

CHILDREN'S THEATRE OF WINNETKA

PARENT INFORMATION AND AUDITION, REHEARSAL AND SHOW POLICIES

Annie, Fall 2026

Thank you for your interest in Children's Theatre of Winnetka!

Whether this is your family's first CTW production or you've been with us for years, we're excited to welcome you. This handbook outlines our policies, expectations, and important information to help make the process a positive and rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Please read it carefully before auditions and keep it as a reference throughout the season.

We can't wait to see you at auditions!

- CTW Production Team & Board of Directors

HISTORY

Founded in 1974 at The Community House Winnetka, Children's Theatre of Winnetka (CTW) was established to provide children throughout New Trier Township with a comprehensive theatrical experience. CTW is proud to be a subsidiary of The Community House Winnetka, and together we share a commitment to enriching the community through exceptional educational and cultural programming.

Today, auditions are open to students in grades 4–8 who live in or attend school within New Trier Township. CTW teaches all aspects of theatre while producing two high-quality productions each year in a supportive, professional environment. CTW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization led by an all-volunteer Board of Directors and has provided thousands of young people with meaningful opportunities to learn, perform, and grow through theatre.

OUR MISSION

The Children's Theatre of Winnetka strives to empower and inspire today's youth through participation in musical theatre performance and production, while fostering collaboration and personal development within a supportive and nurturing environment.

AUDITIONS & CASTING

At Children's Theatre of Winnetka, every audition is an opportunity for students to learn, grow, and challenge themselves. Our goal is to create a positive, supportive environment where every child feels encouraged to do their best, regardless of the outcome.

AUDITIONS

Auditions are open to students in **grades 4–8** who reside in or attend school within New Trier Township.

To help every child feel comfortable and perform their best, all auditions and callbacks are closed. Only auditioning students and members of the casting committee are permitted in the audition room. Parents are welcome to wait in the Community House lobby or return at their child's scheduled pick-up time.

No prior theatre experience is required. We encourage children of all experience levels to audition.

Please see the "[Audition Expectations](#)" section of our website for more information on what to expect.



THE CASTING COMMITTEE

The casting committee consists of the Director(s) and any additional members of the artistic staff the Director(s) choose to include. This typically includes the Music Director and Choreographer. At least one member of the CTW Board of Directors who does not have a child auditioning in the production also serves on the casting committee.

Casting decisions are made collaboratively whenever possible. The Director has final artistic authority in the event consensus cannot be reached. For productions with Co-Directors, consensus between the Directors is required.

CASTING PHILOSOPHY

Casting a production is a complex and highly subjective process. Every show presents unique artistic requirements, and many factors are considered when assigning roles.

The production team evaluates each student based on:

- Acting ability
- Vocal ability
- Dance ability
- Character portrayal
- Stage presence
- Physical characteristics appropriate for specific roles, including age, height, and overall appearance
- Chemistry with other cast members
- Attendance availability and rehearsal commitments
- The overall needs and balance of the production

Because every production has different casting needs, a student who is not cast in one production may be an excellent fit in a future show. Because casting is subjective, many factors are considered when selecting the cast. When necessary, a grading system may be used to help break ties between equally qualified candidates.

ARTISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

While talent is an important factor, it is not the only consideration in casting.

For example:

The Director is the primary evaluator of acting.

The Music Director/Vocal Director is the primary evaluator of singing.

The Choreographer is the primary evaluator of dance.

When evaluating students with comparable abilities, additional artistic considerations—including size, age, chemistry, and the overall visual balance of the cast—may determine final casting decisions.

Because theatre is a visual storytelling art form, there are times when an exceptionally talented actor may not be cast in a particular role simply because they do not fit the Director's artistic vision or the physical requirements of that character.

BOARD POLICIES

The CTW Board of Directors has established the following casting policies:

- The Director(s) have the artistic freedom to select the students they believe are best suited for each role.
- Children of current CTW Board members and children of non-board members serving on the production team will receive a callback as a professional courtesy.



- When, and only when, two students are determined to be equal in talent and suitability for a role, preference will be given to the child of a current CTW Board member.
- If multiple children from the same family audition, there is no guarantee that all siblings will be cast in the same production.

STUDENT PRODUCTION CREW

CTW is proud to offer a student production crew for children interested in the technical side of theatre.

Crew members play a vital role in every production and receive hands-on experience in backstage disciplines including stage management, props, scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, and other production areas.

Crew selections are made independently of casting decisions. If selected to join the crew, a \$250 crew production fee will apply.

PRODUCTION FEE

The production fee for CTW productions is \$1,200 per cast member and includes all rehearsals and performances, a cast T-shirt, and a video of the production. Payment instructions and deadlines will be provided following casting. Payment plans are available upon request. The production fee is non-refundable.

SCHOLARSHIPS

CTW is committed to making theatre accessible to all families. Through the Barbara Weldon Scholarship Fund, partial and full scholarships are available. All scholarship requests are kept strictly confidential. Families interested in scholarship assistance should indicate their interest during registration or contact the CTW Treasurer (treasurer@childrenstheatrewinnetka.com) for additional information .

VOLUNTEERS

CTW is a nonprofit, volunteer-run organization, and the support of our families is essential to every production. Every cast family is expected to volunteer throughout the season, helping create the exceptional experience that makes CTW so special.

Each family will serve on:

- One pre-show committee to assist with preparations leading up to the production.
- One show-week committee, volunteering during one Tech Rehearsal, one Dress Rehearsal, and two performances.

A variety of volunteer opportunities are available to accommodate different interests, skills, and schedules. Committee assignments and volunteer sign-ups will be discussed at the parent meeting following casting.

Many CTW parents find volunteering to be one of the most rewarding parts of the experience. It's a wonderful opportunity to spend time with your child, meet other families, and become part of the CTW community. The more involved you become, the more you'll discover that volunteering feels less like work and more like being part of something truly special.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography and video recording by parents are not permitted during auditions, rehearsals, backstage, or in dressing rooms, due to licensing restrictions established by our professional licensing company. This policy is a condition of our performance rights. Professional production photos and a video recording of the show will be provided to families following the production.



IMPORTANT DATES: ANNIE FALL 2026	
Saturday, August 29 & Sunday, August 30	Auditions (Select one day)
Monday, August 31	Callbacks Emailed
Tuesday, September 1 & Wednesday, September 2	Actors called for callbacks (1 day only)
Friday, September 4	Cast List Emailed
Tuesday, September 8	First Day of Rehearsal
Saturday, September 12 at 10am	Mandatory Parent Meeting
Saturday, October 3	Tickets on sale for Cast and Crew (10 tickets max)
Saturday, October 10	Tickets on sale to public
Saturday, October 10	Cast and Crew Headshots
Saturday, October 31	Halloween *** <i>Rehearsals to follow regular schedule</i> ***
Monday, November 9 at 6:30pm	Set In (one adult per family required)
Tuesday, November 10	4-Hour Rehearsals Begin, no excused absences allowed *** <i>See final page of document for detailed rehearsal schedule</i> ***
Saturday, November 14 & Sunday, November 15	Tech Rehearsals (1 per cast)
Tuesday, November 17 & Wednesday, November 18	Dress Rehearsals (1 per cast)
Thursday, November 19 - Sunday, November 22	Performances
Sunday, November 22 at 6:30pm	Cast and Crew Party
Sunday, November 22 at 6:30pm	Set Strike (<i>one adult per family required</i>)

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have questions regarding auditions, rehearsals, policies, or any aspect of the production, please contact CTW Board Chair at info@childrenstheatrewinnetka.com. We are always happy to assist and appreciate your partnership in making each CTW production a positive experience for every child.



REHEARSAL TIMING AND POLICIES

Cast A: Tuesdays & Thursdays: 4:00–6:00PM, Saturdays: 12:00–2:00PM

Cast B: Tuesdays & Thursdays: 6:00–8:00PM, Saturdays: 10:00 a.m.–12:00PM

Please Note:

- Some principal roles may be called from 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. on Saturdays.
- While directors make every attempt to call each child for as much time as possible each week, not every actor may be called to every rehearsal. The production team schedules actors only when they are actively needed, so your child's rehearsal time may be shorter than the scheduled rehearsal block.
- A detailed rehearsal schedule & production update will be emailed every Sunday for the following week. Because rehearsal schedules vary from week to week, families are expected to read each weekly email carefully.
- CTW rehearsals are held on many school holidays and holiday weekends, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Presidents Day weekends. Unless specifically noted on the official rehearsal schedule or in a weekly production email, families should assume rehearsals will be held as scheduled.

ILLNESS

If your child is ill, please do not send them to rehearsal. Notify the Lead Producer by 2:00 p.m. on weekdays or 9:00 a.m. on Saturdays so the Production Team can adjust rehearsal plans and determine whether your child's double is needed.

CLOSED REHEARSALS

To provide the safest and most productive rehearsal environment, rehearsals are closed to parents and guests. Only members of the production team, approved volunteers, and committee chairs performing assigned responsibilities may be present during rehearsals.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

At CTW, we strive to create a positive, respectful, and supportive environment where every child can learn and thrive. Cast members are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness and respect.
- Listen and follow directions.
- Arrive on time and ready to participate.
- Be inclusive, courteous, and supportive of fellow cast members.
- Help keep rehearsal spaces clean and organized.

If behavioral concerns arise, the production team will work with the student and their family to address and resolve the issue. If behavioral issues cannot be resolved, it may result in recasting or removal from the production.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of personal electronic devices—including cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and similar devices—is prohibited during scheduled rehearsal times.

REHEARSAL ATTIRE

Actors should wear comfortable clothing that allows for movement, including closed-toe shoes or jazz shoes. Crop tops are not permitted. Hair should be secured away from the face. Specific attire or footwear may be requested by the production team as needed.



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is one of the most important commitments a cast member makes to a CTW production. Every rehearsal builds on the previous one, and each actor plays an important role in the success of the entire cast.

Because of the collaborative nature of theatre, **all rehearsals are considered mandatory.** Absences are permitted only if they have been approved prior to auditions, your child is ill, or there is a family emergency. We ask families to carefully consider any requested absence, as missed rehearsals affect not only your child, but the entire production.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

- No more than two excused absence requests will be accepted.
- All requested absences must be submitted prior to casting. Any dates added after auditions will be considered unexcused.
- No absence is considered approved until confirmed by the CTW prior to auditions.
- No more than two consecutive rehearsals may be missed unless your child is ill or there is a family emergency.
- With advance approval from the Producers, your child may be asked to switch rehearsal times with your double (for example, attending 4:00–6:00 p.m. instead of 6:00–8:00 p.m.).
- Missing an approved rehearsal may result in a reduction of role or participation based on material rehearsed during the absence, at the discretion of CTW Board of Directors.
- Beginning November 10, there are no excused absences.

Failure to comply with CTW Attendance Policy may result in, but is not limited to:

- Reduction of role or stage time
- Recasting
- Dismissal from the production
- Consideration during future casting decisions

CTW reserves the right to evaluate attendance concerns on a case-by-case basis and determine appropriate action at the sole discretion of the Board of Directors and Production Team.

Thank you for taking the time to review these policies. They are intended to provide a safe, respectful, and positive experience for every participant and to support the success of each CTW production.

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the policies outlined in this Parent Handbook and agree to support my child's compliance with these expectations. I understand that failure to follow CTW policies may result in disciplinary action, including recasting or removal from the production if deemed necessary by the CTW Board of Directors and Production Team.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Actor Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the expectations of cast and crew members at Children's Theatre of Winnetka. I agree to follow these expectations and understand that failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, including recasting or removal from the production.

Actor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



ACTOR'S NAME: _____

PLEASE MARK ANY REQUESTED ABSENCES BELOW. FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED & ABSENCES CONFIRMED BY CTW TO BE CONSIDERED FOR A ROLE.

Day	Date	Time	Reason for requested absence	REMINDERS!
Tuesday	Sept 8	4:00-8:00		CTW expects cast members to attend all rehearsals. We understand, however, that there may be unavoidable school, family, or religious commitments that require an absence.
Thursday	Sept 10	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Sept 12	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Sept 15	4:00-8:00		Please use the calendar below to indicate only unavoidable conflicts for which you are requesting an excused absence.
Thursday	Sept 17	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Sept 19	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Sept 22	4:00-8:00		Please note: - All absence requests are subject to approval by the CTW Board prior to casting.
Thursday	Sept 24	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Sept 26	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Sept 29	4:00-8:00		- Requests for more than two consecutive absences will not be approved.
Thursday	Oct 1	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Oct 3	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Oct 6	4:00-8:00		- A child's availability is one of many factors considered during the casting process.
Thursday	Oct 8	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Oct 10	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Oct 13	4:00-8:00		- This is your <i>only</i> opportunity to request planned absences. After casting, absences will be excused only for illness or a family emergency.
Thursday	Oct 15	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Oct 17	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Oct 20	4:00-8:00		- Beginning November 10, 2026 (the 4-hour rehearsal schedule), no planned absences will be approved.
Thursday	Oct 22	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Oct 24	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Oct 27	4:00-8:00		- If your child misses a rehearsal, they may miss staging or scene work that cannot be recreated. Depending on what is rehearsed during their absence, they may not be included in certain scenes or portions of the production.
Thursday	Oct 29	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Oct 31	10:00-2:00		
Tuesday	Nov 3	4:00-8:00		
Thursday	Nov 5	4:00-8:00		
Saturday	Nov 7	10:00-2:00		
Monday	Nov 9	6:00-9:00	Set In (Parents Only)	
Tuesday	Nov 10	4:00-8:00	4-Hour Rehearsal Cast 1	
Wednesday	Nov 11	4:00-8:00	4-Hour Rehearsal Cast 2	
Thursday	Nov 12	4:00-8:00	4-Hour Rehearsal Cast 1	
Friday	Nov 13	4:00-8:00	4-Hour Rehearsal Cast 2	
Saturday	Nov 14	9:00-5:00	Tech Cast 1	
Sunday	Nov 15	12:00-6:00	Tech Cast 2	
Monday	Nov 16	4:00-9:00	*Pickup Rehearsal (If Needed)	
Tuesday	Nov 17	4:00-9:00	Dress Rehearsal Cast 1	
Wednesday	Nov 18	4:00-9:00	Dress Rehearsal Cast 2	
Thursday	Nov 19	4:30-9:00	PERFORMANCE Cast 1	
Friday	Nov 20	4:30-9:00	PERFORMANCE Cast 2	
Saturday	Nov 21	9:00-5:00	PERFORMANCES Cast 2 then Cast 1	
Sunday	Nov 22	12:00-6:00	PERFORMANCES Cast 1 then Cast 2	