

*So you or your child has been cast in a show or has joined a tech crew!  
Congratulations! That was a lot of hard work and an accomplishment on its own, but  
now what? How does one get from being cast or joining a crew to opening night?*

*Welcome to...*

## **THE REHEARSAL PROCESS!**

The objective of the rehearsal process is to take a script, story, and/or score and turn it into a live performance with a group of (sometimes) strangers so that the performance -

- consistently meets time expectations
- can get from beginning to end coherently with the flexibility and confidence that unexpected reactions, moments, and accidents do not interfere in the overall production success
- meets structural signposts; expressing themes, portraying compelling emotional expression, completing special effects, stunts, dance, and song safely, accurately and with artistry.

No small task.

While each production will have specific needs, there are some things one can expect rehearsing a show at Lambert:

### **First Read-Through -**

The cast (and some crew) will read through the script (and listen to songs) from beginning to end.

- Key designers and technicians will attend to hear the show so they can begin their work*
- This gives the cast and crew the opportunity to meet each other and experience the story of the show that they are all going to contribute to.*
- This may be the first and last time for a few weeks that the whole cast will be able to experience the whole arc of the story and is critical to keep in mind as they make choices and rehearse individual scenes.*

### **Table Work/Learning the Music -**

The cast will work through scene by scene and song by song to make sure the text and music is understood.

- This is where unfamiliar words are addressed, given circumstances are discussed, relationships are defined, themes are identified, and structural elements like crisis, rising action, climax and denouement are outlined.*

- Objectives, obstacles, tactics, and subtext may be explored at this time
- Further character work and dramaturgy that is needed to research individually will be assigned
- Dramaturgy packets/information may be presented at this time (such as historical context, character professional knowledge, jargon, cultural references)
- Musical parts are assigned and unpacked, challenges are identified

## **Staging/Blocking/Choreography**

The cast begins to be taught choreography for dances, stunts, and scenes begin to be staged (blocked).

- There are different styles of blocking/staging
  - Organic Blocking - actor driven, the actors are given the limitations of their set (ie two chairs and a table up stage left) and they work intuitively with what they want to do, and the director shapes the work
  - Traditional Blocking - the director paper blocks the scenes and then walks the actors through their expected traffic patterns, cues for sitting, standing or crossing
  - Mixed Blocking - a combination of pre planned expected moves with room for actor impulses to change set blocking during the exploration stage of the blocking process before it is 'set'
- All blocking is written down by the individual actor and the stage manager - for organic blocking this step may be delayed until the blocking is 'set'
- Choreography is taught often by musical number. It can be broken down into sections and specialized skills (ie the 'tap dance' section)
- Staging/Choreography is added to prepared songs

**Once a scene is blocked/staged/choreographed - it is expected that the next time it is rehearsed, all dialogue will be memorized**

*\* A 'play-through' may substitute for initial organic blocking after table work is done - this is a chance for the actors to get up and move after having done table work and 'touch' the whole play after having explored the text in smaller chunks*

## **Runs/Working/Off-Book/Notes\***

The actors perform the scenes and numbers as they understand them from beginning to end to ensure the movement works and to start imparting emotion and other creative storytelling choices.

- stopping and starting - actors run through scenes, stopping for adjustments, changes, missed moments

- rehearsal props, skirts, pants, shoes and other technical elements may be brought into rehearsal for actors to adjust to and make choices with
- runs - actors perform a scene or the show without interruption, calling for lines if needed
- runs off-book - actors perform a scene or the show without calling for line, if they forget a line they practice 'covering and continuing' as if they were in a live performance
- this working style applies to choreography and music
- notes are given by the directors/choreographers to be considered and applied at the next run or rehearsal
- Runs can be of scenes, acts, or entire performances. Runs are important to the whole cast to learn timing of entrances, time management for costume changes, prop management and any other necessary preparation. The work that is done while waiting is very important to delivering a capable performance

### **\*Tech Crew during this time:**

- Pre-show - all teams: supplies inventory and needs requested
- Set designs are completed and a floor plan is provided by the first blocking rehearsal
- Build crew - creates shopping list and begins to build based on show priorities
- Paint crew - creates shopping list and begins initial templates/designs, begins painting as set becomes available
- Costume crew/Hair/Make-up - designs are rendered, budgets created, submitted and approved, costumes sourcing, building, buying begins, complex hair/make up training begins
- Props - list created, construction/sourcing begins - rehearsal props pulled and put into rehearsal
- Lighting - hang/focus, instrument choices, effect choices, budget created
- Sound - begin mic plots, source and create special effects, program tracks
- Other special teams pre-work (live sound, projections, etc)

### **Technical Rehearsals**

The cast and crew begin to assemble all elements that will culminate in the final presentation - coordinating sound, lights, set, costumes, hair, make-up, mics, props, backstage traffic, run crew, curtain (flies) pulling, special effects, safety concerns.

- The cast will run the show for the crew so they can see what they are working on - take notes about potential issues (quick changes, where set pieces leaving the stage need to go, etc)

- *Paper Tech: Lights, sound, stage management and another teams needed run through the script to receive cues from stage management and go over timing issues*
- *Dry Tech: crew runs lights, sound effects, set changes without cast*
- *Wet Tech/Cue to Cue: actors are added, working from the beginning of the show until the end, holding for light focus programming, sound changes, set changes, prop hand offs, curtain calls, etc.*
- *Dress Runs/Rehearsals - full costume, hair and makeup elements are added to the process*

### **Previews/Opening/Runs/Brush Ups:**

Preview - *Time permitting, before the final dress rehearsal, there may be a preview where an invited audience is asked to watch the show. Sometimes feedback is solicited (story problems, asking about whether something makes sense or is understandable), often just practicing holding for laughs and discovering where there may be audience responses is sufficient.*

Opening Night - *the first performance*

Runs - *the performances after opening night*

Brush-ups - *if there are days off between performances, a run through before the next series of performances may be required*

### **How Much Time Does All This Take?**

For perspective:

Broadway's standard rehearsal is two hours for every minute of stage time. Each page is about 2 minutes of stage time. So each page is 4 hours of rehearsal time.

An average person takes repeating a line, a dance move, a song, **7 times** before it goes into long-term memory - and don't forget an actor isn't just learning a dance move; they're learning lyrics and emotions, too.

Actors are expected to learn their lines and research their roles on their own time, although assistance and strategies to achieve this will be covered during class time.

### **And All That Other Stuff:**

Preparation: physical, vocal, emotional, intellectual exercises the actor practices to be able to perform at their best (this can include tongue twisters, dance classes, scales, relaxation and breathing techniques, etc.)

Warm-Up: a condensed preparation an actor does as a routine before rehearsal and performance often including stretching and vocal exercises to prevent injury due to misuse or overuse and to be able to achieve the emotional truth of their character.

Homework: learning one's lines, reviewing music and choreography, and making researched choices to bring to rehearsal.

Here is a great article outlining an actor's experience and reflection on the rehearsal process:

<https://www.stagemilk.com/successful-rehearsal-process/>