

Do you have any suggestions for auditioning for you?

Yes! Most of all, try to relax and have fun. We want you to do well!

1. *Consult the detailed character descriptions.* It's valuable information on how to create a distinct character and the descriptions describe what we're looking for.
2. *Take direction.* It's possible that we will ask to have the scene read again in a different way, based on what the director is looking for in a scene. It's best if you can take the direction and make the requested changes. It's part of the process and showing that you can apply what is suggested makes a good impression.
3. *Being fully present with active listening is compelling acting and we look for it.* If you're not familiar, here's a brief introduction:
<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/craft-listen-active-listening-can-raise-performance-higher-level-25262/>
4. *As you are reading a scene, always slide your thumb to the next line* for your character. It's easier to look away from the script and engage with the other actors while they are reading, but know right where to look when it is your next line. There is a lot of acting done when you're not reading, and if you're looking away from the script, we can see it better.
5. *Be kind to other actors, staff and volunteers.* While we are looking for great acting and the right fit, we also want to cast people who play well with others!

What can I expect at auditions?

When you arrive, you'll check in with the audition assistants. We will take your audition form if you've filled out ahead of time or will give you one to fill out if you haven't. We'll also give you a number which you'll pin on your shirt (American Idol style). Then we'll take a quick photo of you for the audition team (it helps us remember you!), or if you have a current photo of yourself or a headshot, we'll take that instead.

You'll receive an audition packet and you'll be sent to a holding room where actors will be able to prepare your audition monologue and review the scenes.

When you are called, you'll present your monologue, and the audition team will assign a scene to perform with other actor(s). You'll have the chance to practice the scene with the other actors before you perform it for the committee. Once you've performed a scene or two, you'll be free to go. If you are needed to read further, you may be called to callbacks. We will contact you by the following Wednesday to let you know whether or not you've been cast.

How should I choose one of the monologues for the audition (especially if I'm interested in several roles)?

For this audition, we'll be using short monologues adapted from the script. It's best to choose a monologue for the character you are most interested in playing (see the character descriptions and excerpt on sterlingplaymakers.org) but if you are interested in several roles equally, you should choose the monologue that shows off your skills best.

If you are interested in auditioning for Clara or Eli, it's best to choose one of their two monologues and you may be asked to read both.

I am only interested in accepting a certain role(s). If I indicate that on my audition form, will that negatively affect how you feel about my audition?

Not at all! We appreciate your honesty and *completely* understand that you may be only interested in doing the show for a certain role or two. Everyone's time is valuable and we won't think less of you – or be reluctant to cast you - if you're only interested in a particular role(s).

If you change your mind during the audition process and want to be considered for more (or less) roles, please contact us before casting begins, (i.e., as soon as possible during or following your audition), as we will read the audition forms carefully when making casting decisions.

I'd like to try out for Clara or Eli, is there anything else I should know about these roles and what you're looking for?

Clara and Eli are in nearly every scene and are very much the focus of this romantic comedy. We're looking for two dynamic actors who are comfortable carrying these major roles and are committed to the preparation that will be required for the success of this show.

For Clara, we're looking for someone who can convey Clara's inner strength and quick wit while maintaining a polished demeanor. Since she was raised in "Old New York," she has definite ideas of what proper behavior is and follows these norms very closely despite her diminished economic situation. She is smart, confident, determined, and self-reliant, but we do see a more vulnerable side of her as the story progresses. It's a challenging role to play, since she must maintain her poise – and can't often say what she wants to - but we also must see that there's more to her than meets the eye.

For Eli, we're looking for someone who has a strong stage presence and great comedic timing. Eli is a successful self made man and has a big personality to match, but he is trying to break into a high society world that makes little sense to him and is most often out of his element. While most of the comedy arises from Eli's dialogue and behavior, the actor must be also able to realistically convey tender moments, both as the romantic lead and the guardian to his nieces and nephew. This is a demanding role, but a fun one for the right actor.

I've never been on stage before (or it's been a long time). Can I still audition?

Absolutely! The Playmakers are always looking for new actors (and other volunteers) and we'd LOVE to see you come out – prior experience is not required. We can't guarantee that you'll get a role if you audition, but you certainly have a better chance of getting cast if you come out and take the chance!

I see that several characters have accents, do I need to use an accent when I audition?

It's not required. Our advice is if you have a well-developed accent (for the appropriate character), by all means use it to audition, but if you do not or do not feel comfortable using one on the fly, it's better to have no accent rather than a poor one.

Can you tell me more about what an ensemble role will be like?

The ensemble roles may be doubled by other named roles in the show or may be cast as a separate group.

There will be a "servant" and "society" ensemble. Both of these ensembles are important – giving more depth to both the 'upstairs' society that Eli is trying to break into and the world of 'downstairs', the people who are really running Newport behind the scenes. The ensemble will sometimes interact with the leads and other named roles, react to what's happening on stage and give more depth to our story.

There are several specific characters such as the workmen, the Naval Officers, a flirtatious couple, and Prince Haakon. All of these parts, and others, have one scene that they will be featured in and play a small but important role in the play. They will be cast from the ensemble or be doubled by a named role.

The director plans to work with the ensemble to create compelling characters to help tell our story.

How do callbacks work?

Callbacks will be held Saturday afternoon following auditions, if needed. This is generally an opportunity for the director to see more from actors before casting or to have 'chemistry' reads. Not everyone will be asked to come to callbacks, it most likely will only be for certain characters.

You may still be cast if you are not called to callbacks, and you are not guaranteed a role if you called for callbacks.

How many rehearsals will I be called to?

In general, the more stage time you have, the more rehearsals you will be called for. Our leads, Clara and Eli, will be called to nearly every rehearsal, but smaller roles may be called only once a week or less as rehearsals begin.

We make every effort to call you only when you are needed. We will rehearse the show out of order to start so that actors will be called to fewer rehearsals.

Once we get into runs (Act I, Act II and whole show runs), everyone that makes an appearance will be called.

Will you cast understudies?

We may cast two 'swings'. They will be asked to play any role at rehearsal due to absences and become familiar with the script. While they will not be expected to be completely off book, they will be called upon to 'fill in' for other roles in case of emergency. While they will not have a guaranteed performance, they will be given personalized feedback from the director and recognized in the program as part of the cast. This is a valuable role to the production and most swings enjoy the experience.

There are a lot of roles, can/will I be cast in more than one?

There are many roles to fill, and you may possibly have the opportunity to play more than one role. The main exception are the two lead roles, Clara and Eli, as they are nearly every scene and won't take on a second role.

You may indicate your preferences about being cast in more than one role on the audition form. We are undecided if we will offer actors more than one role. It will depend on auditions, actor preferences and director discretion.

I have some conflicts with rehearsals, can I still be cast?

In most cases, if we know conflicts ahead of time, we can generally work around them. It is essential to list all your conflicts on the rehearsal calendar as we plan our schedule around cast

members conflicts and availability. It is unlikely that we will cast anyone with a dress rehearsal or performance date conflict.

I am currently in/on staff for *Godspell* with Sterling Playmakers. Can I still be cast?

Yes! Our rehearsal schedule may conflict with the Sterling Playmakers summer musical, but will be only during the early rehearsals. If any conflicts were to arise, *Godspell* commitments would take precedence since they open first. Please indicate known conflicts on the audition form calendar.

I have been cast in *Catch Me If You Can* with Sterling Playmakers. Can I still be considered for *The Social Secretary*?

Congrats on your role! If you are cast in our fall musical, we unfortunately won't be able to consider you for *The Social Secretary* since there will be too many conflicts leading up to the production.

If I am cast, what other responsibilities will I have besides performing?

All actors are expected to help during "build week" and take part in "strike". These are both on the rehearsal schedule. Build week is when we move everything into the theater and build the set. There are a variety of jobs and ways to help out. "Strike" follows the final show, when we take apart the set and make trips to the warehouse and the cast party immediately follows!

If I am not cast, can I still be involved with the production in some other way?

Absolutely! There are lots of opportunities to be involved in a variety of backstage roles such costumes, sets, props, run crew and many others. Please reach out and we'd love to find a place for you to help!

I understand that this is an original work. What is the development history?

The play has been in development for several years. The first private reading was held in January of 2018. Sterling Playmakers hosted a public play reading in the spring of 2018. The City of Fairfax theater hosted a 'script-in-hand' staged reading with a full cast and audience in November 2019. Following the postponement of the planned 2020 fall production due to Covid-19, Sterling Playmakers hosted a virtual play reading in March 2020.

This will be the first fully staged production of *The Social Secretary*.