

Colleen's Corner

How to Make the Most Out of a Smaller Role

Casting is done and you didn't get the exact part that you had hoped for. It's understandable that you are disappointed, but now you have a whole new exciting challenge ahead



of you— making the most of the part you have! As the famous saying goes, “There are no small parts, only small actors.”

A “small actor” is someone who doesn't make the most of their role, has a negative outlook about their role, or simply lets their character fade into the background. Don't be a small actor!

The most important thing to remember is that your character is onstage for a **reason**, either as an essential creation of the playwright or a necessary addition by the director. Each actor is onstage because they need to be there in order to make the production complete. Can you imagine *Bye, Bye Birdie* without the Shriners, *Into the Woods* without Milky White or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* without the Oompa-Loompas? These are not the “biggest” roles in these productions in terms of number of lines or time onstage, but they are all roles that past ACTors made memorable.

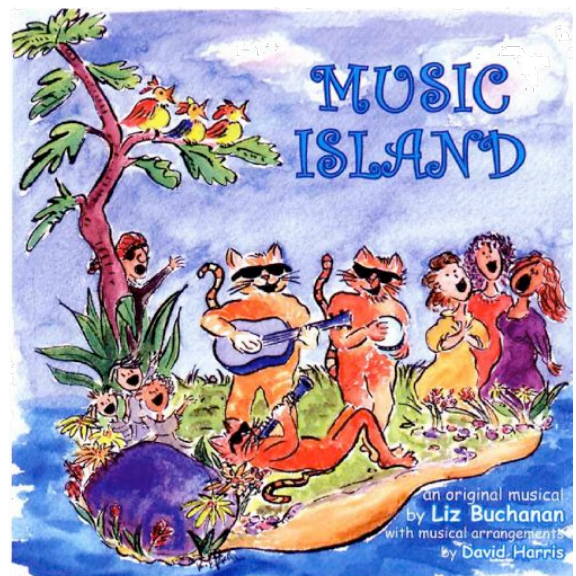
So, how do you go about making the most of this role? First, learn as much as you can about your character. Who is s/he? What is her/his family like? What had her/his life been like up to the point of this play? These answers may come directly from evidence found in the script. More often, this information, known as a character's *given circumstances*, is created by the actor. Actors will sometimes even write this information down in the form of a character autobiography. If you have a clever back story for your character, it can make your time onstage more interesting. Find ways to show these parts of your character onstage. Befriend

Continued on page 2

Fall Productions:



7 PM Friday, November 16th
 2 PM Saturday, November 17th
 Arlington Masonic Temple
 19 Academy St



7 PM Friday, December 14th
 2 PM Saturday, December 15th
 Arlington Town Hall
 730 Massachusetts Avenue

Colleen's Corner

Continued from Page 1

your character!

Next, know what your character is doing onstage at every moment, even if you have no lines. Your character must be doing something *active* in each moment. (Ever notice that the words “active” and “action” have the word “act” in them? It's no coincidence!). It is helpful to think about what you are doing onstage in the form of a verb. For example, an actress delivering this line:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?

might think of her action/verb as “to plead,” “to dream,” “to demand,” or “to wonder.” These are all strong verbs that can be played actively. Depending on which verb is chosen, the line will be delivered quite differently. Analyzing your lines in this way will help you to understand why your character is onstage and what s/he is doing. The same goes for non-speaking characters. What are they actively *doing* in their silence?

Here are some other tips: Listening is a huge part of acting. Part of listening is reacting to what other characters are saying or doing. Reacting is acting. Remember to be a good listener. Pay attention to your character's physicality. How does s/he move? Stand? Walk? Is s/he old? Young? Energetic? Lazy? Do they speak quickly? Slowly? With an accent? This should come through in the portrayal of your character. Don't be afraid to take a risk. If you have an idea, try it out during a rehearsal.

Finally, remember two things. 1. Directors want to work with actors who have a positive attitude and work hard. 2. The directing staff notices actors who make the most of any part, no matter the size, and will remember you next time you audition.

Colleen



The cast of *Ten Little Indians* at the ACT Halloween Party, including Daniel Begin, winner of the scariest costume award for his scary Millie door.

Registration Opening for Winter Workshops including February and April Vacation Week Drama Camps!

Winter Workshops to include:

- * Acting with Talia Etidgee for students 12+
- * Acting with Sean Edgecomb for students 7-11 (tentative)
- * Magic Carpet Riding with Medina Mahfuz for 6-8 year olds
- * Singing for the Actor with Janet O'Hare
- * Directing with Colleen Rua for students 12-18
- * Advanced Playwriting with Steve Smith for students 12+
- * February Vacation Week Drama Camp: *Three Terrible Trins*, adapted by the ACT Playwriting Workshop from the book by Dick King-Smith, for students 7-10
- * April Vacation Week Drama Camp: *The Araboolies of Liberty Street*, adapted by Peter and Maya Bermudes from the book by Sam Swope and Barry Root, for students 7-10
- * Summer Drama Program—Information will be available soon!

For information on these workshops and to register, go to ACT.arlington.ma.us. Registration opening soon!



Voices of ACT

An Extra Something by Sarah Smith

I sometimes tell people that Arlington is my second home, even though I don't live there. Because of the amount of time I spend doing ACT plays and workshops, I feel like half of me lives in Arlington. And trust me, I love it!

Ever since I tried out for "Peter Pan" in the summer of 2001, ACT has been one huge family to me. I love all of the people there, and I can't imagine what my life would be like if it hadn't been for ACT. But I'm not going to get all sappy and say how ACT has taught me things (though it has taught me many) or how I feel free when I do a play with ACT (though I do). I want to tell you about an experience I had last year—a life-changing one, mind you—that changed how I viewed the theater entirely.

ACT's winter show last year was "Into the Woods"—a medley of characters from various fairy tales thrown together into one place. It was in this play that I was offered my first really small role. In the past plays I had done (some with ACT, some with other theaters), I think I'd always been happy about the role I got. My motto was and I hope still is, "I don't care what part I get, as long as I'm in the show." I sort of went against that when I was offered the role of Cinderella's Mother—in my opinion, the smallest role in the play. I got to sing a short solo and be on stage for two scenes total.

At first I was really upset. OK, I was upset for a long time. But it gave me time to think . . . and for my dad to give me a little pep talk. I think I will always remember the things he said to me—they helped me cheer up, accept the role, and they changed the way I thought about things.

The first thing he said was the famous theater line: "there are no small parts, only small players". This saying refers to the fact that a part is only small if you make it small.

I know I will always remember the other thing he said. He recounted his favorite scene from the old movie "It's a Wonderful Life". It's when the people in the town run in to George Bailey's Savings and Loan to demand all their money back (this was during the Depression in the 1930's). Some people are asking for two or three hundred dollars each while George is trying to get them to take out as little as possible so the bank wouldn't fail.

Anyway, there is this one character who goes to the window and simply says, "Could I have seventeen-fifty?" and George takes this old lady who asked for \$17.50 and kisses her full on the mouth. The character never appears again in the movie, yet it is one of the most memorable scenes in the entire movie. I will always remember that character because of how big she made her one little line. She took what could have been a small, unnoticeable role and made it noticeable, funny, and memorable.

It was these two things that brought me around, and I decided to be in the play and to give it my all. I won't say I loved my role and I won't say that I made it as big as the lady in "It's a Wonderful Life", but that play ended up being as fun for me as every other ACT play I've been in. I made new friends and I learned something: just because you have a small part, doesn't mean you can't be noticeable. People tend to remember little things if you can find a way to make them notice you.

So here are my words to you: if you don't get the part you want, take the role anyway. You could end up being the star of the play because of the little things you do. Find your own way to spice up the part, make people remember you. And never, ever forget the lady who asked for \$17.50 and got a kiss as well.



Sarah Smith (with ACT buddy Andrea Perkins) is in seventh grade in Winchester and has acted in numerous plays with ACT, as well as Wakefield Repertory Theatre and Devanaughn Theatre.

Voices of ACT

You Know What? There are Small Parts The Trick is to Give Them Everything You've Got by Day Marcucci

There is a much overused and I believe inaccurate theatre cliché which states that there are no small parts, only small actors.

First of all, there are small parts. I have had many of them. And secondly, there should only be large actors who no matter how many lines or solos they have should always exert personality and energy on the stage.

To be able to accomplish this you need to develop a certain mind set. I know from personal experience that it can be very difficult to accept a small part. I love to act. I was born with a major speech impediment, so as a child I had to act everything out with my hands and facial expressions. My mother says I was born an actress; however, my first shows were musicals and I have to be honest in saying that I am not the most talented singer and dancer. My small parts frustrated me, but my love for being on stage overcame my disappointment. This is the first part of being a small part yet large actor. You must love the Theatre and you must thrive off of performing on stage.

This year I had the joy of being in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* with A.C.T. I played a member of a large dance ensemble. The majority of the times, my movements were exactly the same as my fellow dancers. I love characters, so I decided to make one for myself. I gave her a name, a family, a story, even a walk. I knew her inside and out and I played her to a tee. Even though all my movements were the same, my facial expressions, walk, and physicality took on the life of my character. This added to my dynamics on stage, but it also made it much more fun.

Another important part of playing a small part well is your energy. Everything you do must be full of it. Also, you must encourage your fellow ensemble actors to do the same.

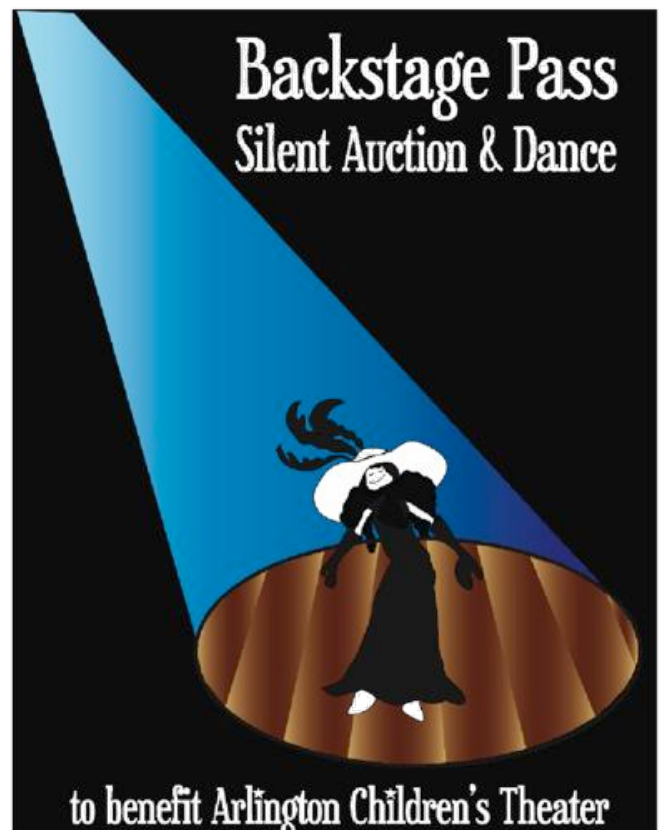
Now all of this has helped me to completely enjoy acting no matter what the part, yet I struggled for a while because I always felt that you could delete me and no one except perhaps my Grandma would notice.

This perception changed for me when one night a good friend of mine and myself were having an animated

conversation about our latest performance of *Millie*. We both felt like that show had been our strongest so far. The first thing she said was, "Our ensemble kicked butt today." I had to agree.

No show, especially a musical, can be pulled off without a strong, excited, and energetic Ensemble. From watching many professionally done shows, I know the best ones are those with those special cast members that never speak a word, yet draw your attention with their talent, smile, and individuality.

Day Marcucci of Medford goes to Matignon High School in Cambridge. She has appeared in several ACT plays, including "Thoroughly Modern Millie", "Damn Yankees" and "Bye Bye Birdie".



ACT's First-Ever *Backstage Pass* Silent Auction

by Jackie Daley & MJ Michaels
Auction Committee Co-Chairs 2008

ACT is holding its first ever *Backstage Pass* Silent Auction and Dance, scheduled for **March 15th, 2008**. This exciting fundraiser will be at The Sons of Italy in Arlington, and our guests will enjoy a light dinner, cocktails, dancing and a silent and live auction. Funds from this event will help ACT in its mission to provide affordable theater education, scholarships, and quality productions.

Here's how you can participate in the success of this ACT event:



* Please consider contributing to the silent auction. You, your employer, a friend, or family member can donate the item. Remember, all items are tax-deductible. Suggested donations include: gourmet gift baskets, vacation rentals, hotel stays, services such as landscaping, house painting, or tax preparation. To obtain a donor form, contact Jackie Daley at 781.648.1477 or MJ Michaels at 781.438.3716. We are also happy to pick up any donation items at your convenience, if it is not possible to mail it.

* Please mark your calendar now and plan to attend the auction on **Saturday, March 15th, 2008**. Tickets for the event are \$25 per person. You will receive more information in the mail, as the event draws nearer, but in the meantime, we encourage you to tell all your neighbors, friends, and family members.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support of this important event. Together we can make a difference!



ACT's Annual Membership Fund Drive and Changes

by Jackie Daley, Fundraising Chair

Over the past several years ACT has grown tremendously. By the end of this year, we will have produced five plays, three camp shows and numerous workshops and special programs. It is an exciting time to be involved with ACT, and we want to thank all of you for the support that has brought us thus far.

Looking ahead, we are fully committed to continuing to offer children the chance to participate in live theater. We offer low participation fees for all of our programs to ensure all children will be able to participate without regard to cost. For those unable to pay, we offer full financial assistance. The fees we receive do not cover our operating costs and they are not moving us closer to realizing our dream for our own ACT location, and a dedicated fund for financial assistance.

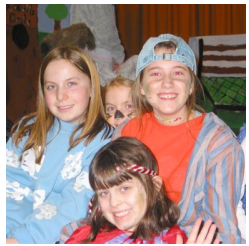
We are embarking upon a new adventure to move us closer to our dreams and to foster our continued growth and expansion: an annual fund. As we establish an annual fund, we will be moving away from the membership model we have had in the past. In part, this is a logistical decision, as administering all the benefits was time consuming and often confusing, both for us and our members! This past summer, we kicked off the first annual fund drive, and in keeping with the fun and whimsical nature of ACT, we are continuing to offer the following "roles" for our donors:

- ACTor—\$50**
- Stage Manager—\$100**
- Director—\$250**
- Producer—\$500**
- Executive Producer—\$1000**

We thank you for helping to bring us to where we are today and we hope you will continue your support, generosity and commitment to ACT and to the arts.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE
ACT ANNUAL FUND

Arlington Children's Theater
A.C.T.



"ACT is such a great community of kids and parent volunteers. I feel privileged to work with them."

Please contribute to the ACT's Annual Fund! Keep current on our programs and support an important cultural resource! Our donors include families and friends from Arlington and throughout Greater Boston.



Wrapping Packages for ACT at Henry Bear's Park December 9th

Here's a fun way to help ACT and get some holiday chores out of the way: stop in to Henry Bear's Park in Arlington Center on Sunday, December 9th between 11 AM and 6 PM and have your holiday purchases wrapped by ACT volunteers. We will be wrapping gifts for customers all day for a cost of \$3 per package. All proceeds will go directly to ACT.

If you or someone in your family (like an enterprising, energetic teenager!) are interested in wrapping, contact Jackie Daley (englishaccent2004@yahoo.com or 781-648-1477) with your name, contact info, and availability on that date. If you are shopping for the holidays, wait and come on that day so you can be a part of this fun fundraising effort!



P.O.Box 1076
Arlington, MA 02474

Inside:

* Fall Shows: *Ten Little Indians* and *Music Island*

* Upcoming Workshops

* "There are no small roles..."

* *Backstage Pass:*
The ACT Auction
March 15th, 2008



Coming Up: Our Spring Shakespeare Production will be

Romeo and Juliet



Directed by Matt Lundeen

We need your help! Contribute to the Annual Fund today!