



Company of Dance Arts
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THE MEANING OF AN AUDITION

Every year we have questions from parents who don't understand what an audition means. The Artistic Staff of the Company of Dance Arts has decided to explain this up front.

The clearest way of explaining would be to picture that the child is entered into a swimming or running race. There can only be one *winner*, the rest are unsuccessful. In a soccer game one team of twelve wins, the other team of twelve players is unsuccessful. This doesn't mean they won't win next week. Somehow this is accepted in sports, but all these overly obvious statements also apply to an audition. However, it's not easy for many parents to understand why one child is chosen and one is not (especially if the latter is their child). In dance, there are no clear *winner*s who get the highest score or get there first. So here's what the Artistic Staff is looking for:

- **The child must be *self-disciplined*.** He/she must have the discipline to stay focused during hours of rehearsal, have the discipline to concentrate 100% throughout the rehearsal, and have the discipline not to talk and fool around (there's just no time).
- **The child must be *musical*.** That means he/she must "hear the music". Many do not; to some it comes naturally. *This is an art that many will learn as years go by.* Some are born with it. Fair? No! But it's an essential part of being in a ballet. Imagine the line of soldiers with everyone dancing to their own rhythm – it would be horrendous!
- **The child must be *animated*.** In other words, he/she cannot be on stage "watching" what's going on with a blank expression, as if watching TV. The child *is* the entertainment on stage and needs to be expressive and have the ability to act.
- **The child must be *confident*.** "Nerves". While we expect a certain amount of nerves at an audition, experience tells us if a child falls apart or freezes in an audition, it will probably happen on stage.
- **The costume *must fit*.** In many productions we have the costumes. As a rule, there's no budget to make new ones to fit the child nor can the matching fabric be found. Therefore, out of all the children that make it through all of the above, we must choose those that will fit into the costumes on hand.
- **A strong ability to dance is *essential*.** The casting process is indeed a difficult one and by now you understand that often their dance technique is not the only criteria.
- **Each dance has a *set number of dancers*.** We do "double cast" many parts, but if there are 12 soldiers, we need only 24 dancers. If 50 children audition, we cannot possibly take them all, so 26 will be disappointed. It doesn't mean they are poor dancers. Instead, they may not be the right size, or just not as ready as others, *yet*.
- **There is a *limited amount of rehearsal time*.** Those who give us a 100% commitment to rehearsals will be chosen first. Do not even audition if you cannot commit to the final two weekends and mandatory theatre rehearsals. Do not audition if you cannot commit to all performances.
- **Each production is *different*,** with different casting requirements. Even if your child has successfully auditioned for one production, it is no guarantee that there will be a part for him/her in the next production.
- **Once casting is set, *100% commitment is expected from every dancer*.** We will explain that choreography taught the first week must be practiced and remembered for the next rehearsal. **There's just not time to re-teach those who forget.** Each week we move on and develop. In *Nutcracker*, the choreography by Emmy Award winning Peter Anastos is difficult (much of it is set for professional dancers) and is a real challenge for the Corps de Ballet and Soloists. A new production (with no videotape to study) requires much home practice and thought to perfect, choreography may change as the work progresses and grows. Those of you who have seen our productions know the high quality of work that we expect from the smallest "walk-on" to the most accomplished soloists. Anyone unable to attend the weeks when choreography is set cannot be accepted.

Having said all this, it probably sounds like a nightmare. *It's Not!* It is a rewarding and wonderful experience for us all, from the many volunteers behind the scene to the dancers under the spotlights. Rehearsals *are* hard work, but they're also a great learning experience, and believe it or not – a lot of fun, too!

All casting decisions will be made by Artistic Directors Nicholas and Shayne Mishoe and the other members of the Artistic Staff. You will be notified about casting decisions within a few days after the audition. Procedures will be explained to you at the mandatory parent meeting. **Please understand that once those decisions are made that they are final and that neither the Artistic Staff nor the Board of Trustees will entertain questions or discussions regarding same. Please trust us and know that the decisions made are the best for the Company, the dancer, and the audience that has grown over the years to expect the very best production possible.**

We hope that this explanation will help you to understand. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call the Company at (732) 842-4015.