

Cast Information for *Mary Poppins*
The 2023 Grade 3-6 Pierce School Musical
Phil Schroeder, Artistic Director
phil@pierceschoolmusical.com

Welcome to the Chorus Information document! It's a LOT of stuff, but I believe it's all very important. At registration, you'll be asked to affirm that you've read and understand this information.

EMAIL CONTACTS

I have left behind last year's email address "piercemusictracks@gmail.com" for @pierceschoolmusical.com, to simplify things. There have been occasions where the new email has landed in people's promotions folders, so if you're not getting emails from me, please look there and clear me for your inbox. Our director, Tara Choat, also uses tara@pierceschoolmusical.com.

OUR WEBSITES

We run two websites. They are different in design and capacities and it doesn't really work to combine them.

pierceschoolmusical.com is where we host info about our upcoming shows and have registration links. (It's where you just downloaded this document.) Once rehearsals are in progress, you won't need to check in with this site much at all.

piercemusictracks.com is where digital assets are located, including MP3 files of songs, PDF files of scenes or changes, and links to choreography videos we shoot during rehearsals. The kids should have easy access to this website before auditions and during the rehearsal period.

Please bookmark them both.

CASTS AND ATTENDANCE

We will have two casts for *Mary Poppins*, the A Cast and the B Cast (names to come later). A Cast will meet Mondays and Wednesdays, B Cast will meet Tuesdays and Fridays. These days will be consistent throughout the production run with only two exceptions, one per cast, described herein.

When registering, you will be asked to affirm your child's availability for one or both casts. This allows you to consider your other known obligations and plan accordingly. So, for example, if

your child has Hebrew School or piano lessons on Tuesdays, then you'd tell me you're available only for the A cast. If your child is in Art Barn's Barncats, either winter or spring, you should choose the B cast because that's the only schedule that will work for you.

The very best thing is if your child is available for both casts as it provides us the greatest flexibility in casting. One thing I humbly ask is that you not game the system to keep friends together. We're all friends – or soon will be – so please reserve your availability selection to real needs.

Based on what you tell us at registration, you will accept your child's cast assignment and clear the decks of non-essential appointments during the rehearsal schedule. Dentists are the hardest, we know...but please do what you can.

Attendance is mandatory unless your child is sick. Putting a play together is all about interaction, timing, and trust. To lose an actor on any day is difficult for the actors who are there, so please respect everyone's need to have your child present.

REHEARSAL AND SHOW SCHEDULES

A Cast: Mondays and Wednesdays, Jan 9 – Mar 29. Cast meets after school for check in and snacks, then proceeds to rehearsal either at the VFW facility or the Pierce Auditorium. Rehearsals run 2:30 to 5:30pm. Please see the website for the complete schedule, including locations.

There is an extra rehearsal day for the A Cast on Thursday, January 19, 2:30 to 5:30pm, as a makeup for MLK day earlier that week.

Shows for A Cast are Friday, March 31, 6:30pm, and Saturday, April 1, 1:30pm.

B Cast: Tuesdays and Fridays, Jan 10 – Mar 30. Cast meets after school for check in and snacks, then proceeds to rehearsal either at the VFW facility (all Tuesdays) or the Pierce Auditorium (Fridays). On Tuesdays, rehearsals run 2:30 to 5:30pm. On Fridays, rehearsals run 1:40 – 4:30pm.

B Cast will have one Thursday rehearsal, its final dress rehearsal before the show, on March 30 until 6:30pm.

Shows for B Cast are Saturday, April 1, 6:30pm and Sunday, April 2, 1:30pm.

REGISTRATION

Registration opens on November 19 at 8:00am. Please mark your calendars, set reminders, etc., as we register on a first-come-first-served basis. We will sell 44 spots only to accommodate two casts of 22.

We do NOT make cuts! Each registered child is in the play. We do make casting decisions, but all are given speaking roles. We do NOT have kids only in the ensemble and no one is cast as "third bush from the left."

AUDITIONS

Auditions will be held on January 4 and 5 after school. In mid-December, your child can select an audition time, via Google Sheet, on either of those days. Auditions are in 25-minute slots throughout each afternoon, and kids will audition in groups of 5 or 6. We encourage them to join with friends for these audition slots and practice together.

Audition materials will become available in mid-December and we'll make sure you have links to those materials. There will be 6 "sides," which are small scenes, usually involving 4-6 characters. Your child should learn them all, being able to read any character for the audition. They don't need to be memorized but should be well-rehearsed.

In addition, each child should learn one song from the show. MP3s, lyric sheets and sheet music will be available for practice. They may choose their song from the available choices. Other songs are not allowed – we want them to put some effort into this. Again, memorization is not required.

Audition criteria, in a word: preparation. We don't expect superstars and we have no favorites. Little things like nerves or shyness doesn't bother us. Mostly, we want to be convinced that your actor has spent time with the material and has created a sense for how to play the roles. We love creativity, risk-taking and bringing physicality to the audition. They may dress up if they want!

CASTING AND ROLES

We will announce casts by noon on Saturday, January 6, via email. This also gives you, the parents, a chance to navigate emotions and set expectations. It's always a bit emotional but you'll get through it.

We work very hard to make this an equitable and important experience for every child. There's nothing we like more than to coach a nervous child to confidence and to coach a gifted child to greater heights. We'll take 'em all! But please know that some roles are bigger and some smaller, that's the way of story. I spend a ridiculous amount of time with the script to make sure there's something good for everyone in there. In addition, most kids won't be very familiar with the character they've been assigned, even if they've met them in the audition sides. Help us help them to trust the process – it always works out.

REFUNDS

There are no refunds after auditions! Refunds can be given before auditions or if your family is suddenly relocated overseas, but because we make big financial commitments to our staff, we ask that once you're in, you're really in. I'm sorry to say that we've had people leave the show after casting, and nothing is more frustrating. (Please don't be that family.)

MATERIALS, SCRIPTS, SONGS, piercemusictracks.com

Each child will receive a script in a binder. Get a pencil pocket for the binder and put in pencils! We do ask them to mark up their scripts and take notes.

CHECK-IN, SNACKS, OTHER POLICIES

Actors will meet in the cafeteria after school on their rehearsal days.

Please send your kids with snacks! They're hungry after school and need to eat something. Please make it healthy and clean. We don't have a lot of capacity to clean up tables and the custodians have already cleaned the cafeteria and moved on to other locations. Thanks for understanding.

I will publish a rehearsal schedule each week and there will be times when actors may leave early. There may be days when we don't need them, and I will let you know.

Students should NOT leave campus for Starbucks, Walgreens, CVS (anywhere!) after school and before rehearsals.

Recently, we've seen students coming to watch the other cast's rehearsals. We welcome them, as it's fun and all, but they cannot use it as social and talking time while we're working. We will ask them to go home if it gets out of hand. Also, if they choose to attend a rehearsal on a day not theirs, we are not looking after them and, unless there's an emergency, won't report anything to you. You'll need to work this out with them.

Cell phones are NOT to be on during rehearsals. If you need to get a message to your child, you'll have the cast supervisor's contact info.

We do not check students out at the end of rehearsals, they are free to leave campus as they would after school.

1. Kids in PSED (5th grade only), Mon, Wed and Fri, must check in to PSED before coming to us and must return to PSED afterwards, *even if* the parent is there, ready to take them home.

2. On Tuesdays or any day we hold our rehearsal at the VFW (next section), we are *not* able to return your child to PSED, as we have no building access. You should let PSED know your child will not attend those days so they don't need to check in and out.

3. They are always welcome to stay with us until the end of rehearsal or until you can meet them.

We cannot allow students in grades 5 & 6 to be in the cafeteria after school unsupervised, so when they're done, they must go home. Please let us know if you have a circumstance that requires accommodation.

REHEARSALS AT VFW

Because space at Pierce is limited, we rent rehearsal space at the American Legion/Veterans of Foreign Wars ("the VFW") building at 386 Washington Street, next to the preschool and across from the Civil War Memorial by the library. The space is clean and secure and approximates the size of our stage. On VFW rehearsal days, we walk the kids as a group, cross Washington Street while the crossing guard is there, and enter the building. At the end of rehearsal or when they're finished, your child may leave the VFW and go home, as they would from Pierce. You'll tell us which you'd prefer at registration.

CAST SUPERVISORS

In addition to the director, there will be a Cast Supervisor present at each rehearsal to check in actors and manage behavior and emergency responses if necessary. Our Cast Supervisors are CPR-Certified, have a first aid kit, and are trained in threat response in these specific spaces. They are all young adults. Their primary job is to have an eye on students' whereabouts and help maintain a productive environment while the director works.

BEHAVIOR AND MEDICAL CONCERNS

Behavior and discipline: Sometimes, kids have a bad day and act out. When this happens, our first response is to pull the student aside for reminders and redirection. Our second response will be to remove the student from the room for a "time out." If the situation warrants, the cast supervisor or director will dismiss the child immediately and contact the parent to discuss the situation, and the child may be released for the day. We have a zero-tolerance policy for verbal or physical abuse that violates anyone's safety; should those occur, your child will be sent home immediately and we'll discuss the situation with you. If the behavior continues, your child may be asked to leave the program without refund. As this is a PTO program, any extreme behavior will be reported to the Pierce Vice Principals.

Medical issues: We receive no information from the school about your child's health. You'll be asked at registration to disclose any medical or non-medical issues that may impact your child's participation as well as your instructions for treatment, if any. It is crucial that you provide us

with any relevant information so that we can make appropriate decisions for your child's care. Any disclosures and instructions will be shared with the director and cast supervisors so that we can recognize a problem before it escalates and respond according to your instructions.

Our emergency response protocols are as follows:

- In the event of a real medical emergency, our first response is to call 911, then the parent.
- In the event of a minor emergency (stomachache, onset of illness), we'll contact the parent and/or send the child home.
- Of course, if a child demonstrates any Covid symptoms, we'll call you and they'll need to go home.

Non-medical considerations: If your child has a special circumstance such as ADHD, which needs more attention than is typically offered in this setting, please notify us in advance and we'll work with you to create a plan for successful participation. If your child is prone to less-manageable outbursts, including physical altercations, we do not have the resources (and the school will not provide them) to create a successful and safe experience for everyone.

You will be asked to check a waiver absolving us of liability in the event of medical emergencies, as is typical for programs like ours, Town sports, Art Barn and more.

FEES AND REFUNDS

Pierce School Musical is a PTO program taught by paid, non-parent instructors who are qualified to teach drama, visual arts, and work with children. Because we make a financial commitment to them, we cannot extend refunds after the start of auditions on January 4.

The registration fee for the musical is \$350. The registration fees will cover directors, technical personnel, assistants, printing, set materials and more.

Fees are collected via credit card at time of registration. If you prefer to pay by check, need scholarship support or structured payments, please contact Phil at phil@pierceschoolmusical.com.

Pierce School Musical/PTO offers these programs to any child who requires financial support on a "no questions asked" basis. We want your kids, regardless of your ability to pay.

COVID STUFF

Refund policy: In 2020, as many of you know, we lost our shows to the immediate shut down of the schools. We were not able to issue refunds, as staff still needed to be paid. Our priority is to provide a complete educational and fun experience for children, regardless of outcomes, while

honoring our agreements with our staff. While performances are one expected outcome, they are not guaranteed. If our program is shut down early, owing to situations beyond our control, we will refund money as we are able, and after all staff have been paid for work to date. After March 10, however, we'll not be able to offer refunds for program or show cancellations.

Masks: we welcome masks at all rehearsals and for the shows but as of this writing, they are not required. We will follow any mandates issued by the Town or the principal in this regard and expect the kids to do the same. We prefer that your child have a mask available in case we suspect a Covid exposure.

Registration is your choice and you register at your own risk (words we never thought we'd have to write). If this endeavor sounds risky or makes you uncomfortable, you should not register.

VACCINATED, PLEASE

We strongly encourage you to get your child vaccinated.