



# SPOTLIGHT

THE HOME OF CASTING

The Spotlight Prize 2024





Shannon Watson  
Screen Winner, 2023



Teddy Moore  
Stage Winner, 2023

# The Spotlight Prize

## A Brief History

Since its introduction in the 1950s, the Spotlight Prize has given graduates the chance to establish their careers in front of industry professionals.

Previously, the Prize was known as **The Millington Award**, and notable nominees and winners include Dame Judi Dench, Albert Finney, John Hurt, Brian Cox, Zoë Wanamaker, Robert Lindsay and Anna Calder-Marshall.

**The Spotlight Prize** was then re-established in the early 2000s.

Almost 70 years later, over 75 drama schools and universities are now invited to nominate a student from their graduating class.

The nominees and winners of past Spotlight Prize showcases include Gwendoline Christie, Sam Heughan, Jodie Whittaker, Faye Marsay, Ben Whishaw, Edward Bluemel, Joel Fry, Bessie Carter, Laura Donnelly, Jacob Fortune-Lloyd, Rosalind Eleazar and Gabrielle Creevy – amongst many, many more.



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# A Very Warm Welcome

We'd like to thank you, our industry friends and colleagues, for joining us tonight as we celebrate another year of exceptionally talented graduates.

The Spotlight Prize is a favourite event in many of our calendars and I see first-hand the passion and hard work that our Spotlight team put in to make each year so special.

Tonight, we will also award our Nigel Seale bursary and we're delighted to have this year's recipient Alana Ruddy with us this evening. Alana will be starting her training at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama later this year.

This year, we have 22 brilliant graduates who have been selected to perform and we're acutely aware of the part we all play in their journey. We hope that we can continue to come together on nights like this to champion emerging talent.



Matt Hood,  
Managing  
Director

SPOTLIGHT  
THE HOME OF CASTING

# The Judges

# Stage Judges

## Danny Sapani

Danny Sapani is an accomplished and versatile actor whose work spans film, television and theatre. He can currently be seen in Guy Ritchie's feature *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare* and was the male lead in *Girl* earlier this year, which premiered at Sundance and was nominated for a Grand Jury Prize. He will next be seen on the big screen in *The Amateur* opposite Rami Malek, Rachel Brosnahan and Laurence Fishburne.

Danny is best known for his acclaimed role of 'Sembene' in *Penny Dreadful*, and was a regular in *Killing Eve* (Season 3). His other screen credits include: *Black Panther*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Star Wars: Episode VIII - The Last Jedi*, *Trance*, *The Siege of Jadotville*, *The Bastard Executioner*, *Doctor Who*, *Harlots*, *Blackout*, *The Fear* and *Misfits*.

Danny also has an impressive stage career. He has just finished a run of *Between Riverside and Crazy*, directed by Michael Longhurst at the Hampstead Theatre. Other theatre credits include: *King Lear* (Almeida), *Les Blancs* (National Theatre), *Home*, *Medea*, *Macbeth*, *Andersen's English*, *The Overwhelming*, *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare's Globe), Joe Turner's *Come and Gone*, *Wig Out*, *Big White Fog*, *Radio Golf*, *His Dark Materials*, *To the Green Fields Beyond* and *The Lion*.

## Fra Fee

Fra Fee is an Irish actor and Royal Academy of Music graduate, well known for his roles across film, television and stage.

Film credits include: *Rebel Moon*, *The Laureate*, *Cinderella* and *Les Misérables*. Television credits include: *Dalgliesh*, *Marvel's Hawkeye*, *The Spanish Princess* and *Heart and Soul*. Theatre credits include: 'Emcee' in *Cabaret* (Kit Kat Club), *Translations* (National Theatre), *The Ferryman* directed by Sam Mendes (West End and Broadway), *As You Like It* (National Theatre), *The Last Five Years* (Lyric Belfast), *Romeo & Juliet* (Gate Theatre Dublin), and *Les Misérables* (Queen's Theatre). (cont)

(cont) For his role in *The Ferryman*, Fra won the 2018 WhatsOnStage award for Best Supporting Actor in a Play.

In 2024, Fra can be seen as 'Andy' in *Lost Boys and Fairies* (BBC).

## Harry Blumenau, CDG, CDA

Harry's current credits include: *Your Lie in April* (Harold Pinter Theatre), *Kinky Boots* (Curve Theatre/UK Tour), *Why Am I So Single?* (Garrick Theatre), *Burlesque* (Manchester Opera House/Glasgow Theatre Royal) and *Babies* (The Other Palace).

His theatre credits include: *Unbelievable* (Criterion Theatre), *The SpongeBob Musical* (Southbank Centre/UK Tour), *Derren Brown's Showman* (Apollo Theatre), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Curve Theatre/UK Tour), *Death Note* (London Palladium/Lyric Theatre), *Dirty Dancing* (Dominion Theatre/UK Tour), *Babies* (Lyric Theatre), *Treason* (London Palladium/Alexandra Palace/UK Tour), *Choir of Man* (USA Tour), *Starcrossed* (Wilton's Music Hall), *Blippi* (Lyric Theatre), *Disruption* and *On The Ropes* (Park Theatre), *Cinderella* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Fanny* (Watermill Theatre), *The Girl on the Train*, *Once*, *Private Lives* and *Million Dollar Quartet* (Barn Theatre), *Aladdin* (Lyric Hammersmith), *American Idiot* (Arts Theatre/UK Tour), *Footloose* (Peacock Theatre/UK Tour), *Dark Sublime* and *Silk Road* (Trafalgar Studios), *Our House* (UK Tour), *One Man, Two Guvnors* (Derby Theatre/Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch), *Glory Ride*, *Soho Cinders*, *Mythic* and *The Knowledge* (Charing Cross Theatre) and concert productions of *Your Lie in April*, *Wild About You*, *Chess*, *Kinky Boots* and *Treason* (Theatre Royal Drury Lane).

TV credits include: *Prince Andrew: The Musical* (ensemble casting) and *Derren Brown's Showman*. Film credits include: *Tomorrow Morning*, *A Family Affair*, *Beast/Type/Song* and *The Hermit*.

### **Jatinder Chera**

Jatinder's theatre credits include: *G* (Royal Court), *The Comeuppance* (Almeida), *The P Word*, *Sleepova*, *A Playlist for the Revolution*, *The Real Ones* (Bush), *The Flea*, *Samuel Takes a Break*, *Multiple Casualty Incident* (Yard) and *Sweat* (Royal Exchange).

### **Louisa Harland**

Louisa is well known for playing the title role of 'Nell Jackson' in the Disney+ series *Renegade Nell*, and the beloved 'Orla' in the multi award-winning *Derry Girls* (Channel 4/Netflix).

Before training at Mountview, Louisa appeared as a series regular in *Love/Hate* for RTE alongside Aidan Gillen and Robert Sheehan. Further screen credits include: Channel 5's *The Deceived*, Discovery's *Harley and the Davidsons*, Woody Harrelson's feature film *Lost in London* and Jack Rooke's award-winning comedy *Big Boys*. In 2022, the third and final season of *Derry Girls* aired to wide-spread critical acclaim.

On stage, Louisa starred in the one-woman show *Cotton Fingers* with National Theatre Wales, performed in a sell-out run at the Royal Court of *Glass. Kill. Bluebeard. Imp.* – a collection of new plays by Caryl Churchill, and starred as 'Agnes' in *Dancing at Lughnasa* at the National Theatre, directed by Josie Rourke.

Most recently, she starred in David Ireland's play *Ulster American* alongside Woody Harrelson and Andy Serkis, and in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in the West End opposite Brian Cox, both directed by Jeremy Herrin. Louisa played a leading role alongside Jack Rowan in the comedy/horror feature film *Boys From County Hell* and will next be seen in *Joy*, directed by Ben Taylor, with Bill Nighy and James Norton.

### **Lucinda Syson, CDG, CSA**

Lucinda Syson started her career in casting after graduating in French and Linguistics. Her training as a casting assistant was under Priscilla John on studio films like *Alien 3*, *City of Joy* and *Seven Years in Tibet*. Her early work as a casting director includes classic films such as *The Fifth Element* and *Snatch*. (cont)

(cont) With the support of producer Iain Smith, she had the luck to work with the late Tony Scott on *Spygame*, which had a huge influence on her career.

She continued working with incredible directors like Christopher Nolan on *Batman Begins*, *Inception* and *The Dark Knight*, and Alfonso Cuaron on *Children of Men* and *Wonder Woman*. She received an Artios nomination for Matthew Vaughn's 2010 film *Kick-Ass*.

More recently, she has entered the world of television on series like *The Sandman*, *Foundation* and *The Diplomat*, and just completed casting on the film *The Magic Faraway Tree*.

### **Nikki Amuka-Bird**

Nikki is a BAFTA-nominated actress, recognised for her work in BBC's *NW*, who's currently leading the thriller, *I, Jack Wright*. She recently finished working on *Here* for Robert Zemeckis, alongside Tom Hanks, and is currently a co-lead alongside Cate Blanchett in the upcoming A24 feature *Rumours*, which premiered at Cannes in 2024.

Nikki is the lead in independent thriller *Jericho Ridge*, as well as M. Night Shyamalan's *Knock at the Cabin*. She previously worked with Shyamalan on Universal's *Old*. She can be seen in *Citadel* for Amazon, and returned for the second series of Armando Iannucci's *Avenue 5* as one of the leads, alongside Hugh Laurie, for HBO.

Further credits include: *Persuasion* for Netflix, *The Outfit*, Disney's *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, BBC mini-series *Gold Digger*, *The Laundromat*, *Hard Sun*, *Quarry* for Cinemax/HBO, *The Children Act* and *Jupiter Ascending*.

Nikki's extensive stage credits include leading roles at the National Theatre, Royal Court Theatre, RSC and at the Donmar Warehouse in Ibsen's *The Lady From The Sea*.

### **Olissa Rogers, CSA**

Olissa Rogers is an Emmy award-winning casting director working on a freelance basis. She began working in the industry back in Germany in 2008. She worked there until 2016, mainly on TV.

In 2016, she met casting director Jeremy Zimmermann, and went to be casting assistant for him on several films until 2018. She then moved on to become casting assistant to Kharmel Cochrane for commercials and TV/film projects.

In March 2019, Olissa was approached by Theo Park and was working on big TV projects (e.g. *Ted Lasso*) as her associate, where she was until October 2019. From November 2019 until February 2020, Olissa was one of the casting associates to Amy Hubbard. Olissa has also worked for Fiona Weir as one of her associates from June 2020 to April 2022.

### **Rachel Freck, CDG**

Rachel Freck is an Emmy Award-winning casting director. Her credits include: *The Office* (Golden Globes, BAFTAs/RTS), *Little Dorrit* (Emmy for Outstanding Casting for a mini-series), *Howards End* (BAFTA nomination), all seasons of *W1A* and *Twenty Twelve* (BAFTA/RTS), Richard Curtis' adaptation of *Esio Trot* (Int. Emmy), four seasons of *Him and Her* (BAFTA/RTS), *Peter and Wendy* (Int. Emmy), Victoria Wood's *Housewife 49* (BAFTA/RTS), Sky Atlantic's *Hunderby* (BAFTA/British Comedy Award), *Green Wing* (BAFTA/RTS) and *Peep Show* seasons 1 and 2 (RTS/BAFTA).

Her recent television credits include: four seasons of *Trying* (Apple), *Ten Percent* (for Amazon/Sundance Now), *Mrs Wilson* (PBS-BAFTA-nominated), all seasons of *Tin Star*, *Sexy Beast*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Flack*.

Other notable credits include: *Love Nina*, *Defending the Guilty*, the BAFTA-nominated *Holy Flying Circus*, *Grandma's House*, *Life in Squares*, *The Long Walk to Finchley*, *Casanova*, *Nativity 1 and 2*, *Toast*, *Confetti*, BAFTA award-winning *The Mark of Cain* and *Your Christmas or Mine 1 and 2*. (cont)

(cont) For animation, she has just finished casting *That Christmas* – a feature adapted from Richard Curtis' children's books for Locksmith Animation (Netflix). She also cast the voices for the BAFTA and Oscar award-winning short animation *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*.

### **Verity Naughton, CDG**

Verity's most recent work includes being co-casting director on *King & Conqueror* (CBS) and doing young person casting on *The Hills of California* (Sam Mendes, Jez Butterworth).

Other work includes: UK casting on *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, *Bal Maiden* (NFTS) and *Jester* (NFTS). As casting associate, credits include: *The Beautiful Game* (Netflix), *The Book of Clarence* (Legendary), *HALO* (Paramount+), *All the Old Knives* (Amazon), *The First Lady* (Showtime, Lionsgate), *Stephen* (Hat Trick, ITV), *Riviera* (Archery Pictures), *Berlin Station* (Anonymous Content) and *Fate: The Winx Saga* (Netflix).

In theatre, Verity has cast projects for the Globe, the Royal Court, Southwark Playhouse, Chichester Festival Theatre and the Almeida Theatre. Having originally specialised in young person casting, Verity has cast children in a wealth of West End shows and on screen, including: *Enola Holmes* (Netflix), *The Pursuit of Love* (BBC), *Frozen the Musical* (Theatre Royal Drury Lane), *The Sound of Music* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Leopoldstadt* (Wyndham's Theatre), *Medea* (Soho Palace Theatre), *Small Island* (National Theatre), *The Ferryman* (Royal Court and Gielgud Theatre), *School of Rock* (UK and International Tour) and *Beauty & The Beast* (UK Tour).

# Screen Judges

## **Andy Brierley, CDG**

Andy set up Andy Brierley Casting in 2010 and The Casting Office in 2017. Credits include projects for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky, Netflix, Paramount+, NBC/Peacock, HBO Max, Warner Bros, Starz and Paramount Pictures.

Current and forthcoming projects include: *The Undeclared War* (Channel 4/Peacock/NBCU), *Death Valley* (BBC, starring Tim Spall), *The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim* (Warner Bros, starring Brian Cox), *This Time Next Year* (Blackbox/Signature), *Concordia* (Intaglio/Beta Film), *D-Day: The Unheard Tapes* (BBC/Wall To Wall) and his tenth series of *Silent Witness* (BBC).

## **Anna Dawson**

Anna is a Scotland-based casting director who has worked across film, TV and theatre for over a decade.

Her credits include: *Float* (BBC), BAFTA award-winning *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates* (Sky) and upcoming features *Midwinter Break* for Film 4 and Lesley Paterson's *Hidden*. Series co-cast with Simone Pereira Hind include: *The Island* (BBC), *The Chief* (BBC) and the upcoming adaptation of *The Railway Children*. Theatre credits include: *Macbeth* for the RSC, *Life is a Dream* (Wils Wilson), *Dracula* (Sally Cookson), *Macbeth – An Undoing* (Zinnie Harris).

In 2021, Anna co-created and developed a tool with Tagmin, Spotlight's agency solution, to ensure all actors get an answer on auditions in support of the Equity Yes/No campaign.

## **Bernard Telsey, CSA**

Bernard Telsey, along with his staff, has cast such Broadway shows as *Cabaret* at the Kit Kat Club, *The Mother Play*, *The Notebook*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Parade*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Into the Woods*, *MJ: The Musical*, *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, *Kinky Boots*, *Hairspray*, *In the Heights*, *Rent* and more. (cont)

(cont) Some of Telsey's film projects include the upcoming *Wicked*, *The Idea of You*, *The Color Purple*, *Mean Girls: The Musical*, *The Little Mermaid*, *In the Heights*, *Mary Poppins Returns*, *The Greatest Showman* and *Into the Woods*.

Recent television credits include: *Only Murders in the Building*, *The Gilded Age*, *And Just Like That* and *Schmigadoon*. Telsey is one of the Co-Artistic Directors of MCC Theater, and he was the 2016 recipient of the Casting Society of America's Hoyt Bowers Award for his contributions to the profession.

## **Claudia Blunt, CSA**

Claudia Blunt Casting was launched in 2020. Claudia's previous work includes multiple short and feature length film projects, such as ITVX's *The Effects of Lying* and Sky's *Bonus Track*, which was selected as part of Cannes Great8, premiered at The London Film Festival, and saw her long-listed for the BIFA for Best Casting.

She has played a key role in casting multiple screen projects for clients, including: HBO, Fox Searchlight, Sky Atlantic, Amazon, Canal+, Netflix, Paramount, Starz, Sony Pictures Television, BBC and Disney+. Claudia serves on the European Board of the Casting Society of America and in 2023 was delighted to be invited to join BAFTA as part of their Connect scheme.

## **Dan Jackson, CDG**

Having seamlessly made the move from being a busy actor into casting in 2006, Dan relocated from London to Glasgow to work with Kahleen Crawford in 2007. Dan gained his first credit as a casting director in 2012.

Dan is a member of the CDG and is proud to have been nominated for a 2021 CDG Best Casting award for his work on *His Dark Materials*. He was also nominated for a BIFA and CDG for Best Casting for the feature *Limbo*. (cont)

(cont) Other casting credits include: *Vigil* (Season 1 and 2), *Karen Pirie* (Season 1 and 2), *Timestalker*, *Prevenge*, *Daphne*, *Filth*, *Annika* (Season 1 and 2), *For Those in Peril* and *Dead Shot*. 17 years on and Dan and Kahleen are still working together.

### **Fiona Weir, CDG, CSA**

Fiona Weir moved into casting after working in film production. She trained with the renowned casting director Mary Selway, with whom she worked for many years.

Fiona has cast for many leading film directors, including: Clint Eastwood (*J. Edgar*, *Invictus*), Roman Polanski (*Ghost Writer*, *Carnage*), Peter Weir (*Master and Commander*), Rupert Goold (*Judy*) and David Yates (five *Harry Potter* films and the three *Fantastic Beasts* series films).

Other work includes: *Brooklyn* for John Crowley, *Room* for Lenny Abrahamson, *Everest* for Baltasar Kormakur, *Suffragette* for Sarah Gavron, *Pride* for Matthew Warchus, *Ammonite* for Francis Lee, and *The Duke*, *My Cousin Rachel* and *Venus* for Roger Michell. Her television work includes: *We Were the Lucky Ones* (presently screening on Hulu), *Life After Life* for John Crowley and the BBC, and *Brassic*, written by Daniel Brocklehurst and Joe Gilgun for Sky.

Fiona is presently working with Ken Branagh on his next film *The Last Disturbance of Madeline Hyde*, starring Jodie Comer. *We Live in Time* for John Crowley, starring Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield, will be released this autumn, and *Bad Apples*, starring Saoirse Ronan, will be released in 2025. Fiona was nominated for an Emmy for *The Girl in the Café*, a BIFA for *Brooklyn* and won the Artios Award for *Room*.

### **Makis Gazis, ICDA**

Makis Gazis is a native of Athens, Greece. After his film studies at the Stavrakos Film School in Athens and NFTS in London, he began working as a casting director. For over three decades, since 1993, he has developed a keen eye for discovering new talent, and built an extensive resume with international co-productions.

(cont)

(cont) He is a member of the International Casting Directors' Association (ICDA) and the European Film Academy (EFA). Casting credits include: *Moon*, *66 Questions*, *Pari*, *Smyrna*, *Adults in the Room*, *The Lost Daughter* (Greece casting), *She Loved Blossoms More*, *Greek Salad* (Amazon Prime) and *Daisy Jones & The Six* (Amazon Prime).

### **Maureen Hughes, CDG**

Maureen is an established casting director in Ireland, working in film, TV and theatre. She began working at the Druid Theatre Company in 1984, and then moved to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1991, where she was Head of Casting. In 1995, she worked as assistant casting director on Neil Jordan's *The Butcher Boy* and then as assistant to Jim Sheridan on *The Boxer*.

Her recent film work includes *That They May Face the Rising Sun* by Pat Collins and the yet-to-be-released *Small Things Like These* with Cillian Murphy (directed by Tim Mielants). Her TV work includes: *Love/Hate*, *Hidden Assets* and *Raw*. Her theatre work includes *The Ferryman* by Jez Butterworth, which she is currently casting for Gaiety Theatre (ends 2025).

### **Olivia Grant, CDG**

Olivia Grant is a London-based casting director who started out as a cast PA on film sets from 2013-2015, before making the move into casting.

She has co-cast the following projects with Lucy Bevan: *Masters of the Air* (Apple TV+) and *What's Love Got to Do With It?* (Studio Canal). Films due for release this year as co-casting director include: *Joy* (Netflix), *Lee* (Sky Cinema) and *Here* (Sony). Projects co-cast with Lucy currently in production include: *Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy* (Universal) and *Huntington* (A24/Studio Canal).

Olivia's associate credits include: *Barbie* (Warner Bros), *The Dig* (Netflix) and *The Batman* (Warner Bros).

## **Rich Mento, CSA**

Rich's select film and TV/digital casting credits include: *Remember Me*, *Warm Bodies*, *The Wackness*, the *Step Up* franchise (all five films), *Dear John*, *Safe Haven*, *Youth in Revolt*, *Cedar Rapids*, *Chloe*, *Sorority Row*, *No Strings Attached*, *Take Me Home Tonight*, *Tracers*, *Ashes in the Snow*, *The Mortuary Collection*, Blumhouse TV's horror/comedy series *12 Deadly Days* and numerous short films, including *Perfect Roast Potatoes*, for which he won an Artios Award for Excellence in Casting.

Slated for release in 2024-2025 is *I'm Beginning to See the Light*, starring Jack Huston, for luminary European director Konstantin Khudyakov, and two narrative episodic podcast series for Fresh Produce Media and Audible: *Bloodhound*, starring Elliot Fletcher and Stephen Root, and *Summer Breeze*, starring Sarah Steele, Mark Consuelos, Zach Gilford, and Kelly Ripa.

He's cast music videos (including U2's *Song for Someone*, starring Woody Harrelson), new media projects for both Electronic Arts and Bad Robot, PSAs and commercials for Park Pictures, and consulted for Universal Films and 343 Industries/Microsoft, as well as for The Park Avenue Armory in New York City on *Massive Attack v. Adam Curtis*.

Rich is a former co-president and now lifetime honorary board member of Casting Society (f.k.a. Casting Society of America).

## **Sam Stevenson, CDG**

Sam is a freelance casting director working in theatre, television and film. She worked in partnership with Gemma Hancock for many years, and in 2010 they were nominated for an Emmy for their work on the BBC miniseries, *Emma*.

Her television and film work includes: *Don't Take My Baby*, *Our World War*, *Glasgow Girls*, *Nightshift*, *Care*, *The Minor Character*, *Nixon's the One*, *The Selection*, *Silent Witness*, *Money*, *Consuming Passion*, *Mr Loveday's Little Outing*, *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*, *Afghan Dreamers*, *My Policeman*, *Treasures* (cont)

(cont) *Leave to Remain*, *Private Peaceful*, *Babel* (UK casting), and *The New World* (casting associate).

For the National Theatre, she has cast: *Tartuffe*, *Translations*, *Twelfth Night*, *Home*, *I'm Darling*, *The Great Wave*, *Common*, and *Blood & Gifts*. Further theatre work includes: *Love Love Love*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *For Services Rendered*, *The Royale*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Vortex*, *Labour of Love*, and *55 Days*.

## **Sharon Bialy, CSA**

Sharon Bialy is an award-winning casting director for television, film and theatre. Her recent television credits include: *Julia*, *Barry*, *Sugar*, *Parish*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Better Call Saul*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Act*, *The Walking Dead*, *Invasion*, *Perry Mason*, *Dead to Me*, *The Society* and *The Comey Movie*.

Her past favourite films include: *Drugstore Cowboy*, *Point Break*, *Rudy*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Reign O'er Me* and *Red Belt*, and her past favourite television credits include: *Phil Spector*, *The Unit*, *Jericho*, *Mind of the Married Man* and *Picket Fences*.

Sharon's love for theatre has been a recurring theme throughout her career, including 15 years with Des McAnuff at the La Jolla Playhouse, and various productions at Lincoln Center, The Old Globe, South Coast Rep, and The Guthrie.

On Broadway, she cast: *The Anarchist*, *Jersey Boys*, *Race* and *The Farnsworth Invention*. She is a former board member of the Casting Society of America, with 36 Artios nominations to her name. She received her first Emmy nomination for *Breaking Bad's* final season and has been nominated nine times.

Sharon was the recipient of the 2011 Media Access Award for her commitment to casting actors with disabilities. Her book 'How To Audition On Camera' was published to wide acclaim. She has partnered with Sherry Thomas at Bialy/Thomas & Associates for the past 25 years.





# The Nominees

Scan each QR code to be taken to the performer's profile.  
Performers are contactable by the details listed on their profile.  
\*indicates that at the time of print, the performer was seeking  
representation.



**CINDY CHAWULA\***

**(She/Her)**

*Laughing Wild*  
Christopher Durang



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**ZANNIE BENFIELD\***

**(She/Her)**

*All New People*  
Zach Braff



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**SCOTT BOWDEN**

**(He/Him)**

*The Man*  
James Graham



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**JESSICA OPPONG**

**(She/They)**

*Chewing Gum*  
*Dreams*  
Michaela Coel



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**TSEN DAY-  
BEAVER\***

**(She/Her)**

*Linda*  
Penelope Skinner



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**SENAM AKPOKAVI**

**(He/Him)**

*Death of England:*  
*Delroy*  
Roy Williams &  
Clint Dyer





**ADAM HASHMI\***

**(He/Him)**

*Age Of Consent*  
Peter Morris



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**NIAMH-ELLA**

**MCCANN\***

**(She/Her)**

*Sea Creatures*  
Cordelia Lynn



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**DÚA RÓBERTS\***

**(She/Her)**

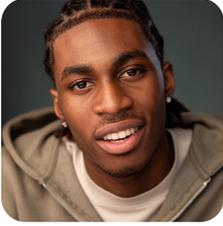
*Seven Fairy Tales*  
*of Shame*  
Tyrfingur  
Tyrfingsson



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**JADEN ASHA  
EVELYN\***  
(He/Him)

*Shifters*  
Benedict Lombe

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**TRUDY AKOBENG\***  
(She/Her)

*Little on the Inside*  
Alice Birch

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**BETHANY  
WOODING\***  
(She/Her)

*Cancer Time*  
Gary Owen

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**LARA DAILEY\***

**(She/Her)**

*Stupid With Love  
(Mean Girls)*

Tina Fey (Book), Nell Benjamin (Lyrics), Jeff Richmond (Composer)

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**ALYSON HANDLEY**

**(She/Her)**

*Falling, Falling,  
Falling*

James Longman

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**PENNY MORRIS**

**(She/Her)**

*Glitter Punch*  
Lucy Burke

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**ALFANSO MAY\***

**(He/Him)**

*For Black Boys Who  
Have Considered  
Suicide When the Hue  
Gets Too Heavy*  
Ryan Calais Cameron



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**KATIE SHELLEY**

**(She/Her)**

*Revolt. She Said.  
Revolt Again.*  
Alice Birch



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**CALLUM  
ALEXANDER-  
SMITH\***

**(He/Him)**

*Holes*  
Tom Basden



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**ALYSSA THABISILE**

**SIBANDA\***

**(She/Her)**

*Many Moons*  
Alice Birch



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**EMMA SYMONDS\***

**(She/Her)**

*Anatomy of a  
Suicide*  
Alice Birch



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**GABRIELLE K.**

**APPIAH**

**(She/Her)**

*Wonderboy*  
Ross Willis



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# Production Team

## **Lyndsey Turner, Stage Director**

Lyndsey Turner is an associate director of the National Theatre. Her work includes *The Witches*, *The Crucible* (also West End) and *Under Milk Wood* (National Theatre), *A Number* (Old Vic), *Far Away*, *Faith Healer* and *Fathers and Sons* (Donmar Warehouse), *The Treatment* and *Chimerica* (Almeida), and *Girls and Boys* and *Posh* (Royal Court).

## **Amy Wicks, Stage Manager**

Amy trained as a director at East 15 Acting School. Since then, she has worked as a stage manager, director and assistant director on productions at Regional, West End and fringe venues. As an assistant director, her credits include: *The Wasp* (Trafalgar Studios), *Untold Stories* (Watermill), *Dinner with Friends* (Park Theatre) and *Mrs Roosevelt Flies to London* (King's Head). As a director, her credits include: *Cross Purpose* (Crypt Gallery), *Isaac Saddleore* (Electric Theatre) and *A Brand New Start* (Tristan Bates).

## **Tarek Merchant, Musical Director**

Tarek holds a starred first class degree in Music from York University, alongside a first class degree in Actor-Musicianship from Rose Bruford College. He has been working professionally as a composer, arranger, musical director and performer for over 15 years, and has collaborated with a range of top-tier organisations, including: the RSC, the National Theatre, The Donmar Warehouse, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, Manchester Royal Exchange, Bristol Old Vic, The Orange Tree and British Youth Music Theatre. He has been musical supervisor for the acclaimed Public Acts programme at the National Theatre, and has worked across the UK, Europe and North America.

In 2023, Tarek was nominated for a WhatsOnStage Award for Best Musical Direction for his work on the UK premier of *The Band's Visit* at the Donmar Warehouse. He's currently the MD of the West End production of hit-musical *Hadestown*, which he has been working on since it opened in February 2024. He is also supervising a new project for the Roald Dahl Story Company. Tarek is a multi-instrumentalist, playing accordion, flute, violin and holding a DipABRSM on piano. He is an associate artist for the Watermill Theatre, Newbury.

## **Paulette Randall, Screen Director**

Paulette was the Associate Director of the Opening Ceremony for the 2012 London Olympic Games. She was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honors List for her services to Drama.

Her television credits include: *The Wives*, *Waterloo Road*, *EastEnders*, *Hollyoaks*, *Tin Star*, *Death in Paradise*, *Casualty*, *River City*, *Holby City*, *The Real McCoy*, *Desmond's*, *Porkpie*, *C4*, *The Crouches*, *Comin Atcha*, *Kerching!* and *The Little Miss Jocelyn Show* (creative consultant).

Her theatre credits include: *The Fellowship* (Hampstead Theatre), *Doctor Faustus* (The Globe), *Love Letters To The NHS* (National Theatre Wales), *Daisy Pulls It Off* (Park Theatre), *The Disappearance of Dorothy Lawrence* (Vital Exposure), *Obama-ology* (RADA), *Play Mas* (Orange Tree Theatre), *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair De Lune* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Rudy's Rare Records* – starring Lenny Henry (Birmingham Rep and Hackney Empire), *Fences* (Theatre Royal Bath, Tour and West End), and the sketch show *Funny Black Women on the Edge*.

Her further credits include *Tell Me You Love Me* and *Bluebird* (short films).

# Spotlight Team

**Project Lead:** Emma Dyson

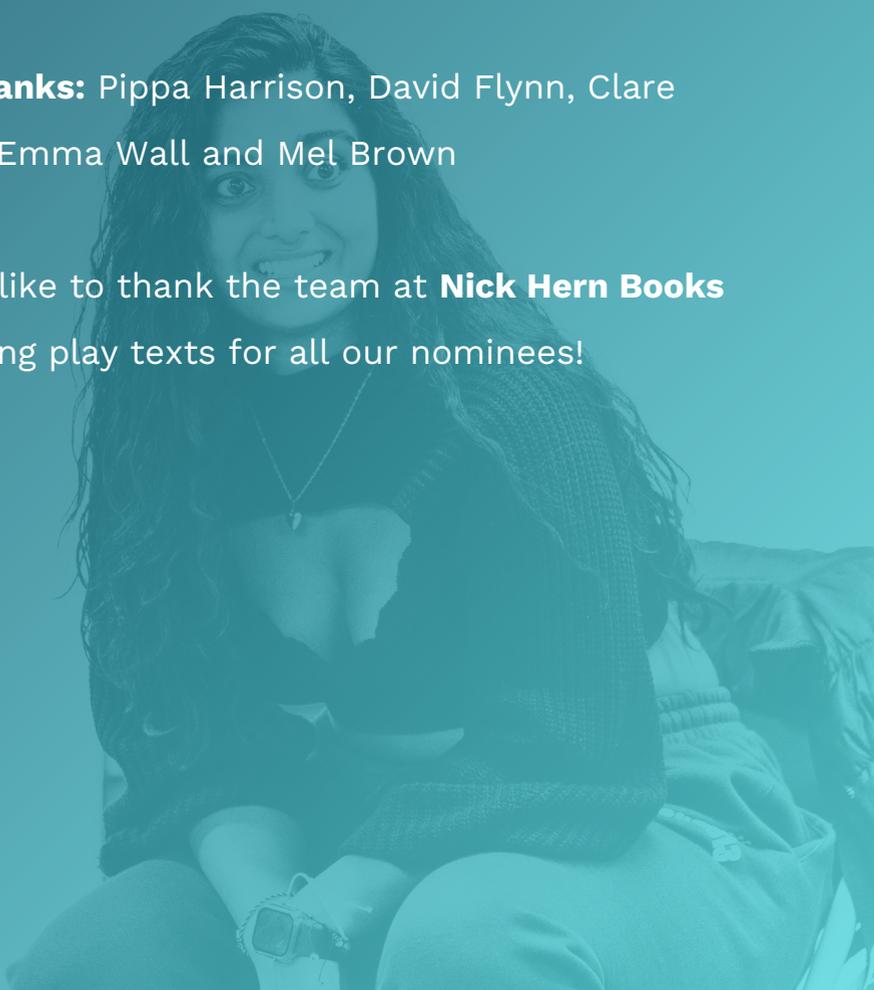
**Event Management:** Jamie Ramsay

**Audio-Visual:** Nicholas Peel, Adrian Pozniak and Joe Bates

**Communications and Marketing:** Emily Moran, Gemma Nelson and Natasha Raymond

**Special thanks:** Pippa Harrison, David Flynn, Clare McGinley, Emma Wall and Mel Brown

We'd also like to thank the team at **Nick Hern Books** for providing play texts for all our nominees!



# Participating Schools

American College Dublin

Anglia Ruskin University

Arts Educational Schools

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

D&B Performing Arts

Drama Studio London

East 15 Acting School

Fourth Monkey

Guildford School of Acting

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

ICTheatre - Brighton campus

LAMDA

London College of Music

Manchester School of Theatre (MMU)

Mountview

Norwich University of the Arts

Rose Bruford College

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama

The Lir





## Kieran Smith

This year's Spotlight Prize is dedicated to the memory of 2022 nominee, Kieran Smith, who we sadly lost at the beginning of 2024.

We send our love to his family, friends, his team at United Agents and Kieran's school, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

We will remember Kieran as an actor of exceptional warmth and talent.

# SPOTLIGHT

THE HOME OF CASTING