

HST Troupe Philosophy & Policies for May Auditions

What is a troupe and why is it different than auditioning for a show?

- A troupe is modeled after the concept of stock companies. Prior to the internet, local community theaters and summer stock theaters were built around a group of actors/actresses who were committed to ALL aspects of running that program, including technical needs and administrative needs. While this concept is not as common today for theatrical programs, it is still very common for comedy and IMPROV troupes.

Why does HST prefer a troupe structure?

- This model is better suited to HST because our survival depends on parent/student involvement in all aspects of the program (our students help fund-raise, sell tickets, run HST events, assist backstage, and do tech). We also desire to build community and teach that every performer has value regardless of their current skill level. HST values ensemble actors as much as we value actors who can handle lead roles. It is the ensemble who creates the world that the leads act in. Without a great ensemble the story never feels “real” - it is just a story. Additionally, HST values the many intangible talents that a student can contribute to the troupe, such as leadership, creativity, fearlessness, teach-ability, humility and maturity (both as a person and as an actor). Our goal is not to develop Broadway stars but to assist students to reach their fullest potential as individuals.

Why does HST give priority to returning troupe members?

- HST’s goal is to create a safe environment that enable students to learn, take risks, and discover their God-given talents. When students are unsure of their slot every year, the environment becomes competitive and critical. It is the knowledge that they can retain their slot (as long as they are diligent) that enhances positive encouragement and mentoring among students. These are the elements needed for a safe environment that enables students to blossom. The goal if for student actors to learn to support the featured players with their ensemble work. Then, if they are asked to step out into a featured role, they will appreciate the added confidence of having an entire ensemble supporting them.

Once a student is accepted in a troupe can they ever be removed?

- A student who has received a slot in a troupe can be removed. This happens when the student does not follow HST rules or they fail to do the work requested by the director in a timely fashion. Usually the consequence is that the student is told they are at risk of losing their

priority status for auditioning. They will still be eligible to audition for the following year but they will be competing with all the new students for a slot. However, if the behavior problems have been major, a student will receive a conditional contract, listing the behaviors that are not acceptable. The student would only be allowed to continue with HST if they sign the contract. Further occurrence of the problem behavior after the contract is signed will result in removal from a particular HST program or from HST entirely (according to what is specified in the contract). Conditional contracts will be renewed yearly until HST determines they are no longer necessary.

If returning troupe members are given priority why are they asked to audition?

- The requirement to re-audition for troupe in May provides students the opportunity to show directors how they have grown over the past year. Ambitious students who have worked hard choose material that shows off their growth or shows a different aspect of their talents than they have previously shown or attempted. The knowledge that their slot is secure allows them to take risks and this is often the beginning of new areas of blossoming talent. The degree of effort that a returning student puts into this audition says a lot to the director about their work ethic. Their presence is also a gift to the new students who benefit from their example and their support.

Is a student who is not offered a slot in one of the high school troupes (SR and SH) required to participate in the Travel Troupe? (HST tries to accept all students auditioning for our middle school troupes (JR and GB)).

- While they are not required to participate in Travel Troupe, it is not likely that their skills will improve if they take a year off from performing. Also, they will not have the benefit of priority given to students from Travel Troupe who are auditioning for SR and/or SH for the 2nd time.

Why are Travel Troupe students who audition for a 2nd time for SR and/or SH troupe given priority and why do they audition if they already have priority?

- Priority is not a guarantee. Directors assume that students will continue to improve their skills when they take advantage of the training offered in Travel Troupe. However, if a student did not apply the training and returned to audition with no improvement in skills, the director would not be required to take that student. Improvement of skills depends on a student's willingness to take direction and put time into practicing.

If a student chooses not to participate in Travel Troupe can they try again to audition for a troupe the following May?

- Yes. However, they should realize that the director will be looking for skill improvement, so we recommend that the student participate in some sort of program that will enable them to develop and mature their skills.

If a student decides to try a different troupe, do they automatically maintain the highest level of priority instead of competing for an open slot?

- HST's greatest desire is to develop the talents of all students. We recognize that one of the best ways for this to happen is for a student to experience different directing styles and learn different skills. Since GB & JR troupes offer the same type of training (one hour musical), we assign new students to these troupes (taking siblings & carpools into consideration) so that we can keep the troupes balanced. If a student wishes to switch troupes after their first year, they are given priority to do so. When students age-out of JR & GB troupes they are required to take our Audition Class before they can audition for SR or SH Troupe. This class enables directors to assess student's maturity and the other intangible talents that students have to offer. If a student is trying to switch between SR & SH troupe, they will also be required to take this class. Based on their abilities, the directors will let them know if they will maintain their priority status or not. They are still welcome to audition, either way, it is just a question of whether they will be competing for an open slot or automatically getting one of those slots.

Doesn't this priority system put students at the mercy of the number of slots available in a troupe?

- Yes it does. However, this is a life lesson that students will have to face when they apply to colleges or apply for jobs. The number of applications received determines the level of competition for an acceptance. So too, in HST, the level of competition to get a slot in a troupe depends on the number of slots available (ie. how many current HST troupe members graduate, switch troupes, move, or go back to school) and how many students are competing for those open slots. HST believes that God orchestrates the circumstances of life and can bring good out of all things. So, even though all humans are capable of making errors, we pray fervently that God will guide the discernment of those who score auditions and award slots based on the criteria outlined here and voted on by HST's board. Then we trust God will bring growth and blessings from whatever life lessons come out of those decisions.

Variety of talents that a student can find opportunities to develop in HST:

Acting Talents:

- Shakespeare (classic) actor – well developed diction, vocal control – can “act” just with their voice (useful for all acting including radio and voice-over work)
- Serious/dramatic actor – multi-dimensional characters, range of emotions, complex character development, can portray internal conflict, can carry character through a developmental arch
- Comedic actor – comedic timing, slap stick, mimic, improvisational
- Ensemble Actor – can act without words (mime skills), attention to idiosyncrasies of characters, great team work, original creativity
- Teachable Actor – possessing both a willing heart and humility which enable an actor to receive and apply director’s instructions
- Fearless Actor – an actor who is willing to take risks and is not self-conscious or embarrassed.

Singing Talents

- Classical singer (opera/any music demanding high technique)
- Soloist – can sing with emotion/style/charisma
- Choral – can harmonize in a group
- Duet – Can hold harmony on your own/solo style

Dancing Talents

- Irish – softshoe and hardshoe
- Jazz – traditional and modern
- Tap – traditional and rhythm
- Ensemble dancing – precision dancing – ability to dance to a count
- Solo/Partner dancing – fearless, strong technique

Intangible Talents

- Leadership – HST has a Thespian Honor Society which runs many events
- Directorial – able to direct small ensemble scenes in Travel Troupe
- Choreographic – able to choreograph small dance numbers
- Marketing – ticket sales, ad sales, donation solicitation
- Community Building – can plan/run social events with Honor Society
- Morale Building-sensitive to when people are down and able to encourage
- Creative – design tee shirts, create props, paint set flats
- Maturity – as a person and as an actor