

WORD NERD

An Original Musical

**Audition &
Callback Packet**



SIGN UP TO AUDITION

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THE TEAM

Director: Bibiana Torres*

bibiana.torres@yale.edu

Producer & Bookwriter: Simon Rabinowitz*

simon.rabinowitz@yale.edu

Lyricist & Bookwriter: Will Wegner*

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Composer & Bookwriter: Charlie Romano

charles.romano@aya.yale.edu

Orchestrator: Griffin Strout*

griffin.strout@yale.edu

Associate Producer: Malia Munley

malia.munley@yale.edu

Stage Manager: Adam Wassilchalk

adam.wassilchalk@yale.edu

Assistant Stage Manager: Maya Li

maya.li@yale.edu

Assistant Producer: Lily Pérez

lily.perez@yale.edu

*Denotes senior for whom *Word Nerd* is a Senior Project.

AUDITION TIMELINE

Sun Sep 26

2pm - 3pm

Audition Workshop

Hopper Cabaret

Mon Sep 28

5pm - 7pm

Tue Sep 29

7pm - 10pm

Auditions

Hopper Cabaret

Wed Sep 29

6pm - 7pm

Wed Sep 29

8pm - 10pm

Sat Oct 2

10am-3pm

Callbacks

Hopper Cabaret

Sun Oct 3

12pm-2pm

Casting Call

SHOW TIMELINE

October 3rd

Cast Announced

October

First read through + sparse rehearsal meetings

November/December

Weekly rehearsal meetings

January 29th, 2021
[tentative]

Workshop Reading with Invited Audience

January–Spring Break

Full Rehearsals

Late March–Early April

Move into the 53 Wall St Blackbox

April 13-19

Tech

April 20

Invited Dress Rehearsal

April 22 - 8pm

April 23 - 2pm

April 27 - 8pm

April 29 - 8pm

Performances!

SYNOPSIS

Bob Otto is America's favorite cruciverbalist (*n. someone skillful in creating or solving crossword puzzles*) and host of his very own syndicated television game show, *Word Nerd*. Though he is more than happy to spend his days writing crossword puzzles for the show, his agent Brenda Silver is always pushing him to dream bigger. When the show's executive producer, Gloria Crenshaw, devises a questionable plan to boost the show's falling ratings, Bob is faced with a difficult choice—should he maintain his personal values, or do what's necessary to save the show from its imminent cancellation? Bob sticks to his guns, just in time for hotshot production assistant Stuart Olsen to save the day, pitching an idea to boost ratings *and* preserve the show's integrity—they'll air it live! During the much-anticipated live broadcast, however, Bob is publicly accused of stealing his puzzles from lesser-known cruciverbalists, a claim supported by fabricated evidence planted by Crenshaw and Stuart. He has no choice but to step down from the show. After securing him an unsuccessful series of short-lived television gigs, Brenda is frustrated enough by Bob's thanklessness that she accepts a job as a producer on the newly-renamed *Word Whiz*, hosted by the newly-promoted Stuart. Out of a job and completely alone, Bob is left with no other choice—he dons a disguise, assumes the identity of Frenchman Léon Noël, and lands himself a spot as a contestant on *Word Whiz*.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

BOB OTTO, America's favorite cruciverbalist. Originally from the Midwest, Bob is a cockeyed optimist with nice things to say about everyone he meets. Always willing to put the needs of his loved ones above his own, the one thing Bob loves more than anything is his craft, the art of crossword construction, and the wonderful place where he gets to practice it, Word Nerd.

Tentative Vocal Part: Tenor

BRENDA SILVER, Bob's agent and lifelong friend. More pragmatic than optimistic, Brenda is the eternal voice of reason in Bob's life. Though she shaped Bob's dream of a crossword game show into a reality, she also believes that the two of them have the potential to accomplish bigger and better things than Word Nerd.

Tentative Vocal Part: Mezzo

GLORIA CRENSHAW, the executive producer of Word Nerd. Brought on by the network to ensure the show's commercial success, Crenshaw cares far more about numbers and quotas than she does about crosswords themselves. When the show's ratings begin to plummet, Crenshaw is willing to resort to drastic measures to save it from cancellation.

Tentative Vocal Part: Alto

STUART OLSEN, a production assistant on Word Nerd. A longtime fan of the show, Stuart is eager to learn all he can about crossword construction from his cruciverbal idol. Much like Bob, Stuart is a natural-born people-pleaser-- though his ambition eventually places him in direct competition with his hero.

Tentative Vocal Part: Baritone / Tenor



CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

RICH FOREMAN, head of craft services for *Word Nerd*. As passionate about good cooking as Bob is about good crosswords, Rich has been with the show for nearly as long as its creators, though his contributions are lesser-known. While he and Bob share a love for baking, their bond also goes beyond the kitchen.

Tentative Vocal Part: Tenor

The show will also feature an **ENSEMBLE** of eight people of any vocal part, each of whom will portray a variety of characters, including *Word Nerd* **CONTESTANTS**, assorted members of the show's **PRODUCTION TEAM**, **DEVOTEES** watching from home, and many others.

WHO CAN AUDITION?

We especially encourage BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and first-time theatermakers and creatives to audition or join our production team! Absolutely no experience is necessary, and we would love to work with and mentor you throughout the process. Moreover, we firmly believe that all students, regardless of ability or disability, should have equal opportunity to be involved in theater. We are committed to accommodating all needs to make that happen and create a barrier-free environment. **If specific accommodations or architecture would aid your participation in our auditions and virtual or in-person engagements, please do not hesitate to let us know, and we will tailor to your needs as best we can.**

Note on Gender and Casting: This production aims to be as inclusive of trans, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming folks as possible. Individuals of any gender identity are encouraged to audition for whichever characters they wish! Though we currently have a general gender breakdown, since this is an original piece, some details may continue to develop or change throughout the rehearsal process, including the characters' gender identities. On the audition form you will fill out at your audition, we would love for you to list the gender identities you are comfortable playing. Your well-being is our top priority: if there is anything that we can do to make this process and the audition space more inviting and safe for you, please let us know! Feel free to reach out to Bibiana at bibiana.torres@yale.edu or Malia at malia.munley@yale.edu.

AUDITION WORKSHOP

What is an audition workshop?

This is an open space to ask questions about the structure of auditions, the content of the show, or anything else you want to ask the team. We may model what an audition will look like, or even go over some music from the show. If you have something specific you want to see at this workshop, reach out and let us know!

Is attending required in order to be cast?

Absolutely not! This is meant to be a helpful event to clarify what auditions look like or help you prepare if you would like, but attendance is NOT required and will not affect casting whatsoever.

This sounds really helpful, but I can't make it! What do I do?

No problem! Contact a member of the team (contact info is at the beginning of this packet). We'd be happy to answer questions over email or find a time to meet if you need help.

AUDITIONS

What to prepare

For your audition, please prepare:

- 1-2 mins of a song
- One audition side for a character of your choice

NOTE: This audition process will **not** involve a dance call.

While your audition should only take 5-10 minutes, please plan to arrive ~10 minutes before your expected audition time to fill out an audition form.

Auditions will be held in the **Hopper Cabaret**, unless otherwise specified.

What songs should I sing?

Tl;dr: Anything goes! We would love to hear a **contemporary musical theatre piece**, but the show and character is entirely up to you.

For the audition, bringing sheet music is required as our team would be happy to accompany you during your audition. With that said, if you cannot find sheet music (or don't know where to start looking), email Griffin Strout or Simon Rabinowitz in advance and they will be more than happy to track down sheet music for any song of your choice!

We will be discussing the preparation of a 1-2min cut at our audition workshop, but if you have any questions/concerns about preparing your audition cut please contact Griffin or Simon.

Griffin Strout: griffin.strout@yale.edu

Simon Rabinowitz: simon.rabinowitz@yale.edu

AUDITIONS [MUSIC]

You may select any contemporary musical theater song. These examples are provided to give you a sense of the musical style we're looking for, though you're welcome to actually use them for your audition if you would prefer.

Sheet music for all of these songs can be found [here](#). Click on each song to listen.

- "[All to Pieces](#)" (*Violet*)
- "[I Resolve](#)" (*She Loves Me*)
- "[I Don't Need a Roof](#)" (*Big Fish*)
- "[Astonishing](#)" (*Little Women*)
- "[Freeze Your Brain](#)" (*Heathers*)
- "[Run Away With Me](#)" (*The Unauthorized Autobiography of Samantha Brown*)
- "[Sailing](#)" (*A New Brain*)
- "[Favorite Places](#)" (*Ordinary Days*)

AUDITIONS [SIDES]

What are sides?

A side is a small portion of lines from the script that we use to get a sense of your acting style. While you can choose a side specific to a character you would like to audition for, it is not a requirement – the side you prepare will not affect the characters you will be considered for, so choose whichever character you like best!

Since these sides are dialogues between two people rather than monologues, there will be a **reader** in the audition room to read the other character's lines. You can choose to read either character in any of the sides. If you're reading for Bob or Brenda, you may choose any of the sides that feature each character.

Links to the sides are included below, and hard copies will be provided both in the audition workshop and at your audition.

SIDES	<u>Brenda / Bob 1</u>
<u>Brenda / Bob 2</u>	<u>Rich / Bob</u>
<u>Crenshaw / Bob</u>	<u>Stuart / Bob</u>

CALLBACKS

What are callbacks?

Callbacks are an additional opportunity for the prod team to get you know you better as a vocalist and performer. Unlike auditions, callbacks are specific to a single character, and are aimed at seeing how you embody that part. During callbacks, we will ask to see three things:

1. A small cut of a song the character sings in the show
2. A cold read
3. Reading a scene alongside other actors (Depending on the part)

NOTE: We will not be holding callbacks for every role. In light of this, please do not view the presence/absence of a callback as reflective of your chances of being cast in the show!

What is a cold read?

A cold read is a short excerpt of the script that, unlike the side, you don't receive in advance. It's called "cold" because of the lack of preparation, and gives us a good chance to see how you work with the director to develop the scene. Because we know cold reads can be nerve-wracking for new actors, we will be emailing cold read excerpts along with callback notifications. This way, you will receive them 1-2 days before your callback. For certain roles, we may also ask you to do a scene with another actor who is auditioning (e.g. Bob and Brenda, Stuart and Crenshaw, Bob and Rich...) These group auditions are purely for your benefit, as they give us an opportunity to see how well you can interact with & respond to others, while also making it easier for you to feel engaged in the scene (compared to during auditions where you're interacting with a reader who is sitting behind the audition desk).

CALLBACKS

What should I prepare?

The only thing to prepare for callbacks is a small vocal cut for your character, which will be sent out as part of your callback notification. As mentioned earlier, please feel free to also select any of these cuts to use in your audition if you are struggling to find a 1-2min piece! Again, no memorization is required, and sheet music will be provided in your audition.

AND THAT'S IT!

That's all you need to know to rock your audition! If you have any additional questions please don't hesitate to contact our director Bibiana and our producers Simon and Malia.

Break a leg! We're looking forward to seeing you!