



Production Workbook

Please fill in the following information on the day that you are given this book!

About You:

Your Name: _____

Your Phone #: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____

Your Job on this Production: _____

About This Play:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Performance Dates: _____

Name of Venue: _____

Box Office Phone #: _____

Box Office Website: _____

How to Use this Book

This workbook is divided into three sections:

- Early Production Period (26 to 13 weeks prior to opening)
- Auditions and Rehearsals Period (12 to 2 weeks prior to opening)
- Tech week, Run and Post-production Period (2 to 0 weeks)

Each section is further divided into week-by-week pages to guide you through the production. Each week contains a checklist of the things that need to be done that week in order to keep your show on track.

In addition to the checklists, this workbook will provide you with:

- A **Best Practices Guide** for production, stagecraft, artistic merit and theatrical etiquette for shows at Grinder Productions
- **Answers to Frequently Asked Questions** about various production problems, and tips to help you avoid common mistakes
- **The Toolbox.** The Toolbox can be found online at www.grinderproductions.org. It is a compilation of print and online resources covering every aspect of theatrical production, containing valuable information and resources for you and everyone involved in your show from start to finish. Refer to this material often, and encourage the rest of your team to do as well
- **Online Forms**, also available at www.grinderproductions.org, containing information that is unique to Grinder Productions that you and your team will need
- A clearly-defined **Reporting Structure** that ensures the lines of communication between you, your play and the company headquarters remains open at all times, no matter how busy you (or we!) may get

This workbook is the product of countless professional, semi-pro, collegiate, school and community theatrical productions. It is the product of good shows and bad shows, shows produced by idiots, tyrants, lunatics, geniuses, diesel mechanics, activists, atheists, intellectuals and yes, even a few that were produced by me. It has been designed to help you bring the highest quality production possible to the stage on opening night, and to ensure that you and everyone else who's involved with your show has an enjoyable time from start to finish.

And yes, it is **your** show. Take ownership in it, take pride in it and make it the best it can possibly be. True, this show is a part of the larger project here at Grinder Productions, but it's your efforts that will show our patrons the quality, dedication and values we uphold.

Good luck with your production!

- Eric

The General Production Schedule – Your Show at a Glance

What follows below is a generic production schedule for a typical show here at Grinder Productions. It contains all the deadlines, important milestones and other activities that must be done in order for your show to be a success.

In most cases the actual day an activity is listed on doesn't really matter – what's important is that by the end of that week all the tasks for that week have been completed.

This outline is not your personal “to-do” list. It is the master outline of every task involved in the production, and while many of the items will have to be done by you ***it's important that you delegate many of these tasks to others.*** Starting in week 24 we'll talk more about building your production team.

| Wks left | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Sat |
|----------|------------------|--------|------------|----------------------|----------|--------|-----|
| 26 | Read Play | | | | | | |
| 25 | Pre-Prod Info | | | | | | |
| 24 | Crewing Start | | | | | | |
| 23 | Crew Continue | | | | | | |
| 22 | Create Prod Sch. | | | | | | |
| 21 | | | | Set Designer | | | |
| 20 | | | | Stage Manager | | | |
| 19 | | | | Set Design Meeting 1 | | | |
| 18 | | | SM Meeting | Costume Designer | | | |
| 17 | | | Build Crew | Set Design Meeting 2 | | | |
| 16 | | | Paint Crew | Costume Des Mtg 1 | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--|--|
| | | | Props Crew | Set Design in | Sound Designer | | | |
| 14 | | | ASM(s) in place | Set Building | LX Designer | | | |
| 13 | | | Scripts Due | Set Painting | Sound Des Mtg | | | |
| 12 | | | Auditions | Trial fit-up in reh | Costume Crew | | | |
| 11 | | | Call-backs | Hand Props | LX/SD/show Crew | | | |
| 10 | | | Cast in place | Costume Des Mtg 2 | Set Elements | | | |
| 9 | | | Sound Design | Set Dressing | LX Des Meeting | | | |
| 8 | | | Sound Track | Costume Design in | Marketing plan in | | | |
| 7 | | Reh Prep | Poster & flyer | Free lists, blog, n-ltr | Print Run | | | |
| 6 | Read-through | Website Update | Block 1 st 25% | Measurements | Block 2 nd 25% | | | |
| 5 | Block 3 rd 25% | Online Invites | Block 4 th 25% | Print Distribution | Stumble-through | Show-based | | |
| 4 | Work 1 st 25% | Prelim Fittings | Work 2 nd 25% | Rehearsal Photos | Work 3 rd 25% | Show-based | | |
| 3 | Work 4 th 25% | Press Release | Run for LX Des. | Sandwich Board | Polish 1 st 25% | Show-based | | |
| 2 | Polish 2 nd 25% | Final Fittings | Polish 3 rd 25% | Lighting Design in | Polish 4 th 25% | Program | | |
| 1 | Full Run | FOH Display | Full Run | Lighting/Sound prep | Full Run | Tech Notes | | |
| 0 | Full Run | Tech Notes | Tech and Shows – See Tech Week Schedule → | | | | | |

Early Production Period – 26 to 12 Weeks Prior to Opening Night

The early days of working on a play are by far the easiest. Most of the work can be done when it's most convenient for you, and there are fewer things to check off the list at this point than at any other time in the process.

You'll spend a little bit of your time creating a schedule, securing your production team and making sure that everything will be ready for auditions and the first rehearsal. You'll spend a lot of your time thinking about the play, reading it over and beginning to see in your mind how it might look, sound and feel on stage (and, most importantly, why it will look, sound and feel that way).

I can't emphasize enough the importance of getting to know your show. Some veteran directors can walk into the first rehearsal without having even read the script and still manage to do a decent job, but for anyone with less than a thousand or so productions under their belt the benefits of a thorough understanding of the play can't be over-stated.

This doesn't mean that you need to lock yourself in a quiet room somewhere and perform an exhaustive close reading of the text using every branch of literary theory known to humankind – to do so is the task of the academic, and to a lesser extent the dramaturg, and both of them tend to make lousy directors.

What you need to do is read the play, understand it, and then spend some time **thinking** about it. Hit the gym, take some long walks, indulge in your hobbies, whatever it takes to get your mind into its relaxed, stress-free mode. If you've taken the time to carefully read and understand the play you'll find the ideas will come thick and fast.

In the week-by-week checklists that follow I'll walk you through all of the creative and administrative steps that you will need to take in order to make this production a success. It's important for you to remember that you aren't in this alone, and that I and the rest of the company are here to help you at every step of the way.

Turn the page to begin your journey, 26 weeks prior to opening night...

Week 26

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Read the play to find out what it is about. Resist the temptation to start making notes or doing any elaborate planning at this stage. □ Director: If you are unfamiliar with the venue in which the play will be performed see the Online Form #1 for the specific ground plan for your venue. You may also wish to contact the venue directly to arrange a tour of the facility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ The Toolbox - Directing ➤ Online Form #1 – Ground Plans |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: If you've made it to this point we have to assume you know a little something about the craft of directing a play, but now is the time to learn a little more, or brush up on your knowledge. Check out the Director's Toolbox for some resources, or contact us if you can't find what you're looking for | <h3 data-bbox="824 842 1044 884">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Send confirmation to grinder@grinderproductions.org that you are going to join the project, if you have not done so already. Let us know your thoughts on the play after your initial read-through, and any questions you may have about the play or the venue |

Best Practices

- Plays are short. The first time you read yours do it in one sitting.
- Keeping in touch with head office is essential. Even if you don't have anything exciting or pressing to report a regular check-in once a week to let us know how you're doing saves a lot of worry.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions about the venue your play will be performed in. Ask the people who run the venue, ask other people who have done shows in there before, and ask us. You can avoid a lot of common "traps" that first-time directors often encounter, like putting an actor in a place on stage where it's next to impossible to light them.

FAQ's

- **Q: Why shouldn't I make notes during my first read-through?**
- **A:** The first time you read the play it's like you're a member of the audience. The audience can't stop the play to take notes, and they don't know what's going to happen next. For them the play is an experience, one they'll probably have only once. In order to direct the play you need to first experience it, just as your audience will. Reading it straight through is the only way you'll be able to do so.

Money, money, money

Most of theatre's nastiest wars are fought not over artistic differences but rather over money, so let's get this out of the way up front: here at Grinder our budgets are extremely, extremely tight.

That being said, theatre people are the masters of ingenuity! There are countless low-cost and no-cost ways to produce professional results, and we have the know-how, materials and equipment to make them happen.

The vast, vast majority of the cost of your show is for two things over which you have no control: Rent and Royalties. These two expenses have been worked out (and in most cases paid) months in advance, and they have already consumed over 90% of the money set aside for this show. While you don't have to worry about these expenses you do have to make sure you don't do anything to change them, like deciding to add an extra performance (or cancel one) or if someone working on your show does damage to a venue or its equipment. If any of these or similar situations should ever occur, please contact Head Office immediately for instructions.

You've got \$50 to spend on your production however you see fit. You'll probably need to spend your budget on printing, on running props (things that will be consumed or destroyed in every performance) and possibly on a small amount of paint. It's your responsibility to ensure you and your team stay within the budget, so you should personally approve every purchase that is made for your show.

I can't stress enough how important it is to keep people (especially designers) from getting upset about not having enough money to make their "art." If there's any member of your team who refuses to believe that we can put a great show on the stage for that kind of money please send them to us, and we'll show them how to bring their dream to life.

I've seen "budget blow-ups" ruin shows big and small, with many personal and professional relationships ruined in the process. I don't want the same thing to happen to your show or any other here at Grinder, so please be open, honest and careful with your budget.

Week 25

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Read the play again, this time much more slowly and in greater depth. See online form #2 for a list of questions you can ask yourself to help you get a feel for this particular show. □ Director: Read the play once more, this time with an eye for the play's technical requirements. Carefully complete Online Form #3 – Pre-production Information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Online Form #2 – Questions for Directors ➤ Online Form #3 – Pre-production Information |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Loan your script to a trustworthy friend (who won't lose it!) and ask them to give it a quick read. Ask them for their take on it. □ Director: It's time for the "R" word – research. See below for some things to consider before deciding to do/not to do any research for this production. | <h3 data-bbox="821 827 1042 869">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ E-mail your Pre-production Information, along with any questions you have about either the practical or aesthetic aspects of the play to grinder@grinderproductions.org Ask us anything! |

Best Practices

- Every good director makes the effort to understand their play thoroughly in both emotional and practical terms. End of story.
- Completing a pre-production information form doesn't mean copying out the props list in the back of the book, nor does it mean simply reading everything that's in the stage directions - you must also actually read the script. For example, Shakespeare's plays are full of props of all sorts, most of which are never indicated in the stage directions.
- In terms of research, see the first point in this section. If you're an expert on snakes, incest, poison and Danish royal history then perhaps you can get away without doing much research for a production of Hamlet. But if there's anything in the play that you

don't know, even if it's just a single word, place or reference you should look it up. Really, it's not as hard or as boring as it seems.

FAQ's

- **Q: What is the pre-production information used for?**
- **A:** Your pre-prod-info will be the starting point for you and your production team to begin working on the technical elements of the play, so as you gather people you should give each of them a copy. You and your stage manager will use the Scene Breakdown to schedule rehearsals, while your designers will use the other information to make sure their designs encompass all the needs of the show. The marketing and promotions people will also use the information to get a feel for the show and to help point them towards (and away from) various target demographics.
- **Q: What research should I be doing and how?**
- **A:** This is probably one of the most misunderstood parts of a director's job. Researching your play is as simple as:
 - Looking up an unfamiliar word in the dictionary
 - Performing an internet search on the title of the play to see what other productions have looked like (not that you're going to copy them, but they might have some ideas that would get you thinking in a new direction)
 - Reading a couple of online articles about a famous person, place or event that the play is based upon or is a backdrop to (if you were to direct "Les Miserables" it might be a good idea to learn a little bit about the French Revolution)
 - Take notes if you want to, but it isn't an essay. The point is not to prove that you know something, it's to have the knowledge on hand so that you can **use** it to understand your show and make it that much better

Week 24

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Begin the process of securing quality people for the following jobs on your production. Use the job descriptions and contact outlines in Online Form #4 as a guideline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stage Manager ○ Set Designer ○ Costume Designer ○ Lighting Designer ○ Sound Designer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Continue reading the play to understand its structure and meaning, making notes and conducting research as fit. | <h3 data-bbox="824 842 1040 884">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ E-mail the contact info (name, phone and e-mail) of the crew you have secured to grinder@grinderproductions.org This is when it's essential that you let us know how you're doing. In addition to contact info for the people you do have please keep us informed about your progress on the people you don't have – we can't help you if we don't know what you need! |

Best Practices

- The people you are getting this week are your top-level people who will be responsible for large portions of your production. Choose them carefully.
- It's important for us here at Grinder to keep our membership database as up-to-date as possible, so please make sure that we know who's who in your play and how to reach them.

FAQ's

- **Q: Where the heck am I supposed to find all these people?**
- **A:** First off, you're not alone. **You** don't have to find all these people, **we** do, together. Here's how we'll go about it, starting with the most preferable method and working our way down:
 1. **Your picks:** If you know anyone that you would like to do one of these jobs simply go ahead and ask them. Friends, family, co-workers, etc are all good. If there's someone you'd like to work with who doesn't have the skills you need but is willing to learn ask them anyways – we call always teach them what they need to know.
 2. **Our picks:** If no one springs to your mind for a certain job then just let us know right away. We'll pour over the database and see who's done the job in the past, and who's indicated they're interested in learning that particular area. We'll then send you the contact info of any people we have.
 3. **Open Calls.** We'll put your request for crew into the newsletter which is sent out to over 300 members every month. Chances are there's a member out there who we wouldn't have thought of that would be interested.
 4. **Outside Sourcing.** If we can't find the resources inside Grinder we can always go outside Grinder, utilizing our contacts in other local and regional theatre companies to put you in touch with the people in their spheres of influence who have an interest in your area of need.
 5. **All Calls.** We go to the blog, to Facebook, Twitter. We look for organizations likely to have people with the skill set you need and we contact them and see if anyone's interested.
 6. **We throw in the towel.** If the time and effort being spent looks like it will forever be in vain as a last resort a Grinder staff member will take on a particular job for a given show.
- **Q: Are of these jobs pre-filled?**
- **A:** Check with us, as this will vary. At this time the only position that may be filled is lighting designer, due to liability issues.
- **Q: Do I need a different person for every position?**
- **A:** Technically, no. But it's preferable that you have one job per person, if only to keep everyone's workload light and to ensure they have the time they need to make a high-quality contribution.
- **Q: Can I do one or more of these jobs myself?**
- **A:** Technically, yes. But we'd rather you didn't have to, and were able to focus purely on directing the play.

Week 23

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Director: Continue Securing people for any remaining Stage Manager/ Design Crew positions □ Director: Begin the process of securing quality people for the following jobs on your production. Use the job descriptions and contact outlines in Online Form #4 as a guideline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assistant Stage Manager(s) ○ Head Carpenter & crew ○ Head Painter and crew ○ Head of Props & crew ○ Head Costumer & crew ○ Lighting Tech/Op ○ Sound Engineer ○ Sound Tech/Op □ Director: Continue reading the play to understand its structure and meaning, making notes and conducting research as fit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List |
| | <h3 data-bbox="818 835 1045 884">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ E-mail the names and contact information (phone and e-mail) of the crew you have secured to grinder@grinderproductions.org. We can provide advice on what crew you really need for your production and what jobs can be combined with something else. |

Best Practices

- These people will form the “nuts and bolts” of your production team. They won’t be involved in the creative aspect as much as your design team is – it will be their job to turn those designs into reality.
- Make sure we know who all these people are and their contribution to the show, however small. In addition to phone numbers and e-mail addresses we’ll also need full names, correctly spelled, so we can include them in the show program

FAQ's

- **Q: Where the heck am I supposed to find all these people?**
- **A:** See last week's notes.
- **Q: Are of these jobs pre-filled?**
- **A:** Possibly lighting, again due to safety and liability issues. Other positions may be pre-filled from time-to-time, or we may have some people who have a "standing offer" to do certain jobs when needed. Check with us for the most current information.
- **Q: Do I need someone for every position?**
- **A:** Probably not. In fact a production would be very, very lucky to have a different person assigned to each one of these jobs. Take a look at your particular show and decide which areas require the most work and focus on getting those people first. Once you have a team in place you can always ask for volunteers to do some smaller jobs if you can't secure a full crew.
- **Q: I already have a design team – why can't my designers also do the actual work?**
- **A:** There's no reason they can't, and they probably will have to do a lot of hands-on work to bring their designs to life. But having crew members in place to assist the designers will reduce their workload so they have more time to do a better job. Tech crews also tend to take a lot of pride in their work, and so there will be one more "quality control" in place on your production, and by collaborating with someone else there's ample opportunity for mentoring, where crew members can learn to be future designers and designers can learn to be future crew.
- **Q: I'm directing a very small show. I don't have time to go chasing after a lot of people. I'm having a lot of trouble getting anyone to do any job on my production. How can I put on a show with a tech crew of just one or two?**
- **A:** Having a large crew is, obviously, the most preferable option but there are times when it just isn't possible. When your crewing options are limited you'll want to assign the people you do have to the following roles:
 - Stage Manager – If you've only got one person to help you this is the job they should be doing, with the production tasks being divided between the two of you and head office.
 - Production Assistant – This position is a "catch-all" but most often includes being in charge of props, furniture, set dressing and costumes, as well as working backstage or in the booth on the show. Between you, your PA and your Stage Manager your rehearsal needs should be met, with head office picking up the slack for carpentry, painting, lighting and sound.

- Designer – if you have enough people to pull together the physical needs of the show then you have the luxury of making it look pretty. A set designer who builds and paints his or her own show and is willing to help out during the run where necessary can work alongside an organized stage manager and competent production assistant, leaving you free once again to focus (almost) exclusively on directing.

I've got someone! Now what do I do?

- Sooner or later someone will agree to be a part of your production. Now what are you supposed to do with them?
 - First off, say thank-you, and welcome them to the company if they are new
 - Get their vital statistics: Full name, telephone number and e-mail address and record it on the company contact list – Online Form #5
 - For designers and stage management make a copy of the script and give it to them (or e-mail it if it's online)
 - Give everyone a copy of the pre-production information
 - Send everyone a copy of the production schedule (which you'll be creating in week 22) and confirm with them the first date their presence will be required
 - Answer any questions they may have
 - Inform grinder@grinderproductions.org of your progress

Crewing Checklist

| Role | OK | Role | OK | Role | OK |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| Stage Manager | | ASM #1 | | Head of Props | |
| Set Designer | | ASM #2 | | Props Crew | |
| Costume Designer | | Head Carpenter | | Head Costumer | |
| Lighting Designer | | Carpentry Crew | | Costume Crew | |
| Sound Designer | | Head Painter | | Head Electrician | |
| Sound Engineer | | Paint Crew | | Head of Audio | |
| Production Ass't. | | Running Crew | | Other: _____ | |

Week 22

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Create and begin distribution of the production schedule – see Online Form #6 <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Continue reading the play to understand its structure and meaning, making notes and conducting research as fit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule Blank |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates and draft production schedule to grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- Use the generic production schedule at the start of this book to create one based around the exact dates of your production. Don't worry if you don't know what some jobs are – just make sure everything on the generic schedule makes it onto yours.
- The only thing that's not included on the generic outline that you may want to include are production meetings. A production meeting is where you, your stage manager, the design team and the crew sit down together to “check-in” on how everyone is progressing and address any problems or delays that have come up. Production meetings aren't technically necessary – **if** you can keep on top of everyone to communicate regularly and get things done on time. If you're dealing with a younger or less experienced team you might find a production meeting every couple of weeks or even just once over the course of the production to be invaluable.
- While you have a lot of freedom to create a production schedule that fits the unique demands of your particular show head office reserves the right to ask you to make changes to your schedule if we feel unsure that you will be able to accomplish what needs to be done by opening night in the timelines you have laid out.

Week 21

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director:</i> Secure Set Designer <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director:</i> Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director:</i> Begin sorting and compiling your notes and any research into preliminary director's notes. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Set Designer:</i> Begin working on Set Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes - Design ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #7 – Director's Notes |
| | <h3 data-bbox="818 884 1045 926">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Contact your set designer to confirm the time and place of your first design meeting, and ask them to contact you if they have any questions about the show after they've finished reading the script. |

Best Practices

- This week is when things start getting serious. By the end of this week if you don't have a set designer with a script in their hands and a first meeting time and place settled you are officially behind schedule. Don't let it happen to you!
- See Online Form #7 for a sample outline of director's notes. How you organize and prepare for the process ahead is a completely personal decision, and the outline given is only meant as a guideline. We don't care **how** you prepare, we simply care **that** you prepare.

Week 20

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Secure a Stage Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Continue preparing your director's notes, begin preparing for the first meeting with your set designer <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Set Designer:</i> Continue Working on Set Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send your set designer the agenda for your first design meeting (Online Form #8), address any questions they may already have |

Best Practices

- Your stage manager is the most important member of your production team. From now on you'll want to "cc" them on every piece of correspondence you send, invite them to attend all meetings you will go to and make sure they are kept up-to-date about all aspects of the production.

Week 19

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Set Designer, Stage Manager: 1st set design meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Finish compiling your director's notes – let them sit <input type="checkbox"/> Set Designer: Continue working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | Reporting |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send your stage manager the agenda for your SM meeting (see Online Form #8) <input type="checkbox"/> Either you or your stage manager should take informal notes at your design meeting and then distribute those notes to everyone in attendance (and head office) the following day |

Week 18

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Stage Management meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Secure Costume Designer <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Begin working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Set Designer: Continue working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send notes from stage management meeting to all attendees and head office <input type="checkbox"/> Send your Set Designer the agenda for your second design meeting (see Online Form #8) with a reminder of the time and place |

Week 17

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Head Carpenter and Set Builders <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Set Designer, Stage Manager: 2nd Set Design Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Set Designer: Continue working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <p data-bbox="824 974 1040 1022">Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send notes from set design meeting to all attendees and head office <input type="checkbox"/> Send your Costume Designer the agenda for your design meeting (see Online Form #8) with a reminder of the time and place, address any answer questions they may already have |

Best Practices

- Many hands make light work, so generally the more willing hands that are available to help build the set the better it will go. But it's important to have at least one person (your Head Carpenter) with a good working knowledge not just of wood-working but of the unique demands and conventions of theatrical set construction. Make sure your head carpenter has this knowledge, or put them in touch with us here at head office. This will save time and headaches!

Week 16

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Head Painter, Set Painting Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Costume Designer, Stage Manager: Costume Design meeting 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Set Designer: Continue working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Contact your set designer to politely remind them that the design is due next week. <input type="checkbox"/> Send notes from costume design meeting to all attendees and head office |

Best Practices

- Same as last week. Make sure whoever is in charge of painting your set knows how to paint scenery for theatre productions – it's nothing like painting a picture or painting a house! Again we'll explain to anyone who's interested what they need to know – please let us do so and we can go a long way towards avoiding hissy fits, temper tantrums and all-nighters re-painting the set during tech week.

Week 15

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Head of Props and Props Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Secure Sound Designer <input type="checkbox"/> Set Designer: Design Due <input type="checkbox"/> Head Carpenter: Set Construction Preparations <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Head Carpenter: Schedule exact date for set building, confirm with crew | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Review Director’s Notes – begin making general notes about characters/relationships etc in preparation for auditions <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Begin working on design | <h3 data-bbox="820 934 1047 982">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send or deliver the set design to your head carpenter and all relevant crew (see below). <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail grinder@grinderproductions.org when the set design comes in. Please include a digital copy of the design if possible. |

Best Practices

- As soon as the set design is complete a lot of people will need access to it right away. On the day you receive the design make several copies of it for the following people: you, your stage manager, the designers, all department heads and head office. Then give the original copy to the Head Carpenter (photocopying throws off scale drawings slightly) with instructions to guard it with his or her life.

FAQ's

- **Q: What should the set design consist of?**
- **A:** Many a set design has been created on a bar napkin over drinks but at Grinder Productions we're looking for something a little more professional. A good set designer will provide you with the following:
 - **A Ground Plan:** This is a "top view" of each different scene in the play indicating the positions of all pieces, the elevation of any raised portions of the stage and any notes about how and where any moving pieces are to go.
 - **A Front Elevation:** This is an "audience view" of each different scene in the play and it contains details similar to the ground plan, but shows objects "face on" to reveal details that might not show up from above. Often designers will paint their front elevations, in which case they become known as "renderings."
 - **Other Notes and Drawings:** Any irregular pieces or items requiring a specific construction should be given their own "Construction Drawing." Usually necessary when a piece requires some sort of structural integrity or is of an irregular shape.
 - **A 3-D model, also known as a "maquette:"** Not all designers will provide you with this, and it serves no real practical purpose other than to provide a miniature version of what the finished product should look like. Nonetheless a model can be very valuable to help solve blocking problems and help actors comprehend the final playing space.
- **Q: My set designer just gave me a drawing on a bar napkin. Okay, so at least it was to scale, but it's only a ground plan. What do I do?**
- **A:** Make copies and distribute the same as above. Your Head Carpenter should still be able to glean most of the information they need from a ground plan, and he or she will have to ask you and your set designer to provide the rest. Perhaps suggest once again that your set designer get in touch with us for some tips on creating more useful set design drawings in the future.

Week 14

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Assistant Stage Manager(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Secure Lighting Designer <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Set Designer, Head Carpenter and Crew: Build the set <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Review Director's Notes – pre-block the play, if preferred <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Prepare for Auditions – see below <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Begin Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org and get in touch with us about upcoming auditions for your show if you haven't been contacted already (see below). <input type="checkbox"/> Send your Sound Designer the agenda for your design meeting (see Online Form #8) with a reminder of the time and place, address any answer questions they may already have |

Best Practices

- Attend the set building. Even if you're not an expert you can still help out, and your presence at the build (along with your set designer, ideally) will provide immediate answers to questions the Head Carpenter never thought to ask, and allow for decisions to be made on the spot if something needs to be changed.

- While at the set building set a date for the “fit-up” in the rehearsal hall (see Week 12). Remind the set crew of the dates for the load-up, load-in and fit-up of the set in the theatre during tech week.
- Some directors pre-block meticulously, while others feel it hinders their creativity. Some make plans only to change them several times once they’re in rehearsal. The important thing is not whether or not you pre-block, though – it’s whether or not you’ve taken the time to sit down with the set design and *think through* your blocking

FAQ’s – Auditions!

- **Q: What? I have to have auditions!?**
- **A:** There are many ways to cast a show. Unfortunately none of them work as well as a well-publicized open audition call. While it’s the most work it usually yields the best results. After all, if someone wasn’t interested in being in your show they wouldn’t come out to audition in the first place.
- **Q: Can’t I just ask my friends?**
- **A:** Well, yes and no. The idealist in me says by all means invite your friends to an open call, but see who else happens to show up, keep an open mind and don’t make any promises to anyone. On the other hand the pragmatist in me says do whatever it takes to make sure you can start rehearsals with a full cast – a friend or a bad actor is still better than no actor at all.
- **Q: Do I have to organize these auditions on my own?**
- **A:** Of course not. Generally Grinder Productions will run “open auditions” at least once per year. These auditions are a chance for all the directors in an upcoming year or season to partially or fully cast their shows. Attend these auditions if at all possible.
- **Q: The open auditions were months ago, and I was unable to attend them. What do I do now?**
- **A:** We may be organizing a second open call for yours and a number of other upcoming shows that fall at the far end of the season, so if we’ve not done so already please contact us to inquire about this. If not we’ll work with you to organize a “show-specific” audition call for your production.
- **Q: I have a very small show. Are auditions really necessary?**
- **A:** Auditions do require a lot of time and effort (and sometimes money) so if you’re 100% confident that you can cast the show without auditions we’ll likely be inclined to let you do so. We’ll even help you by suggesting people from our database of existing members. Be forewarned, though – you’re likely to get several rejections before you can completely fill your cast. Be prepared to handle being turned down over and over and over again and to keep on trying new people until you’re successful.

Week 13

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Pick-up scripts <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Set Designer, Head Painter and Paint Crew: Set Painting <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Sound Designer, Stage Manager: Sound Design Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Review Director's Notes – make notes prior to auditions <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Prepare for Auditions – see below <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | Reporting |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send notes from sound design meeting to all attendees and head office |

Best Practices

- You will have already had to make copies of your script for the design team and stage management. At this point the legally-required scripts (one for each actor) should be in, so arrange to pick these up before the auditions if necessary. If your script was e-mailed to you print off a couple of copies for the auditions, and then once your show is cast print off copies for any actors who do not want to print off their own.
- Attend the set painting, preferably with your set designer, and help out where you can.
- Head office handles most of the preparations for auditions, but you may be asked to help arrange the venue or speak to individuals or organizations to help generate interest. You should choose some brief passages (2 pages or less) from your show that would be suitable for cold readings during the auditions.

Auditions and Rehearsals Period – 12 to 2 Weeks Prior to Opening Night

The middle production period is the largest and most difficult chunk of time you'll spend working on your show. This is when most of the major work on the production will be done, or at least it had better be if you want to avoid a last-minute crunch during tech week when everything is coming down to the wire.

Unlike the early days you will now be spending the bulk of your time working on the show with other people: your stage manager, the design team, various crew, head office and maybe even the media, so be ready for the give-and-take of constant collaboration. It's very important that you've completed all pre-rehearsal analysis as thoroughly as you can by this point, because from here on in you won't have as much time as you might like to contemplate all aspects of the play.

In addition to stage management, designers and crew you'll also have to work with the most confusing, entertaining, infuriating group of people you're ever likely to encounter – your cast. You will spend more time with your actors than you will with any other people working on the show. Your collaboration with them will be more immediate, direct and persistent than with any other members of your team. Your best friends and your worst enemies are likely to be found among the people that on opening night will ultimately be the ones presenting your interpretation of this particular play to the audience.

Navigating the minefield of an actor-director relationship isn't easy. Either one of you may have difficulty trusting the other. Either one of you might see the other as lazy or incompetent. There will be actors that will test you, and actors that you'll have to draw out of their shells. Some actors work best with specific instructions while others need to be gently nudged in the direction you want them to go. And of course at some point the two of you will have artistic differences, even if neither party deems it necessary to speak up.

As important as actors are they are still just one element of the production – designers, stage management and crew make equally important contributions to the show and are just as deserving of your time, so be sure not to forget them as you get caught up in rehearsals.

Keep it real, keep everything on track and make sure you know what “on track” looks like for your production. By the time you emerge from the middle production period you won't have the time or the patience left to be anywhere else.

Week 12

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Continue securing crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, Head Carpenter and Crew: Put up set in rehearsal hall if possible <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Costume Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Attend Auditions <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Invite your Stage Manager to join you at the auditions. Invite Assistant Stage Managers to help out if required. |

Best Practices

- If at all possible you should rehearse on a completely built and painted set – if you’ve got it you might as well use it, and your actors will be more comfortable when you hit the stage if they’ve had the advantage of rehearsing on the actual set. At the very least your crew should put the set up once for a trial fit-up, just to make sure everything looks and works the way it’s supposed to.
- Before the auditions you should arrive early and help out with the set-up if required. Bring copies of your play for reading, as well as ample amounts of paper for taking notes.

FAQ's – Auditions Again!

- **Q: There are several different types of auditions. What can I expect and how do I deal with each?**
- **A:** Head office will have established the audition format and will have included that info in the publicity. Common types include:
 - **The Monologue:** Actors have been asked to bring a prepared, memorised monologue (often specified as serious or comedic and contemporary or classical).
 - **What to look for:** A pre-prepared monologue should be perfectly memorized and delivered with exactly the right voice, movement and characterization. It is a performance. Anything short of that says this actor didn't put their full effort into it.
 - If you wish you can ask them to deliver their monologue a second time, this time directing them to do something different. Asking them to deliver their monologue a third time may be asking too much.
 - **Games and Improv:** Younger or less experienced actors may be led in a series of Improv's or simple theatre games to gauge their creativity, their willingness to show initiative (or take direction) and ability to engage with others.
 - **What to look for:** Games and Improv are all about being "in the moment." Look at whether or not an actor is paying attention, looking at other participants and responding physically and verbally to the action. When asked to participate do they throw themselves whole-heartedly into action or are they self-conscious? Can they come up with interesting things to say and do that are in keeping with the rules of the game?
 - **Singing and Dancing Auditions:** These are a little bit different, and you may not come across them too often at Grinder. However they can still be very valuable, even if you're not directing a musical.
 - **Singing Auditions** usually involve a short song or selection part thereof, sometimes one fast and one slow with or without accompaniment. If there's a Musical Director working on the show he or she will may do some piano work to determine a vocal range.
 - **Dance Auditions** may be individual or in small groups. A Choreographer may see people individually and then have a call-back to test candidates out by teaching them a choreographed routine.
 - **Cold Readings:** These are the most common type of auditions at Grinder. Actors are given a chance to read over a short scene and then deliver that scene immediately. The

director may give them some direction and ask the actors to read it again, or may ask someone to read another part or to read with another person.

- **What to look for:** Not everyone reads equally well, and no one auditioning will know your play as well as you do, so don't expect a polished performance. What you're really looking for are people that engage with the text, understand it and make an effort to make it interesting to the listening audience.

➤ **Q: It seems like no one is making an effort in their auditions! What do I do?**

➤ **A:** Relax! As much as we'd like people to put their best efforts into auditions not all actors do, especially those that aren't relying on acting for their next meal. Expect to get "blown away" no more than once or twice during a day of auditions – casting those people will be easy. As for everyone else just pay extra close attention to look for clues about what sort of a person they are or could be.

➤ **Q: Auditions are over. What do I do now?**

➤ **A:** Now comes the tricky part – you have to pick who you want to be in your show, probably in conjunction with other shows and other directors. Part art, part science, many directors consider casting the most important decision they'll make on a production. Here's some steps to help you:

- **Step 1.** Gather with your fellow directors and Grinder staff. Send everyone else home. Stack up audition sign-up sheets.
- **Step 2.** Go through the pile and give a "yes" or "no" to anyone you are interested in for your show (you can have more than one person in mind for a role, and more than one director may want the same person).
- **Step 3.** Go through the "yes" pile to see if the people you want are available during the rehearsal and performance times for your show. If they are available and no one else wants them put them in a "you" pile. If they aren't available and no one else wants them move them to the "no" pile.
- **Step 4.** If you have more than one person available for a role (and no one else wants them) decide who which one you would prefer. If you can't decide you'll need to run call-backs (see next week). Put your 2nd choices in the "no" pile.
- **Step 5.** The only people left in the "yes" pile now are the ones that more than one director wants, so this is where you'll need to compromise. Be as fair and diplomatic as possible, and work with your fellow directors to ensure everyone has the best show possible.
- **Step 6.** Once you've cast the people go back to the "no" pile and sort through it to complete your cast.

Respect all who audition - please keep this process confidential!

Week 11

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Lighting Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Sound Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Secure Running Crew <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, Head of Props, Crew: Hand Props Due <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager: Conduct call-back auditions, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #4 – Theatre Job Descriptions ➤ Online Form #5 – Company Contact List ➤ Online Form #6 – Production Schedule ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas |
| | <h3 data-bbox="824 1031 1040 1073">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail crewing updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send your Costume Designer the agenda for your second design meeting (see Online Form #8) with a reminder of the time and place, answer any questions they may have <input type="checkbox"/> If you are having a call-back audition contact the actors, your stage manager and head office to notify them of the time and place |

Best Practices

- You may or may not need a lighting crew for your show, as this job may be handled by Grinder staff – check with us if you're unsure. In terms of the actual operation of lights during the show this task quite often falls to the stage manager, especially in small venues.

- You will probably need or want a sound operator for your show. Operating lights is usually fairly simple, but operating sound requires more of your time and attention than a stage manager may be able to give, so if you're only going to have one "op" on a show you'll probably want them doing sound. Regarding the initial set-up of the sound system this again may be handled by Grinder staff, so check with us if you're not sure.
- Your running crew are all the other technical people needed to make your show run. Who you need will vary depending on the show. Common jobs include:
 - Follow Spot Operator
 - Scene Change Crew
 - Quick-change assistants (dressers)
 - Fog machine operators or curtain pullers
 - Gun Wrangler (must have a valid FAC!)
 - Kid Wrangler (to look after any minors backstage)
- Hand props are everything that an actor physically picks up or uses in some way. While there's not often a "props call" to get people together to work on props (unless they need to build a lot of them) you should be available to the Head of Props to make decisions about items in a timely manner.
- Once hand props have been secured they should be delivered to the rehearsal hall, where the stage manager and assistants should begin to set them up. The starting location of each props should be noted and a "props tracking" system begun to ensure that props are where they need to be when they need to be there for each rehearsal and performance.

FAQ's

- **Q: Do I need to do call-back auditions?**
- **A:** Most directors don't have the luxury of taking a second look before they make their casting decisions. Call-backs ask people to take time out of their busy lives and alter their plans purely for your indulgence, so don't schedule one unless you absolutely can't decide between two or more equally qualified people.
- **Q: How do I conduct a call-back?**
- **A:** Once you've determined that a call-back audition is necessary you need to contact each of the people you are interested in and advise them of the time and place of the audition (and head office as well), and give them any additional information they may need to know about the play or the role you are considering them for. Then take some time to prepare the material for the audition: scripts, props etc, and make some notes about what you are looking for and any questions you want to ask. Thank every actor who taking this additional time to audition for your show.

Week 10

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, Costume Designer: Costume Design Mtg 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, Head of Props, Crew: Set Elements Due <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Cast the show, add actors info to contact list <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Begin preparing for rehearsals <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Designer: Continue working on design <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production ➤ Online Form #8 – Design Meeting Agendas ➤ Online Form #9 – Information Pack |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send casting updates to grinder@grinderproductions.org as they come in. <input type="checkbox"/> Send your entire cast and head office a “welcome to the show” e-mail to inform them of the time, date and place of the first rehearsal and the information they will receive at that time (see below) <input type="checkbox"/> Contact your sound designer to politely remind them that the design is due next week (and remind them of the time and place that you will be meeting) <input type="checkbox"/> Send your lighting designer the agenda for your first design meeting (see Online Form #8) and address any questions they may have |

Best Practices

- Set Elements differ from hand props in that they are items that are too large to be easily moved but are still used in the action of

the play. They should be delivered to the rehearsal hall and placed on the set under the stage manager's direction.

FAQ's

- **Q: What is the best way to tell my actors they have a part?**
- **A:** As much as I tend to use e-mail to make casting offers I don't recommend it. Call and speak to the actor in person. If you're dealing with young people you'll have to talk to their parents as well, getting their permission for their child to do the show, as well as ensuring they will get their child to and from rehearsals and shows in a timely, responsible manner.
- **Q: I've been turned down! I don't have any suitable second choices for that role! What do I do?**
- **A:** Don't panic. Getting a "no thanks" to your casting offer can be disappointing, but it happens to all of us, and 99% of the time it's nothing personal – actor's lives change, they get cold feet and they think the grass is greener, etc. Let us know where you're having trouble and we'll scour the database and send some names to you. If you're still having trouble we'll go through the steps outlined in week 23 for crew. No matter what, we will get your show cast.
- **Q: All my actors are in place. What do I do next?**
- **A:** Once your cast is in place send a brief e-mail to officially welcome them to the show. Remind them of the time and place of the first rehearsal, as well as anything else they may need to know. Complete and attach to the e-mail all the materials found in Online Form #9 – Information Pack, as well as the script, if it is available in digital format. Ask actors to print their own copies of the script to save on costs, but inform them that you will have a copy for them at the first rehearsal if they are unable to do so.
- **Q: What needs to be done to complete the information pack?**
- **A:** Not very much, if you've been keeping on top of things.
 - **Standard Contract for Performers** – tell each actor to bring two copies of this to the first rehearsal.
 - **Contact Sheet** – If you've been filling in the names and contact information of people as they have come on board this should be just a matter of making sure it is clear, complete and easy-to-read
 - **Rehearsal Schedule** – Use the template given as a guideline, but use your scene break-down to divide the play into appropriate chunks. Don't schedule anyone to rehearse during a time indicated as a conflict at the auditions.
 - **Selling Tickets, Ticket Order form, Theatre that Dares to be Different, How to be a Star in 5 Easy Steps, Who Cares about you enough to buy a Ticket?** – purely for information purposes, shouldn't need any editing at all

Week 9

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Director, Stage Manager, Sound Designer, Sound Engineer: Sound Design Due ❑ Director, Lighting Designer, Stage Manager: Lighting Design Meeting ❑ Director, Stage Manager, Head of Props, Crew: Set Dressing Due ❑ Director: Continue preparing for rehearsals ❑ Costume Designer: Continue working on design ❑ Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design ❑ Sound Engineer: Create Show CDs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production |
| | <h3 data-bbox="829 653 1052 699">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ E-mail grinder@grinderproductions.org with any outstanding casting or crewing issues (or that you have none) ❑ Send notes from lighting design meeting to all attendees and head office ❑ Contact your costume designer to politely remind them that the design is due next week |

Best Practices

- Set Dressing, also called Set Décor, can be loosely defined as everything that's on the set that actor's don't use or interact with. Pictures, books, curtains and plants are set-dressing – unless they are touched by an actor, in which case they are considered props.

FAQ's

- **Q: What is the director's role in creating the sound design?**
- **A:** At your last meeting your and your designer will have created a list of all the sounds and music required for the show, where those sounds will occur and where onstage they emanate from. The designer will now bring you some different options for each sound and you will pick which one you would like. You will also finalize the placement of the sound in the script (so the SM can mark it as a cue), as well as its duration. The designer or engineer will now take your choices and the other information you've provided to create a rehearsal CD.

Week 8

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Engineer: Preliminary Soundtrack Due <input type="checkbox"/> Costume Designer: Costume Design Due <input type="checkbox"/> Grinder Staff: Marketing Plan Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Continue Preparing for rehearsals <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Continue Working on design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes - Production |
| | <h3 data-bbox="829 705 1052 751">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send or deliver preliminary soundtrack to Stage Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Send or deliver costume design to Head Costumer <input type="checkbox"/> This week grinder@grinderproductions.org will e-mail you with a copy of the marketing plan for the show. |

Best Practices

- Please review the marketing plan so that both you and head office will be “on the same page” when promoting the show. You may suggest additions to the marketing plan if you wish, but keep in mind the budget (see week 26).
- Publicity is hard. Please think very, very carefully about everything you say to potential patrons, the media and the general public about the show. An aspect of the play that might be exciting to you could be a turn-off to someone else, so think twice before you start raving about the sex scene or the dark, thought-provoking nature of the drama in Act Two. We can’t lie to people, but we can be sure to pitch plays in the appropriate manner to the appropriate people, and provide them with the necessary context to understand why we feel they will benefit from attending our show.

Week 7

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Director, Stage Manager, ASMs: Rehearsal Preparations <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 7 weeks out <input type="checkbox"/> Director: Complete pre-rehearsal notes <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes – Production ➤ Online Form #7 – Director’s Notes ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your stage manager should begin sending production notes this week (Online Form #10) to you, the designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- If you’ve done everything right up to this point your rehearsal preparations should be relatively easy. See below for what things you should have ready for the first day of rehearsals

FAQ’s

- **Q: What needs to be done to prepare for rehearsals?**
- **A:** Rehearsal prep consists of:
 - Erecting the set, if not done so already
 - Setting up props, set elements and set dressing according to the set design, if not done so already
 - Setting up the director’s table, stage management table and actor waiting areas
 - Setting up beverage areas if appropriate
 - Cleaning and stocking washrooms, ensuring safe access
 - Setting up rehearsal lighting where appropriate
 - Setting up and testing a CD player or laptop to play rehearsal sound cues
 - Ensuring you have in place adequate power, office supplies and other materials to facilitate rehearsals
 - General clean-up of rehearsal facility as necessary

Week 6

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearsal #1: Read-through <input type="checkbox"/> R #2: Block 1st 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #3: Block 2nd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 6 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager, Head Costumer, Crew: Get actor's measurements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with production notes as necessary | <p data-bbox="829 653 1052 695">Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- Do whatever you can to make actors feel at ease at the first rehearsal. Keep the atmosphere light but professional – Timbits and coffee are always a hit. Thank everyone for coming.
- Get the paperwork out of the way before you start the read-through. Briefly go over each document in the info pack and instruct the cast to fill out the contracts. Make sure your stage manager doesn't let anyone leave without handing in theirs in.
- It may be a bit intimidating for the costume crew to be there ready to pounce on people for their measurements on the very first night, but if you're not going to have the entire cast available again this week then it must be done nonetheless. Make sure your stage manager sees to it that every cast member is measured by the time the leave.

FAQ's

- **Q: Will any Grinder staff be attending the read-through?**
- **A:** We'll certainly try, though with several shows going on at once this may not be possible. If we're not there please send our regrets and assure them that we will visit at some point in the rehearsal process.

Week 5

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> R #4: Block 3rd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #5: Block 4th 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #6: Stumble-through <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 5 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with Production Notes as necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- At some point this week we will likely drop-off some print materials in rehearsal for the cast to distribute to family and friends and in their communities. Please encourage your cast to sell tickets constantly, and remind them how they can place orders (online, by phone or using their ticket order form). Our research indicates that up to 80% of our audience are people who are related to, work with or are friends with someone onstage, so the efforts of the cast to spread the word about the show is critical

Week 4

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> R #7: Work 1st 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #8: Work 2nd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #9: Work 3rd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 4 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager, Head Office: Arrange rehearsal photos, comments <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager, Head Costumer, Crew: Arrange preliminary fittings <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with Production Notes as necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- Your stage manager should give your cast one rehearsal's warning of both fittings and publicity shots. Many actors get upset very quickly about having their pictures taken without prior notice. When we come to take the pictures we may ask you for a brief (1-2 sentence) quote for the press release

Week 3

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> R #10: Work 4th 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #11: Run-through for LX Designer (<i>lines down!</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> R #12: Polish 1st 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 3 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with Production Notes as necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail your Director’s Message for the program to grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Best Practices

- This is the one and only time your lighting designer is likely to watch the show prior to tech week, so inform him or her of any significant blocking changes that you may see coming. After the run-through or at intermission spend a few moments going over the show in a lighting context, reviewing any changes to the notes you made in your initial meeting. Remind the designer that the design is due next week

Tech Week, Run and Post-production Period – 2 to 0 Weeks

Welcome to crunch time.

From about 14 days before opening night until you arrive at the cast party your life is going to be consumed by this play. If you thought you were busy before you're going to be even busier now. If you've done your homework properly up to this point you should be in pretty good shape – if not get ready for some long days and nights of seemingly endless work on this play that suddenly has turned from a genteel beast into a fire-breathing monster.

Being prepared for tech week is key to your show's success. If you've stayed on track the only technical tasks that should be left at this point are the "notes" – things that have come up as a result of changes in rehearsals or that were time-sensitive and couldn't be done until you hit the theatre. On the acting front your entire cast should know their lines by now (if not, make sure that they do before the last week of rehearsals!), and you should be making only minor adjustments to character and blocking.

This is also the point in the production process where the cracks in your production team will begin to appear. After several weeks of preparation the big night is now beginning to look very real – sometimes this causes people more stress than they can handle or will admit to. Be ready for someone to drop the ball, give up on a job or perform it poorly, or say or do something inappropriate. It's quite common for people to let you down at the very moment you need them the most, so make sure you're prepared for it and you're ready to quickly and discreetly jump in (or send someone in) to save the day.

And before you do, take a moment to make sure the one who's causing the problem isn't you.

The key to a success at this stage of the game lies in remaining calm, trusting your team and still being conscious enough to think rationally on your feet. Many directors book their vacations for tech week or the week before so that they can devote themselves entirely to the show, but again, if you've kept everything on track up to now you should be fine. That being said the next two weeks would be a bad time to schedule any other major projects.

Week 2

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> R #13: Polish 2nd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #14: Polish 3rd 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> R #15: Polish 4th 25% of play <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Designer: Lighting Design Due <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 2 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager, Head Costumer, Crew: Arrange Final Fittings <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with Production Notes as necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes - Design ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3>Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org <input type="checkbox"/> Send or deliver the lighting design to the LX crew or to head office, as appropriate |

Best Practices

- Ensure your stage manager informs the cast at least one rehearsal prior to their final fittings
- Head office will either drop off or e-mail a draft copy of the program. Please review with your cast and make any corrections or additions

Week 1 and Week 0 to Load-in

| Tasks this Week | Resources |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> R #16: Run with costumes <input type="checkbox"/> R #17: Run with costumes <input type="checkbox"/> R #18: Run with costumes <input type="checkbox"/> Bonus Rehearsal: Run, work trouble scenes or use as catch-up <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Crew: Lighting Prep as necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Sound Crew: Sound Prep as necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office: Marketing 1 Weeks Out <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager: Compile and send Production notes <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Deal with Production Notes as necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Department Heads: Complete all Tech Notes prior to load-in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Play ➤ Toolboxes – Directing ➤ Toolboxes – Stage Management ➤ Toolboxes – Production ➤ Online Form #10 – Production Notes |
| | <h3 data-bbox="829 705 1052 751">Reporting</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Manager e-mails production notes to you, designers, crew and grinder@grinderproductions.org |

Tech Week and Performance Schedule

| Day and Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| Sunday or Monday, immediately following the final rehearsal | <p><u>Rehearsal Hall Strike:</u></p> <p>Head Office: Arrange for a truck, trailer or other means of transporting the show to the theatre</p> <p>Stage Manager: Oversee Load-up, keep prompt book and rehearsal CD</p> <p>ASM's: Load Stage Management supplies, clean-up rehearsal hall</p> <p>Props Crew: Load all hand props, set elements and dressing</p> <p>Costume Crew: Load all costumes and costume supplies, launder items if necessary</p> <p>Set Crew: Load set</p> <p>Director: Assist where necessary, ensure rehearsal hall is left clean and tidy for the next show</p> |
| Tuesday 10:00am | <p><u>Load-in:</u></p> <p>Truck and all crew arrive at theatre Set is unloaded first and set-up on stage under direction of head carpenter, others assist as needed Once set is mostly up paint crew begins doing notes Lighting and sound crews begin set-up Props crew begins setting backstage Costume crew begins setting backstage and dressing rooms Props crew moves onstage as soon as possible Stage Management begins to set-up</p> |
| 1:00pm | <p>Carpenters and Painters leave Lighting and Sound set-up continues Props, Costumes, SM set-up continues Lighting level set if necessary</p> |
| 5:00pm | <p>Supper break for all crew</p> |
| 6:00pm | <p>Director Arrives, Sound Levels Set</p> |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 6:30pm | Actors arrive, safety walk with SM |
| 7:00pm | Cue-to-cue or tech rehearsal begins |
| 10:00pm | End of Day |
| Wednesday 9am – 5pm | Notes as necessary |
| Wednesday 7:00pm | Actors called for 8pm Dress Rehearsal start |
| Wednesday 10pm | End of Day |
| Thursday 9am – 5pm | Notes as necessary |
| Thursday 7pm | Show Call for 8pm start |
| Friday 7pm | Show Call for 8pm start |
| Saturday 9am – 12pm | Prep for strike as necessary – all crew |
| Saturday 1pm | Show call for 2pm start |
| Saturday 7pm | Show call for 8pm start |
| Saturday 10pm | Final Curtain – strike begins |
| Saturday 12am | Strike ends |

Best Practices: Show Call

- **90 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Stage Management arrives and unlocks theatre
 - SM and ASM(s) begin preset
 - Actors begin to arrive and get into costume/make-up
- **60 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Actors all present and accounted for
 - Actors may use stage/auditorium for warm-ups
 - Stage Management gives actors notes as necessary
 - FOH crew arrives and sets up box office and concessions areas, opening up for early patrons if necessary
 - SM and ASM(s) complete preset
- **35 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Actors finish warming up, clear the stage to dressing rooms or backstage
 - Stage Management does final check of preset
 - Stage Manager turns over the house to FOH
- **30 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Stage Manager gives company the ½ hour call

- FOH opens auditorium, box office and concession, begins letting audience in
- **15 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Stage Manager gives 15 minute call
- **5 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Stage Manager gives 5 minute call
- **2 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - Stage Manager gives “Places” call
- **0 Minutes Prior to Curtain**
 - FOH turns over house to Stage Manager, deals with latecomer seating and closes box office and concession until intermission
 - Stage Manager starts the show once actors are at places

Best Practices for Actors

- Never let the audience see you before the show – no waving!
- Do not leave the theatre once you are in costume
- Do not eat or drink anything except water while in costume
- After the show you should change out of your costume before going to greet family and friends, if at all possible
- Stay quiet backstage before the show – don’t let the audience hear you talking, giggling or warming up
- Warm up your voice and body thoroughly before every show
- Never “break character” onstage unless the play requires you to do so – you must keep a straight face while the audience is laughing
- Never call “line” during a performance – you won’t be getting one!
- Do not consume alcohol or take drugs before a performance. Even one drink over dinner can adversely affect the show
- Don’t clap during the curtain call. You might think it’s courteous to do so, but it comes off looking desperate and amateurish
- Never miss an entrance, or force the ASM to find you to remind you of an entrance. Making sure you are onstage when you need to be onstage is your job, not the stage manager’s

Closing Night and Post-production

On the last night of the show you should have all the receipts from your show ready to submit to Grinder Staff, and you should complete Online Form #11 – Director’s Post-show Report, and have it ready to hand in with your receipts. Once the show is down make sure your **entire** cast and crew stay to help with the strike, and that all items from the show are returned to storage or their rightful owners. Give the theatre a final once-over to make sure it’s clean and that everything is in the same condition as you found it, help unload the set back at the barn, and then go enjoy the cast party.