

# Why you didn't get the part you wanted...

## *DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?*

*You gave it your all at the audition, but someone else got the part you wanted. Now you feel like you're "stuck in the chorus" or "just a walk on" without any feedback as to why. Even worse....you didn't get cast at all! The girl you hated got it. Or, sometimes even worse, your best friend got it. Or some other random girl got it. The point is, you didn't. You're crushed, upset, jealous, angry, and maybe slightly insulted. You feel like you're not good enough and think that crawling into a hole for 200 years sounds like a great idea. You feel like strangling the director or bawling at the top of your lungs. Don't worry, we've ALL been there at some point. (or will be...)*

*Read on to learn the top ten reasons directors give for not casting someone, and what you can do improve your chances next time!*

### **Reason #1:**

#### **Someone else gave an interpretation that was closer to what the director wanted.....**

Many times when reading a script, it seems that there is only one way to play it, and that's what you try for when auditioning. There are, however, many different ways to interpret most parts. Maybe you played it very "up," and the director saw something darker, or you played "understated" when the director wanted broad. If someone else comes closer to the director's vision of the part, that actor may be a better choice because the director has far less work to do to get the actor to match that vision.

**How to better your odds:** Many directors explain their vision of the characters and the show before the auditions take place. Pay attention to those character descriptions and try to give the director what he seems to want to see. Also there's nothing wrong with asking the director "How do you see this character?" or "How do you want this scene to be played?"

## **Reason #2:**

### **Someone else was better prepared at auditions.....**

Maybe you didn't plan ahead of time what kind of moves or facial expressions you were going to have during your song, monologue or cold reading. Or didn't look up unfamiliar words/phrases to a song. Maybe you forgot to read the script and do a little background research on the show. So you got up for your audition and had to "wing it". The actor who gives the more polished performance because they prepared ahead of time has an advantage. The actor who prepares ahead of time shows that he's enthusiastic about the show and is serious about wanting the part and working hard at it. A director can't help but be impressed by someone who's put that much work into it before they've even gotten the part.

**How to better your odds:** Memorize the song you are singing or the monologue you are delivering. You should know it as well as your own phone number. Practice your audition material over and over. If it's a cold reading... then know the characters inside and out!!! Try doing some improves using the characters personalities. At the very least, check out a script a head of time and read it as much as possible. Get familiar with the script, plot and characters!!!

## **Reason #3:**

### **Another actor was physically better suited for the part.....**

Some of the physical requirements for a part may be age, height, weight, coloring, hair length or style to mention a few. If the part requires someone to lift and carry another actor off stage, obviously the director is going to cast someone physically capable of doing that. And while much can be accomplished with makeup, if someone comes in with all the necessary physical characteristics of a part as natural attributes, he or she will be one step closer to a part than someone who requires heavy makeup to pull it off.

**How to better your odds:** Read the script ahead of time and think about which parts you are physically right for. Be honest! The role of the male superhero may be a killer of a role that you'd give your right arm for, but if he's supposed to be a big strong guy and you are 4 feet tall and weigh 58 pounds it may be a bit much to hope for it, no matter how incredible your acting is. Or maybe you want the part of the female lead who is supposed to have very short hair. But you have really nice long hair that it's taken you years to grow and you don't want to cut it. By all means let the director know if there are any minor changes you'd be willing to make, such as wearing elevated shoes, wearing a wig or dying your hair, but don't go overboard. For all practical purposes, what you bring into auditions is what the director will see and remember, so the best choice is to go out for parts that you're already suited for.

## **Reason #4:**

### **The director wanted a certain “mix” of physical characteristics among the cast.....**

Directors often juggle actors in and out of parts at auditions as they attempt to arrive at an interesting but believable mix. Different heights, weights, and coloring can make the show not only more visually interesting, but can also help the audience follow the plot: if two actors are physically very similar, audience members may actually get confused about who's who! Likewise, if there is supposed to be a family resemblance among the characters, the director will try to cast people who look like they could actually be related. If the director has only one actress (who is 13) who could logically play Annie, chances are you're not going to stand much of a shot at Daddy Warbucks if you're a 10 year old guy. No matter how good your audition is. You lost out on the part not because of anything you did or didn't do, but simply because you wouldn't work playing opposite that actress.

**How to better your odds:** Short of making sure that you're absolutely the only actor who's physically right for a certain part at auditions, there's not much you can do about this one, other than to give it your very best shot and remember that not getting cast for this reason happens to everyone sooner or later. This one is beyond your control.

## **Reason #5:**

### **The director was unable to get you to deliver what he or she wanted to see.....**

Directors sometimes try to give you direction as you're auditioning. Take this as a compliment! The director is working on two levels here - he or she has seen something in you that works, but would like to see if you can change what you're doing to better fit his or her idea of the character. He or she is probably also checking to see how well you take direction in an effort to determine how easy you are to work with. If you get direction and then go on to do the scene exactly the way you did it before, you flunked the test.

**How to better your odds:** When the director asks you to change your interpretation, do it! Listen carefully and ask questions, if necessary, to make sure you've got the idea he or she is working for. This applies even if you're asked to do something totally off the wall, like play a death scene as if it were a comedy. The director is not necessarily telling you that your interpretation is wrong, he or she just wants to see what you can do and if you are flexible enough to work with easily.

## **Reason #6:**

### **You're an unknown quantity.....**

You gave a really strong audition and are physically perfect for the part, so how come you lost out to someone who wasn't as good but seems to get cast all the time anyway? Perhaps the director knows what the other actor can deliver and doesn't have a clue as to what you can do in the long term. He or she just doesn't know you, your work habits, your ability to get along with others, or your sense of commitment to the show and to the theater group. Just about every director with any experience can cite instances of taking a chance on someone new and having it blow up in their faces, leading to that common lament "But they were so *wonderful* at auditions!" If the show is a challenge for director and cast alike, taking on a new actor, particularly one that hasn't had much stage experience may be more than the director feels like handling. He or she instead opts to go with "tried and true."

**How to better your odds:** The problem is that nobody knows you, so change that by getting involved in some way other than acting. Volunteer for behind-the-scenes jobs. Are you early to rehearsal and see the director is setting up chairs? Jump in and lend a hand. During break times, while everyone else is goofing off, grab someone who knows the choreography and work it with them. Believe me, the director will notice your extra effort. In general, look for ways that you can be useful other than just showing up for rehearsal. If you are given responsibilities and carry them out well, you'll become known as a team player and a hard worker -- two characteristics that directors value in actors. On the other hand, if you are a pain because you're a regular discipline problem, the director may avoid casting you in a significant role just because he doesn't want to deal with the problems you create. Make yourself indispensable and fun to be with, and the director will be actively trying to cast you because he likes having you around! Don't forget... You can always take a THEATRE CLASS. This will give you exposure, experience and develop a relationship with the director.

## **Reason #7:**

### **You have difficulty remembering lines.....**

Rarely is this problem somebody else's fault, even though actors with line difficulties sometimes try to lay the blame elsewhere ("Well, she was supposed to be standing *next to* the table, not in front of it! She threw me off!"). If you can't remember the lines, you'll have difficulty developing your character, and everyone on stage with you will be very, very nervous -- not exactly a situation conducive to turning in a great performance. Directors will do *anything* to avoid casting actors with line difficulties.

**How to better your odds:** If your line problems are just a fact of life, take it slow. Audition for smaller roles that you know you can handle, and try to get a grasp on your technique: your problem may very well stem from how you memorize. Some tips:

- Highlight your lines in your script in one color, and use a different color to highlight your cues.
- If you learn better by listening, make two tape recordings, reading from the script: one of your cues, followed by your lines, and another of only your cues, with appropriate time left after each for you to say your line. Work with the tape as often as you can, at first listening and talking along with the cue and line tape, then using just the cue tape. Check back over the script periodically to make sure you're not paraphrasing.
- If you're a more visual learner, run through the script by covering the page with a piece of paper and lowering it down the page until you come to a highlighted cue line, then try to say the line that follows that cue. Repeat until you get it right.
- Some people like to make flash cards - use index cards, and write the cue on the front and the line on the back. (Make sure you indicate who's supposed to be giving the cue.)
- Work with a partner who will read your cues and let you deliver the responses. In the early stages, ask them to correct and prompt you; later on, tell them to let you hang for a while until you're really sure you can't get it without help.

## **Reason #8:**

### **You have a reputation for being difficult to work with.....**

If every director you've ever worked with was an idiot, if in every show there's someone you just can't get along with, or if the green room magically empties when you walk in, you need to do some serious thinking about how you interact with others. Producing a play is a team effort, and if one member of the team is consistently not part of the program, that person will not be asked to play again.

**How to better your odds:** The best policy is not to earn the reputation in the first place. You can do this first of all by remembering that what the director wants is paramount. Don't argue about blocking or interpretation, especially in front of other cast members. If you disagree with what you're being told, do it anyway, then talk to the director afterwards. If you lose the argument, do what the director wants, and don't gripe about it.

Don't ever badmouth the show or the other actors. Don't point out others' mistakes, particularly those that have no effect on you personally: that's the director's job. If

another actor consistently makes a mistake that affects you and the director doesn't catch it, *let the director know afterwards* so he or she can correct it.

Be courteous of others when you're not on stage. Keep your voice down in rehearsal, and don't engage people in lengthy conversations that might make someone miss a cue.

## **Reason #9:**

### **You are perceived as unreliable.....**

So you're late once in a while, or have to miss rehearsals because you've got a lot going on and inevitably there are scheduling conflicts. No big deal, right? Wrong! Being consistently late wastes everyone's time and makes you look less than serious about the show. Missing rehearsals can throw off the entire schedule, especially if you have an important part. Do it often enough, and directors are going to cast someone who has a better grasp of exactly how short the rehearsal period is.

**How to better your odds:** If rehearsals start at 9:30, be there at 9:20. If you have a basketball game every Saturday morning, let the director know at auditions so he or she can plan accordingly (and don't take it too hard if that conflict puts you out of the running for a part). If you must unexpectedly miss a rehearsal, let the director know as soon as possible. Above all, do not *ever* drop out of a show without an extremely good reason. If you must drop out, tell the director by phone or in person (talk to him or her, don't just leave a message on voicemail or email), ASAP, and be prepared to tell him or her why you have to leave. If you leave the director in the lurch, he will be very reluctant to cast you again.

## **Reason #10:**

### **Remember the real reason we do this.....**

This isn't really a reason why people don't get cast. But it is very important to remember. The point of EDUCATIONAL THEATRE is not to turn every student into a stage star, but to give them the experiences to learn and grow.

# **REMEMBER.....**

That one piercing moment when you look at the cast list, you feel like you've been hit in the gut. You might feel like crying or screaming, or being a slightly sore loser. Don't. This is what NOT to do when you find out you've gotten a less-than-ideal part:

## **1. DON'T Start Crying**

At least not in public. You don't want to look like a spoiled baby, crying in front of your peers because you didn't get a great part. If tears come to your eyes, take several deep breathes. Breathe deeply, shut your eyes, and try to compose yourself. Keeping breathing. Quit staring at your name. Get a drink of water and try to relax. If you absolutely have to cry, excuse yourself to go to the bathroom.

## **2. DON'T Make Excuses for you**

Please, if you get a bad part, don't make excuses. "Well, I must have got this because the teacher is mad at me." Or "Susie got this because she is the teacher's favorite." Keep your mouth closed. If you make excuses, you will look immature and whiney. (nothing wrong with thinking it, though)

## **3. DON'T Demand to know why**

Don't go running up to the director demanding to know what's up. #1 you'll look a little crazy, and #2 your emotions are running high, and you might say things you will really regret later. That's why, after casting, it's wise to keep quiet until you calm down. You don't need an explanation about your part right now. (that comes in later...)

## **4. DON'T Make Excuses for others**

Don't bring down others. That is the worst mind set to have: "If I'm going down, she's going with me". You don't know you didn't get that part. You also don't know why she got that part, even if you think you do. Maybe she worked as hard as you did. So no matter how tempted, don't rain on someone else's sunshine. Even if makes you feel better right then, in the long run, you'll feel worse.

## **5. DON'T Gossip About Anything!!!!**

It ALWAYS gets back to the director, even if you don't think it will. Don't complain. Don't whine. Not even to your best friend. Keep your mouth closed!

## **WHY DIDN'T I GET THE PART???**

Well...I don't know. Maybe the director didn't think you were ready. Maybe someone else performed better on the day of auditions. Directors have all sorts of reasons for casting, and it doesn't always necessarily come down to who's a better dancer, actor or singer either. It's definitely not always fair. But for now... KEEP TRYING! The more you audition, the better you will get. Experience is everything!!!