

Prompts

If our casts are to change there will need to be ongoing thought, focus, and care given to pursuing change. This shouldn't only happen at the point of a production being cast but before and after too, and not just by people directly involved in casting but all those connected to productions in any way.

We've prepared a range of questions you can be asking yourself on an ongoing basis to either:

- + fire up you and your colleagues' thinking in this area if you're new to it
- + provide some useful check-ins and reminders if this is something you're already working on

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For instance: I'm an artistic director, associate artist, literary manager, producer or programmer

Are you connecting your aspirations around casting with the choices you are making about what work your audiences get to see, which artists get to make it, and how resources are allocated?

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My work directly or indirectly brings me into contact with actors and the productions they are part of.

For instance: I work in management, marketing and PR, stage management, technical and production

Are you aware that everyone - not just someone directly involved in the casting process - has a role to play in ensuring all actors feel welcomed and valued when part of a company, and that their working environments support them to do their best work?

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Artist/script development

- + If you're developing work for possible future commission or production, are you investing in works that would ensure a broad range of actors in your rehearsal rooms and on your stages?
- + If not, do you need to prioritise placing greater time and energy on identifying what or who the artists and/or projects are that might help you do this?
- + Who has your ear? Are there associates or trusted colleagues who could connect you with different artists and/or works that could help you achieve this?
- + Are you connected to companies that focus on making work with/about groups you're keen to reflect on your stages, but currently aren't?
- + Could you test-run a potential co-producing relationship with such a company by, for example, working together on a development process?
- + Are you tracking how you are allocating your resources (especially money) across the work you are developing to accurately measure what proportions different artists and projects are receiving? Do you need to make this fairer?

Scoping for work/artists

- + When making choices about what work you go to see, are you prioritising shows that will enable you to widen the pool of actors you know about? The [What Are We Watching](#) tool can help with this.
- + Are you proactively seeking shows out, rather than waiting for invitations to land on your desk?
- + If you're somewhere in the country where accessing this work is difficult, is there someone you know who is based closer to it, who could attend on your behalf and recommend actors they feel should be on your radar?
- + Likewise, are there any staff in your organisation you could ask to do this? Especially those who may experience or respond to work differently to how you might?
- + When artists pitch ideas to you, are you letting them know you're especially keen to hear about ideas that could help you broaden the range of actors working for your company?
- + In tandem with working to increase the range of difference within your casts, are you doing the same in terms of your creative teams? If your creative teams are homogenous, what could the impact be on the actors working with them?
- + If you look to reviews to hear about artists whose work you should get to know, are you also considering the opinions of reviewers and bloggers who may be working for less established digital and print publications, but whose opinions could provide insights into a broader range of tastes?

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Programming

- + Within your seasons of work, are you including stories told from the perspectives of the groups you are hoping to reflect on your stages?
- + Are you engaging prospective directors, casting directors and visiting companies in conversations about this early on?
- + Are you clear with these people what your principles regarding casting and the working environment offered to actors are?
- + Have you requested that they take time to consider how they can collaborate with you to achieve these?
- + Are you proactively seeking to forge relationships with co-producers and producers of visiting work who could support you to achieve your aspirations?
- + If you find yourself jumping to conclusions about what your audience's tastes and interests are, are you checking whether these conclusions are backed up by evidence?
- + If you believe that certain work won't sell, is there evidence to back this up? Can you look to other mediums - such as film - for examples of financial and critical successes that have foregrounded previously underrepresented narratives, as a way of widening your sense of what is possible?
- + If you work in a building with multiple stages, are you routinely programming work that gets put in the 'diversity' bracket in smaller spaces and for shorter runs? Are you considering the message this transmits to audiences about the confidence you have in this work and the value you attach to it?
- + Are you taking time to educate yourself about the challenges that certain groups face having their experiences or stories reflected in authentic or aspirational ways within the arts? Are you attentive to conversations within theatre about why representation matters, to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes within your own programming choices?

Producing

- + If you're asking freelance directors and casting directors to spend time scoping out and meeting with actors beyond those they already know, are you budgeting to cover the additional hours of work this is likely to entail?
- + Are you working with them and their agents early enough in the planning process to ensure that a longer casting period can be worked into their schedules?
- + If a freelance director or casting director is too busy to give additional time to meet with actors outside their existing circles, are they the right person to be working with?
- + If you co-produce, are you finding time early in the process to discuss with your co-producer(s) your respective aspirations around casting and agreeing practical steps you will both take to achieve these?
- + Are you making time following a co-production to evaluate with your co-producer(s) how successful these approaches were and ensuring this informs future collaborations, either with them or with other partners?
- + Have you considered adding clauses to written agreements with freelance creatives and co-producers, being clear about the contribution you expect them to make to your aspirations around casting?
- + Are you dedicating time to learn from actors what conditions they need to deliver their best work in rehearsals and during a run? Are you considering the different needs actors with different circumstances may have, rather than applying a 'one size fits all' approach to practicalities such as timing and length of rehearsal day, scheduling of calls, and travel and accommodation on tour.
- + Can actors give you honest feedback about working for your company, and feel genuinely invited to share negative as well as positive experiences without risk to their future employability?

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Before casting begins

- + Have you and your collaborators (e.g. director, casting director, writer) set aside time to speak about what you want to achieve with regard to the range of actors you're seeking to cast in this production?
- + If you find yourselves using the term 'diversity' as part of this conversation, are you all on the same page about what that word means?
- + Have you requested time with the producers (including co-producers if applicable) to discuss your commitments around the casting of this production and identify practical actions to give you the best possible chance of achieving these?

Making choices about who you invite in to audition

- + Have you and your collaborators gone methodically through each role in the script and discussed who that character could be (for instance, does 'Police Officer' have to be a white man?). The [character tool](#) can help with this
- + Have you ensured that actors from marginalised groups are being considered for roles of all sizes, not just supporting parts?
- + Are you thinking about your casts in an [intersectional](#) way?
- + When looking at Spotlight pages, headshots and CVs, are you taking into account the fact your [unconscious bias](#) will play a role in whether or not you instinctively feel drawn to meeting certain actors for certain roles? Are you employing tactics to help address your unconscious bias?
- + When looking at an actor's CV credits, are you alert to the fact they may have faced a series of systemic barriers to accessing opportunities or training? Not having trained on a certain course or not having performed in certain theatres doesn't necessarily reflect poorly on an actor's ability; maybe they are part of a group that historically has been given less opportunity to do so.
- + Are you open to offering audition slots to actors whose CVs and credits may not resemble those conventionally considered 'successful'? Whether or not an actor's career has the markers that conventionally denote 'success' often depends on whether they and their work have been to the taste of people in decision-making positions. Taste is subjective, so this isn't always a fair test of talent or ability - particularly in light of a historic lack of diversity across theatre's senior decision-makers.
- + Are you leaping to assumptions about whether an actor will or won't be interested in being seen for a particular role, rather than checking with them or their agent first? Are you considering what those assumptions are based on?
- + If you find yourself jumping to the conclusion that an actor won't be able to 'handle' a certain role, are you checking what that belief is based on and whether it's justified?
- + Could you commit to 'wild card' auditions: adding a couple of audition slots per role to meet actors you don't already know and who aren't from the places you usually draw actors from?

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Auditions

- + If you're expanding the pool of actors you audition, is it worth beginning the casting process earlier than usual to allow for the increase in availability checks, auditions, and the time it takes for offers to go out?
- + If you're auditioning actors you don't already know, you are likely to need to allocate more time to meetings. When there are many competing demands on your time, how are you going to ensure this remains a priority?
- + If you are a freelancer, how are you going to articulate to a producer that your fee must reflect this additional time? Who (for example your agent) can you enlist to help you fight your corner on this?
- + Have you taken into account that some actors, for instance parents and those with caring responsibilities, who are disabled, have work commitments, or need to travel from a distance, may need greater notice of an audition to make the necessary arrangements to be able to attend? Could you commit to giving a minimum amount of notice for auditions?
- + Have you and other people in the audition (e.g. director, casting director, writer, choreographer, accompanist) agreed on behaviour during auditions to give every actor the best working conditions possible? This might involve sticking to schedule, so actors are neither kept waiting nor have their meeting cut short, being clear around physical intimacy, and treating everyone with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- + Are you consistently giving fresh thought to making auditions creative and open spaces in which all actors have the freedom to show you their best sides, not just certain personality types or communicators?
- + Will some D/deaf and disabled actors require additional support in the audition room? How can you make it easy for them to communicate their needs ahead of a meeting? Are the audition premises suitable for all actors (not just the room the audition will take place in but waiting room, toilets etc)? The [audition space checklist](#) can help with this.

Making offers

- + If you are repeatedly having offers rejected for certain roles or by certain demographics of actors, are you capturing this information accurately and communicating with the actors and/or their agents to understand why the job wasn't for them? This could help reduce the chances of this happening next time you are casting in a similar context.
- + If offer rejections are threatening the diversity of the cast you were aiming for, how can you still fulfil your commitments rather than defaulting to the 'usual suspects'? Who else on the production team and in your organisation can support you in any decisions and help communicate why they are being made?
- + Are you being compassionate about the fact that getting or not getting a job will have practical and emotional knock-ons for an actor (and that this will be more acute for some actors than others)? Can you give them a clear 'yes' or 'no' after an audition, or keep them updated about any delays in the final decision?
- + While an actor is in the period of deciding whether to accept an offer you have made, are you making yourself available to them to answer questions or talk through concerns about the job? Are you doing this for all the actors, not just those offered lead parts?

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Working with agents

- + Are you open to expanding beyond the range of agents you usually send breakdowns to?
- + Can you increase your knowledge of agencies that focus specifically on representing a diverse range of actors?
- + How - through the wording you use in a breakdown - can you encourage agents to challenge their own biases about which clients they should put forward? Can you signal to them that you want them to widen their thinking, through inviting them to send you some 'surprising' choices as well as more conventional ones?
- + If you work with certain agents a lot, are you engaging them in conversations around diversity and thinking together about how you can do things differently?
- + If agencies aren't providing you with the type of submissions you were hoping for, can you utilise your professional networks to receive recommendations of actors to meet with? Can you build contacts who could help you to do this?

Developing your knowledge of actors on an ongoing basis

- + If you do generals with actors, is the range of actors you're meeting with broad and varied? For instance are you meeting people of a range of ages, ethnicities, genders, actors who are disabled, actors based in various parts of the country, actors who have come into the profession through a variety of routes?
- + If there are groups of actors whose work you are less familiar with, how can you proactively create opportunities to see it, even if this means you may need to look beyond the venues you usually go to?
- + Are you taking time to educate yourself about the challenges that certain groups face in our society? Are you listening to expert industry voices who - often through lived experience - can help you understand how these challenges play out on our stages and in our rehearsal rooms?
- + If you look to reviews to help build a list of actors whose work you should get to know, are you considering the opinions of reviewers and bloggers who may be working for less established digital and print publications, but whose opinions could provide insights into a broader range of tastes?
- + If you're asking members of your networks to recommend actors they have worked with, auditioned or seen perform, are you ensuring these networks contain a broad and varied range of people?

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Stage management, Technical and Production

- + Can practical modifications be made to your rehearsal room, stage, backstage areas, and dressing rooms so that disabled actors feel welcomed by your organisation and able to work to their full capacity? How can you find out their needs before they arrive at your building/rehearsal room?
- + Have you thought about how you could ensure this is the case for venues you visit with a touring production, or if actors are based in a co-producer's venue?
- + If rehearsals and/or tech periods need to run differently to allow for the requirements of an actor with a specific need, have you consulted with stage management and your technical department over any knock-on effect for them, and ensured this has been planned for?
- + If you are involved in scheduling calls, are you giving actors the encouragement and space to articulate their needs and encouraging the director/lead artist(s) to be open to a more fluid, flexible approach to scheduling rather than 'one size fits all'?
- + Are you alert to how scheduling practices are changing, in particular making rehearsals more accessible to a wider range of actors (e.g. parents and those with caring responsibilities)? If you have been involved in more inclusive rehearsal processes, are you sharing learning with industry colleagues?

Marketing and PR

- + If a diverse range of actors have been cast in a production, are you reflecting that in your publicity material?
- + Have you educated yourself on any stereotypes attached to certain groups? Are you taking care to avoid these stereotypes when designing marketing campaigns, selecting images or writing copy and press releases?
- + Have you considered which scenes should be included at a press photo-call so that they reflect positively and sensitively on the make up of the cast, rather than playing into negative stereotypes or allowing certain actors to be depicted in an unacceptably sexualised way? How can you ensure all actors are treated with respect during a press photo-call?
- + If a critic focuses on irrelevancies such as an actor's race, weight, or (in the eyes of that critic) physical attractiveness rather than their work on stage, how will you respond to this? How can you support an actor on the receiving end of this?
- + Are you looking to extend your knowledge of critics, journalists and bloggers who are open to diversity on stage and likely to write about the work with sensitivity and nuance?
- + If you are asked by the press or at a public event to comment on your company's approach to diversity on stage, could you talk accurately about that? Can you brief colleagues so they feel confident to do so?
- + If you work with external organisations and freelancers on your press and marketing campaigns (e.g. PR consultants, photographers, ticketing agencies), are you providing them with the information they need to understand your company's aspirations around casting?

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Management

- + Have you had a conversation with your entire staff team, explaining why this is important to your company's values and ethos?
- + Have you taken time to answer any questions staff members may have and engaged with any concerns?
- + Have you considered that a different approach to casting may impact on the resources and workload of some members of staff, even those not directly linked with casting? How are you demonstrating to those staff that you are aware of this? How will you support them to manage their workloads and budgets?
- + Have you thought about why change can feel difficult to people? Are you considering how you can support your staff team to conduct this work to the best of their ability and to feel positive about any changes?