Dear Prospective St. Olaf Theatre Student,

There are many ways to find acting opportunities at St. Olaf, whether auditioning for the five major productions presented annually by St. Olaf Theatre, for the Quade One-Act festival, for plays presented by our student-run theatre, Deep End Productions, by producing your own work, or acting in scenes being presented in directing classes or in student films.

**St. Olaf Theatre holds three auditions that cover five productions each year.**

**Fall Auditions** are held the first Friday and Saturday after fall classes begin, so it is a good idea to come to campus prepared. One piece serves as your audition for both the fall Haugen Theatre and Kelsey Theatre productions. Usually the only ones watching you audition are the directors for those productions. After that audition, each director holds separate callback auditions, the shows are cast, and rehearsals are off and running by the second week of classes. To ease the process, our theatre service organization, “APO”, holds an audition workshop the evening before auditions, with veterans of the process on hand to offer advice. They offer terrific support, and will even find you a piece, if you need. Rely on them. They like being needed!

The **Interim** production, our third piece of the year, auditions mid-October. This process also includes a round on interviews for students interested in participating in design, crew or management. If you are cast in the Interim show, rehearsal and performance become your class for the month of January. Many first-year students find that the Interim production is a great way to get involved with others who are making theatre at St. Olaf.

Like the fall auditions, **spring auditions** come up quickly, usually the first weekend of spring term classes. Again, one piece will serve as your audition for both the Haugen and Kelsey production. Direction of the spring Haugen production is awarded to a senior theatre student. Like the fall productions, the spring Kelsey play is normally directed by a St. Olaf theatre faculty member. Guest directors from outside the department also work with St. Olaf theatre from time to time.

**Material requested for auditions will vary slightly from play to play.**

The material that directors request for auditions will vary depending on the nature of the plays to be produced. For example, if casting a musical, the director may ask for the actor to bring in 16 bars to sing in addition to his or her monologue. If producing Shakespeare, you may be asked for a sonnet. Whatever we ask for, it is always a guideline and not the law, so if you still want to audition, but don’t have the perfect piece, come any way! We WANT you to audition! You can always check [www.stolaf.edu/theatre](http://www.stolaf.edu/theatre) for updates about specific auditions for St. Olaf Theatre productions. Once you arrive on campus, you can sign up for the “Theatre Interest” email group, so that you will get audition notices as they come up during the year. It’s also wise to keep an eye on the Call Board in the Green Room, located in the lower level of the theatre building, to learn about projects that pop up spontaneously during the year.

Usually, a prepared monologue of two minutes or less will be requested. “Prepared” has a loose definition. Most actors come to auditions for St. Olaf Theatre with a memorized piece, but that is never a requirement of the process. You can always feel free to hold your script while auditioning, but you may want to keep in mind that some others vying for roles are likely bringing in pieces that are memorized. Do you have a favorite monologue from a play you performed in high school, for speech competition, or even a favorite poem? These can all make for great first audition pieces.

It is always a good idea to read the plays for which you are auditioning, to make sure the play appeals to you, and to be a bit more prepared, should you be called-back for a second audition. We provide scripts that you can check out for a few hours, to give the pieces a quick read. Check out is run through the main theatre office, just off the Kelsey Theatre lobby.

If you are the kind of actor who likes to find the perfect piece, one good idea is to choose a monologue by the playwright, from a play that is not the one being produced. Sometimes
directors will ask for different things, like a sonnet, poem, or even a personal story, but the norm is a monologue of under two-minutes.

**Basics to keep in mind when auditioning**

*Sign up for an audition time on the Green Room Call Board.
*Dress comfortably, not as the character, but in a way that helps the director/s believe you in the role you’ve chosen to perform.
*Time your piece. There is really no such thing as “too short” when cutting a piece, but make sure not to go over the prescribed time limit. This is your first way to show a director that you can take direction, so make sure you adhere to the time-limit requests.
*Arrive a bit early, and make sure to bring along your schedule, planner, date book, or whatever you use to keep track of your commitments, because you will be asked to list any potential rehearsal and performance conflicts on the audition form that you will fill out. It is not necessarily a deal-breaker if you have rehearsal conflicts, but directors will need to know any schedule conflicts up front, to plan an effective rehearsal schedule.
*Try your best to relax and be yourself. We will try our best not to be scary! The director/s may want to chat with you a bit before you perform, to get to know you.
*Introduce yourself and your piece, including your name, the name of the play, playwright and character. No other information about the play should be included.
*Use focal points that do not directly engage the director/s. They will want to see your ability to create and maintain the “world of the play”. When an actor chooses to look right at directors while auditioning, an essential “suspension of disbelief” can be lost.
*Think of the first line of your piece as the “headline”. Take your time with it, and use the words. Directors are using this moment to learn about your ability to project. Be aware of the space. Let your voice fill the theatre, with your healthiest, best-articulated sound.
*If it’s appropriate for the piece, let the director/s get a sense of how you move. Generally, it is better to stand than to sit. Try to include only movement and gesture that communicate character, and contribute to the piece.
*Find and convey the journey the character takes in the piece. Look for levels and builds, and use them to show your range.
*Hold the last moment. Let the directors absorb the piece before you break character.
*Not often, but sometimes, a director may ask you to do a bit of the piece again, with a specific direction. This is good! It means that s/he is interested in your work, so don’t take it as a critique, but rather use this opportunity to show that you can take the piece in a new way.
*End with a quick “thank you”, and you are on our way. The stage manager running audition sign-ins will let you know about the next step in the process. If you have any questions, you can ask him/her anything.
*Keep in mind that the directors are rooting for you. We WANT you to leave the experience pleased with your audition.
*If you don’t get cast, do your best not to get discouraged, and don’t immediately take that to mean that you shouldn’t be acting at the college level. Plays are like the city bus. There is always another one coming, so if you don’t get cast, just take a breath and get ready for the next audition. This is just part of the actor’s life.

If you have questions about the audition process, please email me. On behalf of our entire faculty and staff, welcome to St. Olaf Theatre! We hope to see you soon!

Dona Werner Freeman,
Theatre Artist in Residence
freemand@stolaf.edu