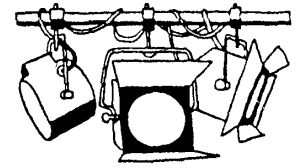


ASAWA SOTA Theatre Department FAQ about Auditions



Issue #13

2016

“Frequently Asked Questions about the Theatre Department and the Audition/ Selection Process.”

For the Prospective Parent/Guardian & Student

The ASAWA SOTA Theatre Staff wants every student to succeed in his or her audition. We hope that this information will help you to do just that.

We know how difficult it is for a student in the 8th or 9th grade to decide that the type of actor training offered at ASAWA SOTA is something they want to do for the remainder of their high school years. The information here and the audition process itself are designed to help you understand the commitment involved in joining the theatre program. Please consider your decision carefully before committing to ASAWA SOTA.

The Theatre Department is a conservatory-type actor training program, and as such it requires a serious commitment beyond regular high school class hours. Most days theatre classes go to 4 pm. A student's daily involvement does not end when the last school bell rings.

Keep in mind as you read the following that our intention is to make each student's time at ASAWA SOTA EXCITING, REWARDING, and as FULFILLING as possible.

The audition is designed to measure the applicant's commitment to drama and her or his potential talent.

QUESTION 1: “What is ASAWA SOTA and how many students attend?”

A: RUTH ASAWA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS is an alternative public high school (grades 9 - 12) in the S. F. Unified School District. It is currently located at 555 Portola Drive, San Francisco, with approximately 600 students from throughout the Bay area, who are enrolled in **pre- professional** programs in the Vocal (Classical and Musical Theatre), Media, Instrumental Music (including Piano and World Music), Visual Arts, Dance, Creative Writing, Technical Theatre, and Theatre Departments. ASAWA SOTA also offers most academic college

preparatory classes. We share our campus with a second small high school, The Academy of Arts and Sciences.

QUESTION 2: “How many students are in the Theatre Department?”

A: We have approximately 80 students enrolled, with 20 students in each of four classes (Basic, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, and Advanced) with approximately 30 males and 50 females.

QUESTION 3: “How many students do you admit into the Theatre Department each year?”

A: We accept the same number of students who graduate in that particular year. (Approximately 20 students from the two rounds of auditions in January and March. We occasionally have a third round of auditions in August.)

QUESTION 4: “Why is there so much competition to get into ASAWA SOTA? I understand that you have as many as 80 students applying for the open slots in theatre every year.”

A: Our Mission Statement says it best “ASAWA SOTA will provide SF Bay Area students with a specialized arts high school of the highest quality in a small school environment, defined as no more than 600 arts students.” Each department is allowed a prescribed number of students to fulfill this goal, the theatre department's being 80.

QUESTION 5: “Why don't you simply increase the class size?”

A: We hope you understand that this would be detrimental to the students in the program. Even when a class of 20 students is presenting individual monologues of 2 minutes each in a 2 hour class, this allows only 6 minutes per student to demonstrate his or her work and to receive comments.

QUESTION 6: “I've heard that many auditioning students have a lot of experience in theatre already, such as classes at A.C.T. Does this mean that you pick only students who already have some training?”

A : **NO!** We are well aware that many middle schools do not offer drama in their curriculum, and therefore, many interested students have not had the same opportunity as others. I repeat that “the audition is designed to measure the applicant's commitment to drama and her or his potential talent.” This is another reason that our audition procedure is laid out so precisely — so that each student has an equal opportunity for success.

QUESTION 7: “My son is not interested in the pre-professional aspect of your program and doesn’t plan to make a career of theatre. Should he apply for ASAWA SOTA?”

A: It depends, if your student accepts the commitment to the work while he is here, no matter his long-term goals, he can succeed. I think our Theatre Department mission statement says it best: “Drama/Theatre as taught in high schools is intended to fulfill three basic goals:

(1) To enhance the students’ personal growth and development (i.e.: developing self-confidence, teach teamwork, etc.).

(2) As a recreational activity (giving the student a break from academic activities, fulfilling many of the same needs as a sports activity).

(3) As preparatory training for continued studies in the field.

Drama curriculums are usually built around one of these purposes. ASAWA SOTA fulfills all three, but its mission statement is focused primarily on the third goal, to prepare each student to continue her or his career or educational goals in the theatre. However, by creating good work habits, study skills, and cooperative learning experiences, the student is better prepared to establish a career in any field of endeavor. Students acquire poise, self-confidence, and skills in self-expression and speaking that will be useful in any career or vocation.

QUESTION 8: “My daughter did not see the ‘Theatre Audition Requirements’ page, and did not prepare the proper material. What should she do?”

A: Every year a few students for some reason do not receive this material and are not ready to give their best audition. This is not a problem. We want your daughter to do her best possible job. We are happy to make sure she has this material in her hands and to schedule an appointment for her in the next round of auditions.

QUESTION 9: “Why can’t my son present a piece he wrote himself or do an improvisation for his audition, rather than a prepared monologue? Doesn’t this show more creativity?”

A: Again we must be able to compare all students using the same criteria. Also, a major portion of the acting program is interpreting other authors’ characters.

QUESTION 10: “Why are there so many parts to the audition? Why is there more than one judge?”

A: So that we can be as fair as possible and so that the subjective nature of any judge’s evaluation can be eliminated and a consensus reached.

QUESTION 11: “Who will be judging the auditions?”

A: The audition will be judged by the Department Chairman and usually two guest artists from the S.F. arts community. These judges remain the same for all rounds

of auditions, so that we may remain consistent and fair to all.

QUESTION 12: “What are your criteria for selecting students? It’s obvious if my daughter can’t play a violin or sing a particular note, but how can you tell whether she has potential to succeed in the Theatre Department?”

A: Students receive points in each of the areas on the below chart, which is tabulated and ranked with a grade averaging computer program

Audition Points Breakdown

Monologue:	30 %
Cold Reading:	8 %
Acting workshop session:	20 %
Informal interview:	9 %
Citizenship & attendance:	5 %
(as reflected on transcripts and in letters of recommendation)	
Letters of Recommendation:	10 %
Essay:	7 %
Department writing assignment:	7 %
Grade Level:	4 %
includes: 4 points for 9th Grade, 3 points for 10th Grade, etc.	

QUESTION 13: “If my son is not selected for admission to the Theatre program can we find out the reason and what was his ranking?”

A: I’m sorry to say, No. It would be unfair to assist one student and not another on improving his standing.

QUESTION 14: “What if my daughter is not selected in this audition? Can she re-audition?”

A: YES. We make no secret of that fact that she may re-audition as often as she would like, in any year. We have had students who have improved their ranking as much as 50 points from one round of auditions to the next. Also, any time a student auditions we look at it as a first time audition and do not balance the scores of past auditions. (In 95/96 one student went from 64th to 13th in the ranking.) Students who re-audition are required to present a NEW monologue ONLY. They are not required to redo any other part of the audition process.

QUESTION 15: “Art should not be about competing but individuality. Can you really judge that in a 15 minute audition? How can you tell that my daughter is truly the one student out of 80 who would flourish at ASAWA SOTA?”

A: That’s why we also read carefully the student’s essays and letters of recommendation, and the outcome of the

informal interview, and her participation in the 3 hour acting workshop session. However, we can learn a great deal about your daughter from the monologue presentation.

QUESTION 16: *“Such as what?”*

A: Her commitment to the audition process, her ability to follow instructions, her monologue selection, and her amount of preparation.

QUESTION 17: *“How can my son decide as a 8th grader that he wants to be in an acting class for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week for 4 years?”*

A: That’s why we have our parent/student group meet on the day of auditions and the group session. These are not only for the department staff to get to know your son, but for you and your son to better understand what is required at ASAWA SOTA.

QUESTION 18: *“Why does my daughter, who is currently in the 10th grade, also have to perform a Shakespeare monologue and provide a resume at her audition.”*

A: So that we may determine if she should be placed in the Intermediate or Advanced Theatre class. Although her work on these two parts of the audition does not eliminate her from possible admission to the Basic Theatre class.

QUESTION 19: *“How should my daughter dress for the auditions and the theatre classes at ASAWA SOTA?”*

A: On the days of auditions, applicants should wear comfortable-fitting clothes that do not restrict movement (sweatshirt and sweatpants are best). An acting student during class work cannot be worried about her clothing or appearance. Therefore, proper dress is required for ALL acting classes. “Proper dress” means department prescribed “outfit,” including black sweatpants, a black sweatshirt or T-shirt, and none of the following: untied shoe laces, high heel or platform shoes, sandals, flip-flops. heavy boots or shoes (combat boots or Doc Martens), shoes with slippery soles, dark glasses, coats, hats, or hoods worn in class. No tongue, lip, or nose-pierced jewelry (piercing must be removed before class), or sleeves covering hands, or loose hair in face are allowed in class.

QUESTION 20: *“How does the Theatre Department function day-to-day? What do you teach the kids?”*

A: The acting program offers a comprehensive, rigorous college level **pre-professional conservatory type** theatre training. *The students learn by doing.* Students get on *their feet* as much as possible. They memorize a lot. They get the words in their mouths quickly. The program emphasizes studies that create professional work habits; vocal development; movement; script and character analysis; and various acting techniques.

QUESTION 21: *“What happens if my son’s goals and desires change in his sophomore or junior year and he doesn’t want to be in the Theatre Department anymore?”*

A: He may, at any time, return to his assigned “home” school. There is also a procedure for transferring to another art discipline. First, the student must be in good standing in his current major and been there for a year. Second, the student must audition for and be accepted in the new discipline (following all department guidelines for entering students) on an established entrance audition date.

QUESTION 22: *“Does my daughter get to learn anything but acting in the Theatre Department?”*

A: The class content varies some each year and also from week to week. Our teaching units are offered both in continuous blocks (such as a movement class which is offered 1 hour per week for an entire semester) or specialized limited class blocks (such as Shakespeare, playwriting, or a 1 week masters class). In the Basic Theatre/Theatre Fitness class a student studies the basic principles of acting through theatre games, acting exercises, vocal development, movement, and contemporary audition monologue preparation and performance. She also will study Shakespeare (including participation in the department Monologue & Sonnet Contest), resume preparation, and career preparedness. In Theatre Fitness the student might take fencing, physical theatre, mask characterization, unarmed combat, movement, Afro-Haitian and contemporary dance. *The Basic Theatre class is the foundation for all future study and is taken by every student who is accepted to the program.*

QUESTION 23: *“My son loves to make up skits, but doesn’t like to dance. Can he pick and choose what areas of theatre he wants to learn?”*

A: The answer is simple: NO. The student actors do not decide which areas of theatre they wish to study. The entire curriculum is prescribed. Our department philosophy is “We teach the student what they NEED to know to *succeed* (not only in theatre, but in life), and to enjoy the process not only the product.”

QUESTION 24: *“How are students graded in their theatre classes? Do all students usually receive "A's?"*

A: Our grading policy focuses heavily on:

- participation
- the student!s ability to “focus” on the task at hand
- the student’s willingness to TRY and experiment
- the student!s ability to establish and use good work habits
- completing assignments,
- being able to work in the ensemble environment
- the adequate preparation and rehearsal of assignments inside and outside of class

The various activities are graded on a system with progress and improvement on each taken into consideration. Students must demonstrate a proficiency in all units of the program, be it fencing, voice, acting, or playwriting. An “A” is not an automatic or average grade in the Theatre Department. Please note that attendance, effort, and commitment — not talent — are the major considerations in the determination of grades. It’s a simple equation: quantity of time = quality of product, or to quote an old theatre saying: “Acting is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.”

QUESTION 25: “How does a student advance in the theatre program?”

A: By demonstration of proficiency in the prerequisite theatre classes and his/her ability to put into practice the material covered in the class. Since the theatre experience is based on personal growth, evaluation is a natural result of the process. Also, since acting is a cumulative experience, the student is evaluated continually throughout the course. Evaluation is by the student, peers, and teachers. There is no automatic advancement in the theatre program. At the end of each semester each student is evaluated for future placement. All ASAWA SOTA students also have a major reevaluation at the end of their Sophomore year (10th grade). At this time the student will present various samples of their work to the entire theatre staff and all artists to determine if they have made adequate progress to continue in the theatre program. Everyday is an audition.

QUESTION 26: “Are there any special graduation requirements at ASAWA SOTA?”

Yes. Besides the standard district high school graduation requirements a student must PASS all semesters of his arts discipline while attending ASAWA SOTA to “walk the stage” with his graduating class.

QUESTION 27: “My daughter loves acting but doesn’t like or do very well in formal academic classes. How do you balance art and academics in your program?”

A: We do not sacrifice academics for the arts or the reverse. Remember our goal is to help you achieve your career goals (be it in college or other) and academics are an important part of this.

QUESTION 28: “Can my son participate in on or off-campus after school extracurricular activities (such as sports) or take a part-time job and still involve himself in the Department activities?”

A: Probably not, these activities often conflict with our schedule. ASAWA SOTA theatre requires a commitment beyond regular class hours, and its schedule varies. We have found that it is very hard on the student to involve himself in extracurricular activities, especially sports teams. Students must ask permission from the Theatre Department before participating in any activities beyond

their SOTA academic and theatre classes. If these activities conflict with a performance schedule or training techniques, or the student is academically at risk, permission may be denied. We are well aware that many students must hold after-school and weekend jobs. We try to understand student work schedules when it comes to department after-school activities, but a student must always keep up with class activities and homework needs.

QUESTION 29: “Who teaches the classes and what are these artists-in-residence that I hear so much about?”

A: Students work not only with experienced staff artists but with many artists-in-residence and guest artists. The Theatre Department could not function without our dedicated staff of artists-in-residences, who are outstanding working professionals drawn from the community, who teach many different specialty class, such as Shakespeare, Asian theatre, physical theatre, dance, voice, and many others. You can see our current artists-in-residence biographies on our DEpartment website: <http://sfsotatheatre.org>

ASAWA SOTA THEATRE IS ON THE INTERNET

We have a website with more audition information, department information (including our department student handbook), photographs, and theatre links. Visit us at:

<http://sfsotatheatre.org>

which includes a link to our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Pages

ASAWA SOTA Theatre Department
AUDITION Parent/Guardian-Student Meeting Form

Dear Prospective Student and Parent/Guardian:

Please take 15 minutes together and read and discuss the material on the “ASAWA SOTA Theatre Department FAQ about Auditions” and then PRINT and SIGN your names below.

Please detach and return this page to us TODAY so that we can place it in your audition file. You should keep the booklet for future reference.

“We, the prospective student and parents/guardians, have read the “ASAWA SOTA Theatre Department FAQ about Auditions” and understand our part in the audition process and, if selected, we understand our responsibilities as an integral part of the SOTA Theatre Department family.”

Print parent/guardian’s first and last name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Print student’s first and last name

Student Signature

Date

Sign and return this page TODAY.