



MADISON
AUDITION
HUB



ACT I

Introduction

This past summer, while stage managing a show, I heard an interesting complaint by one of the auditioners: "Why does it seem that the same people at every audition?" I thought it was just because some performers are very passionate in wanting to do as many shows as they can, but as it turns out, actors feel they do not hear about some auditions, and production groups expressed frustration in attracting new talent to audition.

Through my research, I found that audition information is very much in the realm of "if you know, you know." There are several different sources used, from e-mail lists, to websites, to social media groups, and so on. The challenge is that if you are not on one of these sources, you can miss out, as my research showed that what production companies use to advertise auditions is far from consistent from company to company.

This gave birth to the idea of a centralized audition hub that is accessible by all, easy to use, and at the standards of today's web expectations. While there is the challenge of getting everyone to consistently use it, change always is, this project hopefully will simplify the process, as well as give access to current and new performers alike.

Therefore, for this project, we aim to answer this question:

How might we **simplify**
the audition process
to alleviate **stress** and
tedium performers
feel when seeking
performance opportunities
in the Madison region?



ACT III

Design Brief

Goals

1. This application will reduce the amount of time it takes for a theater company to create, post, and manage an audition event.
2. This application will deliver audition dates, times, and details to potential performers more comfortably and quickly than before.
3. This application will help make the process of the audition quicker by reducing the amount of in-person needs for registration.

Survey to the Community

Actors, where do you go to find out about auditions?

1. Facebook - 4
2. Theater Company's Website - 2
General Local Theater Website - 2
3. E-mail List - 1
Word of Mouth - 1

Production, where do you go to promote your auditions?

1. E-mail List - 4
Theater Location's Website - 4
Word of Mouth - 4
2. Theater Company's Website - 3
General Local Theater Website - 3
Facebook - 3

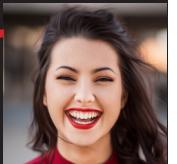
Personas

Bringing my two personas over from my design brief will be important. They represent two very different users that are both necessary for a successful product.



Mark, the actor

Mark is always trying to find auditions for but he won't act upon it until he knows specifically where to go for info. Once he has it, he's very proactive with that source. Mark didn't know how to get involved in Madison until he overheard two actors chatting about an upcoming audition. He found out about an e-mail list and a Facebook group that posts about upcoming auditions.



Alyssa, the stage manager

When producing, Alyssa needs to ensure all of her bases are covered. She needs to make sure that the theater company is posting to their website and e-mail lists about the audition. She also posts an even listing on Facebook and uses the RSVP numbers to determine how many people to expect. When Stage Managing, she greets auditioners as they arrive and collects their paperwork. She employs excel to organize the information and a notepad to track who has read for what parts and scenes already.

Please describe how you feel about the availability and accessibility of audition information in your area.

"Once you know where to go, such as madstage.com, it is relatively easy. I just don't think that all opportunities are posted there. And, on Facebook, if you are not a member of a group it is difficult to know all that is upcoming."

"Sometimes it takes some digging through to find the time or day or location."

"Having a central location where ALL theater companies post announcements, and use consistently, would be ideal. That would be a monumental achievement if it were to come to fruition."

What would you say is the most difficult part of filling out audition forms?

"Noting conflicts, especially if the rehearsal schedule starts a month or more after auditions"

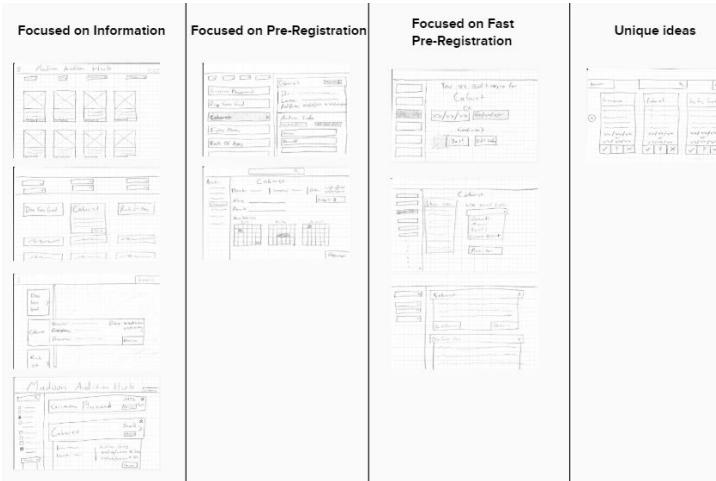
"Filling out conflicts"

"Duplicating info when auditioning for companies you have worked with before. I understand the purpose, but there has to be some mechanism for them to capture and keep the info so you don't have to reinvent the wheel."

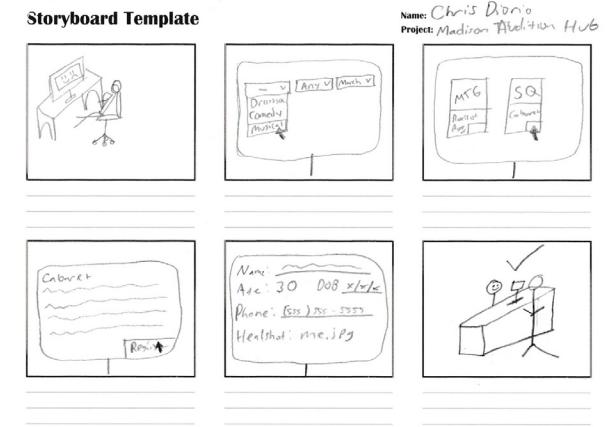
ACT III

Ideation

I began my iteration with my storyboard. I showed a situation of a user browsing online for an audition to attend. They find the website and enter in any relevant criteria. They find a show that interests them, clicks it for more info, and decides to pre-register for it. They then enter their information and submit. When the audition date arrives, they go to the location, where they are easily checked-in and ready to audition!



The idea that ended up succeeding the most is this one here. I ordered the page in a 4-column grid, easily displaying all the information right away. I chose this due to its clean layout, potential for visual expression, and simplistic enough to understand.



As part of the iteration process, I was able to categorize my sketches into four categories. The first was sketches focused on presenting information. Next was sketches focused on the concept of pre-registration. Then, we had sketches focused on the concept of fast pre-registration. Finally, we had sketches that were unique enough to not fall into any of the other categories.



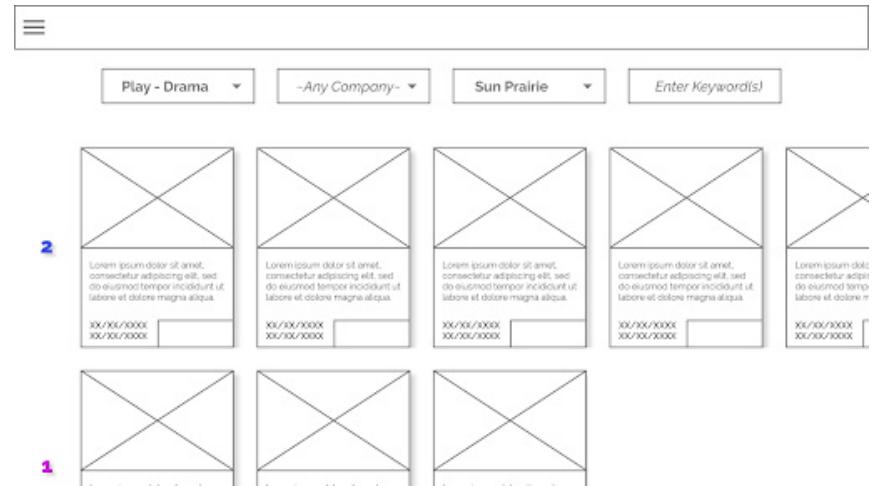
ACT IV

Visual and Interaction Design

Metaphor: The Poster

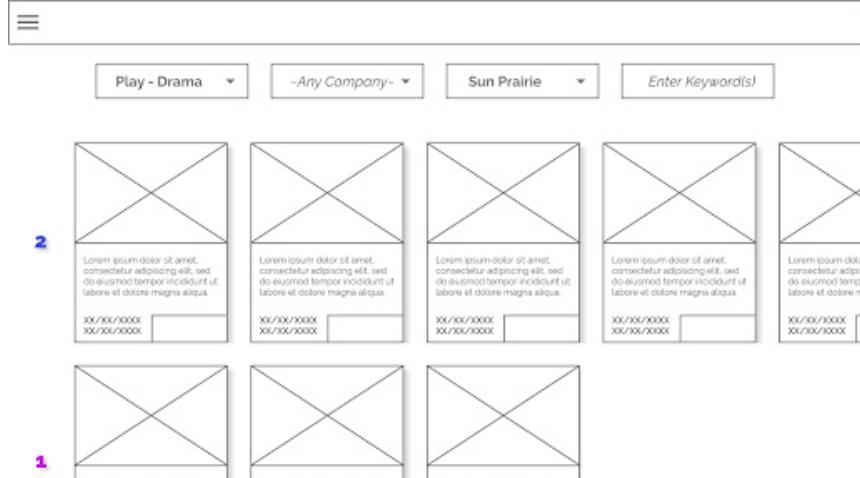


While “cards” can easily be used as a metaphor for my design, I’m choosing to go with the idea of “posters” instead. In terms of shape and look on the page, they are similar, but there is a major difference. While cards can contain any amount and type of information, posters try to be eye catching with specific elements: an appealing picture, the name of the show, and the dates the show will be taking place. While a poster might contain more information, such as the theatrical company putting on the show, the location, or a catchy tagline, the main elements of picture-title-date are the most prominent for this metaphor.

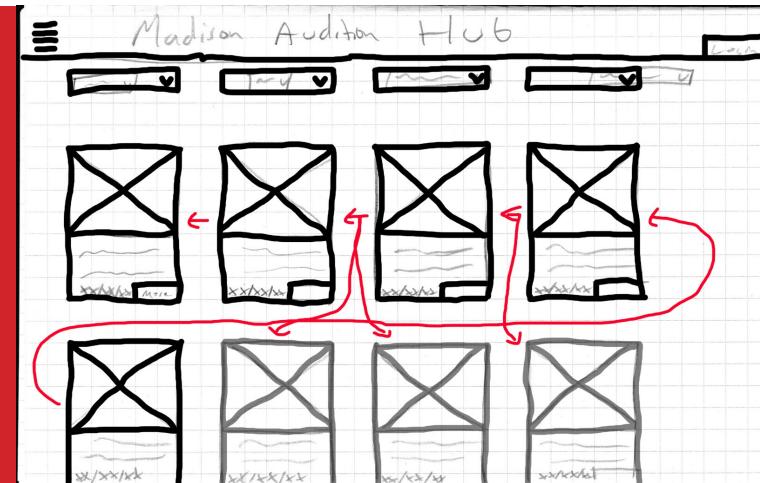


From my iterations, this was the metaphor I was employing and wish to continue with. I went a step further in my iteration and changed the description text to just show the title. When a user comes to the page, they will be presented with the three main elements of a poster: an eye-catching image, the show's name, and the dates of the audition. An action button to gain more information acts as part of the metaphor as if someone was walking past the poster, saw it and is intrigued, and walked up to it to read more.

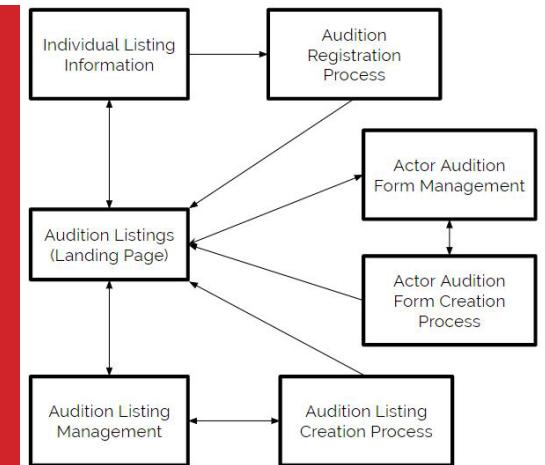
One of the design ideas I came up with dealt a lot with motion. With choreography and movement heavily used in productions, the idea of having the listings move on the page in a synchronized fashion to order themselves based on the criteria set would be pleasing. The idea was the more relevant listings would move to the top, followed by less relevant, and ending with the remainder of the listings.



The navigation model I created is a Multilevel model with each level having its own smaller Stepwise model within it, and each piece having an Escape Hatch back to the landing page. This is because each task has its own management setup with smaller tasks with it to be able to be completed. While the landing page cannot directly navigate to every part of each stepwise step, every step does have an escape route back to the landing page.



The other idea I had was based more on ordering, with each row containing listings that match a certain number of criteria, and the remainder of the listings at the bottom of the page. Having this broke the "grid" giving an interesting design element. The challenge here is giving information to the user about why things are being sorted in this way.

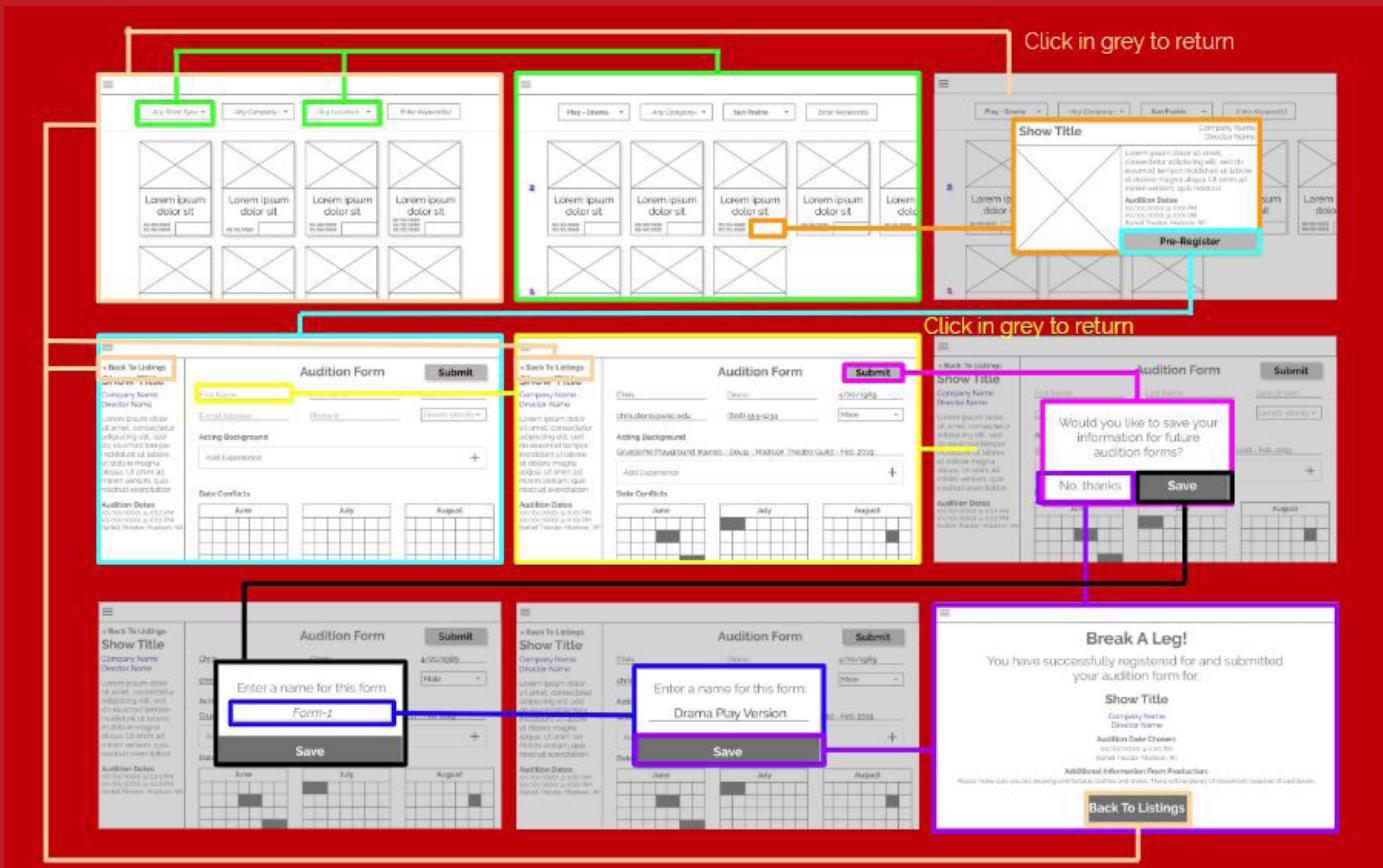




ACT V

Prototyping

Lo-Fi



The task I set up for my initial prototype was the process of registering for an audition. The steps in this process include:

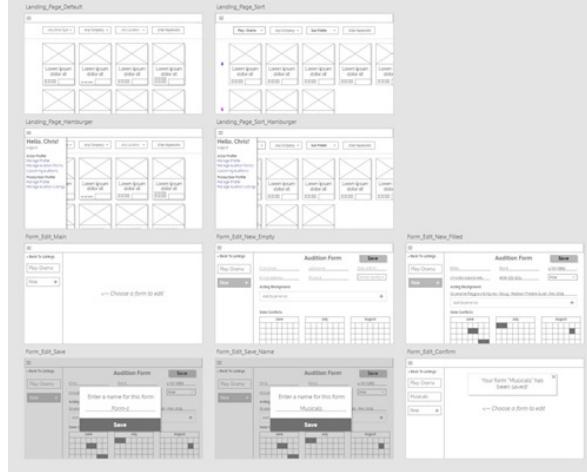
1. Look at audition listings
2. Filter audition listings
3. View audition listing and choose to pre-register
4. Fill out audition form info
5. Offer to save info for later use
6. Confirmation with details

Going through this exercise I had to think a lot about how I want to build this prototype. Since this task flow relies on the user entering in information, I decided to duplicate two of the screens to simulate pre- and post-entry. One finding I did make was how many chances I give the user to return back to previous screens. I decided to include the escape hatches back to the listings page as an additional step to make it as "natural" as possible. Figuring out how best to escape from the modal windows is the next thing to figure out, but for now I opted to use the "off the box" return method.

Hi-Fi

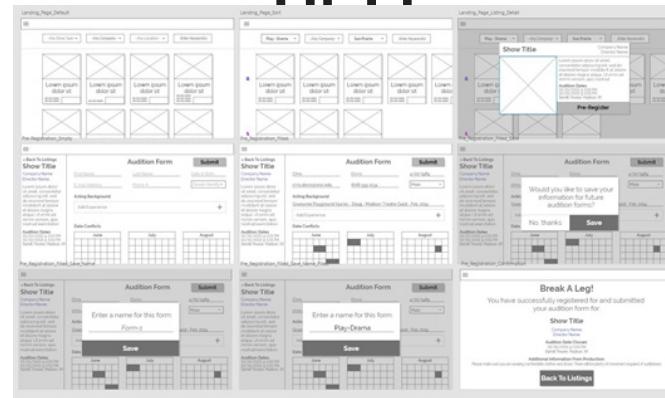
Create Form for Later

As the user is doing their registration, they see they can save the information for later usage. In this flow, I will take the user through the steps to find and manage their pre-made forms, and how they would create a new one.



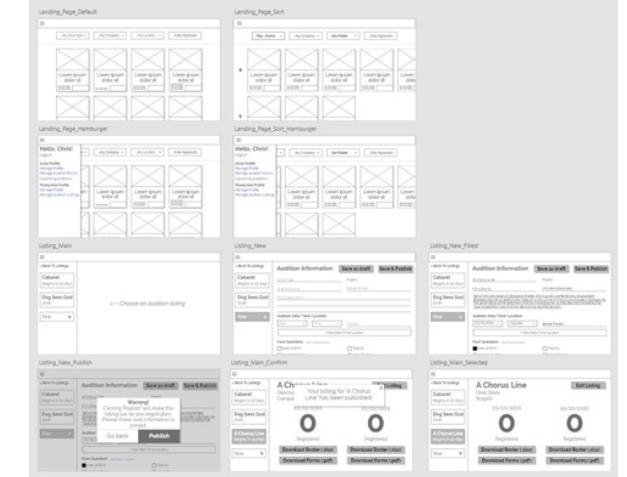
Searching and Pre-registering

The essential task flow here is to show how filtered results would look and to show the process of pre-registering for an audition. The flow of the prototype will take the user through finding and choosing to pre-register, the form to fill out, the option to save the form for later, and the confirmation screen.



Creating an Audition Listing

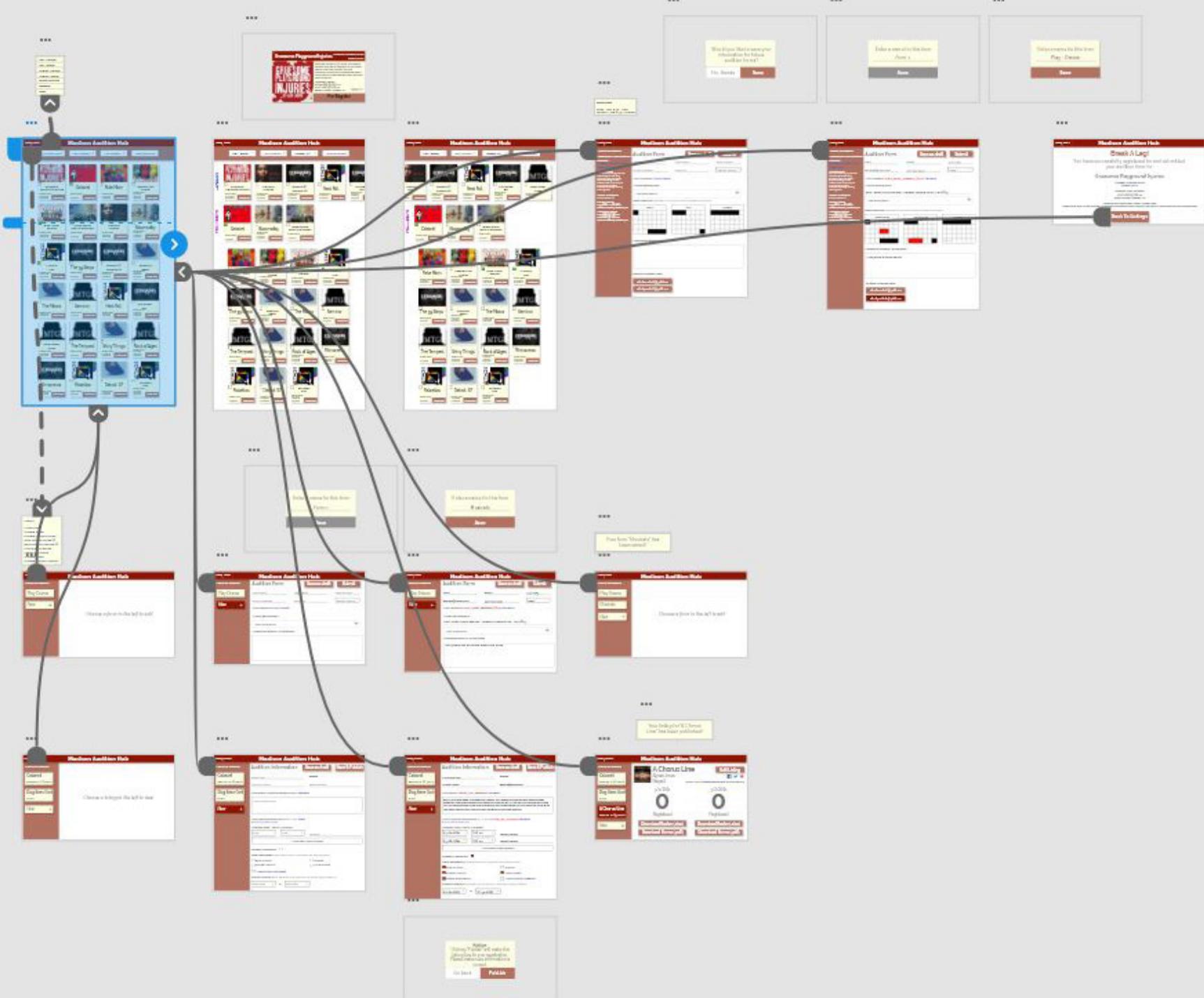
For users I test with whom are production team members or otherwise involved with audition management, I would like to show them the process of getting their listing on the site. I will take them through how to find their associated listings, create a new one, and the confirmation page, where they can see relevant statistics.



These were my three task flows for the prototype. Our performer users will use two of these tasks while our production team users will be using one. I made my prototype where I only need to disconnect one or two buttons depending on which type of user is testing. Some iterations from my Lo-Fi include:

1. I needed to add a "return to start" at most points.
2. I added steps to show the forms going from empty to filled out.
3. I added a way to get out of the dialogue boxes by clicking outside of the box.
4. I added opening the hamburger menu to both views of the landing page.
5. Since flow 1 and flow 2 lead into each other, I added a "completed form" to show the saved form from flow 1.

From my experience as a QA tester, I kept stopping at each screen and thinking, "what can the user end up doing here?" After figuring out the possibilities and removing anything out of scope, I linked those that would benefit the test, like returning to the landing page or backing out of a dialogue box. This process helped me realize the complexity of what I was building more so than before.



ACT VI

Evaluation

Testing Methodology - Tasks

- **Register for an audition** - The user will step through the process of finding an audition listing, filling out the required information, and submitting their registration.
- **Create pre-saved audition information** - The user will step through the process of finding their profile widget, finding where to find their audition forms, and creating and saving a new form for future use
- **Publish an audition listing** - The user will step through the process of finding their profile widget, finding where to find their audition listings, creating and publishing a new listing, and viewing their listing's dashboard.

Study protocol can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3fZNTC>

Findings

The test went really smoothly and the tester delivered a lot of great feedback and confirmations of my application. On the main page, my tester stated how the images and important links stood out, making what they were looking at very understandable. They also mentioned that they liked how the filter boxes were bigger than normal and bolden. This helped draw their eye to understand what they are for. On the topic of filtering, the way the results were getting filtered was completely missed.

For both forms, the tester mentioned the page felt busy, but still clean and straightforward. This is due to the large amount of information that needs to be collected. This was also where I found I stepped too deep into the "theater people will understand this" mindset, as the tester pointed out I could use more descriptive text or tool tips to convey what each item is requiring of the user.

Regardless, the tester states that I am on the right track and that the site is really enjoyable and usable, with a very clean interface. I can be better and adding more descriptive text, and hopefully make the form pages less overwhelming, as that is part of my goal to relieve the stress of auditions.

I asked the tester for additional feedback on what they feel can also be added to this application. One really interesting suggestion was that of bookmarking and recommendation features. Users might want to save certain audition listings to return to later, or save an audition form as a draft (like you can when creating a listing). They also suggested using an actor's past audition registrations to suggest other auditions that are "similar".

Changes to be made

1. Add **page title** to landing page
2. **Rethink filtering** on the listings pages to better show how **relevant** the auditions being shown are.
3. Figure out a way to make the forms feel **less busy**. Options:
 - a. Make the forms multi-page
 - b. Make sidebar collapsable
4. Add **descriptions or tool tips** to each item on the forms
5. Add a "**bookmark**" button to the audition listings
 - a. Add a "bookmarked auditions" link in the actor's profile menu
6. Add a "**save as draft**" button to audition forms
 - a. Add a "drafts" link in the actor's profile menu
 - b. Design how draft forms would appear in the pre-saved audition forms pages (similar to audition listings)
7. Use a "**kinder**" word other than 'Warning!' when asking the user if they are sure they want to publish the audition listing.

ACT VIII

Final Design Approach

My final design is very similar to what I was going for in my original prototype, with some added features. I've implemented all over the items listed under "Changes To Be Made", though one major point is proving to be a challenge: filtering.

In my original design, I used numbers to indicate how many criteria match that row of listings. This was completely missed by the tester. To address this, in my "final" design, I reduced this to just two rows, one with the label "exact" and one with the label "partial". My hope is through testing, this is better understood what is shown. That said, I also want to test out other forms of sorting and filtering, such as my original idea of the listings re-sorting themselves as more criteria are chosen. This would take some extra design time, but I feel testing these ideas out would help deliver a better product in the future.

One other change that required some additional design work is helping to make the forms feel less cluttered. To make more space, I am moving the sidebar with the show information to the top of the page, and making it collapsible/expandable as needed. This will help free up space on the page and hopefully make the forms feel less cluttered.

Speaking of the forms, they are going to be a big focus in the next part of the design process. While the fields I created for the forms were good for this prototype, I'll need to have conversations with production companies to ensure all the common questions are covered and all the submission information is correct for data collection.

Finally, some processes need to be figured out. How do you create an account? How does an account become a content submitter? How does a user get affiliated with a company? Who authorizes that affiliation and how does it occur? One thing about going through this process is the questions you answer, the more questions need answering. While it may seem like the project is getting more complex, I feel these questions will only help make this a better experience for our community.

~Any Show Type~ ▾

~Any Company~ ▾



Gruesome
Playground Injuries

Audition Dates:
10/06/2020
10/07/2020

[More Info](#)



Cabaret

Audition Dates:
11/4/2020

[More Info](#)



Small Mouth
Sounds

Audition Dates:
10/06/2020
10/07/2020

[More Info](#)



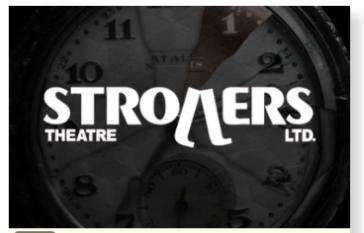
Queer Shorts:
Spirit of Stonewall

Audition Dates:
11/4/2020

[More Info](#)



A Chorus
Line



The 39 Steps

- CAROLE ALT
- CHRIS DIORIO
- JENNA MITCHELL
- JEFF MITCHELL
- KELLERS

TELL



MADISON AUDITION HUB

Chris Diorio
chris.diorio@wisc.edu