



Canberra Philharmonic

Show and Production Team Selection

FAQ

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ABOUT CANBERRA PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

Canberra Philharmonic Society (Philo) has been a proud home of passionate performers, creators, technicians, teachers, and community leaders for over 70 years. Philo has an established history creating quality community theatre, and has been the launching pad of young performing careers and Canberran amateur stars alike.

Philo is a volunteer charitable organisation, and relies on the ideas and work of dedicated volunteers to make its productions happen. We are committed to making top quality musical theatre while fostering a fun, inclusive, safe and respectful community.

PHILO'S SHOW SELECTION PROCESS

What is the process for Philo selecting a show and production team?

Philo is keen for there to be an open process where people can suggest future shows or nominate to be a part of production teams. We want to make sure we're keeping our door open to ideas and talent in the Canberra community, and giving people opportunities to get involved and share their stories!

To that end, Philo has developed a process by which people can:

- Suggest shows that they think would be a good fit for Philo to produce, and/or
- Express interest in filling production team roles on future Philo productions.

You can suggest a show, or express interest in a production team role, by using [this form](#). You can also email your suggestion or nomination to president@philo.org.au.

The three steps below outline the process by which Philo selects what shows it will produce, and appoints production team members to key roles. Philo will run this process as needed to fill production team vacancies and fill out our forward show schedule.

1 - Callout for show ideas and expressions of interest for production team roles

- Philo will call out for show ideas and expressions of interest to current members of the society, and on its social media accounts.
- Interested people are able to submit show ideas or expressions of interest via [an online form](#), or via email (president@philo.org.au).

2 - Show selection sub-committee reviews submissions

The sub-committee:

- researches potential shows, including all shows suggested by the community.
- evaluates the suitability of potential shows for Philo using a clear, consistent criteria.
- consults our producing partners (including the Erindale Theatre) on the suitability of potential shows.

- discusses the production team roles with those who have expressed interest and evaluates their suitability for particular roles.
- works with potential production teams to fill any vacancies.

3 - Philo committee selects show(s) and appoints production team members

- The show selection sub-committee makes recommendations to the Philo committee, identifying suitable shows and production team members for those shows.
- The Philo committee decides on shows to produce and appoints a production team. The committee may decide to lock in more than one show and production team at a time, if there are ample quality options.

While Philo will review and take into account submissions from the wider community when selecting shows and appointing production team roles, the Philo committee retains absolute discretion to select the shows Philo produces and the members of Philo production teams.

Further detail on this process, and details on how to suggest shows or express interest in production roles, is included in this document.

When will I know if my show proposal or production team nomination is successful?

We will contact you as soon as we can to let you know the outcome or if we require further information. However, because we accept and review proposals on a rolling basis we cannot guarantee a timeframe as to when you will be notified. If you have any questions about the progress of your proposal/nomination you can contact president@philo.org.au.

PROPOSING A SHOW

What criteria does Philo use to select its shows?

Philo selects its shows based on the following criteria.

- **Ambition** – Philo productions should be ambitious and push the boundaries of the amateur musical theatre scene in Canberra. Ambition can be reflected in the story being told by the production and/or the way that story is told. The size, scope and style of a production can all be ambitious, including how it uses the theatrical space in which it is presented. A production can also be ambitious in the way it engages the Canberra community, such as through reaching new audiences, new talent pools, or exploring new marketing approaches.
- **Accessibility** – Philo shows should be open to a wide range of involvement from Philo members and others in the amateur musical theatre community in Canberra. The production should have opportunities for involvement for people with a range of skill levels and skill sets, from those starting out in the community to more experienced

members. The production should include opportunities for Philo to showcase all core aspects of musical theatre, including acting, singing and dancing on stage, but also set building, lighting design, band and orchestra involvement, and technical/backstage skills.

- **Variety** – Philo should aim to present shows that are varied in narrative, character requirements, and acting, musical and dance styles. This allows Philo to involve a wide range of people with a wide range of skills. For example, if Philo recently produced a musical with minimal dancing, it will try to provide more options for dancers with its next musical. Or, if Philo recently produced a musical set in a high school with a predominantly young cast, the next production should try to explore different themes and narratives with options for older cast members. Philo will generally avoid producing a show that has recently been produced in Canberra (e.g. within the last 10 years). However, we do recognise that there will be an ongoing place for the “classics”, which are popular amongst our audiences and members particularly where they can be staged in fresh and inventive ways.
- **Profitability** – Philo needs its shows to make a small profit to continue functioning. The production should be reasonably expected to sell well. The production should have a clear intended audience, and a plan on how to reach that audience. This includes consideration of the number of people expected to be involved in the production, as friends and family make up a substantial amount of the Society’s ticket sales. Musicals with name recognition or a history of commercial success are preferable, but not essential. Musicals with adult themes, nudity, violence or explicit language will need to be handled with care. This includes musicals that, due to their age or the context in which they were written, may offend or upset a Canberra audience.
- **Feasibility** – Philo aims to create high quality experiences for members and audiences, both on and off stage. The vision for the production should be able to be confidently executed in a way that would result in as professional a standard of production as possible. While we encourage our production teams to dream big, there are some practical constraints and realities within community theatre which need to be considered. Theatrical creativity can solve (almost) all problems but if there is no way around a particular requirement that is likely to be too expensive and/or impossible then it may not be the right choice for Philo. If there are particular risks or deal-breakers for Philo’s ability to mount a show then these will need to be explored thoroughly before the show is selected.

The relative weighting of these criteria will vary from season to season as the financial and artistic situation of the Society changes, and depending on the number and quality of shows proposed.

There are also clear non-negotiable requirements for Philo shows:

- **The performance rights for the show need to be available in Canberra for community productions.** Philo cannot perform shows without a licence from the rights holders. Rights are generally not available for recent shows, or shows that currently have major productions in Australia, the West End or Broadway. Rights are also generally not available if another theatre company is producing the show nearby.

Before suggesting a show for Philo to produce, please check and see whether the performance rights for the show are available. If the rights are restricted or limited, Philo will need to work with the rights holders to see if we can do the show. Shows with 'restricted' or 'limited' rights are not always possible and can take a long time to be approved.

Most musicals in Australia are licenced by either Music Theatre International Australasia (www.mtishows.com.au) or Origin Theatrical (www.origintheatrical.com.au).

- **The vision for the production must be within the scope of the rights agreement.**
Most performance rights agreements have rules against changing aspects of the show without express permission from the creators. That includes making any alterations to the script or score, changing orchestrations, altering genders of roles, or setting the show in a different time or place. Shows will not be selected based on an assumption that Philo can change any aspect of the show. Before proceeding, Philo would need to negotiate with the rights holders and receive agreement to any changes in advance of selecting and announcing the production.

What theatre does Philo perform in? Are there restrictions on how big/small the show can be?

Philo performs its shows in the [Erindale Theatre](#) in Wanniassa. We do two mainstage productions there each year - one in February/March, and one in August/September. Each season consists of 13 performances.

The Erindale Theatre seats up to 443 patrons. It has a flytower, an orchestra pit, and a substantial sound, lighting and backstage setup. Technical specifications of the Erindale Theatre can be found [here](#).

Philo is particularly interested in producing shows that make ambitious use of the Erindale Theatre space and capabilities.

If you have questions about the Erindale Theatre's specifications as part of proposing a show, please reach out to us at president@philo.org.au and we will find answers for you!

What shows has Philo recently produced?

Over the past decade Philo has produced:

- 2023 - Cats
- 2022 - Grease¹
- 2021 - Jersey Boys
- 2020 - Tommy²
- 2019 - Beauty and the Beast, Legally Blonde: The Musical
- 2018 - Jesus Christ Superstar, Barnum

¹ Cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

² Cancelled due to the 2019-20 Bushfires and COVID-19 Pandemic

- 2017 - Chicago, Strictly Ballroom
- 2016 - Rock of Ages, Anything Goes
- 2015 - Evita, The Pirates of Penzance
- 2014 - Cabaret
- 2013 - Les Miserables, Little Shop Of Horrors

How do I propose a show for Philo?

You can propose a show through [this online form](#), or by emailing president@philo.org.au your show proposal. You should make sure your proposal clearly addresses the criteria above.

If you are proposing a show that you also want to be involved with through a production team role, please also fill out the production team nomination form, or make your preference clear in your email. You should make sure your proposal also addresses the criteria for production team roles, as outlined below.

Do I need to be a member of Philo to suggest a show?

No. Anyone can suggest a show to Philo. We welcome suggestions from the broader Canberra community, including those who attend our shows but who may not be members.

NOMINATING FOR A PRODUCTION TEAM ROLE

What roles can I nominate for?

We welcome expressions of interest from members and the broader Canberra community for all roles associated with a Philo production. This includes:

- **Production manager**
- **Artistic director**
 - Assistant Director
- **Musical director**
 - Assistant Musical Director
- **Choreographer**
 - Assistant Choreographer
- **Stage manager**
 - Assistant Stage Manager
- **Costume designer/coordinator**
- **Set designer/coordinator**
- Props coordinator
- Technical coordinator
- Lighting designer
- Sound designer
- Projections designer
- Poster and program designer

If you are interested in any of these roles, we encourage you to fill out the [production team nomination form](#), or send an email to president@philo.org.au.

When selecting a show, Philo will endeavour to also appoint at least the bolded roles listed above at the same time, as these roles are the leaders and creative forces behind the production. The other roles may be appointed at the same time, or after the production has been announced.

What makes someone a good fit for a Philo production team role?

We consider the following criteria when determining if someone is a good fit for a Philo production team role:

- **Vision** - You need to be able to form an idea of how you want to approach your role, and what you want the end-product to look like. This vision for the role should meet all the criteria for Philo's shows: ambitious, accessible, varied, within budget, and feasible. You need to be able to create a plan to achieve that vision, and take steps to execute that plan successfully.
- **Passion** - You should be passionate about your role, and bring innovative, creative energy to the production. A lot of the work for production team roles is self-driven; you will need to have the drive to progress your areas of responsibility independently,

including navigating pitfalls and setbacks.

- **Strong leadership and people skills** - You need to be able to work collaboratively as part of a team. You need to be open to the ideas of others, and be able to confidently communicate your own ideas. Many production team roles are also leadership positions. To perform these roles successfully, you will need to be able to work with and lead other people, including providing direction, and supporting learning and growth. Philo endeavours to create theatre in a fun, safe and respectful environment; Philo production team members have an important role in shaping this culture.
- **Experience** - Philo productions can be large and complex. You do not need to have prior experience in a production team role, but some experience of leadership positions or project management is desired for senior production team roles (those listed in **bold** above). Some production team roles require technical expertise (e.g. graphic design, construction experience, dance ability, musical skills). You will need to demonstrate that you have this technical expertise for those roles.
- **Availability** - Being a production team member of a Philo show is a significant time commitment. Some production team roles involve 6+ months of commitment, with periods of significant time and investment required. You should make sure that you can accommodate this commitment in your schedule. You will need to be able to make contingency plans for any significant periods of absence.

Do I need to have prior experience in the role to nominate?

No. We understand that not everyone has directed a musical or stage managed a show before - there's a first time for everyone! We encourage anyone with passion and a strong vision for their role to nominate. We can work with you to help develop your skills as you take on a production team role.

How do I nominate for a production team role?

You can nominate for a production team role through this online form, or by emailing president@philo.org.au to express your interest. You should make sure your nomination clearly addresses the criteria above.

If you are nominating for a production team role with a particular show in mind, please also fill out the show suggestion form, or make your preference clear in your email.

Can I nominate for a production team as part of a group?

Yes. If you have other people you would like to work with as part of a production team, please let us know when nominating (either via this form, or via email to president@philo.org.au). Each person will need to nominate separately.

If you nominate as part of a group, we will take that into consideration when appointing a production team. However, there may be situations where we ask individual members of a group if they would be interested in filling vacancies in other production teams.

Can I nominate for multiple production team roles?

Yes. You can nominate for as many roles as you like. We will consider your nominations for each role separately.

However, Philo aims to not have people fill multiple roles in a production team, except for specific creative or logistical reasons (e.g. in a dance heavy show, the director/choreographer roles may be combined).

I want to be on a production team, but only for a specific show. Is that ok?

Yes. We encourage people to come to Philo with ideas and visions for shows that they want to be a part of. If you have a specific show in mind that you want to be a part of, you can suggest that Philo produce that show (see the section on proposing a show, above). You can flag as part of that process that you are interested in a production team role for that show.

Do I need to be a Philo member to nominate for a production team role?

No, but you will need to become a Philo member if you are appointed to a production team role. You can become a Philo member [here](#).

SELECT PRODUCTION TEAM ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

All production team members have a role in providing a positive and fun learning experience and leading, motivating and supporting all persons involved with the production throughout the rehearsal process.

All production team members are also expected to work closely, respectfully and productively with other production team members, cast and crew in a leadership capacity to help realise the artistic vision of the Production Team and ensure the production is ready in time for performances.

Production Manager

The Production Manager coordinates all aspects of the production. As Production Manager you will be responsible for chairing production team meetings, and making sure each part of the production is communicating well with each other. You're also the production's liaison with the Philo Committee (including the marketing and communications sub-committee), and with the theatre. You're responsible for cast and crew wellbeing, along with keeping the production on budget and on track. Essentially, you run the place with a firm, yet compassionate hand.

Key Attributes:

- Good organisational skills, and can keep track of multiple priorities at once
- Able to stick to a budget
- Good at identifying risks in advance, and able to put in place a plan to address them
- Excellent communication and collaboration skills
- Able to mediate disagreements and tell people no when needed
- Working understanding of the technical aspects of theatre is desired (e.g. sound, lighting, backstage)

Artistic Director

The Artistic Director of a Philo show plays a central role in continuing our tradition of bringing the magic and joy of musical theatre to the Canberra community. As the artistic leader of the production, you will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the creative process in order to bring your vision to life on stage. This includes pitching your show idea, casting, guiding rehearsals, and guiding the performances of the actors. You will work closely with other production team roles to develop an exciting and engaging production. If you have a vision for the next musical that will delight, move, or inspire Canberra audiences, we would love to hear your ideas. If you're a leader, effective communicator, collaborator, and motivator who enjoys working closely with the production team, cast and crew, then this is the role for you!

Attributes

- Experience directing musical theatre productions or transferable skills such as project management or leadership roles that require you to maintain oversight of a team.
- The ability to formulate a vision for each moment of the production, and communicate it to those involved to bring it to life.

- An appreciation of musical theatre and the techniques it uses to tell a story.
- An ability to think boldly, but also improvise and compromise where needed.
- An ability to work with actors, helping them refine their characterisation and performance. Knowledge or experience of acting/theatrical techniques is desirable.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills- a Philo show is a team effort, so an ability to work effectively with a diverse team of volunteers is important.

Musical Director

The Musical Director of a Philo show adds the magic of music to theatre. You know what they say about musicals - when it's too emotional to talk about, they sing! You will work with the Artistic Director and Choreographer to blend the book (spoken) scenes, songs and dance routines into a compelling story that will transport the audience to another world. You will be responsible for recruiting the band/orchestra, work with them to rehearse the music and conduct each performance. You will help the cast rehearse their songs and develop their characters through music.

Attributes

- The ability to lead and develop a diverse group of musicians and singers.
- Strong music skills. Experience teaching choral music and/or leading a musical ensemble is desired.
- An appreciation of musical theatre and the techniques it uses to tell a story.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills- a Philo show is a team effort, so an ability to work effectively with a diverse team of volunteers is important.

Choreographer

When the emotion is too big to speak, they sing it. When it's too big to sing, they dance! The choreography is a vital element in a Philo show as dance is a powerful tool that amplifies the emotions, themes, and narratives of the story. If you have a passion for storytelling and bringing characters to life through movement, this is the role for you! You will develop a vision for how each character will move in order to develop their story and how they will come together as an ensemble to wow the audience. You will develop dance routines and choreographed movements, audition and cast dancers, teach them the steps, then work with them in rehearsals to develop and refine each number. You will warm the cast up each night then watch from the wings as they bring your vision to life!

Attributes

- Good knowledge of dance styles and techniques.
- Strong artistic vision and the ability to translate ideas into compelling movement.
- Excellent communication and collaboration skills.
- Ability to motivate and inspire dancers of all levels.

Stage Manager

The Stage Manager is responsible for making sure everyone and everything is in the right place at the right time. As the Stage Manager, you're the link between all the technical departments of the production, acting as a right hand to the artistic director, overseeing sets, lighting, props and sound, coordinating the backstage crew, and calling all technical cues during performances. You also manage the rehearsal room, taking attendance and keeping track of absences. If you have a strong attention to detail, are an effective leader, and can confidently give directions, this role is for you!

Attributes:

- Good attention to detail
- Excellent communication and collaboration skills.
- Confidence to lead a team, including the backstage and technical crew
- Cool under pressure, and able to solve problems on the fly
- Working understanding of the technical aspects of theatre is desired (e.g. sound, lighting, backstage)

Costume Designer / Coordinator

Whether creating the turn of the century mid- western America of *Oklahoma!* The Roaring 20s of *Chicago*, or the sweltering Washington summer of *In the Heights*, costuming is a key component of any musical that instantly transports the audience to a different world. If you are passionate about fashion and the stories it can tell, this is the role for you! You will work with the Artistic Director and Set Designer to develop the aesthetic for the show. You will lead a team of sewists and scouts to create or source costumes that help build the characters for the audience. You will be the one making sure the cast look their best each night.

Attributes

- Some knowledge of fashion history (or a willingness to research and learn) to help select designs that suit the era of the show
- Time and patience to sift through Philo's costume storage to find the right costumes for the show.
- Imagination (and a touch of improvising) to solve costume challenges as they arise.
- Able to stick to a budget, and be thrifty where needed.
- Some sewing, design and alteration skills are ideal, as is the ability to coordinate and manage a team of sewers and alteration specialists.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills - a Philo show is a team effort, so an ability to work effectively with a diverse team of volunteers is important.

Set Designer / Coordinator

Elphie and Glinda need their Emerald City and the Pirates of Penzance need their ship. The set of a Philo show grounds the characters in the world of the production, transporting the audience to a different time and place. If you are a D.I.Y. expert, handy with a hammer and have the ability to build a whole new world out of plywood, this is the role for you! You will work closely with the Artistic Director and Costume Designer to develop the aesthetic for the show and with the Choreographer to ensure the cast can move around the set safely. You'll coordinate with our team of volunteers to construct the set at our rehearsal space at Fyshwick, and supervise its transportation and reconstruction at the theatre.

Philo has experienced set builders and designers that can mentor those new to set design.

Attributes

- Construction and design experience are strongly desired, including an understanding (or an ability to research and learn) how to ensure set pieces will stay standing and support any cast members who need to move on them.
- Imagination (and a touch of improvising) to solve staging challenges as they arise.
- Able to stick to a budget, and be thrifty where needed.
- The ability to coordinate a team of volunteers, and assign tasks based on skill.