PRODUCING A PLAY & WEBSERIES

GENERAL OVERVIEW

STEP BY STEP

You license a play from a company that licenses plays like Samuel French or Dramatic Publishing. You pay per performance and arrange this as far in advance as possible.

OR

You have an amazing idea and you write a play that is ready to be presented to an audience.

OR

You meet a writer who has an amazing play and you want to produce it, so you license it from her/him by offering a certain amount for each performance. You make them sign a **Licensing Agreement** stating how much they are getting paid and what rights they have and what rights you have.

LOOK FOR VENUE

You look for a venue where you can present the play. Plays rarely make profit so you realistically assess how many people would come see the play per night and you come up with a budget to see what the potential is to make money to pay for the production.

If it's an experimental work, or it's in Spanish or anything that makes it for a special audience chances are it might not make a lot of money unless you really know how to market and reach out to this audience.

Once you have an idea how much money you can make from ticket sales and how much money you can raise, you can go explore venues to see what is available in your price range.

If your play is not quite ready, you can also do a workshop production first so you can test it out for a weekend or two without doing press for it or calling it a WORLD PREMIER… This could be done cheaply at 99 seat theaters, black boxes, Real Women Have Curves Studio, etc.

Check out different theater venues and study their rental agreements so there are no surprises later.

Once you settle on a venue and a date and time - make sure you have all the facts and rights you need. For instance you may have rented the space to perform the show, but does it include rehearsal space and time, or is that extra? Does it include a tech or do you pay extra? Never assume anything is included if it is not written in your rental agreement. Does it include sound equipment, video projection, lavalier mikes, etc? Can you rent it to do casting as well or is that extra?

MAKE SURE YOU GIVE YOURSELF AT LEAST THREE MONTHS BEFORE TO START YOUR SHOW UNLESS IT'S ALREADY BEEN PRESENTED BEFORE AND IT'S JUST A RE-STAGING OF IT.

CASTING: post your Casting Notice on Actors Access, FB and wherever you want to target actors. Be very clear about the type of actor you want and if you're open to OPEN TO ALL ETHNICITIES. State the characters precisely so people can submit to the character that best suits them.

CASTING SESSION - Union or Non-Union - always state if there is nudity or sexually explicit scenes in casting notice before casting sessions happen and if there is pay or no pay. You must have casting session in a public place - never your home. Be clear and specific about what you want. Be kind and courteous to all actors especially if you are not paying them anything! Do not hire EQUITY actors unless you have money to pay for rehearsals.

ALWAYS TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS AND GUT WHEN CASTING ACTORS. There will always be red flags. Addicts/predators carry a low vibration, so if you feel your solar plexus tingling it's a sign something is not right. Always be aware of people who flatter you and compliment your work because they will distract you from your instincts.

HIRING A DIRECTOR - make sure you have seen their work on stage. Don't hire a film director to direct your play if they don't understand theater. Just because they know how to direct actors on film doesn't mean they know how to direct on stage, and vice versa. Theater Directors must be empathic enough to be aware of all boundaries and how to build trust with actors. It's a sensitive relationship between directors and actors. Don't hire a Director that treats actors like furniture or puppets.

HIRING A STAGE MANAGER is a very important decision. Hire someone who has experience and is absolutely punctual and firm. They are worth the money, because they will ensure things will run smoothly and it will be a tight ship that moves forward and will set sail at opening. Do not hire a friend to do this unless they are a professional stage manager, otherwise they may not be so firm and you might not be able to fire them if they mess up.

HIRING ALL YOUR DESIGNERS: Scout designers by seeing many productions and obviously asking them how much they charge. If you can't afford to pay anyone then

hire college students who just graduated with a degree in scenic design, set design, sound design, lighting design, etc. Remember that theater is about the words and the images, so everything else is extra but not absolutely necessary.

PRODUCTION MEETING WITH ALL DESIGNERS: Meet with all your designers individually so they share their vision of the play/show. Once you have approved and hired all the designers then have a meeting where they will all meet and share their vision of how they see the play and what their role will be and how they will all work together. If there are any conflicting visions then this is the time to discover this and see how it can all work. Obviously if two designers are in conflict the producer must step in and decide which vision is best for the show. Once everyone agree you're all set to move forward. Always set deadlines as to when everything must be ready. During TECH everything must come together as smoothly as possible.

FIRST READ THROUGH OF THE SCRIPT: Have everyone present at the first read through. Actors must read the Acting Agreement and everyone must sign an agreement to participate stating all the rules, expectations, dates, times of shows, and all the facts. Also state how many complimentary tickets actors get and by what date they have to put in their request with the Stage Manager. Costume Designer takes measurements of Actors and Publicist/Social Media Director gets everyone's info and empowers people as to how to best promote the show and what they can do to spread the word. EVERYONE INTRODUCES THEMSELVES SO EVERYONE SEES THE TEAM THAT IS BEHIND THIS GREAT SHOW/PLAY. The script is read out loud for the benefit of everyone. The playwright and Director speak about why they wrote the play and the vision of the play and what is going to happen as far as the rehearsal process. Everyone is made to feel important and necessary and the actors are reassured that they are the perfect person for the role and we are so lucky to have them in those roles. YOU MUST MAKE ACTORS FEEL SAFE AND SPECIAL SO THEY CAN BE VULNERABLE ENOUGH TO EXPLORE CREATIVELY.

Take photos of rehearsals and start promoting your show.

DESIGN YOUR FLYER and add all names of all people involved. Never forget anybody's name on it. Get your flyers printed and drop them off at places if you have a budget for it. Design your poster and get it printed if you have a budget. If you have no budget, then do FB or social media flyers and invites…

Watch rehearsals, but let the director do her/his work. Then watch the stumble through at least two weeks into rehearsal but not later than two weeks before show opens and see how far the show has come. All red flags will show up now and you must address it. Any actors that need to be replaced because they're not getting the role, or they're misbehaving, or being a diva.

Costume designer builds or rents costumes, Set Designer builds set and set pieces. Stage Manager/Prop Master builds and/or buys all props. All the elements must be ready by tech week so it's less stressful

TECH WEEK - If you have done your job to keep everyone safe and feeling special and built a team and community, tech week will just be tedious and boring. If you have not taken care of everyone and not addressed the red flags, all hell breaks loose. People get passive aggressive, people's fears come out. Actors play out their relationship with their parents with the Director. This unconscious behavior happens when the Director triggers actors by disrespecting them or violating their boundaries in some way. When we play in the unconscious mind, there are sometimes land mines. Always make sure the only person who gives direction to Actors is the Director. Fire Actors that direct other actors. Warn them first, but if they continue to do it, replace them because they will create tension and animosity and break the energy of a team or community. Also fire Actors that gossip about other Actors or Crew.

During Tech rehearsal provide lunch/food to Crew and Actors so they feel special and don't waste time going to a restaurant to get food. This shows them you value them and it saves time.

Watch the rehearsals before the show opens and give feedback to the Director, what's working and not working. Always reassure the Actors that the show is either going great or the potential is there and how pleased you are with the progress and what a great opening it's going to be.

Invite press/bloggers to come see the show at least two weeks in advance and create a publicity packet for them for opening or when they come to review the play.

After a show opens usually Actors are not supposed to get any more direction from the Director or Producer.

Organize an opening night party. If you aren't paying people the least you can do it throw them a party. If you have a small budget, get flowers and present them to Actors at curtain call. This will make them so happy to be acknowledged with flowers. This is what makes this experience priceless.

Always have a closing night party for the Crew & Actors and thank them for helping you make a dream come true.

MAKING A WEB SERIES IS LIKE MAKING A MOVIE WITHOUT THE DISTRIBUTION ASPECT OF IT, SINCE IT'S FOR THE WEB.

MAKING A WEBSERIES IS LIKE PRODUCING A SHORT PLAY OVER AND OVER AND OVER, WITHOUT THE LONG REHEARSAL PROCESS.