Notes from Quarterly Meeting to discuss Casting Landscape, 10/07/2024

Present:

Members of Equity Self-Tape Committee

President of Casting Guild of Australia (Thea McLeod)

Vice President of Casting Guild of Australia (Anousha Zarkesh)

Performer Representatives

Nicholas Hope for MEAA Equity

These notes are not official minutes; rather they aim to summarise the main elements of the discussion and any ongoing actions.

The Equity Self-Tape Committee talked about the ubiquity of self-taping and mentioned their main concerns:

* Depletion of professional cohesion – lack of personal contact/relationship with casting directors, fellow actors, directors
* Mental health – an increased sense of isolation
* A sense of bias against older performers whose performance earnings were decreasing with age whilst their need to invest in the technology was increasing; plus the difficulty of dealing with changing technological requirements as they got older
* The Self-Tape Committee suggested an increase to the possibility of live links (eg Zoom) if in-studio was becoming too prohibitive.

The CGA response through Thea and Anousha was:

* All the above concerns were noted and shared.
* Live links were a good idea, however they involved an investment of time that wasn’t necessarily always available in the current casting climate.
* For a live link it was probably advisable for the agent or actor to ring in and request it. CGA were supportive of live links if requested and would advise their members to agree where possible.
* Self-tapes had increased the spread of actors who could be seen.
* CD’s did not generally have the director in the room during studio auditions anyway.
* As stated in an earlier meeting, studio costs had risen whilst casting budgets had shrunk. Those CD’s who did not have their own studio space were for the most part priced out of using in-studio auditions, especially at first round.

Performer Representatives added:

* Full scripts would be good to receive, especially in the self-tape arena. The lack of direction meant performers (and their representatives) were working in the dark; having a script would help that immensely.
* Self-Tapes were deeply affected by lack of consistent, good readers.
* Performer Representatives concurred with the mental health difficulties associated with the isolated culture of self-tapes.
* They also were keen to get some sort of Yes/No response in respect to submissions.
* Performer Representatives were struggling with the administrative and time-consuming procedures of now having to deal with four casting sites.

CGA advised that script availability was determined by the various productions.

In discussion it was mentioned that most casting sites were working on a Yes/No response.

The number of casting sites was discussed. Nicholas advised that three of the four major casting sites now have a free membership tier; this tier was always limited but did allow actors to have a presence on it. Casting Networks are working on removing self-tapes from the storage limit. Everyone agreed that four sites were too much to deal with however each CD and each Representative had their favourite site to use.

Discussion on re-introducing Go-Sees for Performers and Casting Directors was received favourably as a way to help mitigate isolation and allow formation of relationships between CD’s and Performers. No specific plans were agreed on.

The meeting closed after 90 minutes.

I would suggest that people consider how best to affect the resumption of Go-Sees: whether that is a one-on-one set up, a speed-dating style set-up, or an open meeting once every few months in each city – to be discussed at next meeting if nothing eventuates in between.

Next Quarterly meeting will be held in October: a poll for best dates will be sent out towards the end of August.