Working with Nottingham Shakespeare Company

Hello! Thank you for your interest in working with us at NSC. Before you audition, please read through this document to get an idea of what to expect should you be cast in one of our productions.

If you have any queries please email pr@nottinghamshakespeare.co.uk and someone from the team will get back to you as soon as possible.

Break a leg!

Who are we?

Nottingham Shakespeare Company was founded in 2018 by Michelle-Louise Wright, with an aim to make Shakespeare more accessible for everyone. After working as an educator, Michelle noticed that many people, especially young people, had decided that they didn't like Shakespeare; that his plays were boring, stuffy, and generally 'not for them'. NSC was formed to break down barriers to the Bard, staging affordable shows in community spaces, and bringing Shakespeare back to its original form - for the masses.

We are a grassroots organisation, working to make the theatre scene a more level playing-field, especially in the East Midlands where the arts have recently faced debilitating cutbacks and funding losses. We hope that our work as a company brings art and theatre to those who would not normally be able to access it, and creates connections across local communities.

We have recently been granted CIC status.

The Company

NSC is made up of a four person committee and a board of directors.

Committee

Artistic Director: Michelle-Louise Wright
Responsible for overall artistic vision and direction for productions. Also responsible for play selection, casting, collaboration with directors, designers, and performers.

Production Manager: Toni Tailor-Bird
Responsible for overseeing logistic aspects of productions, ensuring smooth operations. Also responsible for coordinating with stage management teams, managing rehearsal schedules, and venue logistics.

Social Media & Marketing Coordinator: Emily Ashberry

Responsible for developing and executing marketing and publicity strategies for each production. Also responsible for creating promotional materials, coordinating with local press/media, and managing all social media content.

Finance & Administration Coordinator: Alison Rouse
Responsible for managing budgeting and financial aspects of productions. Also responsible for coordinating fundraising efforts with the board, overseeing administrative tasks such as contracts, payments, and record-keeping.

Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for …

- Strategic Direction
- Financial Oversight
- Governance and Compliance
- Artistic Support
- Fundraising Support
- Community Representation
- Performance Review
- Advice and Consultation
- Emergency Decision-Making
- Professional Development

They support, direct and manage the Artistic Director who reports to them at regular intervals.

Board Members
Rachel Pillsbury
Graham Johnson
Conor Lynam

Auditions

We run open and inclusive workshop style auditions. Anyone who applies is welcome to come along. You will be auditioning for the director and the entire committee, and exercises may be run by the director or any member of the committee.

When you arrive you will be asked to sign in, wear a name tag, and a photo will be taken of you to ensure we can remember names and faces, as we don't ask for headshots on application.

The director, working with the Artistic Director, will build a group workshop focusing on the play text. We will run a short group warm-up, followed by group activities focusing on the selected play. Later in the audition you may be given sections of the play to work on, either in small groups or individually, to be performed in front of the panel and other auditionees. Do not worry if sight reading is not your preferred audition style. If you require the audition pieces in advance we can send these, though we do not expect you to memorise them. We are not auditioning your ability to read, but your ability to act and your flexibility to work in different ways with different people.

If you need the pieces in specific accessible formats - or if you have any other accessibility requirements, please don't hesitate to tell us. The audition panel will also give you direction to see how you respond to creative guidance and work with others on the spot.

After the first audition, all attendees will receive an email from NSC informing you of the outcome of the first round. If you have been invited to a call back, details will be given, including anything specific the panel would like you to work on.

At the second round of auditions we will again lead a short group warm up, after which you will be split into small groups or given sections of the text to work on individually. We may ask you to read for several different parts with different people each time and respond to individual and group direction. This is because we are an ensemble company and we like to experiment and look at different pairings and casting possibilities! It is more usual than not to be cast in several roles within a production to keep the cast small and the production mobile and flexible.

After the second round of auditions, the committee or director will call successful auditionees to confirm casting choices. Unsuccessful applicants will be emailed.

What to expect from NSC productions

We are an ensemble grassroots company. Working with the NSC is an incredibly rewarding experience. As we are a not-for-profit company, however, we do ask for the full commitment of our cast members and would like to ensure that all prospective members are prepared for the level of commitment we expect.

After casting is complete, we will contact you with details of an initial all-cast meeting, in which expectations for the production will be reiterated. You can voice any difficulties or problems you may have during this meeting and we will endeavour to help as much as we can.

Rehearsals

In general, we rehearse at The Embankment Pub in Nottingham (282-284 Arkwright Street. NG2 2GR). Any changes in venue will be noted on the rehearsal schedule and sent to you with as much notice as possible.

Our rehearsal days are Tuesdays (6:30pm - 9:45pm), Thursdays (6:30 - 9:45pm), and Sundays (12.30-4.30pm).

In our initial cast meeting, we may nominate members of the cast to be warm-up leaders and time-keepers. This will ensure that rehearsals begin and end on time, and that all actors are ready to work. We will also assign roles for the setting up of staging either in this meeting or within the first few weeks of rehearsals as these demands become clear. This may include large set items, such as scaffolds etc, props tables/backstage areas, and our gazebo for our summer productions.

Rehearsals Timings

Rehearsals are to start promptly at 7pm, having used the initial 30 minutes for arrival and warm-up.

6:30pm - Arrival
6:45pm - Warm up
7pm - Rehearsal begins

If you will be arriving late to any rehearsals, please let the director know with as much notice as possible, to ensure that rehearsal can run smoothly and we can work around your absence.

If you have any rehearsals that you **must** be absent for, please ensure the company is aware of this **as soon as possible**, ideally in your audition application, but at the very latest **within 24 hours of being cast** in a production. This allows our production manager to put together an accurate rehearsal schedule. In the event of emergencies/sickness, we will do our best to accommodate.

In general, the content of Tuesday and Thursday's rehearsals will be planned in advance. Sunday's rehearsals will be left open for us to fix any problems, go over any scenes we feel need more work, and cover more in depth character development. However, if you have particular requests for work please see the director or contact the team and this will be accommodated where possible. Similarly, the plan is subject to variation with the demands of the show as they develop.

Our expectations

As we are a small company, with a voluntary committee and very limited technical and backstage support, you **will be expected** to help with the logistics of productions. This may include driving to venues with cast members and set/props, setting up of stage at rehearsals and performances and striking the same, capturing content for social media, completing interviews with local media including radio and TV, presence at promotional events, flyering and handing out promotional material in local areas, and other ad hoc tasks that will ensure the show is a success. The directors and committee will also be engaging in these tasks and will take on as much as possible but the only way the shows are a success is when everyone pulls together and takes a holistic approach to theatre-making.

Performance Weeks

One week before performances begin, you will be emailed details of each show. This will include performance start times, full addresses of performance venues including parking information and any other pertinent details.

During our summer season, all performances take place in outdoor venues (unless otherwise organised due to weather). During the winter, we perform in indoor non-traditional spaces. Venues include but are not limited to; churches, churchyards, community centres,

church halls, cathedrals, town squares/green spaces, heritage sites, pubs, restaurants, function rooms.

Call times will generally be 2 hours before the performance begins. For example, if a performance begins at 7pm, we expect the director and all cast members to be present at 5pm, ready to work and set up the space. If there is any change in call times, this will be outlined in the logistics email sent to you.

At performances, you may be asked to collect donations from audience members, before striking the stage/space and carrying out responsibilities assigned to you. This is how we make any money on the summer shows so it is very much in your interest to interact with the audience and make them feel inclined to donate. If, for any reason, this is something you have specific reasons to avoid, please speak to the director or their team as soon as possible. Similarly, any physical limitations should be made clear to the team asap so that we can accommodate and make reasonable adjustments.

Pay

We operate a profit share system which will be detailed in the next section.

If you are involved in our summer season, our productions are free for all. We will collect donations by cash and card at the end of each performance, and a QR code will be on every programme to allow audience members to donate via a SumUp link. We advertise our summer shows as “Free” instead of “Pay-What-You-Feel” as we do not want financial anxiety to be a barrier to any potential audience members. This means that some audience members will not pay anything for the performance, which you must be prepared for as a cast member. We believe changing our advertising to say “Pay-What-You-Feel” will stop many people from seeing our productions and goes against the company’s ethos.

Our winter shows are ticketed, partly to pay for venue costs. During the run, we generally stage two matinees, which are free and ‘no-frills’, to retain our goal of making Shakespeare accessible to all communities.

We do not pay for individual fuel expenses - this decision was made to ensure the cast profit share was more equitable. **If you have a long distance to travel for rehearsals and performances, please consider whether you are prepared for the financial consequences of this.**

After production profits have been calculated, you will be emailed a request for an invoice, with details of who to invoice to and the amount you will be paid. If you have never invoiced before, we can provide a template and instructions for this. Send your invoice to finance@nottinghamshakespeare.co.uk and you will be paid within the payment terms.

Profit Share

Details of the profit share are as follows:

Summer Season

All production expenses are paid for by revenue from the previous winter season.

Director's fee = 10%
Committee fee = 2.5% each
Cast = equal share of remaining revenue

Under our profit share model, a cast member includes anyone present at ⅔ of rehearsals or more. This may then include a stage manager or stagehand dependent on the number of rehearsals they attend.

Example:

Show revenue = £6000
Director's fee = £600
Committee fee = £150 (for 4 committee members, total payment is £600)
Cast (10 members arbitrarily) = 10% of £4800 = £480 each

Winter Season

As we make more revenue on winter shows, money is put back into the company for future productions. The profit share model for the remaining revenue remains the same as above.

The winter show revenue covers the following costs before making a profit…

1) Venue Hire
2) Production Costs (i.e. props, costume, effects - not including company costs i.e. costume rails, accessibility aids, purchase of lights etc that will be used on more than one production)
3) The costs of mounting the next summer production - £2000

Policies and Procedures

Should you be cast, you will receive a pack with all our policies and procedures, plus additional information to help you get the best out of your journey with us.

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Thank you for your interest in working with us! We are excited to meet you and see what you can do.

Best of luck,
Nottingham Shakespeare Company