show and what each performer needs. The more they know, the more initiative they can take backstage.

Choreographer

- During registration and auditions, take note of required accommodations and how this may impact your choreography.
- You will be best served and more efficient if you meet your cast before creating choreography. This way, you can learn about what is possible and likely to happen before you begin designing your pieces. Every group is different and has their own possibilities for movement and creativity.

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- If everyone in your group can follow and retain specific steps and sequence, you can choreograph as you wish using levels of repetition that are appropriate for your group. Never be afraid to adapt mid-process based on “what is” happening.
- Try to find moments within your choreographic structures to allow for improvisation. This gives each individual a chance to really shine with their own natural response to the music.
- Create compositions where strong leaders are always visible so that others can follow if/when needed
- Create pairings and trios to be natural structures for support and remembering. Try to establish these with the director ahead of time so that choreography and blocking pairings/trios are the same.
- Explain the concept of “interpretation” to your cast. Normalize that every dancer will do the moves in their own way, and this is fantastic! No two bodies express movements the same way.
- When you notice a dancer enjoying and really embodying a certain step, try to showcase them in a solo moment.
- Structures that incorporate lots of traveling across the stage in groups tend to be more effective than too many stationary movement sequences when working with mixed abilities groups and differing levels of experience.
- If there are only one or a few people with visible disabilities in the cast, avoid making them the center of the dance, or making design choices that draw extra attention to them.
- Resource: [Spark Inclusive Arts](#)

Producer

- When applying for shows, if you use a junior or “youth edition,” be sure it is approved for your intended age group. MTI Junior shows do not allow anyone over the age of 17 or 18 for their productions, so check the contract requirements before publicizing your show or beginning the process.
- Work hand in hand with the production team to establish the registration form. Modify our template to work for your space and process. We recommend having everyone register and casting everyone who registers. You can follow up with auditions to ensure everyone is placed in a good role for them.
- To ensure casting goes smoothly, ask for age ranges when someone registers. People don’t typically like to share their age, but age ranges work well
- It is not acceptable to ask people about their disabilities. We instead request: “Please share any known allergies, accommodations, or medical conditions we should be aware of.”

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- A common helpful accommodation is transportation. Use your registration as a tool to coordinate carpools. See our registration form for how we do it.
- If you are able to help coordinate carpools with performers, designate one person to make these connections early. Here are the steps we've taken to coordinate these rides:
 - Look through the registration form to see who needs a ride and who has offered to provide rides. Compare locations to find good fits, and email people who didn't specify their location.
 - Email the person who has offered to provide a ride to see if they're willing to connect with the performer and determine if it's a good fit. Our emails give basic demographics and a first name without revealing either person's address. For example: "Hi Joe, I noticed you are willing to provide a ride to performers in the Portland area and I'm wondering if you might be willing to connect with one of our performers, Steve, who lives in that area. He is in his 30s and would really appreciate a ride. If you're willing, I'll connect the two of you via email."
 - If they agree, send an email to both parties that gives them the space to discuss the carpool and share locations themselves. This puts everything in their hands and out of yours. For example: "Hi Joe and Steve: Steve, my friend Joe might be able to give you a ride to and from rehearsals. Perhaps you two could call each other to get to know each other and discuss a plan? I'll leave you to discuss this, share phone numbers and addresses, etc., but if you need anymore help please let me know."
- Centralize communication from one person when possible. Take on this responsibility yourself or designate it to the director, stage manager, or whoever is prepared for the task.

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