



Mayhem Theatre Company

2024 Pitch Process: Guidance Notes - Shakespeare

About Mayhem

Based in Wimbledon, Mayhem Theatre Company is an award-winning theatre company who perform exceptional and memorable musicals and plays in the South London and Kingston area. Mayhem is an amateur company, but we strive for professional standards in both performance and production values. We hold open auditions throughout the year and welcome members of all backgrounds and experience levels.

Mayhem is a members-led company, run by a group of dedicated Mayhemers who form the Members Committee, and support the day to day running of the company.

Mayhem Shakespeare

Mayhem has performed outdoor Shakespeare in the Italian Garden at Cannizaro Park every summer since 2012. Over the years we have made efforts to enhance the experience for cast and audience alike, and consistently turn out productions of the highest possible level. We attract strong performers from across London, and regularly win awards.

The annual Shakespeare production is an important part of our business plan, and attracting a large audience to this show allows us to take risks elsewhere in our annual programme. We are therefore less likely to take risks in terms of the shows we choose, although we have enjoyed pushing the boundaries of various concepts in the past.

2024 Dates

The dates of Shakespeare depend on the availability of Cannizaro Park and are always set to ensure sufficient distance from the Wimbledon Championships (which is important for marketing reasons). The dates for 2024 have not yet been confirmed, but the season is likely to be **24-27 July**.

Show week for Shakespeare usually runs from the Sunday with a run in the park, followed by a dress run at the rehearsal venue on the Monday, a tech/dress in the park on the Tuesday and opening night on the Wednesday. We expect the creative team to be available for all of these days. Please note any availability issues on the application form.

What We Are Looking For

We are primarily looking for a Director with a strong vision. Directing experience is preferred, and experience performing and / or directing Shakespeare is an advantage, but not essential. Our priority is a good pitch for a play that we can see being entertaining and attractive to audiences.

You are welcome to include other team members in your pitch, but this is not essential. We will assist you to find the right team members if needed. Shakespeare teams will always include a Show Producer, and may also include an Assistant Director, a Choreographer (if the vision includes dance), a Musical Director (if the vision includes live music) and/or a Fight Coordinator.



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Which play should I pitch?

We are open to almost any play that has a strong pitch. However, for more obscure plays we will need to be assured that the concept is marketable, due to the Shakespeare production's position as a cornerstone of our financial model. Note that we have found the most commercial plays to be ones that are either well-known, comedic or both. Our target market is the residents of Wimbledon Village, who see the Shakespeare as a tradition they attend annually.

The only plays we won't consider are those we have done recently (roughly within the last 6-7 years). These are:

- Romeo and Juliet
- The Merchant of Venice
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Tempest
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- Macbeth

Note that the Committee will have final say on the selection of the play. We may therefore ask you to consider alternative titles during the pitch process.

What about non-Shakespeare plays?

We are always looking at ways to mix things up a bit and keep our programme for our members and our audiences. However, Mayhem's Shakespeare is a very strong brand, so if we do something different it has to be after a lot of thought and consideration, and needs to be the right play at the right time (such as our Covid-friendly production of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare [abridged] in 2020). For 2024 we have decided to stick with the tried-and-true Shakespeare formula.

Budget considerations

We work to disciplined budgets, which we balance with artistic excellence. This is a challenge, but one to which we expect all producers and teams to rise. It is worth noting that we rely on the income from our Shakespeare productions to balance the riskier shows elsewhere in the year.

A successful pitch should outline anything that may cost more than usual. This may include extravagant set/lighting requirements (and this should also take into account the open-air setting -see more on this below), period specific costumes that need to be rented out, or live music that requires hired musicians and/or instruments. We are likely to ask for a detailed plan for these kinds of budget constraints later in the pitch process, so you should give them some consideration before submitting your pitch.

Venue

Cannizaro Park is an open-air venue, and our Shakespeare production is performed in the round. (Photos of previous productions can be seen on our website). We've experimented over the years with the best way to use the space and have now settled on this as our approach. We are unlikely to consider any pitch that deviates from this. The centre of the stage can be elevated with staging (again do look at photos to



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see previous ways we have used this), but other than this we do have limited staging and rely on the natural setting of the park. Your pitch should include details of how you will use the space and how you will approach directing an open-air performance (experience of directing open air productions is a plus)

Members' Company

Mayhem is a membership company. Our members put on shows for the benefit of other members. This means that, as well as the actors not being paid and being members of the society, this applies to all core members of a production team.

Diversity and Inclusion

Mayhem is dedicated to producing dramatic and operatic works within the local community and works to create an inclusive theatrical environment for its members. As an amateur theatre company, we maintain a strong commitment to embracing diversity and foster an inclusive rehearsal and social environment to encourage all members to be involved in any and all aspects of theatrical production. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in the following:

Membership is open to all

We recognise that we benefit in numerous ways from differences in culture, ethnicity, national origin, race, colour, religion, gender, gender identity, age, disability and sexual orientation. General membership to the society is, and will continue to be, open to everyone over the age of 16 and, as an amateur theatre company, we maintain a strong commitment to embracing diversity.

An inclusive environment for all members

We foster an inclusive rehearsal and social environment to encourage members to get involved. All members have equal voting rights in applicable situations; as an example, in selecting a show at our annual Showdown event. Roles on the Council are open to any member who wishes to apply and all members have an active voice in how we run the society. We are also always open to anyone wishing to join the Members' Council as a General Council Member to provide support and assistance to council members with various tasks and projects throughout the year. Members from all and any background are encouraged to join the society at any time and the company strives to provide opportunities to get involved in any and all aspects of theatrical production, regardless of experience (subject to all necessary health and safety considerations).

Auditionees from all backgrounds are encouraged

We value the specific abilities and talents our members bring to the society and, equally, encourage members and non-members to audition for any roles in our productions, unless a specific requirement is stated and is pivotal to the plot in question.

Casting is based on talent and suitability

We are dedicated to producing dramatic and operatic productions to the highest standards and commit to casting roles based on suitability for role.

We explore diverse theatrical options

We endeavour to create a calendar of productions characterised by as much diversity as possible each year, subject of course to rights availability and company suitability.



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Process

This guidance and the early stages of the pitch process are overseen by a limited group of Mayhem Members Committee members. Between them, these members have a variety of on-stage and off-stage experience, including performing in Mayhem shows, directing, producing, designing, or being involved elsewhere.

The final stages of the pitch process will involve the entire Members Committee making the final decisions on the season. The Committee includes directors, actors, producers and people with backgrounds in both musicals and plays. This ensures that the selection process is as balanced and as fair as possible.

The application form is for you to tell us all about your show, your team and anything else that you think will help us. We love receiving applications that include pictures, sample marketing materials and generally show creative thought! We want to see passion!

The application form is available at <https://forms.gle/sfu7Bps16ZEv5DhE9>

Timetable

The Committee will be making its selections in time to announce the full 2024 season in early December 2023.

The deadline for submissions is 11AM on **Monday 11 December 2023**. Applications received after this time are unlikely to be considered. Early submissions are welcomed! Please ensure you complete the application form linked above by this deadline.

Please note: we may ask you to come and share your vision with the Committee during November. If this is the case, we will be in touch to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Maximum number of pitches

We ask that each Director only submits one play. However, we may ask you to consider other plays during the process, if we like your style but think an alternative may be more suitable.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the process, about play selection, or indeed anything else, please contact us at shakespeare@mayhemtheatre.co.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you — and to receiving some fantastic, innovative and interesting pitches, making Shakespeare 2024 a huge success!

The Mayhem Members Committee