

## MAD's Mary Poppins Frequently Asked Questions

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## What is MAD?

MAD is NASA – Goddard Space Flight Center’s Music and Drama Club. It is a part of the Goddard Employee’s Welfare Association (GEWA). It is also a non-profit 501c3 organization. MAD puts on up to three to four shows per year, including a large-cast musical in the fall, a holiday music concert, a drama, comedy or small-cast musical in the winter or spring and a variety show in the spring or summer. MAD has put on shows every year since 1970. During the pandemic, MAD did six online shows over Zoom and YouTube; the videos are still viewable through MAD’s website.

## What is MAD doing this fall?

The MAD fall musical show for 2024 is *Mary Poppins*. It will be performed in Goddard's Barney and Bea Recreation Center, with 12 performances November 1-23, 2024. The theater seats about 80 people.

## What is Mary Poppins?

Mary Poppins was originally a series of books written in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1964, stories from the books were made into a Disney movie, starring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke, which remains one of the most popular movies of all time. In 2004, the movie was made into a Broadway play. The play has many of the same songs as the movie, with some additional material and some different scenes. The play also includes some story lines from the books that are not part of the movie.

## What does the contract require us to say about the play?

Mary Poppins is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)

## Where can I find the Audition announcement and the forms?

The Audition announcement is here: <https://madtheater.org/news/auditions-for-mary-poppins/>

The Audition form is here: <https://forms.gle/DM7z8MFk1pwusz7U9>

The Conflict form is here: <https://forms.gle/pgHbD5HRCdb5ouP7A>

## Who can participate?

Civil servant and contractor badged employees, who work at Goddard or NASA HQ, plus their spouses and dependent children, are automatically members of the club. In addition, MAD has "Non-Voting Members" (NVMs), who are people that have met certain participation criteria, and "Guest" participants. Members and NVMs are given preference for lead and feature parts. Guest participants in their first MAD show are considered for ensemble, chorus, and other small roles. Guests are not allowed to displace members from participation, but sometimes Guests are cast in lead or feature roles if there aren't enough members who can do them all. After participating in one show, Guests can then become NVMs by application. See the MAD website for more details about the eligibility rules, and NVM status.

## What parts are needed?

Please see the audition announcement. *Mary Poppins* has leads, features and an expandable chorus. Both adults and children are needed. One of the goals of the MAD club, and of this show, is to be inclusive, and the expandable chorus means that we can include people of all abilities and skill levels, from beginner to expert. We expect to double cast most of the roles (see below), which provides the opportunity for more people to participate.

## How can I get access to the audition material?

The audition material is posted on the MAD website: <http://www.madtheater.org/>, in the Member Services section, which is password protected. For access, contact Director Jon Gardner at [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com). The audition material consists of selections from the songs, a video of a

dance, and short selections from the script, called “sides.” These materials are provided for you to prepare and practice in advance for the auditions. You will have a better audition if you practice in advance, but you do not need to memorize anything. We will request that you fill in the audition form before we give you access to the audition material, so that we know you are a real person and not an Internet robot.

### **Neither I nor any members of my family are NASA employees – can I audition?**

*Mary Poppins* welcomes Guest participants in the show. There is some restriction on casting; in particular, Guest participants are not allowed to displace members from participation. See above for details.

### **How do I get into Goddard for auditions?**

There are three days of auditions; Sunday, July 14 will be inside the gate, and people will need a badge to audition on that day. Auditions on Monday, July 15 and Tuesday, July 16, will be in the Goddard Visitor Center, and a badge is not needed. It is now too late to get a 1-day badge for the Sunday auditions, so if you don't already have a badge, you should plan to come on Monday or Tuesday.

### **How do I get into Goddard for rehearsals?**

NASA – Goddard is a secure facility and to enter through the gate, everyone 16 or older needs a badge. Children under 16 don't need a badge, but do need to enter with an adult that has a badge. In order to participate in the show, you will need to undergo a background check and be fingerprinted so that you can get a Goddard temporary badge that will allow you to come to the rehearsals and performances. To be fingerprinted and to pick up your badge, you will need to make an appointment to come to Goddard during the day on a weekday. Children under 16 do not need a badge themselves, but their parent, guardian or transportation person should get a temporary badge so that they can bring the child to the rehearsals. If you are not a US citizen or greencard holder, it might take longer to get a badge, or may be impossible. You will not be allowed to participate in the play if you are unable to obtain a Goddard temporary badge or are unwilling or unable to participate in the security process. To get started on the badging process, send an email to [badges@madtheater.org](mailto:badges@madtheater.org).

### **Is there anything else I should know about access to Goddard?**

NASA Goddard is a secure United States federal government facility. While at Goddard, you implicitly agree that you or your car may be searched by Security at any time including on entrance and exit. While on the Goddard grounds, you are required to follow Goddard's rules concerning appropriate behavior. If you use the Goddard wireless Internet guest network, all of your keystrokes and mouse clicks will be scanned for inappropriate use. Failure to follow Goddard's rules could result in removal from the Center and/or from participation in MAD.

### **Will everyone who auditions get a part?**

MAD is a club that encourages participation and *Mary Poppins* includes an expandable ensemble. So there is lots of opportunity for participation. Nonetheless, it is possible that you won't be offered a part in the play, especially if you have restrictions on your schedule or your willingness to be in the ensemble.

## **What is double casting?**

Traditionally, MAD often uses double casting, in which two people are cast for the same role. The two people participate jointly in the early rehearsals, learning the songs, dances and lines. During the later rehearsals, and for the performances, only one person will perform at a time. Double casting allows for more people to participate in the play, and also allows people with performance conflicts to participate. Actors in double-cast roles will perform 6 times each. MAD does not distinguish between the two individuals; there is not an “A” cast and a “B” cast, nor is there a “lead” and “understudy”. Instead, the double cast actors are treated equally, and who is on that night changes from night to night. Normally, MAD uses the same full cast on Opening Night, Friday, November 1, and Friday, November 22, and the other cast on Saturday, November 2 and Closing Night, Saturday, November 23. Thus each person performs either on Opening Night or on Closing Night, but not both. Double casting also allows each person to be the understudy for their counterpart, and to the extent possible should keep their schedule open to step in at the last minute for their counterpart. Double casting sounds complicated, but it will become clearer as you see it in action; all you really need to know is your own rehearsal and performance schedule.

## **Where are the rehearsals and performances?**

Rehearsals will take place on the campus of the Goddard Space Flight Center. Read-through will be in Building 34, room W150. Early rehearsals will be in the Building 3 auditorium. Later rehearsals will be in the Building 28 atrium. Tech week and the performances will be in the Barney & Bea Recreation Center.

## **When are rehearsals?**

Rehearsals will start with read-through on Sunday, August 18, 2024. Rehearsals will be in the evenings on Monday through Thursday. It is possible that we may add additional rehearsals on Saturday or Sunday afternoons, either to avoid scheduling conflicts, or to spread out the rehearsal time. We will make an effort not to call anyone for more than four rehearsals per week. The final schedule will be arranged around the conflicts of the cast and the artistic staff. Individual actors will be called between 1 and 4 days each week, depending on their part and how close we are to opening. The rehearsal schedule will be handed out at the read-through. It is expected that most evening rehearsals will be from 7:00 to 10:00pm. Full runs may go later, and call time during tech week might be earlier.

## **I have never been in a play or performed on stage – can I audition?**

Yes, we would love to have you come to the auditions. Experience and ability will be selection factors for the lead roles, but there are roles appropriate for beginners. MAD is a club that is very welcoming to people of all levels of ability and experience. Double casting also provides a great learning experience.

## **I am a professional actor/singer/dancer – can I participate?**

Yes, all are welcome. However, all roles are unpaid and non-union. The goals of the MAD club, and this play, are to be inclusive and to provide opportunities to participate. Those goals can sometimes override the goal of putting on the best possible performance. This is a community theater, and MAD is a club; if you are looking for a high-level semi-professional production, you might be happier looking elsewhere.

## **What happens at the auditions?**

You should fill in the audition form and conflict form online in advance. You should come on time at the start time. When you arrive, we will check that your online forms are complete, and take your picture. We will divide everyone into two groups. One group will start with the singing; we'll do a group warm-up, and then sing Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious with everyone in the group. We will determine each person's vocal range individually. If you are auditioning only for the ensemble, you are now done with singing. If you would like any other part, you will sing a song you have prepared, from the list on the member's site. Please prepare to sing just one song, even if you might be interested in more than one possible part. Choose a song that best fits your singing ability. If you are called back, it is possible that you will be asked to prepare and sing a second song.

The other group will learn the short dance in the video, and perform it with a group. If you wish, you can learn a more complicated dance and perform that as a solo, or perhaps in a small group. When everyone has either sung or danced, we will swap the two groups and go through it all again.

After everyone has both sung and danced, we will read short scenes from the play, called "sides." You will be given the opportunity to read for any parts you are specifically interested in. You may also be asked to read additional parts by the Director. The sides are available on the member's site; it is helpful to prepare them in advance. Don't forget to act – don't just read the sides, act them out. It is possible that the Director might ask you to read a side again, perhaps doing something differently. That is a test of your acting ability, and your ability to take direction. However, that kind of thing is more likely to happen at callbacks.

## **What are callbacks?**

You may get called back for a second audition. We won't necessarily call back all parts; we will only call you back if we have not yet seen enough to make the casting decisions. If you don't get called back, that doesn't mean that you won't get a part, it just means that we have seen enough in the first audition to make a decision about you. Call backs might include reading some different or longer scenes than the initial auditions. During callbacks, you may be asked to sing a different song from the one you sang in your first audition.

## **When are the auditions?**

Auditions are Sunday, July 14 at 2pm, Monday, July 15 at 7pm, and Tuesday, July 16 at 7pm. The auditions on Sunday, July 14 are in the building 3 auditorium, which is through security, and therefore are primarily for people who already have a NASA, Goddard or MAD badge. Monday and Tuesday, July 15 and 16 are at the Goddard Visitor's Center and you do not need a badge. Please try to come on time. If you must come late, you may end up auditioning after everyone else. You should only come to one of the three days. You may get called back for a second audition on Thursday, July 18 at 7:00pm.

## **Three audition dates are listed; do I need to come to all of them?**

No, you should come to only one of the audition dates listed.

### **There are multiple songs listed; should I prepare all of them?**

No, you will be asked to sing one song, of your choice, from the list of song excerpts. Choose a song that best fits your voice and showcases what you can sing, regardless of which part you particularly want to audition for. If you are unsure of which song to sing, prepare “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” If you are called back, we may ask you to prepare a different song.

### **Do I need to prepare to dance the dance in the video?**

You are welcome to practice it at home, but you do not have to. At the auditions, our choreographer or her assistant will teach the dance in the video. Everyone will be asked to dance in a group. Even if you think you are not very good at dancing, please just do your best, and we will see what you can do. However, if you have a disability, or are otherwise physically unable to attempt a dance, then you will not have to dance at the auditions.

If you have dance training in tap, ballet, jazz, or musical theater dancing, and if you wish to attempt a more complicated dance, you will also be given a chance to do that at the auditions. Please bring your dance shoes, including tap shoes if you have them! Our choreographer will work with you on additional choreography, and you will be able to demonstrate what you can do in a solo or small group audition.

### **What should I wear to auditions? What should I bring?**

Please wear informal, loose-fitting clothing that allows you to move during the dance part of the auditions. Bring dance shoes if you have them; otherwise wear comfortable, closed-toe shoes. Do not wear sandals or Crocs. You may wish to bring a water bottle. We will have printed copies of the audition materials to use during the auditions, but if you want to practice while other people are auditioning, you might want to print or bring your own copies. Do not try to bring costumes or props to the auditions.

### **I can't come to the auditions; can I audition early?**

If you wish to audition and cannot come to any of the audition nights, contact Director Jon Gardner at [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com).

### **Can I audition late?**

Casting of lead and feature parts is expected to take place immediately after auditions. However, if you miss the auditions, it might still be possible to participate in some way. Contact Director Jon Gardner at [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com).

### **When will I know what part I am offered?**

We expect to cast the lead and feature roles right after callbacks, and those actors should be contacted and notified of their parts within a few days after callbacks. Other actors will be invited to participate in the play's ensemble. The assignment of specific roles within the ensemble will be announced no later than the read-through.

### **What if I don't like the part I am offered or I don't want to be in the ensemble?**

This play has a large number of ensemble parts. The expandable ensemble includes singing and dancing in the chorus songs, as well as multiple characters with a few spoken lines. Everyone in the cast is going

to have fun with this play, and we hope to communicate that sense of fun to the audience. There is a place on the audition form to indicate roles that you would not accept, and you will not be offered those roles. Casting is a matter of finding the best combination of actors and roles so that the whole cast works well together. It is not just a matter of giving the best actor the biggest part. If you are disappointed in the role you are offered, we hope that you are willing to accept the disappointment and still do your best in the role. In the end, however, casting is not a negotiation; your only options are to accept the part or drop out of the play.

### **What does the ensemble do?**

The ensemble is going to be a lot of fun, with a lot of stage time! If you get a lead or feature, that is fine, you'll have fun doing that part. But if you end up in the ensemble, you will discover the secret to this show, which is that the ensemble has more stage time than some of the features, and will get to be part of many of the iconic songs, like Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Jolly Holiday, and Let's Go Fly a Kite. Not to mention Step in Time, in which many from the ensemble will be tap-dancing chimney sweeps. The ensemble will work hard, but it will be very rewarding! Note that not everyone in the ensemble will be in every chorus song.

### **How many times will I be called for rehearsal?**

Rehearsal will run from Sunday, August 18 through opening night: Friday, November 1. We expect to schedule rehearsals 4 days per week. The number of times you are called in each week depends on your role, including both how much stage time your character has and also which songs and dances you are in. In the last couple weeks of rehearsal, when we start running the full play, you will be called for half the rehearsals if you are double cast and all of the rehearsals if you are single cast.

### **How late do the rehearsals go each night?**

During the blocking and scene-by-scene rehearsals, we will try to finish by 10:00pm. When we start doing full-play run-throughs, the rehearsals could go later, as will the performances themselves.

### **Will there be anything else that I need to do for the show?**

Putting on a show is a lot of work off-stage as well as on-stage. We will call work parties to build set pieces and props, and will recruit costume crew to make the costumes. "Move-in" to the theater area is a weekend when we assemble the stage and install the lights and sound. We will encourage the cast to come to help out.

### **When are the performances?**

The show runs 4 weekends, from November 1 to November 23, 2024. There are 12 shows: Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon matinees for the first three weekends, and Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings on the final weekend. The evening performances will start at 8:00pm and the Sunday matinees will start at 2:00pm; call times will be earlier. If you are double cast, you will do 6 of the 12 performances; if you are single cast, then you will do all 12 performances.



### **I have to miss some of the rehearsals – can I still be in the show?**

When you fill in the conflict form, you will list your conflicts with the rehearsal schedule. You can check your hard conflicts, your soft conflicts, or enter a message, such as “I expect to be 30 minutes late.” Missing a few rehearsals can usually be accommodated. Having a lot of rehearsal conflicts, may affect which role you are offered.

### **What is the difference between hard conflicts and soft conflicts?**

If you have a hard conflict, that means you cannot come to rehearsal that day. A soft conflict means that you have another activity that you would like to attend, but that you would give the show priority if you are called that night. When setting up the rehearsal schedule, we will accommodate the hard conflicts first, and then attempt to accommodate the soft conflicts. Partial conflicts are days when you would need to come late or leave early from the rehearsal.

### **I have to miss some of the performances – can I still be in the show?**

Yes. If you have tech week and/or performance conflicts, your part will be double cast, so that your counterpart can play the part when you are not there. It is possible that performance conflicts could affect which role you are offered.

### **Do I have to look like one of the characters to be in the show?**

No. Physical appearance is only one of many casting criteria; we will also use costumes, stage makeup and “suspension of disbelief” to help the actors portray the characters. People of all ages, races, ethnicities and genders are welcome to audition. People with disabilities are also welcome to audition.

### **Can I audition for a part when I am older or younger than the age of the character?**

Yes. The actor playing the part may be older or younger than the character, and you are welcome to audition. Age is just one of many criteria used in casting.

### **What about gender and gender identity?**

All genders and gender identities are welcome to audition for any part. In casting, your ability to portray the character on stage is more important than who you are. You are welcome to audition for any part that interests you. However, note that your vocal range and your ability to sing the solo parts is a criterion for casting.

If the name you use is different from your full legal name, you should put the name you use on the audition form; that is what we will call you and print in the program. You will need to provide your full legal name to Goddard Security during the badging process.

### **What if I have a disability?**

MAD is very committed to accommodating people with disabilities. People with disabilities are welcome to participate in MAD shows, and there are several active members who have visible and invisible disabilities. For example, an article about blind actors in a MAD show is on page 7 of:

<https://www.greenbeltnewsreview.com/issues/GNR20190321.pdf>.

To allow actors to prepare for auditions in advance, MAD provides audition materials in the members section of the website (see above). For access, contact Director Jon Gardner by email at [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com). If you need additional accommodations for the auditions, please contact the Director. If you will need accommodations for participation, those can also be discussed with the Director.

### **Are there named roles for children?**

Yes! The roles of Jane and Michael Banks are lead roles; these two characters are on stage during most of the play. They both have lines and solo singing. Nominally, Jane is 12 and Michael is 10. We may cast children or teens who are older or younger than the nominal ages in these roles. We may cast children who have a different gender or gender identity than the gender being portrayed.

### **Are there other roles for children?**

Children who are not cast as Jane or Michael will be cast in the ensemble, where they will play park walkers, kite flyers, chimney sweeps and stars. Teens over 16 may be considered for the adult roles. The featured dancer roles of Neleus and Valentine could be played by either teens or adults; a pre-teen child who is a good dancer may be considered for a featured dancer role.

### **Can very young children audition?**

The ability of young children to participate depends on the child. Some children are committed to acting and understand what they are asked to do, while other children are not as focused. At the auditions, young children will need to demonstrate that they can follow instructions and perform independently. In some cases the child may simply be too young to be cast. If you are concerned, you should discuss your situation with Director Jon Gardner at 301-938-3253, [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com). Children aged 10 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult to all rehearsals and performances; the responsible adult can be in the show.

### **What are my responsibilities as an actor?**

Maintain a positive and cooperative attitude and play your role to the best of your ability. Participate fully in the rehearsals. Learn your lines and practice your songs and dances outside of rehearsal. Come to rehearsals a little early so that you are prepared and be ready to start at the call time. Leave behind any outside business or concerns and concentrate on the play. Until costumes are added, you should come to rehearsal in comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that allows movement. Wear shoes that you can move in; do not wear Crocs or sandals. Tie back your hair so that it doesn't cover your face. Actors learn their lines and practice their songs and dances outside of the rehearsals, on their own time. Learn your lines as early as possible. Typically, you will be asked to be "off-book" by the third time your scenes are rehearsed, by about the third week of rehearsal. But sooner is better.

### **What are my responsibilities as a parent?**

As the parent of a child in the show, you should take responsibility for getting your child to rehearsals and performances on time, and being available to take them home when the rehearsals are done (even if the rehearsal ends early). Ensure that your child learns their lines: learning lines is done outside of rehearsal and is a responsibility of the actor. Help to ensure that your child is cooperative and maintains

a good attitude at all the rehearsals and performances. When your child has been cast in a play, you and your child have made a commitment to the other people in the company. For your child, participation in rehearsals and performances is a commitment and not a privilege, and should not be taken away as a punishment. Because of this commitment, rehearsals and performances are more important than homework! Children aged 10 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult to all rehearsals and performances; the responsible adult can be in the show.

### **What if I don't like my costume or I don't want to wear makeup?**

Putting on a show is a collaborative art form and everyone involved contributes to the interpretation. However, the collaborative group needs to portray a coherent vision of the story. The Director has the final authority over artistic decisions; the actors in any show have made an implicit agreement to take direction. This show includes statues and toys that come to life; costumes and makeup are important aspects. If you have reservations about the show, it is best to discuss them with the Director before accepting a part.

### **Will it cost me anything?**

Membership in MAD does not require any fees or dues, but there are some possible expenses:

- Each person in the cast will need to have their own personal makeup kit. For hygienic reasons we no longer share makeup, since the pandemic. A kit costs about \$35, and you will be given instructions on what to get and how to get it.
- The club will provide costumes. However, sometimes people provide pieces of their own costume that they purchase at thrift stores or from their own wardrobe.
- We expect to ask many of the cast members to supply black dress pants, a white dress shirt, and a black shirt from their own wardrobe.
- Many members of the cast will tap dance during the "Step in Time" song. If you do not already own tap shoes, you can purchase them from Amazon for under \$35.
- MAD will provide financial assistance for any participants who cannot afford to purchase their makeup kit, tap shoes or other costume pieces.
- Actors in the show will not be given comp tickets. Everyone watching the show must buy a ticket. People without tickets will not be allowed in the house during the performances. This includes parents of children in the cast, people providing transportation, etc.
- You may be asked to contribute to the cost of pizza at work sessions, backstage snacks, etc. Participation is optional.
- MAD's tradition is to hold several cast parties during the performance run; there is usually a suggested donation to help cover the costs of the parties. Attendance at the parties is optional.

MAD is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and donations are tax deductible, including monetary donations and donations of costume pieces, props, set pieces, etc.

## **I don't want to be on stage – is there any other way I can be involved with the show?**

Yes! There are lots of ways to get involved, such as helping with lighting, sound, sewing costumes, being a stage hand, publicity, helping with the house management, etc. Large shows like *Mary Poppins* often have as many people working off-stage as on. (Note that some positions may already be filled.)

## **What about the orchestra?**

*Mary Poppins* will use a live orchestra, directed by Susan Breon. Although most of the orchestra parts have already been filled, you are welcome to contact her at [susan.r.breon@nasa.gov](mailto:susan.r.breon@nasa.gov).

## **How do I buy tickets? How can I hear about future MAD shows?**

Performances will be 4 weekends from November 1 to 23. Tickets will go on sale in September at the MAD website: <https://madtheater.org/>. We expect this to be a popular show, and the performances might sell out, so check back early. From the MAD website, you can click on “Contact” or “Members – Join MAD” to get on our email lists to hear about *Mary Poppins* ticket sales and future shows.

## **I have a question not on this list – who can I ask?**

The Director of *Mary Poppins* is Jon Gardner, 240-960-2933, [jongreenbelt@yahoo.com](mailto:jongreenbelt@yahoo.com). Questions about the production can be directed to Dave Buckingham, 410-271-7852, [david.r.buckingham@nasa.gov](mailto:david.r.buckingham@nasa.gov).