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LIVING GUIDELINES TO PRODUCTION PROCESSES

Initially created by members of the Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) as part of their original report in October 2020, these guidelines were generated to support staff, artists and departments in conducting conversations and processes for all work produced by the Stratford Festival. The intention is that **everyone** who works at the Festival reads these Guidelines.

ARC recognizes that currently, and until bigger systemic changes shift, we must be aware that anyone who comes into the Stratford Festival who is non-white, 2SLGBTQIA+, D/deaf, mad, disabled, and other equity-seeking groups is coming into a Predominantly White Institution. This is a situation that for some takes effort, emotional labour, and armour to protect oneself and their art against daily oppression and exclusion. Please approach the work with care and remember that education is a process. The work of equity-seeking groups within any theatrical practice often needs different support because we hold these stories, performances, garments, props, and more in a way that extends beyond colonial crafts and process, incorporating spiritual or ritual weight that must be held by all in order to be successful.

What follows in this document is an integral framework for everyone engaging in the production processes in accordance with the ARC's initial recommendations. These Living Guidelines are essential to creating conscientious art.

This document is meant to be a living, breathing guide that helps the Stratford Festival and its artists in the evolution of our practice. It is intended to deepen our understanding of the cultural implications of our work. This guideline can be shifted to suit the specificity and uniqueness of every creative process. We will be able to incorporate these considerations into the "Pathways to Cultural Belonging" (PATH) process which will help keep us all accountable as specific topics are identified, discussed and addressed during the production process. <https://airtable.com/appfnxdWL6jz8DgZz/shrs4xkJpnxKdc2Gg>

- Has the script or any updates thereof been distributed to staff and artists at the Festival?
 - Which accessible formats do you need to create for folks with disabilities to be able to read the script?
- Have you read the script?
 - If the show's content is unfamiliar to you or you have difficulty comprehending the script, please seek assistance or further knowledge.
- What is you and your team's cultural competency in relation to a production?
 - Does your staff require additional education to be respectful of cultural elements?

- Are you in community with people with the relevant lived experience? If not, which supports or communities do you need to be connected with?
 - How may performing this work impact that community?
- Which distinct cultures, identities, and/or lived experiences are being portrayed by the script or production concept and how are they being considered? Might these portrayals reinforce harmful stereotypes?
 - Will characters be played by actors from these cultures, identities, and/or live experiences? If not, what considerations or supports are being put into place?
 - What steps have been taken to consider stereotypes that may be part of the play's tone and mood?
- Has the need for cultural consultants been considered so that individual cast, designers, or other members of the production team are not the sole source of cultural expertise?
 - Have you budgeted for cultural consultants?
 - Consider whether cultural consultants and the knowledge they bring would be effective in marketing the shows, or expanding its outreach and education.
 - Are there moments of intimacy in the show? Is there a need for a culturally competent intimacy director?
- Have you allocated time for cross-departmental meetings in addition to production-focused ones emphasizing collective conversations around cultural themes.
- Is there enough time for check-ins throughout the process? Be open about things that are potentially sensitive to the company and discuss how things are being approached.
- Is there a benefit to having pre-rehearsal conversations with all artists? It may be helpful to address concerns earlier rather than later in the process/when rehearsals begin. This can be a time to consider artist needs regarding comfort, access needs, wigs and costumes, make up, etc.
- If a show is being considered to be reproduced or is a new work in which the creative vision has significantly changed, are there creative decisions that need to be reviewed, revised and/or updated to respect cultural specificities? Consider the actor portraying the character in all aspects of the production process.
- Have there been discussions about the needs (skin tones, gender, body shapes/sizes, and/or disability) of equity-seeking actors?
 - Have you considered the identities of the understudies on their own, and in relation to the roles they are covering?
 - Do the light walkers reflect the different skin tones of the production?
- Have you budgeted for unique materials that are necessary for culturally-specific work?
 - Have those materials been obtained in an appropriate and considerate way?
- What is the intention of the culturally specific pieces that are being incorporated into the play?

- Do any design elements require culturally-specific craftsmanship and/or expertise?
- Are there Craftspeople that know how to work with culturally-specific design elements?
- Are artists and staff aware of culturally-specific garments, props, motifs, aesthetics, and designs?
 - Have artists and staff been informed about what they are wearing/using and has knowledge been shared on their proper use and its significance?
 - Are the designs or patterns subject to differing social and cultural laws of public domain and may not be available for use or re-creation without appropriate permission?
- As materials are sourced and purchased, are you considering the environmental and social sustainability of their creation and use?
- Have you made considerations for guests' accessibility needs?
 - Is the show designed with accessibility in mind?
 - Are you aware of planned accessible performances and their implications for your work? What do you need to support a successful accessible show?
- Does the production include the performance of multiple languages? If so, will there be translation provided into English and/or other languages as part of the concept?
- Have you considered the implications of the shows' visions on the work in your department?
- If there are scheduled events related to the cultural specifics of the play, extend the invitation to all members of that production.
- If we are hosting a culturally-specific ceremony or event, have there been discussions with relevant groups to identify specific needs?
 - Is this event noted in the Daily?
- Are you reaching out to the different communities portrayed in and/or most relevant to the play and making the show accessible for them to come see it?
- Are you researching and building relationships with potential collaborators (e.g. vendors, freelancers, designers and craftspeople), particularly from equity-seeking groups beyond those typically hired by the Festival, and providing them opportunities?
- Have staff been hired from communities that may be relevant to the show?
- Across departments, how are we evolving our work to provide opportunities for new audiences to be engaged with the Festival?

Last updated on April 10, 2024

Please note that these guidelines also relate directly to the Festival's commitment to Canadian Actors' Equity Association in connection with Clauses 10:04 and 10:05 of the Canadian Theatre Agreement, "Respectful Consultation, Collaboration and Representation" and "Resolution of Issues Related to Identity".