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Dramatic Publishing

ON TIME

Words and Music

by

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and

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Dramatic Publishing

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**For
Sharon and Alex**

Acknowledgments

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PRODUCTION NOTES

As teachers, directors, and parents, Joy and I have been all too familiar with the fallout from traditional "star vehicles" (i.e., those productions in which there are a small number of leads, and all other aspiring performers are left in the chorus): poor attitudes and belligerence in the classroom, discipline problems during rehearsals, and behavioral problems at home. And by the spring of 1990, we had had enough! It seemed that between Joy's background in theater and Effectiveness Training, and mine in music education and Instructional Design, there had to be a way of creating an enjoyable, high-energy musical that featured parts for a large number of performers, including roles for those who only wanted speaking and/or singing parts, roles for those who only wanted movement (or dance), as well as roles for those who felt they could handle various combinations of the three. And with the encouragement of the students, faculty and staff of University School, in Bloomington, Indiana (not to mention our families), one year later, *ON TIME* made its theatrical debut!

However, to presume that that is the end of the story (and the entire solution to the problem) would not be telling the whole truth. Because once having introduced the concept of "fairness" in the design of *ON TIME*, I found that I (as the show's originating director) could not then turn around and cast it using traditional audition procedures. I was therefore forced to develop a system which would be more in keeping with the philosophy of *ON TIME*—a system which Joy and I have dubbed "consensus casting."

Although this system may appear somewhat radical at first, it really is not all that difficult to employ. Moreover, when the students realize that the objective is to make the casting procedure as "fair" as the distribution of the roles, they are eager to give it a try.

The first step is to teach the entire show until the students have all the songs memorized and are quite familiar with the text. Then stress the fact that “consensus casting” will only work if the group is willing to *make* it work, and that they must be willing to defer to one another for the good of both the group and the show.

Once this is understood, proceed to the second step—the actual casting. Start at the beginning of the script, and name the roles. Ask the children to raise their hands for only one role—the one that they want most. If only one child is interested in a particular role, it is his/hers. However, if more than one child wants a particular role, the students must “negotiate” for it,* remembering that:

a) their relationship with one another is more important than who gets which role;

b) the functioning of the entire group is more important than who gets which role; and

c) if neither student can bring him or herself to relinquish a particular role, they must re-write the entire part in such a way that each one can still be happy with his or her contribution, and so that the scene still “works.”

This procedure should be repeated until the first round of casting is completed and every class member has a part.

Finally, allow the children to “go back for seconds” until all ninety-six** parts are taken, the only provisions at this point being that:

1) *everyone* must have a part!

* No matter how hard we tried to make the roles equally attractive, some parts inevitably appear “juicier” than others. Furthermore, the most sought-after part may vary from group to group; it might be the VILLAIN from “Time’s Up” in one class; and JEREMY, from “Bedtime,” in another.

**This figure is based on the thirty-three individually-featured roles and assumes twenty-eight additional SOLOISTS, thirteen STAGEHANDS, four CREW members, four BACKUP SINGERS, four NIGHTMARE CLOCKS, two TANGO DANCERS, and an eight-member KICKLINE.

- 2) every role in the show must be taken by someone!
- 3) the communication process must be polite, respectful, and pleasant at all times!

Now, the question necessarily arises, doesn't using "consensus casting" change the role of the "teacher" as "director"? And the answer is undeniably, "Yes." First of all, in using this system, the teacher is obligated to sacrifice the traditional "power" of deciding who gets which part. Moreover, s/he must "play the hands s/he's dealt." In other words, if a student selects and successfully negotiates for a role that you, as the auditioning director, would not have chosen for him or her, you must nevertheless bring that child to the highest level of his or her potential, whatever that level might be.

Secondly, the teacher/director must frequently assume the role of "mediator," in assisting class members to achieve agreement and/or consensus as to who should get which role.

And thirdly, the teacher needs to be aware that "consensus casting" may take more time and result in a lower level of professionalism than might have been achieved with traditional casting procedures. However, when this system of casting is used in the educational setting, we have found that the "payoffs" are simply enormous!*

To my delight, not to mention my surprise, I have found that in using "consensus casting" with nine different casts over the past three years, the quality of the final performances has been enhanced rather than diminished, precisely because the students were more invested in, and therefore more committed to, the production. (And their enthusiasm showed in their performances!) It was also interesting to note that even

* I must point out that *ON TIME* has, in fact, been produced (with great success) using traditional casting procedures; however, I am not convinced that the level of team spirit is as high as when the children have had input into the casting and have witnessed the negotiation process at work.

from a director's point of view, the students do a remarkably good job of casting because:

a) most of them already know their own strengths and weaknesses and tend to select roles they can play effectively;

b) children who may initially appear weak improve so dramatically during rehearsals that they turn in excellent performances, anyway;

c) students who realize that a role is too difficult once rehearsals have begun tend to ask if they can give the role to someone else (My answer is always "yes," as long as everyone in the group can agree to the transfer and as long as the student still has a role); and

d) an added bonus of this system has been to watch students who have two or more roles immediately—without prompting—offer one of those roles to "new" children entering the school mid-year.

As strongly as I believe that there are few things as intrinsically motivating as theatrical performance (because it fills the basic human needs for attention, self-expression and growth), I used to dread audition week, because selecting a few "stars" meant shutting the door in so many of the other students' faces. (And I know of few things more frustrating than being denied the opportunity to be featured while at the same time being forced to watch your classmates develop new skills and garner all the applause.) "Consensus casting," on the other hand, not only allows students to have a voice in their role, but also gives each child a stake in the production and helps him/her to understand that his/her individual needs and desires are every bit as important as (and therefore must be balanced against) those of the rest of the group. And when each child feels valued, s/he can become altruistic rather than competitive.

Therefore, it is our belief that any time and/or “professionalism” which *might* be lost (and I’m not convinced that it is) in the use of “consensus casting” is more than made up for by:

1) the improved relationships between the teacher and the students;

2) the improved relationships among the students themselves;

3) the improved relationships among the teacher/director, the producing organization, and the parents (since every child is being featured); and

4) (perhaps most important) the improved relationship between the individual student and his or her own self-esteem.

Sarah Stevens-Estabrook

ON TIME

A Musical in One Act
For 20-60 (smaller or larger possible, flexible)

CHARACTERS

MASTER/MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES 1, 2, 3, 4
CHORUS
LATE-COMER
VILLAIN
MARIANNE
STAGEHANDS
ENGINEER
CREW
KID
"JUNIOR HIGH BLUES" SOLOIST
"JUNIOR HIGH BLUES" BACKUP SINGERS
AL/ALISON
SAM/SAMANTHA
JEREMY/JULIA
MOTHER/FATHER
FATHER TIME
DREAM JEREMY/DREAM JULIA
NIGHTMARE CLOCKS
SHAKESPEARE
NURSE
SCHOOL-BOY
LOVER
SOLDIER
JUSTICE
PANTALOON
PLACEMENT OFFICER
CUSTOMERS A & B
HONEST ARNIE
TECHNO TRIO
ATTENDANT
OBJECTIVE TIME
SUBJECTIVE TIME
MALE TANGO DANCER(S)
FEMALE TANGO DANCER(S)
KICKLINE

SET LIST

Nine cubes, 18" on a side, with each side one of the following colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and white.

SOUND EFFECTS

- Alarm clock (loud)
- Recorded voice
- Cuckoo clock
- Electronically-synthesized voice
- Electronic beeps and blips
- Telephone rings (optional)

PROP LIST

- Signs: BOO and HISS
 YES/NO and RIGHT/PEEP
- Cardboard train (optional)
- Rope
- Handkerchief / STAGEHAND 1
- Snowman face
- Teddy Bear (optional) / JEREMY/JULIA
- Cane / FATHER TIME
- Doll wrapped in blanket / NURSE (optional)
- Satchel / SCHOOL-BOY
- Guitar / LOVER (optional)
- Thick, leather-bound book / JUSTICE
- Two telephones

- Insta-mute (small black box with green button)
/ HONEST ARNIE
- Artificial rose / FEMALE TANGO DANCER (optional)

COSTUME LIST

- ENTIRE CAST / matching T-shirts, jeans, sneakers
- MC 1, 2, and 3 / oversized sport coat, wide tie
- MC 4 / oversized bow tie
- VILLAIN / black top hat, black cape, handlebar mustache
- MARIANNE / nineteenth-century melodrama dress
- ENGINEER / striped denim “Engineer’s” hat, red bandanna
- CREW / red bandannas
- JUNIOR HIGH BLUES / '50s/'60s outfits (optional)
- STAGEHANDS 7, 8 and 9 / hats, scarves, gloves
- MOTHER / apron with bib
- FATHER / jacket (optional) and tie
- JEREMY/JULIA and DREAM JEREMY/JULIA / pajamas
- FATHER TIME / long white robe, long beard
- NIGHTMARE CLOCKS / Clock-face masks
- SHAKESPEARE / period costume
- NURSE / Nurse’s uniform or appropriate period costume
- SCHOOL-BOY / shorts and shirt
- LOVER / romantic or period shirt
- SOLDIER / uniform with bayonet
- JUSTICE / robe, beard
- PANTALOON / traditional: shirt, knickers, tights, slippers,
spectacles, pouch
- PLACEMENT OFFICER / business suit

- **HONEST ARNIE** / “loud” plaid jacket with offensive tie
- **TECHNO TRIO** / futuristic ensembles
- **ATTENDANT** / fast-food uniform and headset
- **OBJECTIVE/SUBJECTIVE TIME** / T-shirts with
respective names across the front
- **MALE TANGO DANCER(S)** / bolero and Spanish dancer
hat (optional)
- **FEMALE TANGO DANCER** / ruffled skirt/blouse and
black character shoes (optional)

(Curtain opens to reveal AL/ALISON crying on top cube of a blue pyramid. SAM/SAMANTHA enters, L.)

SAM/SAMANTHA. What's the matter?

AL/ALISON. It's the blues. They always make me cry.

SAM/SAMANTHA. Well, get off of there, then, and think of a color that makes you happy. *(AL/ALISON descends from pyramid.)*

AL/ALISON. A color that makes me happy?

SAM/SAMANTHA. Yeah.

AL/ALISON. Okay. Yellow.

SAM/SAMANTHA. Yellow?

AL/ALISON. Yeah. Like summer. Sunshine and flowers.

SAM/SAMANTHA. Okay. Yellow it is.

(Snaps fingers, STAGEHAND 1 enters, R, and moves R cube DR, yellow side facing D. S/he then assumes rap dancer pose.)

AL/ALISON. How did you do that?

SAM/SAMANTHA. Magic. *(AL/ALISON climbs onto cube and smiles.)*

AL/ALISON. See? My favorite season!

SAM/SAMANTHA. That's your favorite season? Sunburn and mosquitoes? *(STAGEHAND 1 slaps imaginary mosquitoes.)*

AL/ALISON. Yeah. What's yours?

SAM/SAMANTHA. Spring.

(Snaps fingers again. STAGEHANDS 2, 3 and 4 enter, L, and move three L cubes into pyramid DL, green sides facing D.)

SAM/SAMANTHA. You know...*(Swinging imaginary bat.)*...baseball...

STAGEHAND 2. Strike one!

SAM/SAMANTHA. ...and...*(Swings again.)*...baseball...

STAGEHAND 3. Strike two!

AL/ALISON. ...and...*(Sneezes.)*...pollen!

STAGEHAND 1. Bless you *(Handing him/her a handkerchief. STAGEHANDS 2, 3 and 4 strike rap dancer poses.)*

SAM/SAMANTHA. Well, what would you rather have?

AL/ALISON. Fall.

(STAGEHANDS 5 and 6 enter, R, and place two R cubes UR, orange sides facing D. They then strike rap dancer poses.)

AL/ALISON. When all the leaves change color and the pumpkins ripen on the vine.

SAM/SAMANTHA (*grabs his/her stomach*). All those clichés make me sick! Almost like too much turkey!

AL/ALISON. Oh, sorry. Well, then, how about winter?

SAM/SAMANTHA. Yeah.

(STAGEHANDS 7, 8 and 9 enter, wearing hats, scarves and gloves, and move C column of cubes UL, white sides facing D. They then assume snowman-building poses. SAM/SAMANTHA hurls imaginary snowball.)

SAM/SAMANTHA. Snowballs.

AL/ALISON. And ice skates!

SAM/SAMANTHA. Snowmen! (*STAGEHAND 7 slaps snowman face on top cube.*)

AL/ALISON. Frostbite!

SAM/SAMANTHA. Bobsleds!

AL/ALISON. Pneumonia!

(No. 5: "MY FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR")

SAM/SAMANTHA (*sings*).
SNOWFLAKES...

AL/ALISON.
...HEADACHES,

SAM/SAMANTHA.
WASSAIL...

AL/ALISON.
...FRUITCAKES,

STAGEHANDS 7, 8 and 9.
LOTS OF HOLIDAY CHEER;

AL/ALISON AND STAGEHANDS 1, 5 and 6.
FOLKS ARE PLEASANT,

SAM/SAMANTHA AND STAGEHANDS 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9.
BRINGING PRESENTS,

ALL.
MY FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR.

STAGEHANDS 5 and 6.
**FALL IS THE SEASON OF SPLENDOR;
THE COLORS OF HARVEST ARE HERE.**

STAGEHANDS 2, 3 and 4.
**SPRING IS A TIME OF BIRTH AND GROWTH
THAT SIGNALS ANOTHER NEW YEAR.**

AL/ALISON.
SUMMER...

SAM/SAMANTHA.
...BUG BITES,

AL/ALISON.
SWIMMING...

SAM/SAMANTHA.
...HOT NIGHTS;

STAGEHANDS 5 and 6.

TRY AIR CONDITIONING, MY DEAR.

STAGEHANDS 2, 3 and 4.

CAMPING...

STAGEHANDS 7, 8 and 9.

...BIKING,

STAGEHANDS 5 and 6.

TRAV'LING...

AL/ALISON and STAGEHAND 1.

...HIKING,

ALL.

**MY FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR.
PUT ALL THE SEASONS TOGETHER,
AND STRETCH THEM FROM WINTER TO FALL;**

AL/ALISON.

**YOU'LL FIND THAT ONE IS YOUR
FAVORITE,**

SAM/SAMANTHA.

BUT, FRANKLY, I'M FOND OF THEM ALL.

AL/ALISON and STAGEHAND 1.

SUMMER...

STAGEHANDS 7, 8 and 9.

...WINTER,

SAM/SAMANTHA AND STAGEHANDS 2, 3 and 4.
SPRING AND...

STAGEHANDS 5 and 6.
...AUTUMN,

ALL.
ENJOY EACH ONE WHEN IT'S HERE;

AL/ALISON AND STAGEHANDS 1, 5 and 6.
LEAVES TO...

SAM/SAMANTHA and STAGEHANDS 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9.
...BEACHES,

ALL.
YOU'LL FIND THAT EACH IS
YOUR FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR.

(JEREMY/JULIA enters, L, dressed in pajamas and carrying a Teddy Bear.)*

STAGEHAND 5. Hey, Kid! I'll bet I know what your favorite time is.

STAGEHANDS. Bedtime.

JEREMY. No, it's not.

*(MOTHER** enters, L.)*

* For the purposes of this script, JEREMY will be used throughout, but the role may be played by either a boy or a girl.

**For the purposes of this script, MOTHER will be used throughout, but the role may be played by either a boy or a girl.

MOTHER. Oh, yes, it is. (*To STAGEHANDS.*) Can I have some help with Jeremy's bed, please? (*STAGEHANDS 1, 2 and 7 each place a cube DC and exit. Curtain.*)

JEREMY. But, Mom...

MOTHER. No "but"s, Jeremy. I want you in bed with the lights out in five minutes.

JEREMY. Five minutes?

MOTHER. You heard me. And I don't want to hear another peep out of you. (*MOTHER exits, L. JEREMY stares at the bed, then at the audience. Pause.*)

JEREMY. Bedtime. I hate bedtime! (*To audience.*) Don't you?

(*STAGEHAND 10 appears, R, with sign reading YES!*)

CHORUS (*backstage*). Yes!

JEREMY. You know what I think bedtime is? I think it's a conspiracy, a plot hatched by parents for the sole purpose of getting rid of us kids. Right?

(*STAGEHAND 11 appears, L, with sign reading RIGHT!*)

CHORUS (*backstage*). Right!

JEREMY. So they can stay up and enjoy themselves without us, right? (*STAGEHAND 11 holds sign above his/her head.*)

CHORUS (*backstage*). Right!

JEREMY. Well, we're not going to be fooled that easily, are we? (*STAGEHAND 10 flips sign to read NO!*)

CHORUS (*backstage*). No!

JEREMY. Are we going to take this lying down? (*STAGEHAND 10 raises sign above his/her head.*)

CHORUS (*backstage*). No!

JEREMY. I didn't think so. I exhort you, my fellow kids! The next time your mother says, "You've got five more minutes, and I don't want to hear another peep out of you," climb up on your bed...(*Climbs up on cubes.*)...hold your head high...(*Puffs out his/her chest.*)...and yell...(*Throwing fist in the air.*) "Peep!" (*STAGEHAND 11 flips sign to read PEEP! Pause.*) After all...(*Climbing down from cubes; through yawn.*)...we're people too, right?

CHORUS (*backstage, yawning*). Right. (*STAGEHAND 10 exits.*)

JEREMY (*sitting down on cubes*). And we've had a hard day, too, right?

CHORUS (*backstage: half-speaking; half-snoring*). Right. (*STAGEHAND 11 exits.*)

JEREMY. (*curling up in fetal position, facing audience. Sleepily*). Right.

(*Falls asleep. FATHER TIME enters, R, with beard and cane. Low moan.*)

FATHER TIME. Jeremy...(*No response. Moves closer to JEREMY. In slightly higher tone.*) Oh, Jeremy...(*JEREMY twitches. FATHER TIME pauses, looks hopeful, then disappointed. Goes over and swats JEREMY. Yells.*) Jeremy!

(*JEREMY falls off cubes. Scurries between curtains to be replaced by DREAM JEREMY.*)

DREAM JEREMY (*half-asleep*). Huh?

FATHER TIME. Your mother said she didn't want to hear another peep out of you.

DREAM JEREMY. Who are you?

FATHER TIME. Don't you recognize me? I'm Father Time.

DREAM JEREMY. Father...

FATHER TIME. And not only did you peep, you rabble-roused.

DREAM JEREMY. I did?

FATHER TIME. Your mother shouldn't have to tell you when it's time to go to bed.

DREAM JEREMY. Well, then how am I supposed to know?

FATHER TIME. Can't you tell *me*?

DREAM JEREMY. Tell you what?

FATHER TIME. I'm time. Can't you tell time?

DREAM JEREMY. No. I've never been able to. Big hands, and little hands, and second hands that are really third hands. And everybody telling me I've got to count by fives. I don't want to learn to count by fives.

FATHER TIME. Aha! There's your problem! You need to change your attitude.

DREAM JEREMY. My attitude?

FATHER TIME. Your attitude.

(No. 6: "I'D LIKE TO TELL TIME A THING OR TWO")

DREAM JEREMY (*a capella, slowly*).

MY ATTITUDE, MY ATTITUDE;

MY PROBLEM IS MY ATTITUDE.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO LEARN THIS

TILL MY FACE TURNS BLUE!

(*Accompaniment and tempo up.*)

MY ATTITUDE! MY ATTITUDE!

HE WANTS TO CHANGE MY ATTITUDE!

**WELL, I'D LIKE TO TELL TIME A THING OR
TWO!**

**HOW COME A CLOCK'S A CIRCLE
AND AN HOUR'S ALWAYS ROUND?**

FATHER TIME (*spoken throughout*). Don't ask irrelevant questions.

DREAM JEREMY.

**AND THE WAY THE NUMBERS WORK IS
REALLY WEIRD.**

FATHER TIME. Some things you just have to take on faith.

DREAM JEREMY.

**IF THE BIG HAND GOES FROM TWELVE TO ONE,
YOU'VE GOT TO COUNT TO FIVE.**

FATHER TIME. What's wrong with that?

DREAM JEREMY.

**YOU KNOW, I THINK THIS WHOLE THING'S JUST
ABSURD!**

FATHER TIME. I told you. It's your attitude!

DREAM JEREMY.

**MY ATTITUDE! MY ATTITUDE!
MY PROBLEM IS MY ATTITUDE!
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO LEARN THIS
TILL MY FACE TURNS BLUE!
MY ATTITUDE! MY ATTITUDE!
HE WANTS TO CHANGE MY ATTITUDE!
WELL, I'M GOING TO TELL TIME A THING OR
TWO!**

**YOU PUT THE BIG HAND ON THE SIX
AND TOLD ME IT WAS THIRTY!**

FATHER TIME. Relatively speaking.

DREAM JEREMY.

WHAT KIND OF SILLY THING WAS THAT TO DO?

FATHER TIME. Didn't bother me.

DREAM JEREMY.

**AND WHEN IT'S ON THE THREE AND NINE,
IT'S QUARTER PAST AND TILL!**

FATHER TIME. Fractions, lad! Fractions!

DREAM JEREMY.

**DON'T TELL ME ANY MORE, 'CUZ NOW I'M
THROUGH!**

FATHER TIME. I don't think so...

(Four STUDENTS enter, wearing clock-face masks.)

NIGHTMARE CLOCKS.

**YOUR ATTITUDE! YOUR ATTITUDE!
THE PROBLEM IS YOUR ATTITUDE!
YOU NEED TO WORK HARDER,
'CUZ YOUR FACE STILL ISN'T BLUE!**

**YOUR ATTITUDE! YOUR ATTITUDE!
YOU'D BETTER CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE,
OR YOU'LL NEVER TELL TIME A THING OR,**

**NEVER TELL TIME A THING OR,
NEVER TELL TIME, NEVER TELL TIME,
NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER!**

DREAM JEREMY (*screams*). Aaaaaah!

(Lights out. NIGHTMARE CLOCKS and FATHER TIME exit; DREAM JEREMY is replaced by original JEREMY. Lights back up as MOTHER re-enters.)

MOTHER. Jeremy! Are you okay?

JEREMY. Well, no, not really. (*MOTHER sits on cubes.*)

MOTHER. What's the matter?

JEREMY. There were all these clocks, and they were yelling at me because I couldn't tell time.

MOTHER. You must have been having a bad dream.

JEREMY. They said I'd *never* be able to!

MOTHER. Of course, you will. It just takes time. People learn things at different points in their lives. You weren't born knowing how to talk, were you? (*JEREMY shakes his head.*) Or walk?

JEREMY. No. (*Puts head in MOTHER's lap.*)

MOTHER. But now you can, right? (*No answer. JEREMY has fallen asleep.*) Right. Because that's what life is all about. It's sort of like Shakespeare says:*

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players...

(Lights out. Voice of SHAKESPEARE continues, while JEREMY, MOTHER, and STAGEHAND 1 remove cubes and exit.)

*As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII.