



## ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

### **The ESU**

The English-Speaking Union (ESU) - founded in 1918 - is the leading oracy (speaking and listening) educational charity in England and Wales. We have been running a popular and successful *Performing Shakespeare* Competition with schools for 11 years now with our biggest entry this year with over 67% of entries being from the state sector.

### **The ask to the Little Theatre Guild**

Many of the young entrants have not thought of themselves as actors, but when they get into a theatre, they see what it means. The young students come from all backgrounds of class and ethnicity - this programme has a significant diversity. The ESU wishes young actors to experience performing on a real theatre stage and we are asking LTG members if they might consider hosting the regional finals in 2021. 13 theatres are required altogether.

### **The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition**

The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition fits into Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) and is much loved by students and teachers (supports Key Stage 3 National Curriculum in English - requirement to teach two Shakespeare plays). English teachers (especially where there is no drama department) find it a most accessible route to get students performing and talking about their acting. It is now in its eleventh year and getting huge traction and growing year by year, particularly amongst state schools.

### **Competition Rounds**

There are 3 rounds. Some schools have a dozen students involved, while other schools make the competition part of their curriculum with up to 600 involving whole year groups. Students select a monologue or a duologue. They have three minutes to perform it (no costumes or props). Before that they have up to two minutes to speak about the piece and their interpretation of it. At the regional and grand finals, there is a one-hour actor-led workshop before the students perform.

The first round is an internal school event from which the school selects 3-4 performances to qualify for a regional final. There are 13 regional finals in May and each regional final selects two performances for the grand final (was to be in Swan Theatre in 2020) then COVID came. Previously the grand final has been at the Ambassadors Theatre.

### **Judges**

Recent judges have included the director Iqbal Khan, the actor Edward Bennet, Professor Carol Chillington Rutter, the actor and comedian Hugh Dennis, the arts administrator Baroness Genista McIntosh of Hudnall, the actor Kosha Engler, Professor Paul Edmondson of the SBT, Peter Kyle OBE and the actor Jon Pfumojena.

### **Partners**

The ESU works very closely with the RSC, the Shakespeare Institute and the Birthplace Trust and we would like to add LTG to this list. Regional final host schools in the past have tended to be private, as they have theatres, but this is not ideal and can be intimidating for some state schools.

### **The Regional Final Events**

The events can be held in the day or in the evening. A regional final has up to 24 performances (each up to 5 minutes), with the hour workshop, the adjudication (often with refreshments while the schools wait, but a great time to interact with them), before results and feedback. Total time is c. 3 and a half hours.

Numbers are 48 students maximum (average 32) from 8 schools with 8 teachers. Can be parents and family attending.

### **Training**

Each regional final has the workshop actor as the MC and three judges (most of whom are ESU volunteers and members of all ages and backgrounds). If the host theatre wanted to take part, a member(s) could take part as a judge. The ESU offers online judge training and extensive support with logistics, programmes, certificates, trophies etc. It also would do all the work with schools in advance of the regional final.

### **Re-imburement of Costs**

The ESU would hope that this would be a valuable way to connect little theatres with schools and young actors who may want to get involved with their local theatre. The ESU is only able to pay participating theatres direct costs as the competition is already heavily subsidised to enable school access. These can be discussed in advance as required.

### **Regions**

These are the competition regions for the 12-13 regional finals and the key locations (not exclusive/exhaustive) that work best:

- North-East (*Newcastle/Durham/York/Leeds/Sheffield*)
- North-West (*Liverpool/Manchester*)
- East Midlands (*Lincoln/Nottingham/Leicester*)
- West Midlands (*Birmingham/Coventry/Stafford*)
- East (*Cambridge/Ipswich/Colchester/Chelmsford*)
- West (*Hereford/Worcester/Gloucester*)
- London (*two regional finals*)
- South (*Guildford/Chichester*)
- Mid-South (*Reading/Oxford/Luton/Bedford/Milton Keynes*)
- South-East (*Brighton/Tonbridge/Maidstone/Canterbury*)
- South-West (*Bristol/SalisburySouthampton/Portsmouth/Bournemouth/Taunton/Exeter*)
- Wales (*Cardiff/Swansea*)

We would need be able to tell schools before they break up in December the dates, time and locations of the regional finals, but please do contact us as soon as possible to express your interest.

Please let me know if you have any queries if would like to take part and we can talk in more detail. I very much hope that you will be interested in getting involved with the ESU. Thank you!

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Christmas**  
Head of Engagement  
*The English-Speaking Union*

**matthew.christmas@esu.org**  
**07585 606554**