

CREATING SPACE FOR GENDER DIVERSE THEATRE

by John Meredith, Sloth Levine, and the Gender Explosion Working Group

Transgender and non-binary artists are here and we're ready to work! Steps have been made to make theatrical spaces more welcoming, but more work is needed to create a truly inclusive environment and culture. It may feel like a big task, but we're here to start you out with 7 achievable actions you can take right now to support your transgender and non-binary coworkers.

1 MAKE SPACE FOR MISTAKES.

We're all going to make mistakes, slip up, say the wrong thing. It's inevitable. Give yourself the kindness to allow for that so you can move forward with a focus on growth, rather than making excuses. Allow others to do the same as you invite them to join you in fostering gender diversity.

2 NORMALIZE IDENTIFYING PRONOUNS UNIVERSALLY.

Introduce yourself including your pronouns. Ask for pronouns during introduction circles. Add a space for pronouns on contact sheets, audition forms, and applications. Add them to your business cards, name tags, and email signature.

3 BE AWARE OF YOUR LANGUAGE

Be conscious of using the word "identified" when discussing gender. This can perpetuate the notion that trans women aren't "real" women. Instead of saying "seeking female identified playwrights" try "seeking play submissions from women".

You don't need to say "preferred pronouns" just "pronouns" will suffice. Just like someone's name, it isn't "preferred" it just is.

When discussing pronouns, replace phrases like "she series" with "she, her, hers" to be more accessible.

Transgender & trans are adjectives, not nouns or verbs. Don't use the phrase "a transgender" or "transgendered woman"—try instead "transgender people" or "a trans woman"

4 SUPPORT TRANS ARTISTS

Read works by transgender writers. See work by, featuring, directed, or otherwise created with trans artists.

Pay attention to how many trans people are included in your productions & seasons as a whole—whether onstage, backstage, or in the audience.

5 RETHINK CASTING BREAKDOWNS

When reading plays—any play—notice if you assume all the characters are cisgender. Ask yourself what happens if any of the characters are trans.

"Hmm... Rosalind seems very comfortable dressed as Ganymede. Could As You Like It be about a genderfluid person?" (Yes.)

6 CREATE GENDER-INCLUSIVE SPACES

Convert your theatre restrooms into gender-neutral spaces. Don't assume that the best way to divide dressing rooms is Men's & Women's.

Prepare your staff to talk to patrons who may be unfamiliar with why gender neutral spaces are necessary.

7 HIRE CONSULTANTS & INCLUSIVITY TRAINERS

Bring in (*and pay*) trans and non-binary people during your season planning and script evaluation process to discuss possible gaps or issues within your season.

"I love this play, but it should be addressed that the man in a dress is supposed to be a joke"

A GUIDE TO PRONOUNS IN THE THEATRE

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Using someone's correct pronouns is a part of effective communication, professionalism, and most of all, respect. Below we tackle some questions and misconceptions about pronouns.

BRINGING UP GENDER IDENTITY AT WORK SEEMS UNNECESSARY AND UNPROFESSIONAL?

Using correct pronouns is just like using someone's correct name. You wouldn't walk around calling Sam by the name Alexander... that'd just be weird. And rude. And you probably wouldn't question Sam's intentions if he corrected you for referring to him as "her" because you've only spoken to him over email.

Pronouns have always been used in your workplace, this isn't something new or an invasion of gender politics into the rehearsal room. It's just that the majority of people have the privilege of their pronouns being correctly assumed at first glance. But just like for the Sam's, Alex's, and Jamie's out there, introducing pronouns is helpful and respectful to your trans coworkers. Plus it'll save time and strain in the long run.

HOW DO I START INTRODUCING PRONOUNS IN MY PROCESS?

Start saying your pronouns when you introduce yourself:

"Hi, I'm Sam. He, him, his. I'm the assistant director"

Add them to your business cards and email signature next to your name:

Sam Adams | he/him/his
Assistant Director, Hamlet

Add them during introductions:

"Say your name, pronouns we should use in this space, and favorite ice cream flavor"

On contact forms, add a section to fill them in:

Pronouns to use in this space: _____

Subsequently, add pronouns to your contact sheets:

Asst. Director.....Sam Adams.....he.....617-555-7611.....sam@gmail.com

WHAT HAPPENS IF I MAKE A MISTAKE?

- **DON'T** derail the conversation with your apology
- **DON'T** make excuses
- **DON'T** overcorrect and make it a big deal
- **DO** correct yourself quickly
- **DO** correct others quickly
- **DO** work to not make the same mistake again



"Could you stand next to him—oh my god! I'm so sorry! Her! I know you're a girl. Obviously! I never do that. My cousin is trans so I get it. I'm just so tired right now..."



"Could you stand next to him—sorry, her. And then hold her hand?"