

## Take note

Giving and taking notes is core to theatre practice, but it's fraught with difficulty. Poppy Burton-Morgan on how to avoid common pitfalls

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MARC BRENNER

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## Fringe freeloaders?

Producers and promoters accepting complimentary Edinburgh Fringe tickets need to be aware of their true cost – and so do we critics, says Lyn Gardner

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## Oliviers face new calls to recognise casting directors

GEORGIA SNOW

Organisers of the Olivier Awards are facing renewed pressure to recognise casting directors, after it was announced that BAFTA will introduce a dedicated category at its film ceremony for the first time next year.

The head of casting at the National Theatre and Andrew Lloyd Webber's casting director are among those calling on Olivier Awards organiser the Society of London Theatre to honour casting professionals, who it is argued have long been overlooked at awards.

The Casting Directors' Guild ran its own awards this year in response to this. However, until now casting has not been recognised by a major awards ceremony in the UK.

Last week, BAFTA revealed that a casting award would be introduced at its film awards, as well as in the British Academy Television Craft Awards, in 2020.

It is the first time BAFTA has established a new award since 1999 and the first time ever that a category has been simultaneously introduced across both awards schemes.

Alastair Coomer, the NT's head of casting, described BAFTA's decision as a "timely recognition of the invaluable craft, skill and dedication of casting directors within the creative process". He added: "Sadly, and surprisingly, casting is still not recognised at the Olivier Awards, and I hope BAFTA's exciting decision will encourage SOLT to re-evaluate its position with some urgency."

Fellow casting director David Grindrod, who oversees casting for Lloyd Webber's shows

and whose company works across theatre, TV and film, added: "It's absolutely right that casting professionals are recognised and I'd love to see this echoed at the Olivier Awards."

When BAFTA introduces its casting award next year, the longlist will be decided by a chapter of voters with specific expertise and knowledge about casting. The BAFTA jury will then decide the nominations and a winner.

According to BAFTA's guidelines, it will be judged on elements such as how the casting serves the characters and the piece, how the brief was interpreted to reflect the writer and director's vision, how the casting director collaborated with other creatives and their approach to new talent and diversity.

Praising the move, Victor Jenkins, chair of the CDG, said he was "personally and professionally over the moon", but added: "The alchemy of casting has long been overlooked in awards categories. We hope these awards will lead to wider recognition for the huge amount of work that goes into casting for both stage and screen, and instigate further casting categories."

Jessica Ronane, who is in charge of casting at the Old Vic, said the work of casting directors was often not fully understood, and that celebrating the profession at the Oliviers could increase its visibility and encourage young people to consider it as a career. "The more awareness we can give to the work we do and how vital that is can only be a good thing," she said. "[An Olivier for casting] now feels like the natural step."

SOLT declined to comment.

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DAWN KILLNER



JASSY EARL  
BOTTOM LEFT: MIHAELA BODILOVIC

## Spotlight sorry for 'creepy' child audition advert

GIVERNY MASSO

Spotlight has apologised for allowing a "totally unacceptable" casting call for a child actor to appear on its platform.

In its original wording, a casting breakdown seeking a nine to 11-year-old girl for a Milka commercial said the performer must be "beautiful and angelic" and "she must not have reached puberty". The breakdown also stated "no red hair" and "no overweight children".

The brief, posted on Spotlight by casting director Beth Charkham on behalf of the chocolate brand, was amended twice following widespread criticism on social media, before it was later removed.

Actor and producer Helen Raw shared the casting breakdown on Twitter, branding

it "appalling" and "more than a bit creepy". She said: "There needs to be regulation in the industry and people need to be held accountable for what they put out on casting sites."

A statement from Spotlight on Twitter "[apologised] unreservedly" for the casting breakdown. It added: "On Thursday one of the casting directors who uses Spotlight's platform published a casting call on our platform that absolutely did not meet our high standards, but nevertheless slipped through the net."

"When our attention was drawn to this, we were slow to take action and even the steps we initially took fell far short of what is expected of us by Spotlight members, casting directors and our own team."

A spokesman from Milka added: "We take our advertising responsibility very seriously and this is not representative of the brief we shared with the casting agency and does not meet our high standards. We would never approve the use of such a notice, and are urgently reviewing the situation with Spotlight UK to understand how and why it has happened."

Charkham did not respond to The Stage's requests for comment.

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