

Rishi Sharma for CUADC Director's Rep

About Me

Hi! I'm Rishi (he/him), a second-year English student at Peterhouse, and I'd love to be your CUADC Director's rep for this year!

I've had an amazing time directing, assistant directing and acting at Cambridge, and I'm passionate about making Cambridge a better place for anyone who wants to direct theatre here.

I've had experience on Peterhouse's JCR committee as a Men's and Non-Binary Welfare officer, helping to organise events and oversee the welfare of the whole JCR, with an explicit focus on men and non-binary people. I'd be able to take this experience forward to create a more inclusive, welcoming, and enjoyable Cambridge theatre scene.



My Ideas

A Voice for BME Directors

The theatre industry in general has struggled with a lack of BME directors, and Cambridge is sadly no exception. As a BME thesp myself, trying to feel heard in a majority-white space can be difficult, despite the best intentions of others.

I'd hold **events and workshops specifically aimed at BME directors** to help them get into the theatre scene here and to get to know each other. The end goal is to increase representation, and if we can make the world of Cambridge theatre a little less daunting for those from BME backgrounds when they're starting out, we've made important progress.

Improving the Rehearsal Process

Theatre in Cambridge can be hectic and demanding, and there are many ways we could improve the rehearsal process.

I would **provide clear guidance and promote existing guidance** to all directors, especially those who feel they have less experience, in order to make sure their rehearsal process is smooth and also safe for everyone concerned. If this is your first show, it can be hard to know certain things like how many rehearsals to schedule and how long they should be, and if the balance is wrong it can lead to welfare problems as well as technical ones. I'd **work with other directors, producers, technicians, and actors to produce this guidance**.

I'd encourage all shows to have a **dedicated welfare representative** to handle any welfare concerns, which would include requiring all cast members to fill out a **welfare feedback form** at regular points in the production, although naming yourself in the form would be optional. I'd encourage directors to attend **intimacy workshops** for all productions which involve this.

I'd also encourage all shows which feature **stories from underrepresented communities** (e.g. the disabled community, LGBT+ community or BME community) to **consult groups and societies** which represent these communities in Cambridge to help portray these stories with the authenticity they deserve.

Improving the Audition Process

Auditions are intense for everyone involved, and although actors get plenty of feedback, it's difficult for an actor to let a casting team know if their audition process could be improved. I recently directed a show which offered everyone who auditioned, whether successful or not, an anonymous feedback form to allow our team to make it more comfortable and welcoming for actors in the future.

I'd **make these anonymous feedback forms standard practice as far as possible** in Cambridge theatre. This would not be a substitute for the anonymous reporting procedure already in place but would be specifically focused on the audition process and providing directors with constructive feedback on where to adjust their audition process in the future.

I'd also give **additional guidance on auditioning for directors**, working on how to make the process healthier for all involved and including items such as **unconscious bias and inclusive casting**, as well as encouraging **content notes** on audition packs which are relevant to the whole play. This is especially the case with intimacy, which is often not included in audition packs but is included in the script. Inclusivity and accessibility in Cambridge theatre also has massive room for improvement on the acting side, and I would **listen to and action feedback from any underrepresented group** in the theatre scene.

Other Ideas

I'd consider new ways we can **provide more opportunities to those new to theatre**. Working backstage can be daunting for those who have never tried it, and I'd work with the rest of the committee to help make this process as welcoming as possible.

I'd discuss how to **improve accessibility** in theatre for disabled and neurodivergent audience members. The relaxed shows for the panto were a great initiative, and I'd like to collaborate with community representatives to come up with more ideas.

And, above all, **listen to you!** I'd be there to represent *your* concerns, *your* ideas, and *your* voices to the CUADC committee. If you want something to happen, I'll strive to make it happen.