



CONTESTANT BROCHURE

WEST
END
Calling

WEST END *Calling*

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WHO WE ARE



WHAT IS WEST END CALLING?

West End Calling is a registered charity in the UK. We offer a unique opportunity for young performers to gain audition and performance experience in our nationwide competition.

The competition includes a private audition, regional showcases and the Grand Final in London's West End! Throughout their time in the competition, contestants receive feedback from our panels of West End performers, and take part in workshops to develop their skills.

Registered charity no.1204485

MEET OUR FOUNDER

West End Calling was set up in 2016 by Alex James Ellison.

Alex is a West End performer, writer and creative who has worked extensively in the performing arts industry. He has recently finished in The Choir Of Man in the West End and is the writer of the musical *FIVER* which premiered at Southwark Playhouse, receiving a WhatsOnStage Award nomination for Best Off-West End Production. He has a BA (Hons) Degree from Mountview Academy Of Theatre Arts, and also attended The BRIT School.

Outside of West End Calling, Alex is involved with many youth theatre projects and runs workshops for upwards of a thousand young people each year.



Alex James Ellison



"What makes West End Calling unique, is that we provide a platform to learn through performance whilst also giving professional feedback and coaching. Gaining experience is a key way to build confidence and improve and this opportunity provides a safe space to put what you've learnt into practice."

Alex James Ellison
Creative Director



THE COMPETITION

HOW DOES THE COMPETITION WORK?

ROUND 1 - AUDITIONS

Contestants have an individual audition in front of our panel. This is set up like a professional audition and each contestant receives feedback on how they can improve.

ROUND 2 - REGIONAL HEATS

Each contestant performs in a live performance in a professional theatre. Our West End panel give feedback and decide who progresses through to the next stage. All of our shows are live streamed!

ROUND 3 - SEMI-FINALS

Each contestant performs again in London or Manchester for a spot in the Grand Final. In all our live shows, there is also an audience vote - we have our very own West End Calling Voting App!

ROUND 4 - GRAND FINAL

Our finalists perform again for our panel, this time on a West End stage! We have a variety of awards in each show including the Vocal Performance Award and the Rising Star Award.



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WHERE DO WE AUDITION?

Last year, we auditioned in 13 cities across the UK which we will be expanding this year! We then revisit select regional cities for the Regional Heats and Semi-Finals.

- ★ London
- ★ Manchester
- ★ Birmingham
- ★ Exeter
- ★ Bristol
- ★ Cardiff
- ★ Brighton
- ★ Leicester
- ★ Sheffield
- ★ Newcastle
- ★ Belfast
- ★ Norwich
- ★ Glasgow
- ★ Southampton



KEY BENEFITS



A contestant in a one to one workshop with West End performer Bronte Barbe.

At West End Calling, we believe we can have a real impact on young performers.

- **Performance Opportunities** - Contestants get to perform solos in front of live audiences in regional venues and in the West End.
- **Confidence Building** - Taking part helps young people grow in self-belief and stage presence through real performance experience.
- **Industry Connections** - A valuable chance to meet and network with industry professionals, mentors, and fellow performers.
- **Feedback & Workshops** - Expert feedback and skill-building workshops support personal and artistic development.
- **Professional Videos & Photos:** High-quality performance footage and industry standard headshots to support their portfolios and future opportunities.

PRIZES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the performance opportunities during the competition, our winners are awarded unique experiences designed to further support their training and career progression. Previous prizes have included:

- Recording and releasing an EP
- Performing at West End LIVE in Trafalgar Square
- Performing at Roles We'll Never Play at the Lyric Theatre
- Performing at 'West End Does: Christmas' at Cadogan Hall
- A place West End Stage theatre summer school
- A place on the Arts Ed Summer School
- A term at MX Masterclass
- Recording a Professional Single released on Spotify and streaming platforms.



Our Winners performing at West End Live and at The Lyric Theatre

AUDITION

The first round of the competition is the Audition round. Here you will perform for our panel of West End judges, accompanied by our musical director on the piano. You will receive feedback in the room which we also email out to you afterwards, along with a decision on whether you are through to the Heat round.

WHAT DO I NEED TO PREPARE?

In the Auditions, contestants are asked to prepare a 90 second 'audition cut' of a musical theatre style song. You will need to bring sheet music for the pianist and will talk through your tempos and any cuts before you sing.

WORKSHOPS

Every contestant will also have access to a group audition workshop, where they will learn audition technique and look at the best way to make the most in an audition. From selecting and preparing your sheet music, to the practicalities of speaking to the pianist, our guidance will instil confidence in all participants ahead of their audition.

We also have 1:1 workshops sessions available for those who want further support.



FAQS

What do I need to bring?

Remember to bring your sheet music and some water with you!

Can I warm up in the audition?

Just like in a real audition, we don't guarantee space to warm up so make sure you warm up before you come!

How long does it take?

Contestants can take part in an hour long workshop plus a 5 minute audition.

Can a parent watch the audition?

As this initial round is a private audition, parents are unable to watch. However, friends and family can watch the heats!

NEXT ROUNDS...

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THE HEATS

In the Heat round, performers are asked to prepare a 3 minute cut of a musical theatre style song. Much like the audition, they will perform to a panel of West End judges and receive feedback on their performance, but this time there will also be a public audience! These rounds will be performed to backing tracks.

These regional heats typically have 15-20 performers in each show and are grouped according to age where possible. The judges will select who goes through to the next round (the Semi-Finals) along with an audience vote for 1 person per show! You will find out if you are successful via email, after the event.

THE SEMI FINAL

The Semi-Finals give contestants a chance to perform again in London or Manchester alongside performers from other regions. Each show is split into age categories and live streamed. If successful in reaching the Semi-Final you will need to prepare a different song to your Heat performance.

Our panel will give more feedback and choose who to take through to the Grand Final. There will also be an audience vote for 1 performer per show.



THE GRAND FINAL

The Grand Final is held in a West End Theatre in London and is split into three shows, the Junior Final, the Teen Final and the Senior Final.

The top performers from each category perform to impress our judges and an audience made up of the public as well as an invited audience of agents, casting directors and industry professionals. Here we will crown our Winners and have various other awards in each show.

OUR JUDGES

A huge part of the unique West End Calling experience, are the incredible Judges we have on our panels.

Our panels are made up of experienced West End performers who give expert feedback and industry insight. In each round, contestants will perform to a different set of judges whose job it is to decide who progresses through to the next round.



JORDAN LUKE GAGE

(& Juliet, Bat Out Of Hell, Bonnie And Clyde)

"I've been on the Judging panel in many of the cities in the UK and the talent has been wonderful. It's amazing to see these kids and young adults growing in confidence and performance in each round of the competition. West End Calling is not only a fun and uplifting experience but it also helps prepare them for an industry in the arts if that is what they wish to explore."

LAUREN SAMUELS

(Wicked, We Will Rock You, Grease)

"I wish I'd had the opportunity as a young performer to experience something like West End Calling. It would have really helped me prepare for auditions in later life, and given me much needed advice from current working professionals to help further my training. It's an experience like no other!"



STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE

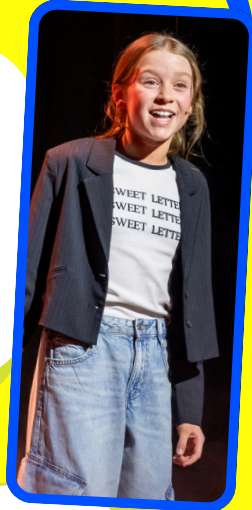
(Hamilton, The Lion King, Once On This Island)

"West End Calling offers a unique opportunity for brilliant young performers around the country to access West End calibre audition scenarios, performance experience, and professional feedback. I'm so proud to be part of a movement that is helping to de-mystify the pathways to professional musical theatre and make that information accessible to young performers from all walks of life!"

TESTIMONIALS

"I took part in the West End Calling competition earlier this year. I did the Newcastle Heats, then the Manchester Semi-Finals and then competed in the Finals in London. My outcome was second place which I was very happy with and my experience was great. It was a very friendly experience and everyone made me feel welcome. I recommend it to anyone so just give it a go!"

Fearne Lily King l'anson (2025 Junior Runner Up)



"West End Calling played a massive part in getting me where I am today. The whole West End Calling process instilled me with a much stronger confidence when performing, one which I am certain was a key aspect in successfully getting a place at drama school."

Connor Keetley, 2016 Contestant



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Suki Hillier winning the Junior Runner Up and playing Matilda in the West End.



ALUMNI SUCCESS

We are so proud to play a part in young people's professional theatre careers and provide a platform for them to be seen by Casting Directors and Agents. Contestants have gone on to work in jobs such as:

- Suki Hillier (2024 Junior Runner Up) - Matilda in *Matilda* (West End).
- Jessica Aubrey (2017 Senior Winner) - Elphaba in *Wicked* (West End).
- Layla Chivandire (2021 Senior Winner) - Catherine Parr in *Six* (UK and International Tour).
- Fearne Lily King l'Anson (2025 Junior Runner Up), Emmeline Walsh (2025 Junior Finalist), Eve Corbishley (2025 Teen Runner Up) and Florence Moluluo (2024 Junior Rising Star), Joel Tennant (2024 Junior Finalist) - UK Tour of *13 Going on 30*
- Harriet O'Shea (2025 Junior Winner) - Series Regular on *Hollyoaks*
- Aaron MacGregor (2024 Junior Winner) - Kensuke's *Kingdom*



AUDITION COSTS

As a charity, we aim to keep these opportunities as affordable as possible for the participants. The only mandatory cost is the one off £20 membership fee which allows you to audition as well as have access to our workshops.

ADD ONS

Headshots - £45

Group Workshops - £20

1:1 Workshops - £25

Hoodies - £30

Video of Performances - £20



BURSARIES

Bursary places can include:

- free entry to the competition
- free headshots, workshops, videos
- two tickets to allow family members/guardians to attend and support each show in which the student participates

Those who are eligible for a funded place may also request assistance with travel costs for themselves (and for a parent or guardian who accompanies them to the various stages of the competition).

The eligibility criteria for funded places are set out below. An applicant must meet at least one of the following:

- be currently in care
- be a full time carer for a parent or sibling
- be in receipt of free school meals
- live in a low income household



INCLUSIVITY

We recognise that as a charity working with young people, it is our responsibility to be inclusive and to not only welcome diversity but to actively seek it out. We do this by visiting regional cities for our auditions and by contacting local schools and community groups to encourage more sign ups. Our bursary scheme means that anyone can take part, no matter their financial situation. Since our first year beginning in just London, we are now actively bringing West End Calling to you in 15 regional cities to break down travel barriers for our young people.

Last year, **10% of applicants recieved bursaries** in order to compete.

We welcome all young people, regardless of social, political, religious and cultural background, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. For more details on how to apply for a bursary please visit our website.



ENTER THE COMPETITION

Visit our website

westendcalling.co.uk

