

# MERCURY

# General Auditions Information Pack

*Including Frequently Asked Questions*



**Updated May 2023**

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## **Welcome to the Mercury Theatre!**

This pack provides key information about Mercury Theatre's General Auditions. If you have any further questions please email [casting@mercurytheatre.co.uk](mailto:casting@mercurytheatre.co.uk) and we will get back to you.

## **Contents**

<b>About the theatre</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>What are general auditions?</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>What is talent development?</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Who can apply?</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Do you have any tips for auditioning?</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>What happens in the audition room?</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Who will be on the panel?</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Can I use this opportunity to pitch an idea for a show?</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>What happens if I get nervous?</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>What happens post-audition?</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Covid-19</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Directions / How to find us</b>	<b>Pages 9-12</b>
<b>Parking and Drop Off</b>	<b>Page 12</b>

## About the theatre

The Mercury is an artistic powerhouse in the East – a vital, vibrant, welcoming centre of culture for the people of Colchester, Essex and beyond.

The theatre takes its name from the Roman messenger god, Mercury. It was Mercury's task to connect the people with the gods, and so, in keeping with our name, **connection** is at the heart of everything we do.

We **connect** through the live event, the shared experience. The award-winning theatre that we present electrifies, transforms and enriches the lives of our community. We reinvent old stories and conjure up bold, new ones. Stories that reach out and touch our audience, stories from fresh voices that demand to be heard, stories that enable us to see through the eyes of other people and identify and empathise with one another.

We **connect** with the diverse communities that surround us through our participation programmes, which celebrate creative potential by providing people with everyday opportunities to be artistic and innovative.

We **connect** with the theatre makers of tomorrow by seeking out our region's boldest, most talented, theatrically-daring artists and providing them with the support and space to research, explore and test their ideas.

We **connect** with national and international theatres as we receive their extraordinary work and share our own.

We **connect** with parents coffee and caking in our cafe bar whilst their toddlers enjoy morning story-time, we **connect** with seniors learning to Lindy Hop in our brand new dance studio, with school choirs singing their hearts out on the terrace, with families picnicking in the Roman Wall Garden, with professionals hot-desking in our office, with our young company rehearsing in the creative learning space.

We **connect** by putting inclusivity, accessibility and empowerment at the heart of everything we do.

## **What are general auditions?**

Mercury Theatre General Auditions is an open call for East-based artists who wish to have a quick chat or perform a monologue, a song or discuss any other talent (*song-writing, fight coordination, musical instruments for example*), in front of a panel of key figures representing producing venues in the region.

These auditions are not for a specific production; however, they help us broaden our casting horizons and allows us to engage with local artists who we might work with in the future. This may be in workshops, R&D's, creative engagement projects, talent development work, readings, community touring or in our theatre productions.

While we won't be able to see everyone who applies, we will acknowledge every submission, keep them on file and contact you when there is an opportunity to audition.

## **What is talent development?**

Mercury's Talent Development programme supports the development of ground-breaking, East-based theatre makers.

The Mercury aims to provide a transparent ladder of progression in order to provide a huge benefit for skills development. By providing time and space for researching, exploring and testing ideas, we aim to nurture and grow the creative innovators of tomorrow.

## Who can apply?

Mercury Theatre general auditions are for East-based artists who:

- want to get onto the radar of key producing theatres in the East
- want to have a chat, perform a monologue, song or any other talent
- want access to advice on project development or 'next steps'
- want to develop their skills

We want to celebrate the awesome talent living in the region, so we are only accepting applications from artists based in the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

## Do you have any tips for auditioning?

*Be prepared* – whilst an audition is not a memory test, it is a perfect opportunity to show the panel how you approach the preparation of your work.

*Be on time* – we always recommend that you arrive 10-15minutes prior to your allotted time so you can register, relax and prepare. If, for whatever reason, you are delayed – a contact number will be provided on the audition information. Please let the designated contact know you are delayed and we will get you in front of the panel once you've arrived, are relaxed and at a suitable moment.

*Mistakes happen* – if you think you've made a mistake, don't panic – it probably hasn't even been noticed by the panel, so keep going.

## **What happens in the audition room?**

Each audition slot will be approximately 20 minutes. This is to ensure that we are able to see as many artists as possible, but that each person has adequate time in the room.

When you enter the room, there will be an initial chat with the panel. They may ask you some questions about your CV or your experience and provide you with an opportunity to ask anything you are unsure of.

You will be asked to prepare a 2-3 minute piece (this could be a monologue, a song, or another art form). We will always inform you prior to the audition if there will be a pianist present who can accompany you with your sheet music.

## **Who will be on the panel?**


Our Creative Director Ryan McBryde and Executive Producer Tracey Childs lead the panel for our General Audition Days. Subject to availability, other members of Talent and Production departments join the panel giving more scope for potential opportunities from the wider organisation.

When availability aligns we welcome creative leadership from other venues in the region as guest panellists – this increases the opportunities for local artists to build connections across the region and hopefully, give you the confidence to keep the conversation growing.

## **Can I use this opportunity to pitch an idea for a show?**

The General Auditions focus on meeting local artists that we may not yet be aware of and who want to be on our casting radar. But all is not lost.

As part of our Talent Development offer, we hold Pitching Days throughout the year by invitation only. The purpose of the meeting is to give you face to face time with Mercury's Creative Director and Executive Producer to pitch your idea, show or project to them. It could be a fully written script or musical, an idea for a workshop or programme that you have the skills to deliver. If you are interested in finding out more about our forthcoming Pitching Days, then sign up to our CONNECTS database.



## **What happens if my nerves get the better of me and I can't go through with the audition – have I lost my opportunity to meet another time?**

"Nerves are an actor's fuel. Nerves are what gives good actors their unmistakable fizz and stage presence" – Dame Judi Dench

If you get nervous at auditions/meetings, don't panic – let one of the team know and we'll support however we can. We are a happy and welcoming team at Mercury. The Panel want you to feel confident, be yourself and enjoy the opportunity.

If you are confirmed to attend a General Audition but have concerns about nerves – then please call for an informal chat with our Talent Development Producer, Antony Stuart-Hicks who will endeavour to assist you. We really want to meet with you, so let us support you in getting the room – you never know the positive outcomes that could happen.

## **What happens post-audition?**

Following your audition, we aim to deliver feedback to you within seven working days. Feedback is always constructive and will be issued via email to you directly and/or your agent.

It is important to remember that you are now on our radar and our door remains open and further talent development opportunities are available. If you would like to have a further discussion about talent development you can contact Antony Stuart-Hicks, Talent Development Producer, via email at [antony.stuart-hicks@mercurytheatre.co.uk](mailto:antony.stuart-hicks@mercurytheatre.co.uk).

## **Accessibility**

We believe theatre and all of the activities we offer should be accessible to all.

If you have any specific requirements or if there is anything we can do to best accommodate you while you are in the theatre, please do let us know in advance or forward your Access Rider with your submission.

All areas within the theatre are fully accessible. There are lifts positioned on each side of the building and accessible toilets on each floor. Full details about

accessibility are available at [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/enjoy-your-visit/access-for-all/](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/enjoy-your-visit/access-for-all/).

If you are unable to attend the audition in person, we can also facilitate Zoom auditions.

## **Covid-19**

If you have any Covid 19 symptoms please do not come to the theatre but let us know as soon as possible.





## Directions / How to find us

The Mercury is only a 5-minute walk from Colchester Town Centre with great local bus links and is within walking distance of both Colchester North and Colchester Town station. Our postal address is: Mercury Theatre, Balkerne Gate, Colchester, CO1 1PT

### By car



- There is a one-way system in the town centre and the theatre can be accessed by turning left off Head Street. Please note that there is no parking outside the theatre, and accessible parking is limited and must be booked in advance. Further information can be found enclosed in Access and Parking sections detailed in this document.

- If approaching the Mercury from the A12 or other destinations north of Colchester, drive up Balcerne Hill, turn left onto Southway, then take the first left onto Headgate
- Go straight across the crossroads. When you pass the Odeon cinema on the left, take the first left, Church Street leads directly to the Mercury Theatre
- Following the re-introduction of car restrictions on North Hill, cars may not approach the theatre from this direction.
- For all Performers, Staff and Visitors our nearest car park is St Mary's car park (Colchester, CO3 3AA), located adjacent to the theatre via Balcerne Hill.
- We offer £2.50 parking vouchers for St. Marys over the bridge (limited number of 150 per day). The voucher is valid from 10am to Midnight and must be displayed on your dashboard. Available to purchase from the box office or website: <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/enjoy-your-visit/online-store/> These tickets are date specific so you'll need the exact dates that you need them for.

## By train

Colchester train stations are mainly served by Greater Anglia trains, which connect both Norwich to Colchester and London to Colchester in about an hour, as well as Ipswich, Clacton and Walton On The Naze, amongst other destinations. Colchester's main station – Colchester North is approximately a 20-minute walk to the theatre. Taxis are available from outside the station:



## Colchester Town Station

Located on St Botolph's Circus – approximately a 10-minute walk to the Theatre. Turning right as you head out of the station walk in the direction of Osborne Street onto St Johns Street, then turn right onto Head Street. The theatre can be accessed by turning left onto Church Street just passed the Odeon Cinema.

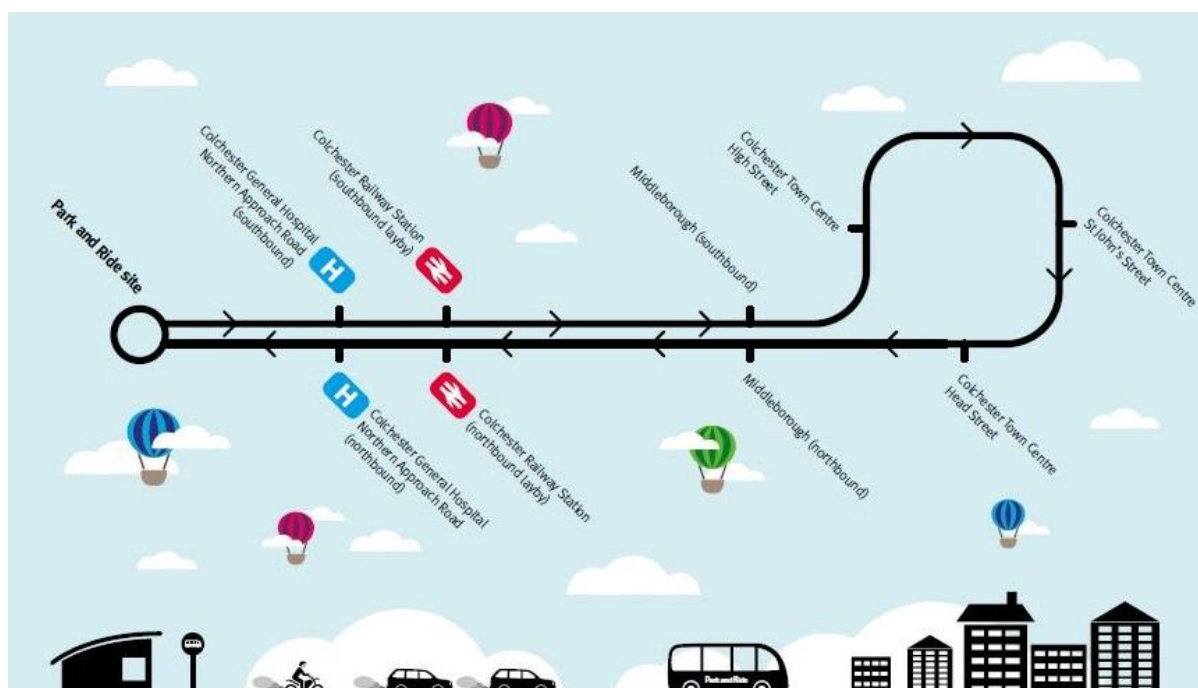
## By bus

You can get to us using any of the buses to the town centre - visit <https://www.firstgroup.com/essex/plan-journey/timetables/> for updated bus times. Our closest bus stop is on Head Street (outside the Odeon) – postcode: CO1 1NH.

## Colchester park & ride

Monday to Friday 5am – 9:30pm and Saturdays 6am – 7:30pm  
Daily Fares £3, Children up to 18 years of age £1, Concessions £1.50  
More information and timetables available:

<https://www.essexhighways.org/Transport-and-Roads/Getting-Around/Bus/Park-and-Ride/Colchester-Park-and-Ride.aspx>





## Cycling

There are several bike stands to safely store your bike outside the theatre. Further cycle parking can be found outside St Mary's car park and outside Debenhams in Culver Street West.

## Parking and Drop-Off

St Mary's Car Park is the nearest available car park. Pre-paid parking tickets are available online at <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/enjoy-your-visit/online-store/>. This is valid all day and costs £2.75.

We have a limited number of accessible parking spaces outside the Theatre. These are available to our Access for All members and must be booked in advance by contacting Box Office directly on 01206 573948.

There is a drop off point directly in front of the box office and the Jumbo Water Tower.

