



KMC Onstage Understudy Policy
3 April 2024

1. The mission of KMC Onstage is to enhance and enrich the lives of all community members within the Kaiserslautern Military Community by providing high quality live theatre entertainment, arts education, and volunteer opportunities that offer individuals the chance to grow, develop life skills, and find a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive creative community.
 - a. Volunteers, especially within a military community, may have conflicts due to illness, injury, short-notice duty and other emergencies. These conflicts may be known in advance, or they may arise at any time during the rehearsal or performance process.
 - b. The implications for a volunteer's inability to perform as a cast member in a KMC Onstage production are far-reaching and negatively impact the program in the following ways:
 - i. Loss of adequate rehearsal time for volunteer and other cast members resulting in lower-quality performances.
 - ii. Loss of ticket sales revenue due to cancellation of performances when a cast member cannot perform.

2. Understudies/Swings: The use of understudies/swings should be cast, especially when active duty service members are cast.
 - a. "Principal" is defined as the primary actor cast in a role.
 - b. "Understudy" is defined as an actor who prepares for a single role in a production, and is fully capable of assuming that role when the principal is unavailable to perform.
 - c. "Swing" is defined as an actor who prepares to cover multiple roles in a production and is fully capable of assuming any of their assigned roles when the principal is unavailable to perform.
 - d. Special categories. The following are special categories for understudies/swings.
 - i. KMC Onstage staff is appointed understudy/swing as an emergency backup plan *with NO scheduled performances in the principal role.*
 - ii. A member of the production team (director, choreographer, fight choreographer, etc) is appointed understudy/swing as an emergency backup plan *with NO scheduled performances in the principal role.*

When an understudy/swing is appointed from one of these categories, the following conditions apply:

 - iii. Minimal rehearsals. Understudy/swing rehearsals may be minimized to the comfort level of the understudy/swing, principal, and director. KMC Onstage staff are expected to have the professional training to be able to step in with less preparation time than a community volunteer. Production team members will already be at rehearsals fulfilling their main duties, and are also expected to know the material well enough to step in if needed. ***It remains the responsibility of the director, stage manager,***



and understudy/swing to ensure that there is adequate rehearsal time to prepare in case of an emergency performance.

- iv. Minimal recognition. Special category understudy/swings will not be noted in published cast lists or playbills as cast members. They will be recognized in pre-show announcements and on social media ONLY for performances when they perform in a role when the principal is unavailable.
3. Responsibilities.
- a. The understudy/swing has the following responsibilities:
 - i. An understudy/swing is expected to attend all rehearsals for the principal role, in addition to any ensemble rehearsals for which they may be called.
 - ii. An understudy/swing must write down and memorize all lines, blocking, choreography, and music notes for the principal role.
 - iii. An understudy/swing is expected to stand in for the principal in the event of a principal missing rehearsal for a planned or emergency conflict.
 - iv. An understudy/swing is considered a full member of the production cast and must be included in all cast activities, including strike, promotional performances, and communications regarding principal role characters.
 - b. The director and stage manager are responsible for ensuring the understudy/swing receives adequate, productive rehearsal time, guidance, and communication to fulfill their duties. A minimum of two working understudy/swing rehearsals MUST be included in rehearsal schedules between completion of blocking and tech week. Director and stage manager are responsible for ensuring understudies/swings' time is respected as valued cast members.
 - c. Directors, production team, ensemble, and principal actors are responsible for treating ALL understudy/swings (including those in special categories) with respect, courtesy, and professional etiquette as valued fellow team members.
4. When an understudy is cast in a KMC Onstage production, out of respect for the significant volunteer workload, the understudy will be given the opportunity to perform at least one elective scheduled performance in the role.
- a. The understudy and principal actors need to be made aware of this when offered the role, and plans for which performance will be the understudy's should be made as soon as possible, with the principal's preference for date taken into consideration. Final decision on understudy dates lies with the director.
 - b. The understudy may elect to decline a performance opportunity *if the principal is capable of performing in all performances and the understudy prefers not to take a scheduled performance.*
 - c. The understudy will perform in the case of any emergency or short-notice unavailability of the principal.



5. Understudies and swings MUST be given adequate rehearsal time to prepare for the role, and it is the director's responsibility to build this time into the rehearsal schedule.
 - a. Between completion of blocking and tech week, at least two understudy/swing rehearsals must be scheduled.
 - b. Understudies/swings must be allowed one full dress/tech run rehearsal with photo call the week prior to their scheduled performances (tech week or brushup rehearsal).
 - c. Understudies/swings are expected to be prepared to assume the role in the event of any unexpected absence of the principal.

6. Swings are typically cast from within the ensemble (although not always), and cover multiple roles (often understudying an understudy and/or covering all male-presenting or all female-presenting characters).
 - a. Swings *may be offered a principal performance* if it serves the production and is comfortable for the swing and the cast. The decision about whether a swing will step in to cover a role in a performance is made collaboratively among the swing, the actor they would be replacing, and the director and production team. Swings are not generally scheduled to cover principal roles if the principal is available for all performances.
 - b. Swings may elect to decline a performance opportunity *if the principal is capable of performing in all performances and the swing prefers not to take a scheduled performance*.
 - c. In the case when a swing will cover a role in a scheduled performance, swings must be allowed one full run rehearsal the week prior to their scheduled performances (tech week or brushup rehearsal).
 - d. In the case of an emergency or short-notice swing performance, all possible effort should be made for the swing to rehearse the role prior to the performance.

7. Recognition. Understudies/swings as KMC Onstage volunteers must log their hours in VMIS and will be eligible for official volunteer recognition programs and awards through KMC Onstage, MWR, and USAG Rheinland-Pfalz.
 - a. Understudies and swings will be noted in the published cast list and show program.
 - b. ALL understudies/swings who perform in principal roles will be recognized the day of their performances by name in pre-show announcements and on the KMC Onstage social media accounts.
 - c. Understudies/swings EXCEPT those in Special Categories will be eligible for project volunteer production team comp tickets under the KMC Onstage Complimentary Tickets Policy. As production team members, they may attend any performance of the show at no cost to ensure quality control, and they are also entitled to two complimentary tickets to a single performance of the show.