

Annie, the 2022 Grade 3-6 Musical

Hi everyone. This document is what is referred to in the registration as "Terms of Registration." These aren't terms, exactly, but all the information that I want you to know as we wade into this together. It's a lot of info but most of it applies to everyone. Your "agreement" at registration means you've read and understand the following. If you have concerns, of course, please let me know.

Welcome, and thank you for considering joining the cast of *Annie*. This is a terrific show for first timers and for kids who've done Art Barn or other children's theatre. It's a timeless "rags to riches" story where the riches are family love, and money is only a foil. It has so many fabulous characters! We did this show in 2017 with two remarkable casts of kids who went on to have amazing careers in Pierce School Musical. As we rebuild the program from our pandemic shutdown last year, I think this is the perfect show.

I've been running Pierce School Musical since 2016/17 and I'm extremely proud of our program. I am committed to a program that changes kids' lives through the arts, and I believe ours does. We've had well over a thousand children in our program since then, most of whom have found a new sense of confidence and happiness being on the stage with their friends. We've had extremely talented kids who've shown great mastery of their craft; I've seen performances that I'm sure will never be topped by anyone else at this age – until they are. But what I love the most is watching the 5th grader who is unsure, naturally inexperienced, and nervous, grow into the actor who unflinchingly seizes the leading role in her 8th grade play. *That* is what gives me the greatest joy. I believe our program is all about the long term, and it starts with this 5th/6th grade play. For those of you just jumping in, I can't wait to see us all at the end.

And for you, the parents, I want to warn you: things will often seem uncertain. Your child will come home and insist that he "bombed the audition," or that she'll think she should have been cast differently. This is all a natural part of the process. What I'll say now, and in some well-timed reminder emails over the years, is that every child is a snapshot of themselves in that moment. How they're cast is simply a step on the long voyage of artistic discovery and we work hard to make every character count. Every one of them will get to the stage, in costume, with mics on, under the lights, and be part of something remarkable. We'll work and play them hard and leave no one behind.

CASTS AND ATTENDANCE

We will have two casts for *Annie*, the Bentley Cast and the Dusseldorf Cast. Bentley Cast will meet Mondays and Wednesdays, Dusseldorf Cast will meet Tuesdays and Fridays. These days will be consistent throughout the production run with only two exceptions, one per cast, described herein.

It's a result of Covid (of course) that we're pushed back to Spring this year, and I know that's a busy time. (We'll be back to Winter next year.) Depending on your child's sport, you may have

to choose one or the other. We can no more accommodate actors missing rehearsals than your coach will allow players to miss games. Thank you for understanding – and good luck!

But what will my child's schedule be? 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 Monday/Wednesday cast. If your child plays soccer or baseball, it's going to be tough, because those game days change all the time. I encourage you to see this as an opportunity for less driving. :-)

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.

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

REHEARSAL AND SHOW SCHEDULES

Bentley Cast: Mondays and Wednesdays, Feb 28 – May 18. 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 Bentley Cast on Thursday, May 5, 2:30 to 5:30pm.

Shows for Bentley Cast are Friday, May 20, 6:30pm, and Saturday, May 21, 2:00pm.

Dusseldorf Cast: Tuesdays and Fridays, Mar 1 – May 17. Cast meets after school for check in and snacks, then proceeds to rehearsal either at the VFW facility or the Pierce Auditorium. On Tuesdays, rehearsals run 2:30 to 5:30pm. On Fridays, rehearsals run 1:40 – 4:30pm. Please see the website for the complete schedule, including locations.

There is a make-up rehearsal on Thursday, April 14 (2:30 – 5:30) because of the holiday on Friday, April 15, just prior to April break. This rehearsal is mandatory, please don't skip town early and expect us to understand – we're not that nice!

Shows for Dusseldorf Cast are Thursday, May 19, 6:30pm and Saturday, May 21, 7:00pm.

REGISTRATION AND FAMILY INFORMATION MEETING

Registration opens on January 29 at 8:00am. (This is a week earlier than previously announced.) Please mark your calendars, set reminders, etc., as we register on a first-come-first-served basis. We will sell 48 spots only to accommodate two casts of 24.

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

There will be a family informational meeting on Zoom on Monday, January 24 at 6:30pm at this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4391545112?pwd=TIBPMWpJZER1VVNtM2tPQ3R2T29Xdz09>
Meeting ID: 439 154 5112
Passcode: 340885

I will briefly discuss what's in this document and entertain questions from parents and kids alike. These are very informative sessions, so please plan to join.

AUDITIONS

Auditions will be held on Thursday, Feb 10 and Friday Feb 11. After registration, your child can select an audition time, via Google Sheet, on either of those days. Auditions are in 20-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-January, please see our website for links. 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 need not be memorized but *learning* them specifically means that they have been rehearsed.

In addition, each child should learn one song from the show. MP3s, lyric sheets and even sheet music will be available for rehearsal. 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. We won't have seen *any* of these kids before in a musical. We have seen just about every malady you can imagine in auditions, so little things like nerves or shyness doesn't bother us. We want to believe 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. (One of the roles will be Sandy, the dog, so please – be a dog!) What we want, more than anything, is to see an actor too prepared for us to ignore.

MATERIALS, SCRIPTS, SONGS, piercemusictracks.com

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

The show songs, as well as digital copies of all materials, can be found at our other website: www.piercemusictracks.com. It's not the same as our organizational website (www.pierceschoolmusical.com) because it's designed and hosted differently. Please bookmark both sites!

CHECK-IN, SNACKS, NO LEAVING CAMPUS

Actors will meet in the cafeteria after school for check-in and a quick snack. We no longer provide snacks. Because of many kids' specific dietary requirements, we've decided we need to leave the nutrition of your kids to you. Please send food, it's a long time from your child's lunch to 5:30pm!

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 report to the cafeteria immediately after school for check-in and should NOT leave campus for Starbucks, Walgreens, CVS, etc. We do not check students out at the end of class, they are free to leave campus as they would at any other time, with the following exceptions:

1. Kids in PSED (5th grade only) 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. Kids who need special assistance, assuming we can accommodate them.

The school does not allow kids to hang out in the cafeteria after school or after they're finished with rehearsals. Please let us know if you have a circumstance that requires accommodation.

PIERCE AUDITORIUM, WORK DETAIL

More than ever before, the Pierce Auditorium is a catch-all space for too many activities, all of which leave stuff in there every day. We have work to do to clear the stage before each rehearsal and I will assign 4 actors each week to a work detail to help with that. They will need to check in and get to work clearing the stage when it's their week. They can eat their snack afterwards.

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

We typically offer a Children's Chorus experience to 3rd and 4th graders, who participate by singing along with most of the songs and have a dance feature in the show. We have loved this important aspect of the Grade 3-6 Musical for years, but we are uncertain if we can offer it this year because of Covid and space restrictions. If we can, rehearsals will be held on Thursdays beginning March 31 and running through May 12, then with additional days to join cast dress rehearsals, TBD. Stand by!

VFW FACILITY

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. The kids don't leave the VFW until rehearsal is over. At the end of rehearsal, your child may leave the VFW and go home, as they would from Pierce, or we can escort them back to Pierce for either PSED or your other plans. 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, social distancing and emergency responses should that ever be 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. However, if they happen, the first response is to pull the student aside for reminders and redirection. The second response will be to remove the student from the room for a "time out." If the situation warrants, the director will dismiss the child immediately and contact the parent to discuss the situation. 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 may be asked to leave the program; a refund will not be offered. 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.

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 rehearsals on February 28, 2022.

The registration fee for the musical is \$350. We are budgeting with a "zero ticket sales" revenue model this year because there is no assurance that we can have performances of a predictable size. The registration fees will cover directors, technical personnel, assistants, printing, materials and more and we'll still operate at a small loss without ticket sales.

If we are unable to continue offering the musical because of state or school district restrictions around Covid or similar, we will wait two weeks before deciding to discontinue the program. If discontinued, we will process pro-rata refunds to all families after our financial obligations to staff have been met.

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 piercemusictracks@gmail.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 CONSIDERATIONS

Please get your kids vaccinated! This is our single best way out of this mess. We understand the importance of keeping the kids safe and will stage the show with no close contact. Actors will be masked. No one will sing into another's face, even masked. We don't want to put anyone at risk or lose any actors.

The state has different rules for after-school programs regarding "test-to-stay" protocols. In short, test-to-stay (or test-to-return) is not available to your child if they are found to be a close contact in an after-school program. Your close-contact child would be subject to quarantine of up to ten days. We take all the precautions that the school takes, including masks worn indoors, distancing and more. We do not direct kids to touch each other as part of their acting and there is no loud shouting or singing in proximity to others. We keep them six feet apart when they are sitting.