NCHS Theatre Department
Student Handbook
2025-26

NCHS Theatre Department Objective:
It is the objective of the NCHS Theatre Department to create a safe environment for the students of NCHS to explore as artists and grow as individuals, while producing the high standard of theater that NCHS students deserve and have come to expect. We plan on bringing in a diverse group of directors, music directors, and choreographers to New Canaan that share the common goal of the NCHS Theatre Department while offering as many leadership roles to the students as possible. We believe that it is important for the students' experience in the Theatre Department to mirror that of a professional setting infused with educational opportunities.

Productions: There are typically FIVE major productions that the students can get involved in. All shows are performed on the auditorium stage.

- ***Mainstage (Fall) Musical*** - This is typically our largest production of the year, incorporates a live orchestra, and is open to students of all ages for all roles and positions. Auditions will be Tuesday Sept. 2 (dancing) and Wednesday Sept. 3 (singing) with callbacks on Friday Sept. 5. Rehearsals begin the following week on Monday Sept. 8. There are four performances of this production from November 20-22. No conflicts beginning Nov. 6. We need all hands on deck for this show!
- ***Drama Fest*** - This is our student produced one-act festival open to all students. The shows are written, directed, designed, and performed by students, and it all happens in ONE WEEK! There will be a playwriting workshop for anyone interested in writing for Drama Fest on Saturday, Oct. 25. Plays need to be submitted by December 10. Anyone can submit a 5-15 minute play that connects to the theme (TBA). Casting and rehearsals will begin Monday Jan. 5 with a one-night-only performance on Friday January 9! It is quick, intense, creative, and fun! No conflicts.
- ***11/12 Play*** - This is a production of a play and is generally reserved for Junior and Seniors Actors. It is typically a smaller cast and a quick rehearsal process. Auditions are Monday Dec. 8 with callbacks on Wednesday, Dec. 10. Rehearsals begin Friday Dec. 12 and will pick back up after Dramafest and the holiday break. There are three performances March 6-7. No conflicts beginning Feb. 23. After the fall play is completed, upperclassmen are encouraged to join the crew of the 9/10 Musical.
- ***9/10 Musical*** - This is a musical production that is generally reserved for Freshman and Sophomore students to participate in. It allows our younger actors to have an opportunity to step into a leading role early in their high school career. This show typically uses a tracked orchestra and also has a quick rehearsal process. Auditions are Tuesday Jan. 13 and Wednesday Jan. 14 with callbacks on Friday Jan. 16. Rehearsals begin the following week with 3 performances on March 27-28. No conflicts beginning March 16.

- ***Spring Musical*** - This is our final production of the year. It is open to students of all ages, but generally is a smaller cast than the Mainstage Musical. Auditions will be Monday March 30 (dance) and Tuesday March 31 (sing) with callbacks on Wednesday April 1. Rehearsals begin the following week with 3 performances May 30-31.

Participation Fee:
All students that participate in a production in any way (actor, tech crew, etc.) will be required to pay a participation fee of $125. This is a *per production fee* that covers the cost of production t-shirts, food for tech rehearsals and Saturday Work Sessions, as well as headshots. *This fee can be reduced by $25 by having a parent/guardian volunteer with the show*. We understand that sometimes we incur financial hardships. If this fee stands in the way of a student's opportunity to to learn and grow as an artist and individual, please reach out to the Theatre Coordinator, Chris Myers, as scholarships may be available. christopher.myers@ncps-k12.org

Attendance Policy:
During the audition process, students are expected to notify the creative team in writing of all of their potential conflicts. If you have a conflict that comes up after casting that requires you to miss rehearsal, you must notify Mr. Myers, the Director of the show, OR the Assistant Director/Stage Manager for that show in writing *one week* in advance. If you become sick, please notify the Director or Stage Manager immediately AND stay home to recover. Don't try to be a hero by coming to rehearsal sick out of respect for keeping your fellow cast and crew members healthy. NO ABSENCES ARE EVER PERMITTED DURING TECH WEEK AND PERFORMANCES EXCEPT FOR SEVERE ILLNESS. If unexcused absences become an issue, the student may be relieved of responsibilities (removed from songs, scenes, backstage duties, or the show entirely). Excessive absences will also be taken into consideration for future casting.

Casting Note:
We all understand that casting is not easy, and not done by one person alone. The Director, the Music Director, Choreographer, and Theatre Coordinator all have input. When it comes to casting, a lot of aspects are considered starting with how well the student fits the part along with performance qualities, attitude, work ethic, willingness and ability to take direction, ability to work as a team, and commitment to the show and theater department.

Please know that as a former professional actor of almost 30 years, Mr. Myers understands the disappointment in not being cast in a show or not getting the role you hoped for. We encourage you to look at it as a moment of growth, continue to work on your craft, come to the next audition stronger and more prepared, and remember that creating theater is bigger than any one person. We must all strive to keep that in mind as we each do our part.

- **Double Casting** - We may sometimes use double casting in any of our productions for a number of reasons.
    - We feel two actors can play the role equally and both deserve the opportunity to perform.
    - Creates a built-in understudy in case of a sickness, unforeseen absence, or ineligibility.
    - Helps create a stronger community effort in putting on a production.
    - Expectations for double cast actors include being attentive in rehearsals to take down blocking, choreography, and notes even when off-stage. Double casts should be rehearsing offstage while the other cast is onstage. If a double cast misses rehearsal, it is their responsibility to go over what they missed with their counterpart, Assistant Director, or Assistant Stage Manager.
- **Understudies/Swings** - are the unsung superheroes of every production.
    - Understudies are typically members of the ensemble that also cover a principal character. *They are expected to attend every rehearsal that the principal character is called to as well as their own.* It is their responsibility to go over anything they may have missed due to a conflict in scheduling with their counterpart, Assistant Director, or Assistant Stage Manager. If the principal character cannot perform in a rehearsal or a show, the understudy is expected to know the lines, lyrics, blocking, and choreography well enough to go on in a moment's notice.
    - Swings can be members of the ensemble, but may also come from an offstage position such as a pit singer or tech position. Swings cover one or more ensemble members in the show, should follow the guidelines of an understudy, and should be ready to go on in a moment's notice for any rehearsal or performance.

Technical Crews: There are a plethora of other ways to get involved other than performing. Again, theater is much bigger than any one person. It takes a village. Opportunities include: Sets, Scenic Arts (paints), Lights, Sound, Costumes, Props, Publicity, Hair & Makeup, Fundraising & Outreach, Front of House, Photography, Online Presence & Social Media, Directing, Stage Management, and Running Crew. Students will learn different skills on different crews and we encourage trying a few.

- Crews meet on Saturdays from 9:00am-3:00pm throughout the year to create all aspects of the shows. **All students involved in a production are required to attend 75% of Saturday Work Sessions for that production and strike.** Even if you're not involved in the production, we hope you support the Department and your fellow students by attending every Saturday that you're available.

Leadership Opportunities: There are plenty of leadership opportunities on our crews throughout the year as well as for each show. For each of our productions, we will need a Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager(s), Assistant Director(s), Production Assistant(s), Assistant Props Designer(s), Cast Deputy, and Dance Captain. You should notify the Theatre Coordinator, Chris Myers if you are interested in any of these roles for each production. christopher.myers@ncps-k12.org

- **Stage Manager Responsibilities**: Attends all rehearsals, takes attendance, writes rehearsal reports, preps rehearsal space prior to the start of rehearsal, cues and calls the show.
- **Assistant Stage Manager Responsibilities**: Attends all rehearsals, assists the SM in daily rehearsal responsibilities, and side manages the show during performances.
- **Assistant Director Responsibilities**: Attends all rehearsals, assists the director in taking notes, making copies, and any other duties set by the director.
- **Assistant Props Designer Responsibilities**: Works with the director and Props designer to help create a list of needed props, helps pull and create props, checks props before all performances.
- **Production Assistant Responsibilities**: Attends all rehearsals, runs music, assists the SM in daily rehearsal responsibilities, may assist with sound or special effects departments, set changes during performances.
- **Dance Captain Responsibilities**: Attends rehearsals, learns all choreography set forth by the choreographer, runs clean up rehearsals, teaches choreography to any actors missing rehearsal, teaches choreography to understudies or swings not present at rehearsal. Dance Captains are chosen by the choreographer and theater coordinator.
- **Cast Deputy Responsibilities**: Each production will elect a cast deputy. This is a peer that other students can go to with questions, concerns, and suggestions. The Cast Deputy can take these concerns to the appropriate person (director, stage manager, etc) allowing anonymity to the first student if needed.

For the duration of the season, we have student department heads to lead the way on our Saturday Work Sessions (Props, Costumes, Hair & Makeup, Sets, Lights, Sound,

Publicity/Marketing). Department Heads are typically chosen for the entire season, but can be broken up per semester or may be teamed up with a partner for Co-heads of a Department. If you are interested in any of these roles, please contact the Theatre Coordinator, Chris Myers or the Technical Director, Kevin Gleason. christopher.myers@ncps-k12.org kevin.gleason@ncps-k12.org

- **Department Heads:** These are students (typically upperclassmen) who have experience and shown a particular interest and ability in that specific department. They have also displayed leadership qualities. They work directly with designers and students to ensure that projects get completed safely and in a timely manner. Department Heads need to attend Saturday work sessions on a regular basis and be involved in ALL productions.
- **Publicity/Marketing Captain**: Runs NCHS's social media platforms, attends some rehearsals to take photographs, creates promo videos for shows, stays in contact with directors and artwork designers.

Officer Positions: These positions are elected by peers based on leadership skills and dedication to the department. These positions are typically held by Seniors, but Juniors may be considered based on the qualities listed above. These officers are a part of major department decisions, help plan events, problem solve, and above are role models for other members. They also act as a liaison between Mr. Myers, the incoming directors, creative staff, the parents, and the students. All officers are expected to take part in all productions in some way throughout the entire season. Elections will typically take place in late spring with the new officers announced at the end of year picnic. Any student interested in running for office should contact Mr. Myers christopher.myers@ncps-k12.org

- **President of Acting**: The President of the NCHS Theatre Department is responsible for overseeing all department heads and other students in leadership positions, including the other officers. The President will facilitate communication between students, technicians, creative staff, parents, new members, and Mr. Myers. They will serve as a liaison between parent volunteers and the needs of the department. They are responsible for welcoming new members to the department and serve as a listening ear to any member voicing concerns, questions, or suggestions.
- **Vice President of Acting**: The VP of Acting's responsibilities mirror that of the President in facilitating communications, working with parent volunteers and new members. Specifically, they will be in contact with Asst. Directors, Dance Captains, and the Marketing Captain to make sure those duties are being fulfilled and assist when needed. The VP of Acting must be very approachable and

reachable to all students in the department and willing to take on the responsibilities of any of the other officers if they are unable to complete their duties.

- **President of Tech:** The VP of Tech's responsibilities include being a liaison between our Technical Director, Kevin Gleason, student technicians, designers, and parent volunteers. They will be charged with overseeing department heads during Saturday Work Sessions and keeping students accountable, safe, and on schedule.
- **Vice President of Tech**:The VP of Tech's responsibilities mirror that of the President of Tech in communication and working with department heads during Saturday Work Sessions as well as being a mentor to other tech students. They will also be responsible for keeping the Stage Managers' boxes and first aid kits are fully stocked before and after each production.
- **Secretary**: The Secretary's responsibilities include keeping minutes at Officer's meetings. They will also be in charge of collecting all of the information (names, roles, positions) for playbills, contact sheets, and other event planning.

Theater Ethics:

- Treat one another as a family. Respect each others' differences and work towards the overall goal of the production.
- Do not touch any prop that is not yours. Always return props from whence they came or to a spot assigned by the props master or stage manager.
- Remember that any noise off stage right or left can be heard by people on stage and often by the audience as well. This disturbs concentration and spoils the suspension of the audience's disbelief.
- Do not bother actors who are getting into character, especially prior to an entrance. You risk breaking their concentration and throwing them off.
- Do not eat in costume. Be sure to return your costume at the end of a show in the same condition you received it in.
- At the end of each performance, return your costume neatly to the proper rack. If a costume piece is lost, then it is your responsibility to find it.
- Without certain costume pieces, one might not be able to go onstage for a particular scene. Keep track of your costumes and keep them in good condition!
- Always listen to the stage managers and other backstage crew members.
- Be on time and ready to start at the beginning of every rehearsal.
- Always listen to technicians in their workspace, they are looking out for your safety as well as the productivity of their crew.

Production Contract:

All students that take part in a production will be expected to sign a contract for that production expressing their understanding and commitment to that specific production.

Note from the Coordinator:
I personally want to thank you for your interest in this department. It was many, many years ago that I found theater as my tribe. It is my life's work and passion. Theatre has offered me much more than just an opportunity to be onstage and tell a story. I have gained countless transferable skills (empathy, leadership, self-confidence, collaboration, time management, etc) through working in the theater. It's taken me around the world and back home. I hope it helps you find your way as well.

Christopher Myers
christopher.myers@ncps-k12.org

Code of Conduct
NCHS Theatre Department

As a member of the NCHS Theatre Department, I understand that it is a privilege to take part in all theatrical events and productions. I commit myself to upholding the expectations outlined below and understand that my actions both in and out of the school not only represent myself, but reflect upon the reputation of the school and theater department.

- Harassment/Bullying: Harassment or bullying of any kind is unacceptable. Please treat everyone with respect and kindness. The theater is a safe space.
- Attendance/Tardiness: It is imperative that students arrive on time and are ready to participate at their scheduled call time. Being tardy on a regular basis or having unexcused absences is unacceptable. Not only will you miss out on information/instruction, but it holds up the entire process and is disrespectful to your fellow students and creative team.
- Tobacco Use: The use of tobacco products on school grounds is a violation of New Canaan Board of Education Policy and will not be tolerated.
- Drugs/Alcohol: The use of drugs and/or alcohol on school grounds is a violation of New Canaan Board of Education Policy and will not be tolerated. In addition, it is unacceptable for any NCHS student to be on school grounds under the influence or in possession of drugs and/or alcohol.

If there is a confirmed violation of the code of conduct, the student in question will meet with the Theatre Coordinator, the Director of the current production, and/or student officers to discuss their actions and ways to resolve the situation. This may include being put on probation from current theatrical events for up to 5 calendar days.

If there is a second violation, the parents of the student in question as well as school administrators will meet with the Theatre Coordinator and the Director of the current production. A more severe suspension from theatrical events may take place as well as exclusion from future productions or events.

Signature of Student _____ Date _____

Printed Name_____ Grade_____