

## 2018 SEASON: PITCH PROCESS GUIDANCE NOTES

### Introduction

With a membership of over 250, a programme of around seven to ten challenging productions every year and a reputation for professional quality in every production, Sedos is proud of our claim to be the premier amateur theatre group in the City of London. We are now seeking proposals for our 2018 season.

Sedos presents a variety of shows — from classic plays such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to modern musicals such as *Spring Awakening* and *Legally Blonde*. We prefer to present modern classics or interesting takes on more traditional works. For example in recent years we have performed a fair amount of Stephen Sondheim musicals (eg *Assassins*, *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd* and *A Little Night Music*) and Donmar Warehouse and Royal Court inspired plays (eg *Enron*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *The Nether*). We also love a challenge — and performing shows that are unusual or may be considered technically difficult — eg Alan Ayckbourn's two simultaneous plays *House/Garden*, the comedy *Noises Off*, a devised and immersive production of *The Tempest* in a 15,000 sq ft office space in the Docklands titled *Such Stuff As Dreams Are Made On*.

The archive ([www.sedos.co.uk/archive/](http://www.sedos.co.uk/archive/)) should give you a pretty good idea about the types of shows that we tend to favour — but we are always looking for new and challenging ideas!

### Dates

Our 2018 dates at the Bridewell Theatre are:

21 January	8 July
4 March	16 September
8 April	21 October
6 May [2 week slot]	18 November [2 week slot]

These are the dates of the get-in Sunday, performances for a one-week generally start on the Tuesday and for a two-week start on Wednesday.

### Resident at the Bridewell Theatre

We are the resident theatre company at the Bridewell Theatre and we perform there for 8 – 10 weeks a year. This is generally split into three or four plays and a similar number of musicals. Plays are generally performed for a week – although we will

consider running plays for two weeks - eg *Noises Off* or a “double bill” of plays such as Ayckbourn’s *House/Garden*. Musicals tend to range from the better known which we perform for two weeks to smaller and/or less well known that we tend to perform for a week.

### **Edinburgh / Summer Festival / Other Venues / Other Ideas**

In addition to our performances at the Bridewell Theatre, we often take a show to the Edinburgh Fringe (last year we took *Frenemies* north of the border). If we do support an Edinburgh show, we will want to combine it with performances in London — either at the Bridewell, or at an alternative venue.

We also like to perform cabarets and devised shows – eg *Eurosedos* and *Red Hot and Black*.

We are keen also to perform smaller shows – either as late night cabarets, part of summer festivals or maybe at alternative venues. All suggestions gratefully received! This is how *Simprov* started, with a pitch for an idea.

Although we are resident at the Bridewell, we will consider performing at other venues. In recent years we have performed at the Battersea Barge, the Winterflood Theatre at the City of London School and at The Rag Factory off Brick Lane as well as *Such Stuff as Dreams are Made On* in an office block in Docklands! Performances at alternative venues can be either in substitution for a Bridewell week/fortnight or as an additional show. So if you think that your show would work particularly well in an alternate venue, and you are happy to take on the liaison and organisation with that venue, then we would love to consider it.

Note: if you are looking at a larger venue, then you would need to demonstrate a detailed marketing or sponsorship plan to convince us that the show is likely to be profitable – and also show that you have someone willing to organise it!

### **New teams / Encouraging new directors**

We encourage new people to pitch for shows. It is true, however, that we do tend to favour those who have been involved with the society in other ways before giving them a show — this is because we find that the best way of being able to assess whether we think that someone is going to be “right” for Sedos, is knowing them already! We therefore encourage people who are thinking of pitching to get involved with the society first — for example by assistant directing, producing, acting, stage managing etc. That being said, there are no hard and fast rules, and we have been known to award a show to someone who has not previously been involved with a Sedos production. If you are not so well known to us, you might want to consider pitching a smaller, less risky title. That is also true for people involved with Sedos already — for example actors, choreographers etc, but who have not

previously directed. It has to be admitted that we are unlikely to entrust a two-week musical to an untried director — unless of course you are an established member of the society with a strong team around you.

We will accept pitches from anyone — including musical directors, choreographers and producers — and will assist in pulling teams together if we have confidence in the pitch and think there may be other suitable people to complement the team.

We do not insist that directors have a full team when they pitch, however, we have to be confident that they will be able to pull a team together.

### **What show shall I pitch?**

Sedos is a pitch-led society. We want to create a balanced and varied season to ensure that across the year, we can appeal to as wide a cross-section of our membership as possible. While some consideration is given to finances, we are not seeking just to put on “money-makers” or “blockbusters” for their own sake. You would also be surprised — “big musicals” while very popular, tend also to be very expensive to put on. We also prefer shows that we believe work well in the Bridewell space — so if a pitch appears to be for a “set-heavy” show, we would want to understand how the vision would work at the Bridewell — or if you think it would work well in a different venue, which other venue — and demonstrating that you have the contacts and team to make that work.

We also tend to favour shows where we are confident that most of the cast (and certainly most of the main principals) could be cast from our own members. We do have an open-audition policy, just that we want to ensure that our membership have a reasonable chance of being cast!

A number of people have asked us for suggested “titles”. It is really for the pitchers to propose titles they want to put on. What we are looking for ultimately are shows that the pitchers are passionate about - which give us a diverse season to appeal across the year to all different sections of our membership — and which we believe we can perform and produce to a high quality.

For inspiration, look at the websites of the major rights holders:

- Music Theatre International, [www.mtishows.co.uk](http://www.mtishows.co.uk)
- Musicscope, [www.musicscopeuk.com](http://www.musicscopeuk.com)
- Really Useful Group, [www.stageamusical.com](http://www.stageamusical.com)
- the Rogers and Hammerstein organisation [www.rnh.com/shows.html](http://www.rnh.com/shows.html)
- Samuel French, [www.samuelyfrench-london.co.uk](http://www.samuelyfrench-london.co.uk)
- Theatrical Rights Worldwide [www.theatricalrights.com](http://www.theatricalrights.com)
- Nick Hern Books [www.nickhernbooks.co.uk](http://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk)

## **A word on rights**

Often the biggest headache with putting together a season is rights availability. Shows that we would love to do are often not available to us. Particularly with plays, a number of rights holders won't give us the rights to perform shows that are regularly on in the West End. That includes most modern American works (eg Arthur Millar, Tennessee Williams) and also a fair amount of popular titles by the likes of Alan Bennett and Tom Stoppard. If you are not sure whether a title is likely to be available, it is worth approaching the committee / rights holders to find out. We are very happy to assist with this process, just drop a line to [pitches@sedos.co.uk](mailto:pitches@sedos.co.uk)

## **Budget considerations**

We work to disciplined budgets, which we balance with artistic excellence. This is a challenge, but one that we expect all producers and teams to rise to. Template budgets for one and two-week musicals and a one-week play are set out at the end of these Guidance Notes. Whilst we do not expect every show to break even, we do expect the season as a whole to break even – and we do balance what we consider are “sure fire hits” with less well known work; so we expect the more “Popular” titles to de-risk more challenging works.

## **Jeremy Lewis legacy**

You may be aware that Sedos received a very generous bequest from a former chairman of the society, Jeremy Lewis. The terms of Jeremy's bequest are to support productions or production values that we might not otherwise be able to achieve. This year we are not specifically seeking pitches that would require additional money, however, if you have a great idea for how we might use the legacy to the benefit of the Society, then please let us know.

## **Members' Society**

Sedos is a membership society. Our members put on shows for the benefit of other members. This is a very different ethos from some other societies. This means that as well as the actors not being paid and being members of the society, this also applies to all core members of a production team – including musical directors, choreographers and producers. We would therefore expect anyone who is listed in a pitch document as part of a team, if they are not already a member, to join the society if they are part of a successful pitch.

## **Process**

The whole committee is involved in making a decision about the season choices. The committee includes directors, actors, producers and people with a musical as well as a play background. This ensures that the choosing process is as balanced and as fair

as possible. But please remember that we are also trying to put together as balanced a season as possible, as well as trying to accommodate the availability of teams and deal with the inevitable frustrations with rights!

The application form is for you to tell us all about your show, your team and anything else that you think we help us. We love receiving applications that include pictures, sample marketing materials and generally show creative thought! We want to see passion!

### **Timetable**

The committee will be making its selections in time to announce the full season at our EGM scheduled for the beginning of September (exact date to be confirmed).

Please make sure you send in your completed document and any other details to [pitches@sedos.co.uk](mailto:pitches@sedos.co.uk).

The deadline for submissions is midnight on Tuesday 1 August. Applications received after this date may not be considered.

Please note, we may ask you to come and share your vision with the committee — this is likely to be over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

### **Maximum number of pitches**

Each director can submit a maximum of **three** pitches for the 2018 season and must be committed to each pitch equally. We think it is important to balance roles across the membership, so we prefer to limit directors/MD's/producers/choreographers etc to one show per season. If you are on more than one pitch which is likely to be successful, we will engage with you and the production team about which shows you can be involved with – particularly if we think that for practical reasons the shows might be too close together to really do both.

### **Any questions?**

If you have any questions about the process, about rights, or indeed anything else, please contact any member of the committee, or drop a note to [pitches@sedos.co.uk](mailto:pitches@sedos.co.uk).

We look forward to hearing from you — and to receiving some fantastic, innovative and interesting pitches from which we can derive a great season for 2018!

***The Sedos Management Committee***

## **APPENDIX – BUDGETS**

Sedos is a registered charity, and we aim to break even across the year. All shows are generally budgeted to break even, or to make only a very small loss. If you are likely to request a higher than usual expenditure, we would generally expect to see a corresponding plan as to how you might achieve a higher than expected audience.

While the marketing group will provide marketing assistance such as templates, updating the website and social media, ultimately the marketing responsibility of each show rests with the show's producer and as much focus on this area is expected as on the actual putting on of the show.

Below are budget expenditure templates: for a one-week play and for a one-week and two-week musical.

We do not pay any of the creative team (directors, musical directors, choreographers).

Final budgets will be agreed between the Production Team and the Production Budget Controller, on behalf of the Committee – but the budgets set out below are unlikely to be exceeded. The teams are also expected to allocate reasonable amounts of their budgets to marketing and programme/printing costs – as these are all part of the show.

Generally, we would expect all performances to have matinee performances (or in the case of a two week musical, at least one) because in our experience, we do tend to play to audiences that are not able to come to other performances, and thus they generally add incremental income, and they don't create a "drag" on the budget.

## TEMPLATE BUDGETS

Expenditure			
	1 week play	1 week musical	2 week musical
Venue Hire	£2,300	£2,300	£4,600
Rights	£500	£1,250	£2,500
License & Parts	£0	£400	£500
Band	£0	£1,250	£3,000
Sound/AV	£200	£2,000	£3,600
Lighting	£200	£200	£1,200
Set	£600	£600	£1,400
Costume	£400	£400	£1,500
Props	£150	£200	£250
Wigs & Make-up	£0	£100	£200
Marketing	£300	£300	£400
Transport	£150	£150	£200
Gala Night	£100	£150	£300
Contingency	£210	£535	£1,205
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,110</b>	<b>£9,835</b>	<b>£20,855</b>

A one-week play budget would not be expected to exceed £5,500

A one-week musical budget would not be expected to exceed £10,000

A two-week musical budget would not be expected to exceed £21,000