

# **Recommended Guidelines for Ethical and Responsible Behaviour by Theatre Directors**

Theatre is a collaborative art-form. We can not direct alone - we are nothing without actors, technicians, writers, designers etc. Always treat colleagues with professional & human respect.

## **RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR**

1. Directors should strive to create a good, harmonious, supportive working environment - creativity does not blossom on negative energy.
2. The rehearsal room should not be seen as a battlefield - the vast majority of actors actively want constructive direction.
3. Aim to be open to constructive suggestions where practicable within the time-scale.
4. Aim to draw out (extend) rather than impose - positive rather than negative reinforcement is more likely to enhance the actor's processes.
5. Be flexible! Recognise that all actors have different ways (and speeds) of working - allow for all different approaches within the time constraints of the production.
6. Don't be afraid to admit that you could be wrong or simply don't immediately know the answer to a problem - tolerance does not equate with weakness.
7. Be aware of the power that you have - i.e. as a referee and potential future employer. Don't abuse it by putting actors in the position of potential sycophancy - this will invariably be counter-productive to their creativity.
8. Be aware that an actor who appears "difficult" could simply be anxious or insecure. Develop strategies for recognising, understanding and dealing with people's behaviours in the creative context. Remember, everyone (including the director) is insecure - no matter how tough they may appear to be on the surface.

## **ETHICS**

1. The director has similar moral and pastoral responsibilities to those of a parent, doctor, teacher, etc., etc. - i.e. all the professions that might be called 'caring'.
2. Remember how vulnerable the actor makes her/himself during the rehearsal process - take care with other people's psyches.
3. The director should hold the intimacies of the rehearsal room as confidential, and they should make this position clear from the outset to the company.
4. Remember that the professional working relationship is not limited

to the rehearsal room.

5. The casting process should remain as confidential as is feasible.
6. Respect an actor's privacy in wardrobe calls and dressing rooms.
7. Don't bring your personal problems into the rehearsal or audition room.

### **GIVING NOTES:**

1. Notes should be constructive rather than destructive.
2. Be sensitive as to when you give notes - the timing is as important as the content.
3. Remember that actors need the half not just to make practical preparations but also mental ones.
4. It is usually divisive and destructive to single out one person for public criticism.
5. Remember that some notes are better given in private. BUT also remember that most notes affect not just the immediate recipient but often other actors in the production.
6. Invidious comparisons with other actors/performances are unhelpful.

### **ORGANISATION:**

1. Disorganisation does not enhance creativity.
2. The director is at the head of the chain of command of a production - she/he must be organised.
3. Treat actors free time with respect - calls should be carefully thought out and made to work.
4. Be aware of the time constraints of others working on the production e.g. the D.S.M. has probably another hour's work to do once rehearsals have finished, wardrobe fittings need to be done in reasonable time before production week, etc., etc.

### **INTERVIEWS & AUDITIONS:**

1. Always treat an actor with consideration and respect at interviews and auditions. Also aim to put the actor at ease in order that she/he has the chance to give of her/his best, e.g. by providing information about the production beforehand and minimising waiting times..
2. Always point out to the actor any 'extreme' that might be required in a production before or whilst offering a contract e.g. revealing costumes, dangerous stunts, 'different' ways of working, etc..
3. Exchange of ideas prior to rehearsals can be very important.
4. Never make (or even imply) any kind of promise to an actor - it is amazing how someone at the beginning of an interview day can

appear 'absolutely perfect' and you feel the need to make a pre-emptive offer, but by the end of a day you have relegated her/him to "interesting".

**HEALTH & SAFETY:**

1. Don't ask unqualified actors to do stunts.
2. Don't try to direct fights yourself; use a qualified fight director.
3. Listen to stage-management and technicians in all matters of safety.
4. Don't run a technical rehearsal without taking reasonable steps to insure that all areas and equipment to be used are safe.