



## BEHIND THE SCENES: *ACT ONE*

Thinking of auditioning for an ECT Production?  
Registered to audition?

*This guide has all the answers and information you need.*

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*Click a link below to be taken to that section within this guide.*

[About ECT](#)

[ECT Directors](#)

[Auditions](#)

[Casting](#)

[Contract Night](#)

[Attendance Policy](#)

[Rehearsals](#)

[Tech Week](#)

[Parent Involvement](#)

[Costs](#)

[Stage Crew and Ushers](#)

[The ECT Board](#)

[Donations](#)

[Questions](#)

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### **About ECT**

ECT is a not-for-profit children's theatre company providing a unique experience in all aspects of live theatre and a supportive and positive learning environment.

ECT typically offers the following opportunities each year to children who live in Elmhurst or attend Elmhurst schools:

- Two mainstage productions - 5th to 8th graders
- One summer production - children entering 5th to 9th grades
- Unintentionally Hilarious Sketch Comedy Troupe - 6th to 8th graders
- Various workshops and classes - varies, typically for 3rd to 8th graders

### **ECT Directors**

The ECT board hires professional directors, music directors, choreographers, and other professionals, like tech directors and pit musicians, needed to put on a

professional production. The board attempts to hire directors with different styles each time to give ECT cast members experience working with directors with varying approaches. *Professional directors cast and produce all ECT shows. The board is not involved in casting decisions.*

## **Auditions**

Fifth to eighth graders who live in Elmhurst or attend Elmhurst schools may audition for ECT shows.

### Registration

- Check [ectshows.com](http://ectshows.com), subscribe to our eblasts at [bit.ly/ectnews](http://bit.ly/ectnews) or follow us on Facebook or Instagram to be notified of audition registration timing.
- Audition registration typically fills within days if not hours, so plan to register soon after registration opens.
- A link to a registration form will be posted at [ectshows.com](http://ectshows.com).
- The form typically includes a place to submit a headshot of your child. A casual, close-up photo of your child is perfect.
- You are required to list conflicts with rehearsals and other show-related dates when registering. To speed up the registration process, it can be helpful to check the rehearsal and show-related dates listed on [ectshows.com](http://ectshows.com) with your child's calendar before registering. Please include any school conflicts, like concerts, on the registration form.
- Please do not register your child for auditions if they will be unable to adhere to the attendance policy: children may only miss two regular rehearsals and cannot miss any tech rehearsals or shows. *School events/concerts are always excused and do not count as absences.*

**Before registering to audition, please ensure that you and your child are able to commit to the attendance policy and that you are able to commit to the parent volunteer requirements.**

### Materials

- Audition materials are provided by the directors and differ depending on director preferences.
- Typically, children are asked to prepare a song and a monologue. A director may request that children choose from songs and monologues from the show or may allow children to choose any song (even "Happy Birthday") or monologue, including a poem or story.
- Audition materials are posted on our website as soon as possible prior to auditions and sometimes even before audition registration begins.

## Process

- When children arrive for auditions, they check in with a board member and are directed to a waiting area.
- Parents can drop off or wait with their child but may not accompany the child into the audition room. Parents must be available to pick up their child immediately following auditions.
- Children audition for the director and music director and sometimes also the choreographer and/or a student director. Some directors request to see the children audition in groups while others prefer to see children one at a time.

## **Casting Process and Communications**

Auditions are typically followed by callbacks, a second chance for the directors to see the children prior to casting. There is typically no preparation involved prior to callbacks. The directors may ask the children to sight read more songs from the show or read lines for particular characters.

Not all children who audition are asked to attend callbacks. Being called back does not guarantee a place on the cast and not receiving a callback does not indicate that a child will not be cast in the show.

Everyone who auditions will receive an email to let them know whether they are being asked to attend callbacks. Following callbacks, the directors provide the cast list to the ECT board president. Everyone who auditions receives an email regarding casting decisions.

For those cast in the show, the email includes which character the child was cast as and directions for next steps. An email must be sent back to the production coordinators within 24 hours to accept the part. If a part must be declined, please communicate this as quickly as possible. Recasting a part impacts casting decisions, which impacts other children.

Our production coordinators will also email you if your child is not cast in the show. Opportunities to be involved with ECT in other ways, including working with the stage crew, will be provided.

## **Contract Night**

The first portion of the first rehearsal is ECT's Contract Night. A lot of helpful and important information is discussed during Contract Night, so ECT requires that one parent/guardian of each cast member attend. Contract Night includes:

- Paying fees

- Turning in contracts for parents and cast members
- Signing up for parent committees
- Reviewing important information about rehearsals, shows, and other events
- Learning other tips, like information about ECT traditions, arranging carpools, and more

## **Attendance Policy**

The children work as a cohesive team, and the absence of one person can prevent the entire group from achieving their rehearsal goals.

ONLY TWO ABSENCES ARE ALLOWED. ALL TECH REHEARSALS AND SHOWS ARE MANDATORY.

All absences must be excused in advance by the production coordinators. School events/concerts are always excused and do not count as absences.

Due to the impact on the entire cast and to be consistent with this policy with all cast members, an absence (other than those due to illness or school events) without prior approval from ECT will mean dismissal from the cast. No refunds will be offered.

An unacceptable conflict includes a regular repeating event, such as a class every Monday night. Failure to communicate a known conflict on the registration form (or prior to casting) will be treated as an unexcused absence. Repeated absences due to illness may, unfortunately, also lead to dismissal, at the director and the ECT Board's discretion.

We understand that special circumstances and events arise that require more than two excused absences from rehearsal. Please list these conflicts on your registration form for the production coordinators to review.

## **Rehearsals**

Most cast members are not called to every rehearsal or for the entire rehearsal time. A detailed schedule for each week is shared by the Sunday prior to a rehearsal week. Additional rehearsals may be added to the posted rehearsal schedule.

## **Tech Week**

Tech Week, the week prior to the show, is when the entire production is put together. These daily rehearsals are on stage at our performance venue and include fine-tuning sets, lights, and sound, and at least one dress rehearsal. Tech Week rehearsals begin as early as 5 pm and end as late as 10 pm. We want cast members to be as rested as possible and do our best to keep these rehearsals shorter when possible. The entire cast must attend all Tech Week rehearsals.

## **Parent/Guardian Involvement**

Elmhurst Children's Theatre is run by volunteers, and parents/guardians of our cast members are an integral part of each show. Without parents/guardians, our shows cannot happen!

Many parents ask about the time commitment. While it is a significant time commitment, it is a rewarding experience that is essential to the success of the show. Commitments include:

- Production committee involvement. Parents/Guardians participate on one production committee: sets, props, costumes, or marketing. While every attempt is made to honor specific committee requests, choices cannot be guaranteed.
- Cast sitting. Parents/Guardians help out at one rehearsal per production by assisting the directors and production coordinators, helping to keep actors quiet and orderly, and assisting with the pickup process.
- Clean-up. Each family volunteers to help clean up the production venue after one show.

Committee descriptions:

- Sets: Design, build, and paint sets. Move and assemble set during set load day prior to Tech Week, and often make adjustments during Tech Rehearsals. Strike the set and return all pieces to storage or elsewhere.
- Marketing: Duties may include writing press releases, managing group sales, organizing the cast party, selling program ads, and otherwise helping to market the show.
- Props: Procure or create hand props for actors to carry on and off stage. Organize props during and after the show.
- Costume: Acquire, create, and customize costumes. Organize costumes during and after the show, including acting as a costume parent for a group of cast members.

## **Costs**

Required production costs include:

- Participation fee. This fee varies with each production depending on the size of the cast and other factors. This fee includes a t-shirt for the cast member, the cast party, a poster, and a script.
- Cast members typically provide their own base pieces, like pants, dance or performance shoes, and tights. Families may be asked to dry clean some costumes before returning. Most costume costs are covered by ECT. If any costs are prohibitive for participating in the production, please contact [treasurer@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com](mailto:treasurer@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com) for financial assistance.
- To give you flexibility with costs and keep the participation fee lower, some items are optional. For example, purchasing a yard sign is not required, but if you'd like one, you can add this fee during our Contract Night. Additional optional fees include donating money for concessions and the cost for attending a family get together. For detailed costs for each production, visit the production page on our website.

Scholarships are available. Please contact [treasurer@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com](mailto:treasurer@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com) for more information.

### **Stage Crew and Ushers**

ECT welcomes volunteer middle school and high school students to help out behind the scenes with Stage Crew and Tech Crew. Typically, these students are involved only during Tech Week, the final week of rehearsals prior to the show.

There are also opportunities for children to help out by acting as Ushers and handing out programs before the shows.

Email [pc@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com](mailto:pc@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com) for more information.

### **The ECT Board**

The ECT board hires professional directors, music directors, and choreographers who cast and produce the show. The ECT Board also manages classes, productions and rehearsals; creates costumes, props, and sets; markets the organization and shows; organizes funding, rehearsal, and performance venues; and more.

Board positions include president, president-elect, treasurer, secretary, marketing, production coordinator (2), and class coordinator (2). Contact [president@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com](mailto:president@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com) to learn more about board positions.

### **Donating Ideas, Time or Money**

ECT welcomes tax-deductible donations to our 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization to help fund scholarship, outreach, and experiences to children of Elmhurst.

Zelle: treasurer@elmhurstchildrenstheatre.com

Check: ECT Treasurer, PO Box 64, Elmhurst, IL 60126

ECT is always seeking assistance from our loyal alumni and supportive community. If you'd like to help with fundraising, have ideas for new performance or rehearsal venues, would like to help make costumes or props, or would like to become involved in other ways, please contact us.

## **Questions**

Contact any member of the ECT Board with questions. Find contact information at [ectshows.com](http://ectshows.com).

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