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Dramatic Publishing

IN SPACE

A Musical

by

SARAH STEVENS-ESTABROOK

and

JOY CHAITIN



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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**For
Alex and Sharon**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the University School community in Bloomington, Indiana, for their involvement in our many musical and theatrical experiments. Our administrators, faculty, parents and students are enthusiastic participants as we try new methods for casting and performance. Their support during the past 19 years has allowed us to develop our approach to “putting on a show,” and we appreciate having the privilege of working with this incredibly wonderful group of people!

PRODUCTION NOTES

If you have already directed *In Space's* companion piece, *On Time*, and have previously employed the techniques involved in "consensus casting," these production notes will be redundant. If, however, this is the first time you have attempted to throw competitive audition procedures to the winds, and empower your cast with the opportunity to exercise choice in the roles they play, what follows is a thumb-nail sketch of methods I use when allowing a group to decide, as a community, who plays what role.

Although consensus casting 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 give each of them as equal a performance opportunity as possible, they are thrilled to be given the chance to negotiate for a role, rather than having to attempt to please a director in an audition.

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 committed to *making* 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 students 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 certain 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 cast member has a part.

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

- 1) *everyone* must have a part;
- 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 hand 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. 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. And, depending on the natural cooperation vs. competition level of a given group, role selection can be quick and easy, or it can require the highest level of delicacy and diplomacy imaginable on the part of the director.

And thirdly, the director 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 an educational setting, we have found that the payoffs are simply enormous! Though *On Time* has, in fact, been produced using

traditional casting procedures, I am not convinced that the level of team spirit is as high as when the cast members have had input into the casting and have participated in the negotiation process.

To my delight, not to mention my surprise, I have found that in using consensus casting consistently since 1992 (with over 100 different groups), 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 shows in their performances! It is also interesting to note that even from a director's point of view, the students do an excellent 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 need for attention, self-expression and growth—I used to dread audition week as 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.

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; and

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

Because what are we trying to create here, anyway? A perfect performance, or a situation in which ecstatically happy performers have the opportunity to choose an avenue for growth and pursue it?

Sarah Stevens-Estabrook

IN SPACE

A Musical in One Act
For 20-75 (smaller or larger possible, flexible)

CHARACTERS

VOICES 1-28

CHORUS

AMOEBAS 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8

BABY BIRD

MOTHER BIRD

DAD

MOM

LUKE/LINDSAY

JEFF/JESSIE

MAGICIAN

MAGICIAN'S ASSISTANT 1,2,3,4

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1,2,3

MATHILDA/MATTHEW

EMPLOYEE 1,2,3,4

WALL 1,2,3,4

MOM/DAD

JACK/JILL

RICHARD/RHONDA

MEMORY INSTALLATION SPECIALIST

CYBER ASSISTANT 1,2

OFFSTAGE VOICE 1,2,3,4

SOLOIST A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N

(Curtains close. Stagehands set up cube "tree," DR and cube "car" for Song #4, DL. BABY BIRD squats on top of "tree." MOTHER BIRD stands DL of tree. Lights up R.)

BABY BIRD (*whining*). But, Mom, I can't!

MOTHER BIRD (*exasperated*). "Can't"? Don't ever say "can't"! Think positively!

BABY BIRD. But flying scares me!

MOTHER BIRD (*with increasing sympathy*). Scares you?

BABY BIRD (*sniffing*). Yeah.

MOTHER BIRD (*truly sympathetically*). But why?

(SONG #3: "LEARNING TO FLY")**BABY BIRD.**

**WELL, THERE'S EAGLES AND BUZZARDS AND
VULTURES,
SWOOPING ALL OVER THE SKY;
THEY EAT BABY BIRDS FOR BREAKFAST AND
LUNCH
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN ASK WHY!**

MOTHER BIRD.

**BUT LOOK OVER THERE, AT THAT WORM, MY
DEAR,
HOWEVER CAN YOU PASS IT BY?
YOU'LL NEVER BE FREE TO DO ANYTHING,
UNLESS YOU START LEARNING TO FLY!**

BABY BIRD.

**BUT WHAT IF I FALL ON MY TUMMY,
AND SPLATTER ALL OVER THE GROUND?**

MOTHER BIRD.

**BUT WHAT IF YOU STAY AND YOU CAN'T
SEARCH FOR FOOD,
WHEN I'M NO LONGER AROUND?**

BABY BIRD.

**YOU'RE NOT HELPING, I'M JUST FEELING
WORSE NOW,**

MOTHER BIRD.

**I GUESS I JUST CAN'T FIND THE WORDS,
TO HELP YOU TO LOOK IN THE RIGHT PLACE,
TO BECOME A MAGNIFICENT BIRD!**

BABY BIRD.

BUT WHAT DO YOU MEAN “IN THE RIGHT PLACE”?

MOTHER BIRD.

**I MEAN FIND WHERE YOU NEED TO GO,
DON'T THINK ABOUT BUZZARDS AND
VULTURES,
THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU MUST KNOW!**

BABY BIRD.

**OH, I THINK I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN NOW,
YOU WANT ME TO FOCUS ON WHERE,
I MUST GO TO FIND ALL OF THE THINGS THAT
I NEED, AND THEN I CAN FLY THERE!**

MOTHER BIRD.

**YOU'VE GOT IT, MY DARLING, SO SPREAD
YOUR WINGS,
AND LET THE WIND CARRY YOU TO,
THE PLACE OF YOUR DREAMS WHERE YOU
CAN BECOME
ALL THAT WAS MEANT FOR YOU!**

BABY BIRD.

OH, THANKS, MOM, I THINK THAT I'M READY ...

MOTHER BIRD.

**JUST TAKE A BIG BREATH AND THEN LEAP!
DON'T LOOK AT THE GROUND, OR ELSE
YOU'LL FALL ...**

(Spoken.) Look up! Don't look down!

BABY BIRD *(jumping off “tree”).* Aaaaaaah! *(Splat.)*

MOTHER BIRD (*to audience*). He was looking in the wrong place! What's a mother to do?

BABY BIRD (*standing up and shaking out feathers*). I got it, Mom! I figured it out! I gotta look up, not down!

MOTHER BIRD (*to audience*). Did I mention that? Did I tell him that? No matter what you do,

(*Sung.*)

THEY JUST NEVER LISTEN TO YOU!

(*MOTHER and BABY exit R as family of four enter L and assume positions in car. Crossfade to L and up on family. MOM and DAD are seated on two cubes, angled facing DR. DAD is behind an imaginary steering wheel. LUKE/LINDSAY and JEFF/JESSIE are seated on two stacked cubes each just upstage of parents.*)

DAD. I'm sick of it! You guys just don't listen to one damn thing we say!

LUKE/LINDSAY. But s/he's on my side of the line!

JEFF/JESSIE. Am not!

LUKE/LINDSAY (*whining*). Are, too!

JEFF/JESSIE (*shoving LUKE/LINDSAY*). Am not!

LUKE/LINDSAY. Dad!

JEFF/JESSIE. Shut up!

DAD (*over shoulder; with evil look*). The next person who argues, whines, moans or complains is going to get out and...

MOM (*interrupting*). Would anyone like some grapes?

LUKE/LINDSAY & JEFF/JESSIE. Me! Me!

(*MOM passes grapes back.*)

LUKE/LINDSAY (*counting grapes*). S/he's got more than me!

JEFF/JESSIE (*stealing LUKE/LINDSAY's grapes, which causes some to fall off and drop on floor*). Do not!

LUKE/LINDSAY. S/he stole mine!

JEFF/JESSIE (*stuffing them all in mouth at once*). Did not!

LUKE/LINDSAY. S/he's dropping them all over the floor!

DAD. Anybody who gets grape juice on anything in my new van is going to have to get out and...

MOM (*interrupting again*). Here, pick them up and hand them to me before anyone...

LUKE/LINDSAY. I shouldn't have to! I didn't do anything!

DAD. I don't care who did what! Just clean up the mess!

Anybody who doesn't listen and follow directions is going to have to get out and...

MOM (*interrupting again*). Kids, you're distracting Daddy from his driving. Luke/Lindsay, hand me the grapes!

LUKE/LINDSAY. No!

DAD. *What?*

LUKE/LINDSAY. S/he stole my grapes and dropped them, and now I have to pick them up?

MOM. Luke/Lindsay...

(SONG #4: "ARE WE THERE YET?")

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

SETTLE DOWN AND LET ME DRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO ARRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

MOM (*spoken*).

KIDS, PLEASE LET DADDY DRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE...

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

ARE WE THERE, YET?

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD (*spoken*).

I'M NOT SURE WE'LL ALL SURVIVE!

LUKE/LINDSAY (*spoken*).

S/HE STOLE MY COMIC ...

JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*).

... AND IT WAS NEW!

MOM (*spoken*).

**LET'S PLAY A GAME,
AND DAD'LL PLAY, TOO!**

LUKE/LINDSAY (*spoken*).
HANGMAN!

JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*).
TWENTY QUESTIONS!

LUKE/LINDSAY & JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*).
THEN I'M NOT GONNA PLAY!

MOM (*spoken*).
**KIDS, LET'S JUST GET ALONG
AND HAVE A NICE DAY.**

(*JEFF/JESSIE hits LUKE/LINDSAY.*)

LUKE/LINDSAY (*spoken*).
MOM, S/HE JUST HIT ME!

JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*).
COME ON, YOU LIE!

MOM (*spoken*).
KIDS, JUST TRY TO ...

DAD (*spoken*).
... LET ME DRIVE!

KIDS (*chorus*).
ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.
SETTLE DOWN AND LET ME DRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO ARRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

MOM (*spoken*).

KIDS, PLEASE LET DADDY DRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE ...

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

ARE WE THERE, YET?

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD (*spoken*).

I'M NOT SURE WE'LL ALL SURVIVE!

JEFF/JESSIE (*crossing legs uncomfortably, spoken*).

DAD, WE REALLY

NEED TO STOP.

LUKE/LINDSAY (*spoken*).

HEY, LOOK OVER THERE!

AN ICE CREAM SHOP!

DAD (*spoken*).
I TOLD YOU GUYS,
WE GOTTA MAKE TIME!

MOM (*spoken*).
AND I'VE GOT MORE FRUIT!

LUKE/LINDSAY (*spoken*).
PLEASE! NOT THAT SLIME!

JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*).
BUT, DAD, I REALLY
GOTTA GO!

DAD (*spoken*).
WE CAN'T KEEP STOPPING!
NO, NO, NO!

KIDS (*chorus*).
ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.
SETTLE DOWN AND LET ME DRIVE!

KIDS.
ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.
YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO ARRIVE!

KIDS.
ARE WE THERE, YET?

MOM (*spoken*).

KIDS, PLEASE LET DADDY DRIVE!

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

DAD.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE...

KIDS.

ARE WE THERE, YET?

ARE WE THERE, YET?

*(DAD applies brakes and all four lurch in their seats.
KIDS open car doors.)*

JEFF/JESSIE (*spoken*). I get fries!

LUKE/LINDSAY. Dipped in chocolate ice cream!

(KIDS start to run offstage.)

MOM. Kids! Look before you cross!

DAD (*resigned*). We might as well get some gas, too.

(Family exits. Curtains open to reveal MAGICIAN DL of a four-cube square, just UR of C. ASSISTANT 1's head can be seen looking out over top of square. ASSISTANT 2 stands DR of square. Three "audience members" are seated on cubes, L, facing DR.)

MAGICIAN (*to combined audiences*). Ah, ladies and gentlemen, wouldn't it be marvelous if we could transform

space? Mold it! Shape it! So that long car trips like that unfortunate display would no longer be necessary? Well, with magic anything is possible! For example, with your permission, I will now demonstrate the incredible malleability of the human body! (*Patting ASSISTANT 1.*) This shouldn't be too uncomfortable for the poor dear, if s/he doesn't watch as I stretch her/his limbs.

ASSISTANT 1 (*screams*). Aaaaaaaah!

MAGICIAN. Quiet! You'll frighten the audience! (*Back to audiences.*) Now, ladies and gentlemen, please point your gaze in this direction. (*ASSISTANT 1 looks at MAGICIAN. To ASSISTANT 1, sotto voce.*) Not you! (*Back to audiences.*) We will now begin.

(SONG #5: "ABRACADABRA")

MAGICIAN.

ABRACADABRA,
ALAKAZOO,
LOOK AT ME, AND
I'LL SHOW YOU A
VERY STRANGE AND
AWFUL SIGHT, BUT
PLEASE BE CALM, DON'T
TAKE AFFRIGHT!

(*MAGICIAN stretches right arm of ASSISTANT 3, who is hidden behind cubes.*)

ASSISTANT 1 (*screams*). Aaaaaah!

ONSTAGE AUDIENCE. Ooooooooooh!

(ONSTAGE AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 falls off chair in dead faint.)

MAGICIAN *(to ASSISTANT 2)*. Take him/her away! This show is not for the faint of heart! *(ASSISTANT 2 drags onstage AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 offstage.)* Now ... let us continue!

(Song #5 continues.)

**ABRACADABRA,
ALAKAZOT,
KEEP YOUR EYES HERE, OR
YOU WILL NOT
SEE THE MYSTER...
...Y UNFOLD
SIGHTS AMAZING;
MAGIC BOLD!**

(MAGICIAN stretches left arm of ASSISTANT 4, who is hidden behind cubes.)

ASSISTANT 1 *(screams)*. Aaaaaaaah!

(Onstage AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 falls off chair in dead faint.)

MAGICIAN *(to ASSISTANT 2)*. Take him/her away! What a lily-livered audience we've got tonight! *(To real audience.)* Anyone else who faints will endure the same fate as our courageous assistant here.

ASSISTANT 1 *(puzzled)*. Courageous?

(Onstage AUDIENCE MEMBER 3 runs offstage, screaming.)

MAGICIAN. Oh, well. I don't do this for the ungrateful public. Art for art's sake! And now for the legs!

(ASSISTANT 1 grimaces. ASSISTANT 2 grabs right ankle of ASSISTANT 3, and MAGICIAN grabs left ankle of ASSISTANT 4. Song #5 continues.)

**ABRACADABRA,
ALAKAZUS,
LOOK THIS WAY AND
PLEASE WATCH US!
AS WE PULL HIS/HER
LEGS LIKE THIS,
WE WILL STRETCH HIM/HER AND
WE DON'T MISS!**

(ASSISTANT 2 and MAGICIAN pull so hard that they yank ASSISTANTS 3 and 4 out from behind cubes.)

ASSISTANT 3 *(standing up and shaking limbs)*. Whew!
That's a relief!

ASSISTANT 2. What do you think you're doing?

ASSISTANT 4. I thought I'd never get out of there!

MAGICIAN. You're fired! Both of you!

ASSISTANT 3. That's fine with me, man! I didn't want to be cooped up in there, anyway!

ASSISTANT 4. Me, either! I need space!

ASSISTANT 3. Yeah! A place of my own!

ASSISTANT 2 *(dreamily)*. Designed and built by *me!*

MAGICIAN. *What!*

(MATHILDA/MATTHEW enters.)

MATHILDA/MATTHEW. Do what I did! I've just hired a crew to construct my very own personal space!

ASSISTANT 3. Personal space, huh? Hm...

MATHILDA/MATTHEW. Yeah. I've hired Psychic Walls Construction Company to come and build a special place just for me.

ASSISTANT 4. Just for you? I'll have to think about that... *(Exits.)*

MAGICIAN. This is ridiculous. I'm leaving! *(Exits.)*

ASSISTANT 1. It does sound a little...

ASSISTANT 2. Strange...

ASSISTANT 3. If you know what we mean.

MATHILDA/MATTHEW. Strange!?

(ASSISTANTS 1, 2 and 3 look at one another and shrug.)

ASSISTANT 1. It's just that...

ASSISTANTS 2 & 3. How can you have a *company* build your personal space for you?

ASSISTANT 1. That shows a total lack of imagination and self-sufficiency on your part!

(ASSISTANTS 1, 2 and 3 exit.)

MATHILDA/MATTHEW *(to audience).* Lack of imagination? Hmph! *(Shrugging.)* Oh, well. What do they know?

(PSYCHIC WALLS EMPLOYEES 1-4 enter, each escorting an actor who assumes a "wall" pose.)