

CRB Guide

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This document is a set of procedural recommendations for the Casting Review Board, patterned on the CRB of Urinetown IAP '06 with additional input from discussions among the managing board.

1 Purpose of CRB

MTG's policy on MIT affiliation is spelled out in paragraph 2.1 of our Constitution:

“A full awareness of the Musical Theatre Guild's affiliation with MIT will be maintained. In filling cast and production positions, priority will be given to members of the MIT community, and in particular to MIT students. “

The Casting Review Board (CRB) exists to ensure that this policy is met when casting a show. The culmination of the CRB process is the CRB meeting, which happens after the directorial staff has finished casting and before any parts are offered. During the CRB meeting, the dir-staff presents their proposed cast to the CRB in terms of MIT affiliation, as defined by the Constitution. CRB presence before and during auditions is designed to allow the dir--staff and the CRB to be on the same page when they come together at the CRB meeting to discuss the cast.

The official requirements on CRB are spelled out in a bylaw passed by the board in 2004, part of which which is included below. Most importantly, this bylaw spells out the definitions of 1s, 2s and 3s.

1.1 Bylaw excerpt: Musical Theater Guild Casting and Interview Policy

Passed Thursday, April 22, 2004

Section 1.1 and 1.2: General Policy for Casting and Interviews

”1.1. The Casting and Interview policy will be based upon the following definitions. Note also that if a person falls under two separate definitions, he is considered part of the group with the higher casting priority.

1's	Currently registered MIT undergraduate and graduate students (fulltime, part-time, cross registered, exchange, and special) and those students who were registered in the term previous to the current show (i.e., if you registered for the summer term, you are a 1 for the fall show and not the IAP show, regardless of audition dates).
2's	Current members of MTG, current members of the MIT Community (including currently registered Wellesley students and those Wellesley students who were registered in the term previous to the current show), and anyone ever enrolled as an MIT student.
3's	Anyone else (including Wellesley alumnae, students of other schools, etc).

1.2. In all casting decisions, 1's will be given consideration over 2's. 3's may not be cast in a role unless no 1's or 2's who are capable of performing in the role audition.

1.2 Bylaw interpretation

The phrasing in section 1.2 of the bylaw quoted above is intended to convey the spirit of the 1/2/3 consideration

process, which gives priority to current MIT community members and especially to MIT students. The CRB and the dir-staff should talk together before auditions begin to make sure they're on the same page about how to interpret and apply the bylaw, especially in terms of the specific parts in the show.

It is the responsibility of the CRB Chair to make sure this discussion happens productively. Include the entire dir-staff and your CRB Rep(s). You may want to use some of the following **past interpretations**:

"In order to cast a 2 in a particular role, the casting of that 2 rather than any 1 must represent a significant positive impact on the show as a whole (not just that one role). In order to cast a 3 in a particular role, there must be no available 1 or 2 auditionee capable of performing the role."

Suggestions as to what "not capable" means:

singing ability - we can deal with a couple squeaks, or bad tone, or out of tune, but if he can't sing it (i.e.: no sound where there should be sound, can't speak-sing, his singing makes regular people (not music directors) cringe), and won't get it by opening night, he's incapable
dancing ability - if he needs to dance and can't do something simple and slow, he's incapable
acting ability - If he can stand and speak, he can act

Overall, remember: this is amateur theater. Someone has to be pretty bad for us to consider him "incapable."

1.3 Jurisdiction of CRB

CRB will examine:

1/2/3 breakdown of total cast
Specific casting of individual roles (leads and secondary roles)
1/2/3 breakdown of rejection pool, in comparison with acceptance pool and with audition pool

The CRB wants to see lots of 1s and 2s in the cast overall.

They also want to see leads going to 1s or 2s, but especially 1s – the bigger the role, the more important it is to have a low number. Specialty roles (eg., very young children) may get special consideration and justification for going with a 2 or 3, but these special requirements must be discussed with the CRB before auditions.

The CRB doesn't want to see 1s being turned away completely. (The dir-staff should just about cast everyone else of the same gender before putting a 3 in the ensemble.)

Of course, there will always be tradeoffs with the dir-staff's ideal cast. The CRB reps can be a resource to the dir-staff for helping to balance the tradeoffs.

NOTE: CRB is for examining casting of 1s, 2s, and 3s. CRB does not distinguish between guild members and other MIT students or MIT community. CRB does not examine other conflicts of interest or issues of fairness unless specifically part of a 1/2/3 relationship.

2 Forming the CRB

The producer is responsible for finding a CRB chair, ideally from among the members of the Managing Board, a few weeks before auditions. The CRB chair recruits the CRB members, including CRB representatives. The producer should make sure this happens, and that the CRB is then must be approved by the Managing Board.

2.1 Recruiting CRB members

Bylaw excerpt:

2.10. All members of the Managing Board not auditioning for the show and not holding production staff positions which are involved in casting should be on the CRB. To fill out the 7 person CRB, members should be drawn from past Managing Boards as well as from past Directors, Music Directors, and Producers. Should this be impossible, other knowledgeable current MTG members may be substituted with Managing Board approval. All members of the CRB must be current MTG members in good standing.

When you've run out of eligible board members to recruit, you may want to spam to the mailing list mtg-suckers, which contains people who are eligible to be on CRB under the second category. Feel free to update mtg-suckers as appropriate.

As you form your CRB, put them on the mailing list mtg-crb, which you can then use to communicate among yourselves and with the dir-staff.

2.2 CRB representatives

CRB representatives attend auditions, callbacks, and possibly directorial discussion, as observers. Later, during the CRB meeting, CRB representatives can back up the dir-staff in its claims about the relative merits of auditionees. If callbacks will use two separate rooms, it is best to have two CRB reps present.

The dir-staff can choose whether or not to have a CRB rep present during directorial discussion of casting. This should be an all-or-nothing choice.

Callbacks are the dir-staff's opportunity to demonstrate to the CRB why they are right when they want to cast someone, or when they don't want to cast someone in a particular role. Allowing a CRB rep to be involved when planning callbacks will help to smooth the process by pointing out potential casting choices that will most need to be well justified to the CRB. IF THE CRB WON'T APPROVE OF SOMETHING, THE CRB REP SHOULD TRY TO FIX IT NOW.

The CRB rep is the best connection between the dir-staff and rest of the CRB. Both sides need to be active in relying on the CRB rep to help bridge that gap, and obtain a cast that both meets the directors' visions and MTG policy.

3. Anonymity

At the CRB meeting, the dir-staff will share copies of the cast list in two forms:

1. CRB representatives will see full list with names associated with each part, so that they see the decisions that were made based on the auditions and discussion that they (possibly) observed.
2. Non-rep CRB members will see only the 1/2/3 status of the person associated with each part, so that they can more easily focus specifically on the 1/2/3 breakdown of the casting for the show. In order for this anonymity to be meaningful, non-rep CRB members will be instructed to specifically refrain from looking at callback lists, discussing audition pool, and trying to guess casting (especially while sitting around waiting for CRB meeting).

At said meeting, dir-staff and CRB reps will specifically not discuss the names of those cast in roles, as this anonymity must be kept until the cast is approved. This allows the CRB to fully weigh the 1/2/3 system against the proposed cast.

4. CRB procedure

4.1 Dir-staff casting intentions

Before auditions, the dir-staff should send to the CRB, and to each other, a breakdown of intended casting and a set of character descriptions, with special emphasis on character traits that may impact 1/2/3 considerations in casting. This information should include:

Intended casting:

- total cast size

 - character list and breakdown into leads, secondary, chorus, and ensemble

 - indication of possible double casting, if appropriate

 - Indication of any possible cross-casting being considered

Character descriptions, including specific traits that you know you're looking for, for example:

 - “so and so needs to feel older than the rest of the cast”

 - “so and so needs to have a specific kind of sexuality”

 - anything else you know, especially if it might make you more likely to want to cast a nonstudent over a student

 - The vocal director and choreographer should give their input on specific vocal or dance requirements for each part

4.2 Touch base meeting

Before auditions, CRB chair and rep(s) should meet with dir-staff to:

- meet each other, if they haven't yet

- make sure the entire dir-staff understands the spirit of MTG's 1/2/3 system

- clarify any questions on procedure, including whether the dir-staff would like CRB rep presence during auditions and/or discussions

- discuss CRB's intended interpretation of MTG constitution and casting bylaw, and specifically of bylaw section 1.2 on the guidelines for casting 2's over 1's or 3's over 1's and 2's.

- go over the casting intentions from the dir-staff and specifically consider whether any special circumstances will apply to certain roles.

After the touch-base meeting, the CRB chair should communicate back to the full CRB to keep them up to speed.

4.3 Auditions

A CRB representative may sit in during auditions, at the consent of the director (2.6.4 of Constitution). If the director consents, at least one CRB representative must be present at all times.

It is highly recommended that the director have a CRB representative present at auditions and callbacks. The CRB rep is there to ensure that claims the dir-staff later makes regarding casting are reasonable. If a director elects to not have a CRB representative present during auditions any cast straying from an ideal cast numberswise (ie, 2s or 3s in the cast with any 1s rejected, a higher number being in a larger role than a lower number, etc) will likely be rejected by the CRB.

The CRB representative should introduce him or herself to the auditionees, so the random person on the other side of the table does not frighten them.

The CRB rep(s) may also be present at directorial discussion if the dir-staff has so elected. This must also be an all-or-nothing choice.

4.4 Callbacks

During callbacks, there should be two CRB reps present if two rooms will be used, so that at least one CRB is always present during callbacks. The CRB rep(s) may also be present at directorial discussion if the dir-staff has so elected.

The producer should keep the CRB chair posted in terms of timing, with current estimates of when callbacks will end and when casting will be finished.

4.5 CRB pre-meeting

The CRB chair should convene the CRB half an hour before the estimated time for the CRB meeting, so that the full CRB can touch base in person on their intended interpretation (as discussed in the pre-audition meeting) and on any issues that may have come up.

4.6 CRB meeting

The CRB meeting is the closure of the entire CRB process. Dir-staff should bring to the CRB meeting:

Copies of the casting list, with names, for the CRB rep(s)

1/2/3 breakdown data, including specifically:

- Audition pool, numbers by gender
- Overall cast, numbers by gender
- Leads/secondary/ensemble/chorus, numbers by gender
- Not cast, numbers by gender
- Individual parts with number and gender, at least for leads

The dir-staff will first present all of their 1/2/3 breakdown information, addressing questions and concerns from CRB members. The CRB will privately discuss and hear the responses of the CRB reps, and may request additional information from the dir-staff before coming to a decision on whether to approve the cast or to request changes or additional auditions.

4.7 Outcome

If the CRB is not convinced that casting has followed the spirit of MTG's 1/2/3 policy, they may require the dir-staff to recast the show from the audition pool or they may require the dir-staff to postpone casting and hold extra auditions.

Most often, when the process goes smoothly, the CRB and dir-staff are both aware of any tradeoffs that are being made and can agree that they are acceptable within MTG's policy. After a cast list has been approved by the CRB, it will be revealed to all CRB members, amid much late-night celebration, and the producers may then begin offering parts.

4.7.1 Recasting

As parts are offered, accepted, and declined, some shuffling will probably happen. Recasting decisions are subject to the same CRB requirement as original casting, but to speed up the process the CRB meeting will often preemptively approve possible recasting situations. Dir-staff, that means you should be prepared to discuss your contingency plans with the CRB for situations where you suspect a role may be declined. If the contingency plan does not involve the changing of the numbers cast in anyway, the dir-staff may go ahead and enact it, even if they forgot to bring it up at the CRB meeting.

5. Questions

If you have any questions at all, don't hesitate to ask the CRB chair. The earlier you ask questions or bring up ambiguities, concerns, or relevant information, the easier the process will be, and the faster the CRB meeting will go. If you are the CRB Chair, feel free to pose question or hypotheticals to the Managing Board, who can help to guide you.