



January 10

Dear Producer,

Please find here some useful hints and tips to help you produce a show at the Little Theatre. You will read that these are not rules but **guidance**. However, this guide reflects experience and lessons learnt, and you are encouraged as much as possible to follow it carefully.

Your responsibility is to communicate between the production and the committee at all times. We are here to support and help you wherever we can. **You are not expected** to do everything – delegate, ask, cajole, blackmail and beg, but most of all **communicate**.

Producing a show is enjoyable and very rewarding. All your efforts, often months before the audience is in, can easily be underestimated, forgotten, credited to someone else or simply ignored, but the show will not run without **you**.

You will be invited to an initial meeting with the committee close to the time of the auditions. Here your questions can be discussed and early advice given.

Thank you for agreeing to take on the role of **the producer**.

GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCERS

This is **not** a rulebook. There is no universally accepted version of the producer's job list. It is a **guide only** and may well vary, by accident or design, depending on the identity of the **producer**, the **director** and sometimes the **musical director**, **choreographer** and the **stage manager**. It is also written with the **Little Theatre** in mind; such job lists will vary from society to society. In some societies there will be no producer and either the director will do his job or the stage manager will; alternatively, his duties will be shared between those two. In Wells, we usually have **producer**, **director**, **stage manager** and when needed a **musical director**, **choreographer** and **assistant stage manager (ASM)**.

The show's producer is the Society's link with the show, but it is the Committee that has ultimate responsibility for the production of the show. Usually the **producer** selects the show's **production team**. However, that task is often partially accomplished by the director or Committee before your own appointment, so check with the director at the earliest opportunity about this.

The director is usually in charge of, and concentrates on, the artistic performance of the cast, and the aesthetic way that this is presented to an audience. He or she interprets the work from page to stage, but **it is the producer that is actually responsible for ensuring that those directorial ambitions are allowed and promoted**; they have to manage the practicalities and the realities of getting the show performed to the best standard possible as smoothly as possible and within budget.

Communication is very much the keyword, for the producer may well be the central focus for information for those involved with the production. The producer should have **contact details** for **everyone** involved in the production, and should have this with him whenever they are at the theatre. A form *Audition Information* is at the back of this pack and is used to gain valuable information at the start of a production. **E-mail addresses and phone numbers are essential**. Ideally, the producer should make sure that everyone has all relevant contact numbers or details.

If you come across a point or problem that is not covered adequately by this guide, ask. Ask the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Secretary. **Do not sit on a problem- share it.**

The principal tasks may involve the following:

1) Preparing a budget for the show. The budget will be 'set' at a specific meeting between you, the director and three or four committee members. This result of this meeting will be based on budgeting experience, a financial target and the creative wishes of the director, costumes department, MD, set designer/builder, props department etc. It is therefore very important that you come prepared. It is a disaster if everything has been sanctioned and then you tell the set builder that he has your very generous £300 allowance to build the palace in *'The King and I'* at which point he falls over laughing, muttering something about joining another society! Pro Forma budget sheets can be obtained from the committee (one is attached) and often a chat with someone who has already completed a similar budget will help. Any costs that are expected from the company (i.e. shoes, T-shirts, shirts, wigs etc) must be carefully identified and a contingency built in to the budget. This contingency is to cover non-payments and surplus. It is the Societies view that individuals should not be pressurised into paying for specific items; any expectation to 'buy this or hire that', should be made very clear to the committee and cast at the earliest opportunity. The budget is **not** a statute, and should

be flexible enough to meet contingency situations; robbing Peter to pay Paul often has to be done half way through a production and tact coupled with firmness will need to be in your personal armoury. The development of the budget often starts in an early production meeting, and refinements and variations often take place in later production meetings. The engagement of **musicians** who will require payment is the responsibility of the musical director, **after** you and the committee have agreed the total amount. The MD and musicians within the constraints of the original budget should agree individual rates of payment, and any deviation should be discussed with the producer and the committee/treasurer. Payment will be made by cheque. Should cash be requested there would be a fee reduction of £10 in order to pay the necessary bank charges incurred by the society. At the end of this brochure is a draft of a letter that could be used as a contract for the hire of musicians.

2) Holding production meetings. There should be a preliminary production meeting, well before the first reading, when the director can introduce the show to the production team (which at that stage may be just a few of the ultimate team). Usually, as a minimum, this would involve the director, you, the stage manager the choreographer and the set designer/builder. If the wardrobe team, props personnel, publicity officer and lighting designer etc. are already identified then they should also be there. The director should inform the team of his vision of the show - some will be more precise than others will at this stage. At this meeting and/or at other early meetings, the budget can be discussed, and a consensus reached about the director's ambitions for performance. Subsequent production meetings need to be held at such intervals as are necessary. Usually, a full one will need to be called after casting, and the first round of rehearsals, as a check that everyone still feels 'on course' with their own requirements. Other 'ad hoc' production meetings often happen in the bar, particularly where only a small nucleus of the team is needed. For example, if a major re-think is needed about part of the set, the meeting might only involve director, producer, set builder and stage manager.

3) Ordering and distributing scripts/music scores. Advance copies for perusal, as well as hired scores or purchased scripts, are your responsibility. Keep good **records** of money spent, numbers received, and who is given/lent what. It is **your job** to return all hired/borrowed scripts etc. in good condition after the show. You should provide the cast **and** production team with all relevant scripts at an early stage. Give the prompter a copy early to ensure that it is **up to date** and contains all the cuts/alterations that are being made.

4) Performing rights and licences need to be checked and paid for. Talk to the Secretary about this, because it is likely that they will arrange performing rights, and deal with the house returns and final payment. Do not assume anything though.

5) Producing a rehearsal schedule. This needs to be discussed very closely with the director and the choreographer, who are likely to decide the dates, content, and then leave it to you to arrange for printing and distribution. Keep it up to date. Keep **watching** the bar calendar on the notice board for warnings of any newly published forthcoming event that might interfere with the schedule. The smooth running of the rehearsal schedule is also the responsibility of the producer. Make sure that the Secretary has sight of the rehearsal schedule **before** it is given out to members, because they may spot a booking clash that you didn't, or weren't aware of.

6) The smooth running of the rehearsals and auditions. These duties include:

- a) Ensuring the necessary rooms are available and warm. During winter, this can be particularly important. If you are not sure how the **heating** system works, consult with the theatre manager.

- b) setting the **rehearsal space** up e.g. with chairs, mock props, dummy furniture
- c) informing the director of any **absentees**
- d) **calling** the cast in for rehearsals
- e) Ensuring that (if required and possible) the **bar** will be available. Consult with the bar manager
- f) Opening up and shutting down i.e. being the first one there and the last one out, maintaining **security** of the building. A 'locking up' check list is available from the Secretary
- g) Ensuring that the musical director/choreographer/rehearsal **pianist** has a keyboard/playback facility in the right rehearsal place at the right time.
- h) explaining to the cast any **changes** to rehearsal arrangements
- i) Publicising the **dates** of preliminary readings, casting readings, pre-audition rehearsals or workshops as well as the audition dates themselves.
- j) Publicising the audition pieces and **audition** information (character descriptions, order of auditions etc.,)

7) Keeping publicity informed. This is **very** important. The publicity officer can't be expected to conjure up a poster, flyer, banner and newspaper adverts, as well as perhaps the programme, with 2 weeks notice. It needs an awful lot of forethought and planning. In tandem with the publicity officer, start considering the design for all these as soon as casting has taken place, and keep that dialogue flowing. Keep the committee informed so that the correct information can go into the **trifold and website**. Give information to the publicity officer so that the NODA and Spotlight magazines can advertise the show. **Advertising needs to be planned and needs to be early.**

10 weeks before opening night advertising posters need to be printed.

5 Weeks before opening night publicity photos need to be taken.

4 weeks before opening night the programme content needs to be passed to the programme designer.

After the production material should be collected ready for adding to the website

8) Constant checking of progress. While the show is progressing, you should be constantly **checking** with the various departments that they are up to schedule and happy with their duties. This is often very important with the props department. Mini production meetings with the props manager will usually be very beneficial.

9) Talking to the director. Keep talking to him/her about how the show is going, to get as much feedback as possible. The producer should be able to take the strain of organising away from the director.

10) Ensuring the lighting technician receives a lighting plot The director may deal direct, but establish agreement about this aspect of matters as soon as you can. The same applies to sound effects, props and costumes. Consult the Society's Wardrobe Mistress for access to the wardrobe.

11) Planning for a video to be made of the production. Subject to performing rights and **copyright** regulations, talk to the lighting technician about how a recording can be made.

12) Considering whether the production is to be entered for any of the local competitions. Check that the N.O.D.A. rep. has been invited. If the director wishes to enter a county competition (David Beach Competition for musicals, Phoebe Rees for plays, Cinderella for pantomimes), you are responsible for obtaining the entry form (from the secretary) and submitting it with fee (via the treasurer). There are time limits for entry, so organise this as soon as the production has been cast. Make sure that the box office is aware of the entries

because free tickets have to be provided. Discuss/arrange with front of house what hospitality will be afforded to adjudicators (welcome, free programme(s), complimentary drink, tour backstage, etc.). Please feedback any competition reviews, spare forms etc to the secretary. There is a separate set of notes – **Adjudicator's Protocol**, available to help with this. Check in the Theatre handbook and with the secretary.

- 13)Checking press arrangements.** Strictly speaking the publicity officer should make arrangements for local press critics and photographers i.e. tickets, welcome etc, but **speak** to them and don't assume it has been done.
- 14)Dress Rehearsal protocol.** The dress rehearsal is the last chance that the director and the production team have to eliminate problems, it **must not** be viewed as an additional performance with an audience; performing rights would usually restrict this. The committee have agreed that a maximum of 50 people *could* attend – by invitation only - a dress rehearsal. This 'audience' would be invited to make a donation (i.e. a raffle prize). The Director's decision whether or not to allow an 'audience' to watch a dress rehearsal is final.
- 15)Before the production week.** Let the **diving group** know that the show will be running. Ask them not to use their compressor (noise) until after the show is finished. They should also be aware of their club night will be affected by the audience. They are very good about this but just need a polite reminder. Remind the Bookings Secretary to remind the ballet school and any other hirers.
- 16)After each performance.** Organise a rota of 4-6 of cast members that will go through the auditorium and FoH area clearing litter and generally making sure everything is in order for the next performance.
- 17)Obtaining feedback on the budget.** Analyse what lessons can be learnt. If something significant surfaces, it should be fed back to committee, to aid future productions and perhaps amendment of these guidelines!
- 18)After the last night.** Arrangements should be made to strike the set, return properties, costumes, hired items, books and scores etc. and make the Theatre ready for the next production.
- 19)Remembering:**
- a) To arrange for a **make-up** artist to be available for dress rehearsals and performances. Ask likely candidates at an early stage of rehearsals and remind those chosen nearer the time
 - b) To check that **front of house** arrangements are in order. Don't assume that it will happen. This includes ensuring that the box office will be manned when the posters say it will be. Consult with the Box Office Manager
 - c) To ensure that approved child minding/**chaperone** arrangements are in place if necessary for young cast members e.g. in Panto. Consult with the Child Protection Officer and read the Society's **Child Protection Guidelines**.
 - d) to appoint a **prompter** early
 - e) to make sure that **website material** (photos, reviews, programme etc) is collected and added to the website
 - f) to speak to the stills **photographer** about his attendance and movements during a dress rehearsal
 - g) to arrange with the treasurer/secretary the entry into a **competition** (if appropriate)

SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

- a) Budget set and agreed with production team and committee
- b) Production meetings
- c) Ordering and distributing scripts / scores etc
- d) Rehearsal schedule - director, musical director, choreographer, Theatre bookings, notice board
- e) Licences and Performing rights
- f) Smooth running of rehearsals readings and auditions
- g) Keep publicity informed
- h) Stills photographer and /or Video recording
- i) Prompter
- j) make-up
- k) Child protection
- l) Lighting plan
- m) Props list
- n) Costume plot
- o) Front of house check
- p) Remind / inform other hirers and the divers
- q) Press arrangements
- r) Competition arrangements and Adjudicator's Protocol
- s) The after show party
- t) Budget feedback
- u) FoH area clearing rota
- v) Striking the set/clearing up
- w) Website updates



Date

Dear instrumentalist

Production

This is to confirm arrangements for the above show, the details of which are set out below. I very much look forward to you being part of the orchestra and, hopefully, a successful team. If you are happy with the terms outlined, would you please sign the copy of this letter and return it to me in the s.a.e enclosed.

Production:

Production performance dates:

Instrument(s):

Expenses to be paid: £ to be paid by cheque
(If cash is required, a bank charge of £10 may be deducted)

Orchestral score and band parts arrive on:

| | | |
|-------------|------------------|---|
| Rehearsals: | First band call | 7.30pm-10.00pm on date |
| | Second band call | 10.00am-2.00pm on Sunday date |
| | Dress Rehearsal | 3.00pm-6.15pm on Sunday date |
| | Performances | 7.30pm-10.30pm on date identifying matinees |

I attach a copy of the rehearsal schedule. You would be most welcome to attend any part of the other rehearsals, if you wished, and to play along with the piano, but please arrange that personally with MD nearer the time.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

| Show Budget Information | |
|---|--|
| Show Title | |
| Date | |
| Number of performances Total number of seats available Ticket price Expected % of seats sold Box Office projected takings Programme sales Raffle Programme Adverts Donations Scripts, badges etc Other – i.e. sales to cast | |
| Total Projected Income net of VAT | |
| Scripts& scores Royalties Director's fee & expenditure MD & Band/Orchestra fee Performing Rights Licence Choreographer's fee Staging -construction & consumables Paint, cloths & painting Props inc hire Lighting hire Costume hire Costume costs Make up Billboard posters Posters & Fliers Newspaper adverts Programme printing Banner Photographs Overspend from cast sales ie shoes, t shirts etc Giveaways for children Competition entry Photocopying / other | |
| Total Projected Expenditure net of VAT | |
| Total Projected surplus | |
| Profit Target - % | |

LITTLE THEATRE WELLS

Show and Date

Audition Information

Contact details Phone(s)

e-mail

Previous roles / shows (a brief note only - if I know you)

Any future commitments e.g. shows in rehearsal., planned Holidays etc. please state dates

Main role you are interested in

Roles you would accept if asked

The company for this show will be very busy and demanding. Would you accept a role as part of the company?

Please return to the producer BEFORE auditions on.... Thank you

Protocol for Adjudicators / Moderators / NODA Reps

1. There is a need to have a dedicated person as the correspondence point for the coordinator (Pam Price for David Beach, Anna Bowerman for Phoebe Rees and for Cinderella trophy). This could be someone permanently, or (more likely perhaps) the producer of the particular show to be judged.
2. The Director / Producer of any show decides whether to enter a Play / Musical / Pantomime into any of these competitions. He or she needs to complete the entry form (obtained from the coordinator) and arrange with Gordon a cheque for the entry application fee and send these off at least six weeks before the production. The earlier it is sent the better. The application form says on it who should be contacted in relation to the show, for arrangements etc. This should be the dedicated person named at 1. above ('our Contact Point').
3. The coordinator will then contact our Contact Point and ask for one or two tickets for a particular night of the show. The Contact Point should immediately contact Norman and arrange for these to be 'sold', the tickets printed and put in the box ready for collection by the adjudicator / moderator on the night. There will be one or two tickets for the adjudicator and one or two tickets for the moderator, and they will not necessarily be on the same night.
4. It would assist, when Norman puts the tickets in the box for collection if he attaches a note to box office staff to ensure that one or two free programmes are given to the adjudicator / moderator when the tickets are collected.
5. Many societies, but not all, provide a free interval drink or pre-show drink for the adjudicator and one other and the moderator and one other. Many societies provide a kind of accompanied hospitality to the adjudicator / moderator during the evening. For example, in Weston or Yeovil they are invited to a meeting in a private room where they are hosted and made a fuss of! However, some societies e.g. Yeovil's Swan Theatre do nothing of the kind and leave the adjudicator / moderator to their own devices. Other societies simply ensure that the director or producer of the show introduces himself or herself to the adjudicator / moderator as a matter of courtesy. We need to decide what we wish to do and how we wish to do that. If we provide any form of hospitality, then I suggest that we nominate for any particular show someone responsible for that. The nomination should be by the director / producer and probably should be one of the following:

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| (a) Director / producer | (b) Chairman | (c) Secretary |
| (d) Treasurer | (e) Committee member | |
6. Usually for any show the adjudicator / moderator is provided with a copy of the script. This is sent to the coordinator when the application goes in or approximately six weeks before the show starts. While the moderator might read it once the adjudicator usually holds on to it to assist him or her in writing the adjudication and therefore it is not usually returned until about a week after the show. The Contact Point should ensure a chasing system to recover the script in time. Often, if it takes the adjudicator a week to write his adjudication, the need for the script has probably disappeared after the third or fourth day and so the script can be chased for even at that stage.
7. Similar arrangements should apply in respect of NODA representatives. We usually invite our local NODA rep and guest to every performance. If they accept then we should do the same for the representative as for Adjudicators/Moderators.
8. Finally, if emails are used to any of these people, please do not rely on the system – ask for specific confirmation of receipt.