

## 2017 SEASON: PITCH PROCESS GUIDANCE NOTES

### Introduction

With a membership of over 200, a programme of around six to eight challenging productions every year and a reputation for professional quality in every production. We are proud of our claim to be the premier amateur theatre group in the City of London.

We present a variety of shows each year – both plays and musicals. The range is varied - from classics such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to modern musicals such as *Spring Awakening* and *Legally Blonde*. We like to present modern classics as well as interesting takes on more traditional works. In recent years we have performed a fair amount of Stephen Sondheim musicals (eg *Assassins*, *Into the Wood* and *A Little Night Music*) and Donmar Warehouse and Royal Court inspired plays (eg *Enron*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*). We also love a challenge and performing shows that other societies might not - such as Alan Ayckbourn's two simultaneous plays *House/Garden* or rarer classics such as Maltby and Shire's *Baby*. Eclecticism and interest is what inspires us! We aspire to challenging, excellent theatre.

Our 2016 season included our first piece of fully immersive theatre in an office block in Docklands – which demonstrates the adventurousness of some of our choices!

The archive ([www.sedos.co.uk](http://www.sedos.co.uk)) gives a pretty good idea about the types of shows that we tend to perform — but we are always looking for new and challenging ideas! We want to perform shows that inspire us and that we believe will also inspire the membership. We want to know that you are passionate about the titles that you pitch! We would love a broad range of titles that will enable us to choose a wide-ranging but balanced season.

We are a pitch-led society. We choose the season on the basis of the pitches we receive.

We are keen to receive suggestions of shows that the society might perform whether or not you wish to be part of the production team!

We are also keen to hear from people who would like to be involved in a production team, in any capacity, who are not actively attached to a specific pitch.

### 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. Musicals tend to range from the better known which we perform for two weeks to the less well known that we perform for a week. This year we have confirmed 9 weeks in advance, but we have the ability to increase this number if we wish. We have reduced the number up front to give us more flexibility if we decide to produce one or more shows at alternative venues.

### **Dates at the Bridewell Theatre**

Our 2017 dates at the Bridewell Theatre are:

Feb 12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> (1 week)  
April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 12<sup>th</sup> (2 weeks)  
June 25<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup> (1 week)  
Sept 17<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> (2 weeks)  
Oct 17<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> (1 week)  
Nov 19<sup>th</sup> – Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> (2 weeks)

Note the September 2 week slot could be used to perform a “bigger play” (for example we ran *Noises Off* over a two week period), two 1 week plays, a 1 week play and a 1 week musical - or we might do combine a one-week show with some members’ events / one night performances etc. The final decision will depend on the pitches that we receive.

### **Edinburgh / “In The City”**

In addition to our performances at the Bridewell Theatre, we regularly take a show to the Edinburgh Fringe; and perform another show as a touring “In the City” production. 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 would love to receive pitches for Edinburgh or “In The City” type events.

### **Devised shows**

We like to perform cabarets and devised shows – eg *Eurosedos* and *Red Hot and Black*. We have often given a one-week slot to these types of shows as we know that they are popular with the society and popular with our audiences.

### **Other ideas for events / Members’ Workshops etc.**

We like performing smaller shows, running workshops and providing opportunities for new and first-time directors. If you are interested in something like this, then please indicate on the form – or get in touch with a member of the committee.

## **Other venues**

Although we are resident at the Bridewell, we often perform 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 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 plan – and also show that you have someone willing to organise it! For these kinds of opportunities, it is probably worth pitching on the basis of a performance at the Bridewell, but with ideas and thoughts around a broader team that could be employed to make the show work in an alternative venue.

## **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 a director unknown to us or a first time director — unless of course you are an established member of the society with a strong team around you.

We are happy to accept pitches from anyone — including musical directors, choreographers and producers — and will assist in pulling teams together if we think that there may be other suitable people to complement the team. Indeed if you have an idea for a show and just want to suggest it – then please do and if we think we can pull a team together to put it on and it would complement the season, then we might just go for it!

We do not insist that people have a full team when they pitch – but in all cases, we have to be confident that a full production team can be pulled together.

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

We are 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. Whilst breaking even is important, we are not seeking just to put on “money-makers”/“blockbusters” for their own sake. You would also be surprised – “big musicals” while very popular, tend also to be very expensive to put on and rarely make a profit - so we have to be very careful when balancing a season. 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) can be cast from our own members. Whilst we have and want to continue our open-audition policy, we also 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 are passionate about! Our aim is to choose a season from the shows pitched to us which will 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:

- Josef Weinberger, [www.josef-weinberger.com](http://www.josef-weinberger.com),
- 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.samuel french-london.co.uk](http://www.samuel french-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 many 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 or the rights holders to find out. We are very happy to assist with this process.

## **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 and more details on budget considerations are set out in the Appendix to 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. 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**

We are a members' society. Our members put on shows for the benefit of other members. This is a 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 directors, musical directors, choreographers and producers – and generally assistant directors and stage managers also. Whilst we appreciate that some core members of the team may be brought in at a later stage to fill a gap, and in those cases, discretion may be used, we would certainly expect anyone who is named on a pitch document to become a member if they are then involved in putting on their show.

## **Process and the Application Form**

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 end of September (exact date to be confirmed).

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

The closing date for submissions is **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July**. 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 towards the end of August.

## **Maximum number of pitches**

We ask directors to limit their pitches to a maximum of three. We would expect directors to be committed to each pitch equally.

## **Being on more than one pitch**

We know that sometimes other members of the team (eg producers, MD's etc) may be on a number of different pitches which may make it impractical for them to be involved with all the shows that they are on a pitch for if more than one is successful. If that occurs, we will raise with the relevant pitch teams. We also try and balance the load across the season as much as possible, so if for example a choreographer or a producer is attached to two shows that are both likely to be successful, we may ask them to express a preference and see if there is someone else that might be able to join the other team. This is particularly the case if shows happen to be close together.

## **Suggestions for shows**

We welcome suggestions for shows that you think Sedos may be interested in putting on. Depending on the pitches received, we will consider other suggestions made and will try and pull a production team together if we think that this will help us create a balanced season.

## **I am a director/producer/musical director/choreographer but I'm not on a specific pitch**

Please do complete the form to let us know that you are available. Many of our pitches come with incomplete production teams and this will assist us in helping people that pitch shows to pull together a full team.



Established in 1905. The City of London's premier amateur theatre company

### **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 2016!

### ***The Committee***



## **APPENDIX – BUDGETS**

We are 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. These are just an indication of our expected level of costs in each area and there is some flexibility as to where each team feels the money is best spent.

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. 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 shows 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

### 1 Week Play

Expenditure	Template	Comments
Venue Hire	£1,840	
Rights	£500	
License & Parts	£0	
Charity Night	£350	50% of 1 performance's income
Rehearsal Space	£0	
Band	£0	
Sound	£0	
Lighting	£200	
AV	£0	
Set	£700	
Costume & Wigs	£300	
Props	£200	
Makeup	£0	
Marketing / programmes	£250	
Transport	£150	
Gala Night	£130	
Contingency	£193	10% of variable costs

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE** £4,813

Total Budget not expected to exceed £5,000

## 1 Week Musical

Expenditure	Template	Comments
Venue Hire	£1,840	
Rights	£1,200	
License & Parts	£400	
Charity Night	£650	50% of 1 performance's income
Rehearsal Space	£0	
Band	£900	
Sound	£1500	
Lighting	£250	
AV	£0	
Set	£500	
Costume & Wigs	£350	
Props	£200	
Makeup	£0	
Marketing / programmes	£350	
Transport	£150	
Gala Night	£130	
Contingency	£433	10% of variable costs

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE**      £8,853

Total Budget not expected to exceed £9,000

## 2 Week Musical

Expenditure	Template	Comments
Venue Hire	£3,680	
Rights	£2,500	
License & Parts	£400	
Charity Night	£750	50% of 1 performance's income
Rehearsal Space	£0	
Band	£2,500	
Sound	£3,500	
Lighting	£1,750	
AV	£0	
Set	£1,400	
Costume & Wigs	£750	
Props	£250	
Makeup	£0	
Marketing / programmes	£450	
Transport	£250	
Gala Night	£300	
Contingency	£1,115	10% of variable costs

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE**      **£19,595**

Total Budget not expected to exceed £20,000.