

**DEMYSTIFYING THE AUDITION PROCESS
AT NORTHWESTERN**

WELCOME

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THE AUDITION

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Hi!

My name is Sam, and many eons ago, back when the world was new, and planet earth was down on its luck, I was a co-chair of the Student Theatre Coalition. I spent four years auditioning at Northwestern, and, lemme tell ya, it can be a confusing process. I wrote this quick guide to clarify that process and encourage YOU to audition! Above all, my hope is that this can alleviate any stress you may feel about auditioning or participating in theatre at Northwestern. To me, theater is a celebration—of joy, of the human experience, and, most of all, of difference. The theatre *must* represent all of our varied experiences—especially yours. So here's an invitation to try it out: audition!

Maybe you're a new student, sullenly sitting alone at home, draining the Internet of information about Northwestern because all your friends have already gone to school.

Maybe you're a current Northwestern student who loved theatre in high school, but you're not sure how to get more involved in the theatre community here.

Maybe you've never even been involved in theatre at all and want to broaden your horizons. Maybe you heard about the life-altering benefits of participating in performance.

Whoever you are, I invite you to breeze through this packet to discover how the audition process at Northwestern works! Here's a hint: it's actually very simple and very fun.

Did you get that?

It's simple.

It's fun.

Let's do this!

WHAT IS AN AUDITION?

And how do I do it?

This section will give you general information about what an audition is. It's broken down into two sections: "the monologue," and "the audition."

Hopefully, it will clarify what you need to do, terms you may not know, and any myths that you may have heard floating in the ether.

And I'm not just telling you things I know. I talked to the entire acting faculty about their thoughts, so you can be sure that you're getting the crème de la crème of expertise! Very special thanks to David Catlin, Shawn Douglass, Henry Godinez, Cindy Gold, and Mary Poole. Seriously though. If you see them, thank them. But make sure it's a very special thanks.

While I've done my best to include the relevant information about auditioning for musicals at NU, this packet will primarily use language geared toward "straight" theatre (lol that means "plays"). Honestly though, you can basically substitute "song" for "monologue," and you'll be golden!

You can also find sample monologues included at the end of this packet. Feel free to use them if they speak to you!

THE MONOLOGUE

WHAT IS A MONOLOGUE?

A monologue is a way for directors to evaluate potential actors.

Just as a dialogue is two people talking, a monologue is one person talking! It is a one- to two-minute piece of text, taken from a play, film, or TV show. It's still a conversation between characters, in that one character is communicating with another, but only one character is seen and heard—the other is only imagined.

"But...is that *really* a good way to evaluate acting?" Nope.

Don't get me wrong—I love monologues. But they're basically the silliest part of "The Theatre." If it feels weird doing a monologue, just know that you're not alone. It gets better. Being good at a monologue often doesn't even mean that you're good at "acting" at all! Nevertheless, it's a part of the theatrical industry, and it's not going away. I say, "Embrace the weirdness! We're all in this together, thx Troy&Gabriella! Go 'cats!"

FINDING A MONOLOGUE

What is the best way to find a monologue? Read! Read as many plays and scripts as you can! When you get to a block of text that is spoken by a character you relate to, that's possible monologue material. There are also some monologues included at the end of this packet that you can use!

Find a monologue that speaks to you deeply. Choose a piece that says things that are important to you—things that you *need* to share with others. The character should be relatively close to you in age, but if the age of the character is unclear in the monologue and you're still drawn to it, go for it! Most importantly, the monologue should be something you *enjoy* doing.

Pick a piece that shows you at your best, doing what you do best. The audition should showcase YOU, your natural body, voice, and energy, using skills in which you feel most confident. If you're not good at crying on command (like me), don't pick a piece from *Medea*. Easy!

PREPARING AND REHEARSING THE MONOLOGUE

Once you've found a monologue that resonates with you, you should get to know the character and his or her circumstances a little better. You can ask yourself these questions, bestowed upon us by **Uta Hagen**, a famous (sadly deceased) acting teacher:

1. **Who am I?** All the details about your character, like name, age, relatives, likes, hobbies, etc.
2. **What time is it?** What century? What season? What time of the day? What's the significance of that?
3. **Where am I?** Am I in a field in the country? Am I in the throne room of a castle? Am I in a boardroom on the 110th floor?
4. **What surrounds me?** What things, people, animals, plants are around me?



An elegant Uta, acting in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

5. **What are the given circumstances?** What has led me to the situation I'm in now? What *is* the situation I'm in now? What could the situation be in five minutes?
6. **What is my relationship?** to events that I'm talking about? to the person I'm talking to?
7. **What do I want?** The objective—what is at stake for me if I don't get that?
8. **What is in my way?** The obstacle—what is preventing me from getting what I want?
9. **What do I do to get what I want?** The action—what are the physical and verbal things I'm doing to get around the obstacle to obtain my objective?

These questions can help you flesh out who you are. They can tell you why the character *needs* to be speaking in that moment and can help you make choices informed by the text and the character. **Specificity in answering these questions is of utmost importance!** ALL of the answers to these questions can be found in the play or script, so if you have time, it's important to read that too.

After you read the play and answer these and other questions you may have, you should rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. Rehearse on your own. Rehearse to an object, putting your focus outward. Rehearse with people who will give you responses to help spark your imagination. Have them turn or walk away from you, smile, doubt, laugh, spurn, so that you can see what responses help move the piece forward. Be sure to tell anyone who helps you what kind of feedback you want. It may be enough just to have someone watch and respond in the moment, or you may want help with individual aspects of the piece.



A bundled Sandy Meisner. He knows winter in Evanston is no joke!

Be so prepared that you can be free to play in the moment. And, as **Sanford Meisner**, another famous, deceased acting teacher, says, do not walk in empty! Prepare so that you can truthfully access your emotional life. Honest emotion is the most powerful. That doesn't mean you have to cry (thank GOODNESS)—it all comes from your need and what's at stake in your relationship with that other person, the situation, the words you're using.

Remember to start learning your piece with enough time to relax before your audition! It's not fun or healthy or creatively conducive to learn your monologue the night before. If you happen to get away with that, it's just dumb luck.

And do your best not to address the auditors (the people watching) when you're doing your monologue...it's weird for them and it's *very* weird for you.

THE AUDITION

The audition is **not** a measure of “talent.” Most people auditioning are capable actors. It is also not the time for you to convince the director that you are the best for the role: you don’t know what the director is looking for. It **is**, however, a chance for you to display honestly and efficiently **who you are** and that you’re comfortable onstage.

HOW TO HAVE THE BEST AUDITION POSSIBLE

1. **Remember that everyone in the room is rooting for you!** The directors and producers all want you to be fabulous and talented and professional because that means that their work is done! This gives you immense power.
2. **Set goals for yourself.** Whether it’s to nail a certain section of the monologue, or to imagine clearly your invisible scene partner; to be confident and relaxed in the “non-monologue” part of the audition or to make sure all your actions are clear. This allows you to determine how well the audition went, regardless of whether or not you get a callback or the role.
3. **Breathe.** It relaxes you and you have to do it to survive. Embrace your humanity!
4. **Own the space.** For two minutes, that room is yours. You can do with it what you will, and, whatever it is, it’s gonna be awesome.
5. **~HaVe FuN~!** Yeah I said it. It makes everything better. Find the fun, and you can do anything.
6. **Never apologize.** Ever.

WHAT DO I WEAR?

Wear something that makes YOU feel comfortable. It should show that you respect the audition and should be flattering, not ostentatious (it shouldn’t distract from you and your performance), but it should most importantly be a way for you to feel your best!

WHO IS IN “THE ROOM?”

At Northwestern, we have “general auditions,” which means that you’ll do a “general” audition (surprising, right?) for all of the shows that are happening for the quarter. This means that all of the directors of the shows will be in the room, along with their producers or stage managers. If there are 18 shows, there’ll be around 36 people in the room (yes, I used a calculator for that bc I AM TRASH). There are generally fewer people in the room for musicals, because fewer musicals are produced on campus.

Why do we have general auditions? To make it easier for you, of course! This means that you don't have to go to eighteen separate auditions to get seen by everyone. It's just two minutes or less, and you're done!

For more information about auditioning specifically *at NU*, see the next section, "Auditioning at Northwestern in Wirtz and StuCo."

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I GO INTO "THE ROOM?"

1. Go to the center of the room and introduce yourself. Tell the auditors (the people watching):
 - a. Your name (You have a great one, so say it loud and proud. Do it for your ancestors.)
 - b. What piece(s) you'll be performing.
 - c. The name(s) of the character(s) (only if you're feeling *wild*...I never do this because I can't remember names!)
2. Begin! Kick ass doing your monologue! (the most fun part!)
3. Thank the kind people for watching you. They've already had a long day (maybe two!), so gratitude is great!
4. Exit (*not* pursued by a bear #Shakespeare).

AUDITIONING AT NORTHWESTERN in Wirtz and StuCo

HOLD ON A SECOND. WHAT ARE “WIRTZ” AND “STUCO?”

GREAT Q.

The Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, or “Wirtz” colloquially, “produces and manages the performing arts productions of the School of Communication, Department of Theatre, and Department of Performance Studies” at Northwestern. But **you do not need to be in the School of Communication to be cast in a Wirtz production!** The directors at the Wirtz Center are either professional theatre-makers from Chicago, or students in the MFA directing program. To find out more about the Wirtz Center, visit <https://www.communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz>.

The Student Theatre Coalition, or StuCo, is an alliance of student theatre groups, which produce their own seasons on and off campus. You also don’t have to be involved in StuCo at all to be cast in a StuCo production! The StuCo directors are all undergraduate students. To find out more about StuCo, visit <http://nustudenttheatre.org>.

Both Wirtz and StuCo need actors to put on their shows—that’s where you come in! Wirtz and StuCo hold general auditions or “generals” together for each quarter of shows to find actors.

HOW DO I AUDITION AT NORTHWESTERN?

If you’re wondering how you can get in on that, it’s MUCH simpler than it may seem—you can do it in just a few steps!

GENERAL AUDITIONS

Although they happen in different rooms, generals for musicals are exactly the same as they are for plays. The only difference is in what is performed. In the plays room, you’ll have two minutes to do a monologue or two; in the musicals room, you can sing a 32 bar cut of a song, or two 16 bar cuts of songs.

1. **Sign up for an audition slot on the Auditions Wiki.** The link to the Auditions Wiki is <https://nuauditions.wikispaces.com/>. You can sign up for BOTH a **musicals** slot and a **plays** slot on the Auditions Wiki. This is ALSO where you can find information about the shows you'll be auditioning for. The sign-ups typically go live one to two weeks before the audition dates.
2. **Find a monologue.** This can be as simple as choosing one of the monologues contained at the end of this packet, or as adventurous as going to the library and finding one yourself (read, read, read!). Either way, choose one that both speaks to you and your experience, and that you also love!
3. **Prepare as much as you want.** In the professional world, monologues have to be memorized, but we're all busy at Northwestern. If you don't have time to memorize it, don't worry. It's totally acceptable to hold a piece of paper and read the monologue. (See the earlier "What is an Audition?" section for more information on monologues.)
4. **Fill out and print your forms!** This is very important, and very easy to do on the computer! The forms are how directors keep track of all the people who audition. You should print as many forms as are asked for (hint: it's the same number of shows as are in the room). Print that number **EVEN IF YOU ARE ONLY AUDITIONING FOR ONE SHOW. I MEAN IT.** If you're only auditioning for plays, you only need to print the number of shows in the plays room, if you're doing musicals, only print for the musicals room. If you're doing both, print both!
5. **"But Sam! What do I do on the day of my audition?"**
 - a. Having signed up for a time slot, you should get to the site of auditions and check in with the person running them. Try to be there at least ten minutes before your slot begins. If you don't have a time slot because Wildcat Welcome or rush were too stressful and you forgot, just check in with the person running auditions, and they'll fit you in!
 - b. Hand over your forms to the person who's running auditions. These are your ticket in! It's also how the people in the room know who you are and how they're able to call you back!
 - c. Hang around until your name is called, then follow the directions (you'll go in one at a time in the order called, do your monologue, and come back out again).
 - d. ~;Do YoUr MoNoLoGuE oR sOnG!~ (See the "The Audition" section earlier in this packet for more information.)
 - e. Go to Andy's! But seriously, treat yourself. You deserve it!

CALLBACKS

Once you audition, you may get a callback! Congrats! This is a way directors can meet you and see what you can do more in-depth. It's also an awesome opportunity for you to see how YOU feel in the director's rehearsal room. A callback can help you

predict what a process will be like. If you don't like the vibe, you can withdraw from consideration for the show after your callback.

In a callback for a play, you could be asked to do anything from reading sides (parts of the script) to creating or learning a movement sequence. In a musical callback, you will be asked to prepare a specific song and there may be a dance portion as well.

THE "PREF SHEET"

Once you go to all of your callbacks, you **MUST** fill out a preference sheet ("pref sheet" if ur *~in the kno~*). These are used in the conferrals process (more info later...). **You can find a link to the online pref sheet on the Auditions Wiki!** On your pref sheet, you rank all the shows for which you were called back (both musicals and plays) in the order you'd prefer to be in them. Even if you were only called back for one show, it's good to fill out a pref sheet so the co-chairs and the Wirtz Center Auditions Coordinator, Her Royal Highness, Magic Auditions Queen Dixie Uffelman, know you'd prefer to be in that show rather than not in a show at all. And always provide a phone number just in case something gets mixed up!



Her Royal Highness, Magic Auditions Queen Dixie Uffelman

HOW IS MY PREF SHEET USED?

If two shows really want to cast you, the StuCo co-chairs and Dixie will look at your pref sheet to see which show YOU would prefer to be in. That way, your voice is present in the room, even if your body is absent. For example, if you auditioned for *The Lion King* and *Hamilton*, and both directors wanted you to be in their show, your pref sheet would be consulted. If you preffed *Hamilton* over *The Lion King*, you would be cast in *Hamilton*.

Pref sheets are not a way for you to request to be in a show—by completing a show's callback, you have requested to be in that show. They *are* used to clarify where you would prefer to be cast when everyone wants you to be in their show. Even if you preffed *The Wiz* and *Cats!* above *Hamilton*, you might still get cast in *Hamilton* if only *Hamilton* wants you.

StuCo uses pref sheets religiously, and Wirtz will reference them if they want to. If you want to know *how* pref sheets are used, check out the conferrals section below!

WHO LOOKS AT MY PREF SHEET?

ONLY THE STUCO CO-CHAIRS AND DIXIE. No directors will see how you “preffed” their shows, so don’t feel bad if you want to pref your friend Morty’s show last. He’ll never know!

WITHDRAWING FROM A SHOW

If you’d like to withdraw from consideration for a Wirtz show, you must email the director by Friday night of callbacks at 10pm and cc Dixie. If you withdraw on time, there will be no hard feelings, so please be courteous and do it! If you don’t, that director will assume that you will accept all roles in their production.

If you would like to withdraw from a StuCo show, you may mark that on your Pref sheet – but it is courteous to also email the production team.

And that’s all you have to do! Simple, right?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY AUDITION AND CALLBACKS?

Although the last thing you have to do as the auditioner is to fill out a pref sheet, directors have a couple more steps to finalize their casts. For your edification, I’ve included that process here. After callbacks, directors will make a “depth chart” of people they want for their show and bring it with them to conferrals where their shows will be finalized. Whoa. What? Let’s break that lingo down.

DEPTH CHARTS

Having seen actors at callbacks, directors and producers will create a depth chart of people they want to cast in their shows. Here’s an example of a depth chart for a new play I’m directing, called *Romeo and Juliet*:

<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>	Juliet	Romeo	Mercutio	Lady Capulet	Nurse
1st Choice	Heather Headley	Zach Braff	David Schwimmer	Megan Mullally	Cloris Leachman
2nd Choice	Julia Louis-Dreyfus	Seth Meyers	Harry Lennix	Heather Headley	Ana Gasteyer
3rd Choice	Stephanie D'Abruzzo	Charlton Heston	Brian d'Arcy James	Stephen Colbert	Martha Lavey
4th Choice	Stephen Colbert	Stephen Colbert	Charlton Heston		Stephen Colbert
5th Choice			Stephen Colbert		

My first choice cast is Heather as Juliet, Zach as Romeo, David as Mercutio, Megan as Lady Capulet, and Cloris as Nurse. Just in case my first choices preffed another show that also wants them, I've come up with alternate choices. Hopefully, I won't have to go past Stephen. This is the type of form I would take to conferrals.

CONFERRALS

Dixie and the StuCo co-chairs will gather the directors and producers together to determine who will be in each show, using YOUR pref form! Wirtz sometimes doesn't use the pref forms, but STUCO ABSOLUTELY DOES. This is great because when you combine the preferences of the actors with the preferences of the directors, everyone gets their highest possible choice in this best of all possible worlds.

Thanks!

I hope this packet has been helpful in alleviating some of your stress and giving you a closer look at what it's like to audition at Northwestern. Hopefully, you've decided to audition whenever the next generals are (check the Auditions Wiki!).

If you haven't decided to audition yet, I do hope you give yourself a chance to tell a story at Northwestern, whether it's yours or someone else's. There is a place for your voice on this campus, and every single person will benefit from hearing it.

If you have any questions that I haven't answered, go ahead and shoot Dixie Uffelman or the StuCo co-chairs an email at either dixie.uffelman@northwestern.edu or nustuco@gmail.com.