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Thursday, May 10, 2007

## How to Start Acting Up (on a stage)

Contributed By [Laura Peebles](#) | [Acting Up](#)

Part 3 of 4: Rehearsals

In parts 1 and 2 of this series, we learned about Eben Franckewitz. Eben is a 10 year old boy from Loveland, who auditioned and got the role of a storyteller in Acting Up's latest community theatre presentation, the Caribbean-flavored, Tony award nominated production, "Once on This Island". Acting Up cast approximately 60 young performers ages 6-18 in this musical. Eben is in 5th grade and is home schooled, but the cast comes from 30 different schools all over the Cincinnati area, from as far away as Springboro, Oxford and Bethel-Tate.

The musical was set to open May 11th at the Mason High School Theater, which was only 10 weeks after auditions. Since Acting Up has no permanent rehearsal space, they rehearse at different locations around Mason. For "Once on This Island," rehearsals were held at Western Row Elementary, Royalmont Academy, and Just for Kicks Dance Academy.

At the first rehearsal, the young performers had their picture taken for the playbill and had their measurements taken for costumes. Next, they had a "read through" of the script where everyone learns the story and who has what lines. Meanwhile the parents learned what was expected. For example, Acting Up is an all-volunteer organization and expects the parents to work on various committees such as creating costumes or building sets or shopping for various supplies.

Rehearsals were scheduled to allow plenty of time for Eben to complete his school assignments and participate in gymnastics. During rehearsals, they all learned their lines and the songs with the musical director Nick Washington, a fifth grade teacher at Mason Intermediate School. "Once on This Island" is a heavily vocal show with beautiful harmonies. The group of kids that were picked as the storytellers all harmonized very nicely together, even from the beginning; though Mr. Washington worked them hard so they were all on the correct notes. Then the director and choreographer, Arlene Borock, a teacher at Mason High School, along with her assistant, Megan Kelley, a Mason High School Sophomore, taught them the movements and dances that accompany the songs. They learned 1 or 2 songs at each rehearsal.

All of the young actors got to write a bio for the playbill. It was exciting to have all of the kids' pictures and biographies in the book.

"Once on This Island" is being produced with a live orchestra. The music is being provided by the Ohio Metropolitan Theatre Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Benjamin Price. Since the young cast had been rehearsing to only piano accompaniment and a CD, practicing to the live Caribbean beat of the drums and other music was a little different. The group found that live music is more flexible than having a CD and more fun!

As the costumes were being fitted and the sets were being built, excitement started to build among the cast members. Finally, they had learned the entire musical with all actors from the 6 year olds to the 18 year olds. Each actor brought their own little piece of interest to the "island."

Performances of "Once on This Island" will be held 7 pm Friday, May 11; at 1 pm and 7 pm Saturday, May 12; and at 1 pm Sunday, May 13. Tickets are \$8 each and are available online at [www.ActingUp.com](http://www.ActingUp.com). For more info call 513-588-0988.

Part 4: Opening Night



Eben Franckewitz (middle-Loveland) with "Island" castmates Abby Docherty, Tess Hogan and Emily Kissela

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