

# Guidelines For Inclusive Auditions

Theatre is a collaborative, community-building activity. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we included everyone in our endeavour to make amazing theatre?

These guidelines will help you create a safe, inclusive audition environment, specifically inviting individuals from marginalised communities and encouraging them to get involved in theatre.

## First things first

- ▶ When you pick a play or create a new work, be intentional about your choice and the relevance of the work.

## Audition callout

- ▶ Consider including a statement on diversity and inclusion in your audition info pack. UHT's statement below is an example, you can adapt this for your own group

### UHT statement about diversity and inclusion:

*Union House Theatre is an equitable, fun-filled, inclusive space for our domestic and international students to express themselves. Theatre is a platform for storytelling, and we believe that everyone has a unique story to share. As such, we welcome anyone who identifies as a person with disability, BIPOC, First Nations, Gender Diverse, LGBTIQA+, Neurodiverse and from any and all cultural backgrounds to our auditions, shows, workshops, and other programmes.*

*At UHT "experience" is not a barrier and we want everyone to get involved. We believe in creating fun, physically and psychologically safe spaces that allow students to fully express themselves, learn, grow, and make amazing theatre in the process.*

- ▶ If the characters are open to diversity (gender/age/race/ability), state clearly it for each character.

**Example:** The Character of Olive is a 38-year-old barmaid, Roo's girlfriend. We are looking for female-identifying/non-binary people for the role of Olive. We strongly encourage indigenous/BIPOC/ queer/all abilities/ neurodiverse/non-binary and trans actors to audition. We also warmly invite local and international students with all levels of acting experience.

- ▶ Always provide as much information about the project to your potential auditionees. Never assume they know about the play, even if it's a famous one. You can provide:
  - ▶ The play script
  - ▶ Excerpt of a devised work
  - ▶ Bio of the audition panel
  - ▶ Production team names (if applicable)

This will help your auditionees get a glimpse of your creative process, trust the team, and not to mention, it would be great marketing for your show!

## During Auditions

- ▶ **Audition panel:** be intentional about who needs to be on the panel. If possible, make it as diverse as you can. 2–4 people can be enough as auditioning in a large group can be intimidating.
  - ▶ **Welcome your auditionees:** Introduce yourselves, your student theatre group, and your vision of the play. Welcome them into your “theatrical” world (remember auditions are the start of your show marketing. If not selected, this person could be a potential audience member).
  - ▶ Create a safe, empathetic space. Always provide feedback and/or direction with gentleness and care.
  - ▶ Consider revealing your audition panel beforehand on your social media so that your auditionees know who exactly they will meet
- Example:** Meet the director/get to know the team posts.
- ▶ Did you know that from time-to-time UHT runs Audition Workshops for students? Reach out if you feel like it's time to hold one!

## Casting

When casting, there are a number of different approaches you could take.

Here are a few things to keep in mind during the auditions and casting process.

Ask yourself what your priorities are this time around — remembering that you don't have to achieve EVERYTHING at once. Each production you do will provide you with opportunities to develop your practice around casting.

Here are a few choices, think about which approach you need to take for this production.

### Be intentional

Cast the person most appropriate for your role. Remember that you're making a dramaturgical choice when you're casting a person of a certain community. For example: A woman of colour playing 'Blanche' in *A Streetcar Named Desire* will carry a different meaning than a Caucasian person playing the same character.

### Potential over privilege

In student theatre, we encourage you to pick potential over talent: some people from marginalised communities may not have had access to the resources to participate in theatre before, and student theatre could be their introduction to this art form and community! In this case, consider if you can prioritise potential over experience or someone's perceived skill level. Be open to emerging diverse talent and consider choosing people you can work well with.

### When not to cast a diverse person?

If a character/role depicts a negative sentiment and can cause harm to someone from a marginalised community, it may be better to not cast a diverse person in this role. For example, what might it say about a community if a specific person is cast as “violent”?

## After Casting

### Acceptance

If you have decided to say yes to an actor (yay), always give them specific feedback about why they're given the role and how excited you are to work with them. This will help them build trust with you and minimise any "imposter syndrome" that an actor may experience, especially if they're from a diverse community. Reassure them that they are chosen for their merit, specific talents and/or their potential to grow.

### Rejection

Gently give your auditionees specific feedback about what they could do better next time, and why they were not fit for your play. This will help them grow, learn, and come back and audition for you next time! You can always present them with other opportunities to get involved in your student theatre group such as in a Front of House or Backstage role.

**If you're wondering what to do, remember you can always ask UHT staff if you're unsure about casting and its implications. We also have lots of networks of amazing people who we can help you to connect with.**

**Happy Auditioning! CHOOKAS!**



*\*These guidelines were developed with the input from dedicated students from the Union House Theatre community*