

CASTING

from *Directing a play*

5 Casting is when the director chooses the actors wanted to take part in a production. They should be auditioned for every role - and that includes actors whom the director knows. Type-casting and the casting of friends is risky. It is better to audition for a specific play than to determine generally how good an actor is, and any special skills required should also be tested at the audition. It is also wise to cast well in advance to accommodate drop outs.

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IS CASTING IMPORTANT?

As director you will spend more production time with the cast than with anyone else, so you must be able to work together in a friendly and relaxed way. Never cast actors whom you do not believe in or who clearly do not believe in you. You need an efficient and dedicated working group who respect each other's abilities. Social considerations are also important, and you may decide to take a willing but less talented actor rather than a brilliant one who will cause trouble or fail to mix with the others.

DECIDING WHAT YOU WANT

20 Casting is a heavy responsibility. Your decisions will affect a lot of people deeply, so try to be sensitive to their personalities as well as their talents. Be quite sure about what you want in any given character and seek the best actor for that role. Resist being pressured by anyone into casting someone whom you think is wrong for a part, but remember too that a good acting company is not just composed of excellent actors.

TYPECASTING

30 Typecasting has its pros and its cons. Typecast actors will respond quickly to your requests and give you something well within their range, but you may get no more than that, which can halt overall progress and development in rehearsals. The actor, too, may suffer from having the performance compared with a previous similar one.

CASTING FRIENDS

35 A director naturally wants to work with friendly and supportive colleagues, but the casting of friends needs careful thought. A rehearsal period can be a testing one for a friendship. Your friends will see you in a new, demanding persona, and may feel challenged, or simply threatened, by what you ask of them as actors, especially if you also want their support as friends.

40 Friendship with actors can blind you to their true abilities and lead you to giving them roles beyond or beneath them. The casting of friends may also be a disservice as it can mean exposing them to jealous comment. It is wiser to cast friends only if they are the best actors you know for the parts.

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AUDITIONING

Only at an audition can you form an opinion about an actor's suitability for a role. Even one who has played the part before has not done so for you. You are

looking for three things: the actor's general level of skill, the promise of specific skills and qualities needed for a role in a particular production, and the actor's willingness to work with you on the role. Your ultimate aim is a play with the strongest possible cast.

5 Even experienced actors get nervous at auditions. No one likes being graded and assessed. Try to put them at their ease by giving them space to prepare themselves and enough time to show you what they can really do. Ask auditionees to learn a short speech — twenty lines or so — appropriate to the play, and invite each one to audition at a definite time, thus avoiding a nerve-racked line of people at the door. Greet them personally and ask what they are
10 interested in doing. Explain your approach to the production and ask each actor to perform the chosen speech. Reading auditions alone are rarely satisfactory, but ask the actor also to read a speech, giving time for preparation and some direction on mood, tempo or character. After the audition spend a minute
15 chatting — without dashing or raising hopes, and without showing disappointment.

Avoid on-the-spot decisions and have a colleague present with whom to discuss the auditions — but not while actors are present. After these first auditions compile a shortlist of the actors who interested you for particular roles. If you are
20 not sure about an actor invite him or her to audition again. You may want to see if certain actors are mutually compatible. Make detailed notes.

A useful audition needs planning, scheduling and budgeting. Be sure that your budget includes provision for it.

25 **SPECIAL SKILL AUDITIONS**

Singing, dancing or fighting should be tested at special auditions. Such sessions are best held with small groups rather than with individuals. Auditioning actors through improvisation should be done in the same way.

30 **MAKING YOUR CHOICE**

Choosing a cast from among the candidates can be difficult and painful. Using your notes, first eliminate all the actors you do not want, then work through the cast list, starting with the leading roles, and note possibilities among those you have not rejected. Discuss all this with your colleagues on the audition panel,
35 then choose your cast. Though your decisions are final you should give weight to the others' opinions.

A hunch about an actor can be right, and an imperfect but exciting candidate may, by opening night, have a more interesting performance to offer than a competent all-rounder. Be ready to take some chances — while avoiding blatant
40 risks.

REJECTIONS

When you have your full cast send out your rejection letters. Keep them short and do not give reasons for rejection. Being turned down is painful, and the
45 actors may want to know why, so be polite but firm. Do not antagonize any of them. You may want them in future productions for which they are more suitable.

LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

5 Every actor who has auditioned should be told the outcome privately, preferably by letter, which avoids direct confrontation with disappointed candidates. Ask those you wish to cast to inform you promptly of their acceptance (or otherwise), and close with the date, time and venue of the first rehearsal. Write to successful candidates first. You may have to go back to your rejector list if someone turns down a part.

consideration	zvážení, úvaha
to seek	hledat
to resist	vzdorovat, bránit se
range	škála, rozmezí
to halt	zastavit
beneath	pod úroveň
disservice	poškození (koho), ublížení (komu)
suitability	vhodnost
willingness	ochota, svolnost
assessed	hodnocený
to put sb at ease	to make (someone) feel calm and relaxed
nerve-racked	vystresovaný
to dash	hnát se
to compile	sestavit
hunch	tušení
blatant	očividný