

# SAMTC DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion) Policy

To be read alongside our Anti Discrimination Policy

May 2023: note, this policy is up to date at the time of creation but may develop as required in line with Trustee meetings and feedback.

## A. INTRODUCTION

The SAMTC Committee acknowledges that SAMTC's charitable aims will be fully realised when its activities and productions are accessible to any person irrespective of race, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, religious belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or class/socio-economic group.

We acknowledge our moral and legal duty to equal opportunities as embodied in The Equality Act 2010 from which their anti-discrimination policy was founded. The committee recognise their trusted responsibility in developing, publishing and implementing a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy to ensure that no boundaries are in place for everyone to equally participate and enjoy the work of the company.

## B. PRIMARY ACTIVITY

SAMTC's principal activity as outlined in the constitution is to '**educate the public in the arts of operatic, dramatic and musical arts**', which is primarily achieved through the production of live theatre'. SAMTC remain committed to achieving equality of opportunity and a creative environment free of discrimination in its main areas of work, in the following ways:

- Making sure that both the process and production of theatre making remains accessible at all levels
- Creating and forming a working environment that is welcoming and free of discrimination for all members and those involved at all stages
- Actively pursuing programming that takes into account issues of diversity, equality and inclusion, including those outlined in this policy and prefaced below in guidelines accepted by the committee
- Making sure, so far as is possible, that its activities are delivered by production groups that reflect the diversity of, and are sensitive to the particular needs of, the participants and, where applicable, the subject matter addressed in individual productions.

- Consult with members and set up a confidential process for feedback with a dedicated DEI committee officer, both alongside individual productions and regular activities. Encourage and foster a relationship with members where views can be expressed regularly and openly.
- Ensure that activities are affordable and provided at the most appropriate times, reviewing these regularly.
- Disseminate information about our work as widely as possible, and where necessary targeted to particular groups to ensure maximum awareness.
- Where practicable, provide information in the most effective medium using languages, print, images, audio-visual, etc;
- Ensure, as far as possible, rehearsals and primary activities will take place in accessible environments where no one is unable to attend due to any physical disability.

### **C. DEI COMMITTEE REP**

SAMTC acknowledges that DEI is an integral part of their organization and will be recognised as such through a named committee position. Whilst DEI efforts should extend to the full committee, having one identifiable member, agreed each year at the AGM, shows a commitment to the membership and offers a point of contact for members. The DEI rep will have access to a confidential and separate email address for members to contact should issues arise that need to be discussed at a committee level.

A standing agenda point for DEI will be included at each committee meeting for discussion of issues and active discussion of increased DEI efforts and activity.

An annual DEI survey will be sent to members that is optional to complete but encouraged to offer a representation of the current membership. Further details to be communicated to members with regards to GDPR and where/how this information is stored and used.

### **D. SHOW SELECTION**

SAMTC understands that musicals can deal with complex themes, inherent bias and areas of outdated and problematic views. When selecting shows these will be discussed as a committee and production teams and mitigated as far as possible. It is understood that the terms of performance licenses restrict changes to text and original intentions of the authors and must be performed as written in line with the performance license. Understanding these boundaries and the scope for interpretation will be discussed with production teams when selecting a show for performance.

SAMTC understands how important diverse representation is in terms of storytelling and the shows it chooses to perform. We will ensure that creative teams reflect and are sensitive to these diverse stories, as well as any areas that may challenge this goal. This may include discussing with the membership any concerns people may have over which stories are told and how they are told, inviting those with direct knowledge of themes to identify and flag anything

that could be considered problematic or offensive. It may also extend to seeking professional advice from other amateur theatre groups of specialist practitioners where appropriate to ensure sensitive stories are told in the most appropriate way possible.

## **E. RECRUITMENT AND CASTING**

At a Committee level, open positions will be advertised across the membership with an emphasis on inclusion to ensure the trustees accurately represent the diversity of the membership.

For production teams, we will do everything possible to encourage diversity across all roles. When a show features themes pertinent to a minority group, we will ensure the production team reflects this to the best degree possible in order to offer an authenticity to the process.

In terms of casting, SAMTC are committed to creating a safe and supportive audition environment where everyone feels equipped and empowered to succeed. We will maintain an excellent standard of performers cast for each production.

We are committed to ensuring that all actors or performers will be treated equally throughout a fair and open audition process, regardless of ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, age, physical ability, faith or economic background. We aim to reflect the diversity of the world we live in on stage rather than that of the period a show is written.

We are committed to offering an open audition process for all our productions. We will openly advertise all auditions online, through social media and direct marketing to members, newsletter subscribers and to a growing selection of community and interest groups. We aspire to make DEI progress by widening the network of these advertisements beyond our usual outlets to reach the widest possible population.

The DEI Rep, or nominated representative, will be present at auditions for members to raise any issues or address any concerns that may arise from the process. They will not sit as part of the audition panel, but will be present as part of the casting discussion to ensure this policy is followed and to assist the panel with any questions that may arise.

We are committed to the principle of open casting. Production teams will be told to cast with an open mind, looking beyond prejudice whilst maintaining maximum flexibility around personal characteristics, not wedded to previous productions and established 'types'.

This begins with a neutral position for all roles where specific characteristics are not specified within the libretto. When specific characteristics are identified as being central to the story this will be noted in audition notices and addressed at the pre-show meetings.

We shouldn't shy away from performing certain shows due to the challenges they may present, instead these should be seen as a way to enhance our membership and increase diversity

across the board. If the committee chooses to perform a show that requires diverse roles, the production team and committee should form a plan to advertise auditions as widely as possible in order to offer an inclusive process. Communities will be targeted instead of specific individuals.

No one will be asked to play a minority role against type. Where a specific characteristic or ethnicity is pertinent to the text and integrity of the show this will not be altered to suit a performer who is unsuitable for the role.

Where roles are required to engage in sensitive behaviour (eg. kissing, scenes of an intimate nature, drug use, suicide etc.) these will be clearly identified in audition material and raised at pre-show meetings. Audition forms will ask auditionees to confirm they have read and understood the requirements of the role they are auditioning for and are encouraged to speak with a member of the production team before auditions should this raise any concern.

Where the script of a show dictates a particular moment of intimacy or handling of a sensitive subject, for example use of racist language, suicide, drug use or abuse, the production team will identify specific rehearsals where these will be rehearsed and discuss requirements with the cast accordingly. If necessary the rehearsal will be deemed 'closed' to non-necessary members of the company and the use of phones and recording devices banned. These rehearsals will be scheduled ahead of time with the participants. The SAMTC committee will work with the production team to solicit the aid of external professionals if required for guidance and counsel.

Safeguarding is an important factor in all productions and activities. Where this involves children, a separate safeguarding policy will be created and distributed to all parties depending on the needs of the specific show or activity. Trained reps will be sought in this area to implement the specific safeguarding policies as required by law.

## **F. MARKETING**

SAMTC recognises that marketing can help increase the diversity of its membership and audiences. Marketing beyond our usual membership should be an ongoing commitment and built into our forward planning at every opportunity.

Collaborations and partnerships with local communities will be encouraged and reported back during committee meetings. This may include performance collaborations, newsletter sharings, invites to performances and so on to increase our presence in the local area and beyond.

Our communications will be considered in line with our DEI plan to ensure it remains sensitive and inclusive at all times.

## **G. EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS**

The primary responsibility for implementation of this policy rests with the SAMTC board of Trustees and committee. This plan will be regularly reviewed at the AGM and committee meetings where appropriate.

We will aim to collect relevant data to help measure delivery against this policy with regular feedback to the membership. The DEI committee rep will be responsible for updating and feeding back on this progress at regular intervals, including space at the AGM.

The SAMTC committee will expect each individual member to read this policy and communicate when they feel any breach of the policy has occurred. The due process for this is to contact the DEI Rep in the first instance for discussion at committee level or with the Chair directly at the earliest opportunity. Any suspected breach of the policy will be investigated and fed back on appropriately on a case-by-case basis. At the beginning of each rehearsal period, the DEI Rep will be invited to address the cast to discuss the policy and outline expectations in line with this policy on expected behaviours.

Production teams and freelancers employed by the SAMTC committee to undertake any part of its key goals will be expected to read and comply with this policy at all times and be supported by the committee throughout for its successful application. We will ask for relevant similar statements and policies from partners that we work with and share with members when appropriate.

### 3. DEI Action Plan

1. Create a DEI Policy that will be shared with membership and publicised on the website and through social media. - **by June 2023**
2. Officially name a committee position as DEI officer complete with confidential email address that will be visible to the membership. - **by June 2023**
3. Conduct a diversity audit: Circulate a survey to membership, along with announcement of the policy and plan to identify areas where diversity is lacking. Use the data to set specific goals and interrogate processes that require consolidation. **By September 2023**
4. Review current practices: Complete an evaluation of audition forms and show/audition packs. Look at partnering with community organizations to attract a more diverse pool of talent for both production teams and casts. - **beginning with 'Elf' and continuing as appropriate**
5. Provide DEI training to production teams ahead of auditions, particularly in relation to unconscious bias, as well as being present at auditions. - **beginning with 'Elf' and continuing as appropriate**

6. Provide ongoing support to production teams and casts throughout the audition, rehearsal and performance process. - **beginning with 'Elf' and continuing as appropriate**
7. Be a visible presence to casts throughout a production process to offer support to members where required - **Ongoing**
8. Celebrate diversity: celebrate diversity within the membership by incorporating cultural traditions and celebrations into productions and events. From celebrating and acknowledging Pride month to observance of religious holidays. - **Ongoing**