



Talisman Theatre Diversity Statement

The killing of George Floyd by police in America and the subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has woken us all up to acknowledge that we have a responsibility to reach out to all our local communities much more actively than we have traditionally done and to be inclusive rather than exclusive. This is not just a “personal” matter – we need to reject institutional racism. The Talisman is a theatre with a very white membership, choosing plays mainly about white people, by white authors, presented to a mainly white audience. We can do better than that in a world where that limited world view is no longer acceptable.

Ironically, Talisman Theatre members have always thought of ourselves as very friendly and welcoming. New audience members often tell us this. We also have a record of staging plays reflecting diversity. From as far back as 1992 with Martin Sherman’s “Bent” and up to 2019 with the Zellnik’s musical “Yank!” we have mounted shows with strong gay themes. Actors from the Talisman were founding members of Side by Side, a Theatre Company for both Disabled and Non-disabled performers. However, even a casual glance at our roster of actors, technical staff, and our audience profile reveals an appalling absence of black people.* Just because we have occasionally cast black actors doesn’t exonerate us.

(* we use the term black people here to refer to all those who consider themselves “of colour” or “not white”.)

The Action Plan which follows is The Talisman Theatre’s commitment to becoming a diverse organisation that seeks to change the status quo.

Action Plan

1. In tandem with other local Little Theatres, we will extend the range of means we use to advertise our proposed Programme and Audition Notices, so that potential actors, technical staff, and audiences recognise that we are an inclusive and welcoming organisation.
2. With immediate effect, we will ensure that actors who audition at The Talisman will be cast on ability and suitability for a role, regardless of ethnicity. The only exceptions will be where a particular ethnicity is clearly logical or expressly specified by the author. Pre-casting of roles is already only permitted with the permission of the Artistic Directors (ratified by the Executive). We will also seek opportunities to be creative in casting, for example, changing the gender of a role where an auditionee is the best choice, and where this is coherent within the context of the play, and permitted by the Author and/or Rightsholder.
3. We will ensure that members of the Trustees, Executive, Heads of Department and Directors fully understand the principals of diversity we embrace. These values will be disseminated to all members of the theatre.



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4. Diversity will be a standing item on the Agenda of both The Trustees and Executive of the theatre and this Statement and Action Plan will be reviewed formally every year.
5. We will continue to challenge language, attitudes, and behaviour which contradict these values, whether written, spoken, or by omission.
6. We will search out plays which appeal to and give opportunities to, black actors and technical staff and which will appeal to a diverse audience.

We welcome feedback on both this Statement and Action Plan.

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