

# WSYT Casting 2010

## Frequently Asked Questions



*Many times there is a question about how the casting is decided for each WSYT show. Hopefully this will dispel a few of the myths and rumors about how casting is accomplished.*

### **Who does the casting and how does the process work?**

As a team, the director, the choreographer, and the musical director take a look at their notes : audition process. First, we try to determine all the people who could possibly match the requi roles beginning with principal singing roles, and then moving on to principal dancing roles, and then speaking roles.

Each person is discussed, trying to find the best fit for each role, taking into account the specific requirements demanded of the actor.

A primary singing role that requires a relatively wide range or mature voice would call for someone who vocally could handle the music. Musically we look at projection, pitch quality, whether the voice has changed (mostly for boys) and the range the singer is capable of. Principal dancing roles don't necessarily go to just those with formal dance training. Those who display willingness and enthusiasm and who can handle the intricacies of the steps taught during the dance audition demonstrate that they are likely to pick up more lively or complex choreography later on. And an important element overall is the feeling that the casting team gets about a participant's ability, flexibility and willingness to take and understand direction.

### **Are there specific qualities that you are looking for in BARNUM?**

Every show has unique requirements that enter into the casting process. BARNUM requires large personalities in some principal roles, and the ability to convey subtle nuances of character, vocal maturity and strong musicality, as songs must be sung while maintaining the specific character voice and persona. Age and maturity, both physical and mental, also come into play. Casting the adult roles in a WSYT show generally requires actors with more physical maturity - to aid the audience in seeing them as "adults." We are a YOUTH theatre company, but we strive to make our "world of the play" as believable as possible for our audiences!

Specifically, for a role like Barnum, we require vocal maturity and diversity. He must sing everything from whimsical up-tempo to poignant ballad to tongue-twisting patter. As if that weren't enough, vocal control is a key element, as Barnum must sing while crossing the tightwire. Our Barnum must be also be agile and fearless as he engages in the various circus tricks and stunts that are the signature of this show.

The role of Charity also requires vocal maturity and strength. The actress must be able to demonstrate her "tough-talking New England lady" side, but played with a "wink-wink" nuance that lets the audience know that not only is she wise to Taylor's schemes, but she has a few of her own! Her chemistry with "Taylor" is also a key element, as theirs is a mature love story – not a story of falling in love. They must be comfortable with each other and familiar in all that they do.

Jenny is a demanding role both vocally and dramatically, as she is the most subtle of the characters – there is nothing over-the-top about her. She is contained, almost regal, in her bearing and must quietly convince us that all men would compete for her affection.

The character roles of Joice Heth and Tom Thumb require song-and-dance capabilities. Joice is pure character singing and movement and Tom is all energy and entertainment!

The ensemble of circus folks, on-stage musicians, passersby and clowns can accommodate a wide range of ages and many "types" are represented. Ensemble roles will be assigned based partly on special skills. Those with strong tumbling backgrounds or skills will be tumblers or acrobats, for example. Some who have indicated they play musical instruments will be onstage musicians or featured in Come Follow the Band.

**If someone had a lead role in last year's show will they automatically get a lead this year?**

No. Every show is different and what made someone a perfect fit for a principal role one year may not be there another year. Very often we've had someone go from playing a lead one season to being an ensemble member the next. It isn't a reflection of their talent, ability or audition skills, but more a matter of what each production requires.

**Are all the principals or featured actors chosen from A.A.?**

No. Every effort is made to look at each participant based on their abilities and the best fit for the role. We are looking for good stage presence, the ability to project, a good "physical" match for the different roles, as well as the opportunity for each participant to apply what they will be learning through workshops. Some younger participants don't display their potential right away, or may be not as far along in the learning process before they are thrust into the responsibilities of a major role. Many of our participants have grown up with us, but they too, began by playing supporting roles before developing the maturity and confidence required to maintain a stronger role in a production.

We do like to remind all our participants that each and every person is important to the production. Ask a dancer whose partner misses a rehearsal how important that partner is to the success of the production.

**I put down that I wanted a principal role but didn't get it. Why?**

We have 48 performers. Most everyone put down on their sheet that they wanted to be Charity or Jenny if they were a girl, or Barnum, The Ringmaster or Tom Thumb, if they were a boy. Obviously not everyone can be cast in these roles. If you weren't cast in these roles it doesn't mean that your audition was bad or that you aren't talented. The reality is that we have a large group to cast from and only so many principal roles to go around.

**It is important to remember that one thing that makes a good show a *great* show is the strength of the entire ensemble. That means that we always want – and need - strong singers and actors in ensemble roles. Never think of the ensemble or chorus as a place where we "stick" those who don't "deserve" principal roles. We don't think that way – and neither should you.**

Some people, with a little more experience, will be handling principal roles in a year or two. Some others who have played principal roles in the past are being given new challenges that may require different talents. That's why it's so great when people come back to WSYT year after year and we can see how they've grown as both people and actors.

We were very impressed with all of the auditions this year and had many people who could have done any number of things, but unfortunately we can only cast one person per role. That's the unpleasant reality of theatre. Please don't be discouraged if you didn't get the role you wanted. There is always another season and another show around the corner. Look at your WSYT time as a chance to gain experience for future endeavors. What you learn here can be used over and over again, and there will always be plenty of opportunities.

***Not getting the role you had your heart set on can be upsetting. We know this. What we also know through many years of experience is that by the end of the summer, this will be forgotten –yes, really! - as we become an ensemble, working together and having a lot of fun! Regardless of your role, you are considered an important part of our production and of our summer experience together! We'll all share happy memories as we end the summer, and hopefully you'll will be back to share another WSYT summer with us!***