

# LAINE

THEATRE ARTS

Casting Policy

# CASTING POLICY

## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy sets out the principles and procedures by which Laine Theatre Arts ("the College") manages all casting and performance opportunity decisions for students enrolled on its programmes. It applies to all internal and external performance opportunities, including assessed and non-assessed work, the Annual Summer Show, and opportunities facilitated through The Laine Artist Group. This policy applies to students enrolled on the Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre, the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre (3-year course), the Foundation Course, and the CertHE course. The Foundation Course and CertHE course culminate in their own end-of-year show and do not form part of the Annual Summer Show, which applies only to students on the Level 6 Diploma and BA (Hons) programmes.

The College is committed to a fair, transparent and merit-based approach to all casting decisions, in which no student is disadvantaged on the basis of any protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

## 2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 MERIT-BASED SELECTION

All casting decisions at Laine Theatre Arts are based on merit. This encompasses:

- Skill level and performance quality across all relevant disciplines
- Creative suitability for the role or piece in question, as determined by the creative team
- Attitude, aptitude and commitment to training
- Attendance record and engagement with the course
- Equitable distribution of casting opportunities across the course to support each student's readiness for the profession

Merit is assessed holistically and may differ depending on the context of each performance opportunity. Creative vision forms a legitimate and significant part of casting decisions for leading or featured roles; the most technically proficient student is not always the most suitable for every role.

Students who have auditioned for a leading or featured role and were unsuccessful may request brief verbal feedback from the relevant Head of Department or lead creative. Such requests should be made within five working days of the casting decision being communicated. Feedback will be offered as developmental guidance and does not constitute grounds for a formal appeal of the casting decision itself.

## **2.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

No student will be disadvantaged in any casting process on the basis of a protected characteristic, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The College actively promotes inclusive and equitable casting and will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour in relation to casting decisions. Any student who believes a casting decision has been unfairly influenced by a protected characteristic should raise this through the College's Student Complaints Policy and Procedures.

## **2.3 RESPECT FOR CASTING DECISIONS AND A POSITIVE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT**

Casting decisions are the professional judgement of the relevant creative team, Head of Department, or agency. Students are expected to respect those decisions. The College expects all students to contribute to a positive, supportive and inclusive environment in which their peers feel valued and respected. Negative comments that are intended to cause hurt, demean or undermine a fellow student will not be tolerated.

It is unacceptable for any student to suggest — directly, indirectly, or on social media — that another student has been cast for any reason other than their skill, suitability and the creative vision of the production. All casting is based on merit, creative suitability and the vision of the creative team — without exception.

The College is committed to freedom of speech and to an environment in which open and honest discussion can take place. However, in line with the Freedom of Speech Policy, this does not extend to comments that are malicious, targeted or discriminatory in nature. The Freedom of Speech Policy makes clear that behaviour which creates an atmosphere of intimidation, harassment or verbal abuse — particularly in connection with a protected characteristic such as race — is likely to be unlawful and will be managed under the College's disciplinary procedures. Making comments designed to diminish a student's achievement on the grounds of a protected characteristic falls squarely within this category.

Any conduct of this nature will be treated as a disciplinary matter under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and the Student Code of Conduct. Students are reminded that their conduct — including online and on social media — is subject to the Respectful and Appropriate Language Policy at all times.

## **2.4 CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

All casting decisions are made with sensitivity to issues of cultural appropriation and cultural representation. Students will not be placed in roles that appropriate cultural identity in a harmful or disrespectful manner. This consideration is applied consistently and does not disadvantage any student.

## **3. ASSESSED PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

The College is committed to ensuring that casting opportunities are distributed equitably to support each student's development and readiness for professional practice. While every effort is made to provide a broad range of performance experiences, the College cannot guarantee that every student will undertake

principal or featured roles. Casting is determined in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy and not by an expectation that all students will receive particular types of role.

Assessed performance opportunities form a compulsory part of the course curriculum. All students are required to participate and contribute to assessed performances as directed.

Where assessed projects include leading, featured or principal roles, these will ordinarily be allocated through an audition process. Auditions will be conducted fairly and without bias, allowing all eligible students the opportunity to be considered. The outcome will be based on the merit criteria set out in Section 2.

Supporting roles and ensemble participation within assessed work are allocated by the relevant creative team and are compulsory for all students. Allocation will be based on the requirements of the project and individual student skill sets.

As with other performance opportunities, the College may limit or adjust a student's participation in assessed performance work where an assessment has been made on the grounds of physical or mental health, following consultation with the student in accordance with the principles set out in Section 4.4.

Casting decisions for assessed work are final in terms of who is cast and in what role. However, where a student considers that the audition or allocation process was affected by procedural irregularity or unlawful discrimination, this does not extinguish their right to seek redress. Such concerns relating to assessed work should be raised through the Academic Appeals Policy. Concerns about the process that are unrelated to assessment outcomes may be raised through the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures.

## **4. NON-ASSESSED INTERNAL PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

### **4.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Non-assessed internal performances — including in-house productions and projects that form part of the course but are not formally assessed — will ordinarily include an audition process for featured or principal roles. All students will be expected to participate and contribute to such performances in line with their year-group requirements and the direction of the creative team.

Casting decisions for these productions are final and are made by the relevant Head of Department, the college agency, or the appointed creative team.

The College may also limit or adjust a student's participation in non-assessed internal performances on the grounds of physical or mental health, in accordance with the principles set out in Section 4.4.

### **4.2 THE LAINE ANNUAL SUMMER SHOW**

The Laine annual Summer Show is specifically for students on the three-year programme. Either the Level 6 Trinity Diploma or the Level 6 BA Honours in Musical Theatre.

The Annual Summer Show is not an assessed component of the course. It is a whole-college production providing all students with the opportunity to work collaboratively to create a piece of theatre to industry standard. The Summer Show forms a valuable part of each student's induction into professional industry expectations and working practices.

All students on the three-year course are expected to participate. Casting is organised by year group, with the following guaranteed minimums:

- First Year students: a minimum of one piece

- Second Year students: a minimum of two pieces
- Third Year students: a minimum of three pieces

The suitability of each student for particular pieces is determined by the material chosen and the assessment of the casting team, subject to approval by the Artistic Director and creative teams. Piece allocation is made at the discretion of the casting team according to individual skill sets and the demands of the material. As an educational production, its purpose is to support students' professional development and readiness for employment, rather than to assess individual achievement or guarantee any particular type of role.

Where outside choreographers or directors are engaged to work on the Summer Show, auditions may be held for pieces they are working on, at the discretion of the creative team and the College. All students will still receive their guaranteed minimum allocation; where a piece is cast following an audition held by an outside choreographer or director, being cast in that piece may count towards a student's guaranteed minimum or may be in addition to it.

#### **4.3 AUDITION PROCESS FOR THE SUMMER SHOW**

An initial general dance audition will be held to assess dance skills across the student body. Based on the material selected and the evaluation of the casting team, individual students may be invited to audition for featured singing roles. Invitations to featured vocal auditions are at the discretion of the casting team and are determined by individual suitability and the requirements of the production.

Solo performance assessments carried out throughout the academic year - including individual dance and song assessments - are used as an initial indicator of each student's skills. These assessments form part of the evidence base used by the casting team when making Summer Show decisions. Heads of Department will also be consulted where appropriate. Most featured roles are allocated following an audition; however, in some cases the casting team may already have

identified a suitable student for a featured role on the basis of this evidence, without a further audition. This applies to Summer Show casting only.

#### **4.4 FACTORS CONSIDERED IN SUMMER SHOW CASTING**

In addition to performance skill and creative suitability, the following factors will be taken into account when determining whether a student receives featured moments in the Summer Show:

- Attendance, punctuality and engagement with training throughout the year
- Discipline and conduct
- Aptitude and commitment to the course
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing

The College may limit a student's participation in, or in exceptional circumstances remove a student from, the Summer Show where an assessment has been made on the grounds of physical or mental health. Before such a decision is confirmed, the College will seek to consult with the student and, where appropriate, with the student's medical advisors or the College's welfare team. The decision will be confirmed to the student in writing, with reasons. Students wishing to query such a decision may raise this with the Student Director in the first instance. Such decisions are made with care and in the best interests of the student's health and safety, and do not of themselves affect the student's academic record. This is because the Summer Show is a non-assessed component of the course.

#### **4.5 ATTENDANCE AT REHEARSALS**

Students are required to attend all rehearsals and warm-ups as directed. Where a student has an unauthorised absence, they will ordinarily be given a warning before any further action is considered. Persistent or significant unauthorised absence may result in a student being removed from one or more pieces, or in exceptional circumstances from the production entirely. Before a decision to remove a student from the show is made, the student will be informed of the concern and given an opportunity to respond. The decision will be confirmed in

writing. Such removal does not of itself affect a student's academic assessment record, as the Summer Show is a non-assessed component of the course. Final decisions regarding removal rest with the Artistic Director and/or the Senior Management Team.

#### **4.6 CHANGES TO CASTING AND PROGRAMME CONTENT**

The College reserves the right to make changes to casting, individual pieces, or entire sections of the Summer Show at any time. Such changes may be required due to evolving creative vision, production requirements, scheduling constraints, the needs of the material, or any other circumstances that the Artistic Director, or creative team consider appropriate.

Students will always receive their guaranteed minimum allocation of pieces as set out in Section 4.2. However, the specific pieces to which a student is allocated may change during the course of the production process. A student's minimum allocation is a commitment to participation, not a guarantee as to the specific content, role or placement within any given piece.

The College will endeavour to give reasonable notice of significant changes to casting or programme content wherever practicable and will communicate such changes directly to affected students. The College recognises that unexpected changes can be unsettling and will support students through this process. Students are expected to respond positively and professionally to changes as directed, in keeping with the standards of professional conduct expected in the industry. Students who have concerns about changes to their allocation should raise these with the Student Director in the first instance.

## **5. EXTERNAL CASTING — THE LAINE ARTIST GROUP**

### **5.1 OVERVIEW**

The Laine Artist Group is the College's in-house theatrical agency. The agency operates independently from the College's academic structures and functions as

a professional agency, with the aim of securing students professional experience and industry contracts during and beyond their training.

All students enrolled on the College's three-year programmes — either the Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre or the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre (3-year course) — are automatically represented by The Laine Artist Group upon enrolment. Students do not need to apply for agency representation.

## **5.2 AGENCY AUTONOMY AND DECISION-MAKING**

The Laine Artist Group operates like any professional theatrical agency. Decisions regarding which students are submitted for professional contracts and opportunities are made at the sole discretion of the agency, based on the suitability of individual students for the professional briefs received.

The agency will attend solo performance assessments over the three years of training to develop an informed and ongoing understanding of each student's individual skills and development.

## **5.3 COLLEGE OVERSIGHT OF EXTERNAL WORK**

While the agency retains full autonomy over professional casting decisions, the College continues to exercise oversight in relation to student safety and wellbeing. College policies in statutory areas, including safeguarding and health and safety, continue to apply to all students undertaking work through The Laine Artist Group or otherwise whilst in training.

Although the agency operates with autonomy in its professional decision-making, the College reserves the right to limit or restrict a student's engagement with the agency and external professional work on the basis of:

- Attendance and punctuality
- Discipline and conduct
- Aptitude and commitment to training

- Overall engagement with the course
- Issues relating to personal health and wellbeing

Where the College is considering applying such a restriction, it will inform the student of the concern and give the student an opportunity to respond before a decision is made. Any restriction will be confirmed to the student in writing, with reasons, and will be reviewed at regular intervals. Students may raise concerns about such a restriction with the Student Director.

#### **5.4 EXCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION AND RESTRICTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL WORK**

Students are not permitted to engage in professional work through any agency other than The Laine Artist Group whilst training at the College. All professional work undertaken during the training period must be arranged through The Laine Artist Group or approved in writing by the College in advance. Students are made aware of this requirement before they enrol, and it forms part of the Student Terms and Conditions.

Any professional work opportunity obtained independently or through a third party must be referred to The Laine Artist Group immediately and must not be accepted or undertaken without the College or Agency's prior written approval. Any student wishing to undertake professional work that has not been arranged through The Laine Artist Group must submit a written request through the Agency, setting out the nature of the work and the proposed dates. The College or Agency reserves the right to approve or refuse any such request at its absolute discretion. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in disciplinary action under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

## **6. DECISIONS AND APPEALS**

All casting decisions — whether for internal assessed work, non-assessed productions, the Summer Show, or external agency submissions — are final. They

are made by the relevant decision-making authority: the creative team, the Artistic Director, the Student Director, or The Laine Artist Group, as appropriate.

Where a student has a concern about the process by which a casting decision was made (as distinct from the decision itself), they may raise this informally with the Student Director in the first instance or the designated casting team. For non-assessed work, formal concerns may be raised through the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures. For assessed work, where a student considers that the process was procedurally irregular or has affected their academic outcomes, the appropriate route is the Academic Appeals Policy, which, for degree students, ultimately provides access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Concerns should be raised promptly.

## **7. RELATED POLICIES**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following College policies and resources:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Cultural Appreciation Resource
- Student Code of Conduct
- Non-Academic Misconduct Policy
- Respectful and Appropriate Language Policy
- Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Student Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Terms and Conditions

## KEY DATA

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