



WUDS PRODUCER'S GUIDE

2011/2012

Hello wonderful theatrical folk. This guide has been put together in order to give a helping hand to anyone producing a WUDS show. It is aimed specifically at the Warwick Arts Centre Studio shows, since those tend to be the most troublesome, but is generally applicable to any production team. I hope you find it helpful and not unbearably boring to read (I'll try and throw some jokes in to keep you going), and please remember most of this isn't exact rules you must abide by, but merely friendly suggestions for you to bear in mind.

I'll try to make the guide as comprehensive as possible but there will inevitably be things I can't cover because of the ridiculous range of the job, and equally there will be things I write that are the mind-blowingly obvious but I have to put in anyway. If you have any questions, queries or general musings then don't hesitate to get in touch with me or the rest of the exec, and we'll do anything we can to help. You'll find a list of contacts at the end of this document who can hopefully provide some words of wisdom.

Please also be aware that this guide applies only to the year under the 2011/2012 exec, and may be completely changed in the future if it all goes horribly wrong. Hopefully not though.

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THE GENERAL ROLE OF THE PRODUCER

The specific roles and duties of the producer are so varied and depend so much on the individual needs of each show that there is no way to define them comprehensively (one part of being a good producer is being adaptable – things never, never go completely according to plan). However, there are some responsibilities/general traits that the producer should consistently hold, and I'll try to explain these as best I can.

- The first and most important of these is **making sure everyone is happy and functioning**. This is a deceptively huge task, and requires excellent communication, organisation and personal skills. You basically need to make sure everyone in the company (cast and crew) is doing their job and is happy to be doing it. A large part of this is **keeping on top of the schedule** – make sure you have everyone's availability and plan rehearsals and meetings well in advance so you don't ruffle feathers by scheduling a run-through on the same day someone's granny's 80th birthday party.
- **Communication**. Decide early on what form of communication you'll be using primarily (e.g. Facebook, email etc.) and try and stick to it – there's nothing more frustrating than checking your email and thinking you're on top of everything, and then coming home to a hundred Facebook messages all marked 'urgent'. Make sure you send out weekly messages (via your chosen medium) with all the information cast need to know, but try and stick to this one message if possible – bombarding people means that they a) get annoyed, and b) start ignoring or missing pieces of information. Obviously with production team you'll need to send out a lot more than just one message a week, but as far as cast are concerned this is a good rule. Also make sure you have every single person in the cast and crew's phone number and email address. This will inevitably be infinitely useful if you need to catch someone in a hurry.
- **Communication with the exec** is also a large part of your job. Keep us in the loop with everything (see later section on the Arts Centre and WUDS protocols for information about this) and we'll love you forever. Any issues within the production follow a general route of communication, which is via you to the productions manager, and then I bring it to the rest of the exec if necessary.
- **Make friends with the Arts Centre** (or your relevant venue). It's incredible how far a good relationship with the right people will get you, and **respecting their regulations** and decisions is imperative to this. You're performing in their space, so what they say goes. If you need to speak to any of the staff, **email in advance** to organise a convenient time to see them (contact details at the end of this document).
- **Be a lovely person**. Stay professional, but deal with things as kindly as you can – people are far more willing to go out of their way or work with a friendly and approachable person than a crazed dictator. Be a beacon of calmness and zen.

SUBMISSIONS

This is the first big responsibility you'll come across as a producer – putting together the submission pack for the proposed production. The Arts Centre Studio submissions are taken incredibly seriously, so the pack needs to be finished to a highly professional level. Remember – the Arts Centre is a

professional venue, and will hold you to their standard rather than lowering their expectations of a company in their space.

- **Meet with the DC productions manager.** Generally just to let them know what's going on with your submission, but they can also be very helpful with explaining the logistics of submitting and working in the studio. It's also always a good thing for them to know who you are in the panel meeting and have talked through your ideas beforehand.
- **Read over old successful packs** (there are lots on the WUDS website). This is essential to understanding what the panel will be looking for, and gives you an idea of what works structurally and what you need to include. Make sure everyone on your team does the same thing in order that they know what they're aiming for.
- **Write the budget.** This is your responsibility, and it will be your job to make sure that the budget is adhered to throughout the production process (if your submission is successful!). If you email Rob Morton (DC Productions Manager) he should be able to send you a budget template if you need one, or equally get in touch with me and I can find you one.
- **Remember the rules for submission packs.** You must have a viable budget (WUDS will only allow budgets with a 65% or lower breakeven), proof of the availability of performance rights (if applicable) and the pack must be no longer than 25 pages, and that includes EVERYTHING. Make sure everyone has written their relevant section thoroughly, as you'll be penalised if you miss something out (e.g. if you haven't included a section on lighting design or publicity). Also remember that if you're including smoking, nudity, gunshots, swearing etc. in the show then you have to include a justification in the pack.
- Something else that requires justifying is **whether you're having a matinee** or not. Although they make budgets and breakevens much nicer, we ask that if you do decide to have a matinee you have a very good reason for it, since they don't sell nearly as well as evening performances. Usually the only reason you'd do a matinee would be if the play was particularly family-oriented, or incredibly commercial and well known (think Shakespeare). Be prepared to talk about this at length with both the exec and the panel.
- **Use the WUDS productions manager.** Chances are if I hear you're submitting and you haven't got in touch with me you'll get a gentle nudge to ask you to make contact, but I'd prefer it if I didn't have to do that. I can be there for anything from finding people to fill empty roles on the team, to helping with editing the content, to holding your hand and bringing you a comforting beverage when it all gets too stressful at 3am the day before the deadline. I also need to be involved to just check that you're on the right track and have the best chance possible of making a successful submission, because we obviously want as many WUDS shows to get into the Studio as possible (and everywhere else - world domination is actually on the exec agenda for this year). The earlier you get me involved the better, and I can answer all your questions at every stage of the process in a friendly and supportive manner.
- **Meet with Howard.** He likes to be in the loop with the submissions and can be infinitely helpful when it comes to things like set, tech and staging, since no one knows more about the studio than he does.
- You will also get lots of help from the society in the form of **submissions workshops**. Basically the WUDS exec will organise a room and a group of actors together to give your director a chance to experiment with some of their ideas before submitting the pack, allowing them to explore what works and what doesn't work with their vision and proposed

techniques. They should use this time to refine their concept and gain some confidence in it, and myself and the president will also attend and take part/observe in order to give feedback to the director where they ask for it. This also means that when they get in front of the panel they can use the workshop to back up effective directorial ideas. All part of our lovely initiative to make submissions as positive an experience as possible!

- The other thing I can do is **proof-read the pack with an outside perspective**. This is essential – get as many people with experience to read over your pack as you can. They'll notice things that you haven't, and can also be invaluable when it comes to a section you have less knowledge of (e.g. if you aren't a techie, get someone who is to read over your sound/lighting plans). It's always a good idea to get the president to read it, since they're objective and an outside perspective but also incredibly involved in the society (obviously) and can give you extremely useful feedback.
- Then we come to the infinitely delightful **panel meeting**. During this you'll have ten minutes for everyone relevant on your team to present your proposed production to the panel (alliteration all over the place here), which will be made up of students active in Warwick drama, members of the execs of other drama societies, the DC productions manager (Rob Morton) and the Arts Centre Technical Director (Howard Potts). A good rule of thumb is steer clear of anything too technical or showy in presentations – take in simple costume drawings or boards if you like, or print-outs of any publicity design. Don't bring in a giant powerpoint presentation and a full chorus line.
 - **Planning these presentations is essential** – make sure you give everyone a maximum time allowance and outline what they need to focus on. A tip here is that directors almost always talk over their allotted time (typical creative types), so make sure you allow for some leeway in your schedule! Get everyone into the order you'd like them to speak, and make sure you go down the line and everyone introduces themselves first before launching into speeches. As a general rule of thumb, you don't speak yourself apart from a quick introduction to the proposed production and a quick sum up sentence at the end of everyone's presentations, and then to answer any questions directed at you at the end. Try and rehearse the full presentation a couple of times before you go in front of the panel – it really shows.
 - The other essential part of this process is **enthusiasm**. Everyone must look like they're having the time of their life and whoever's speaking is saying the most interesting thing in the world – you must be excited, cohesive as a team and completely in love with your show, even if you were up till 4am making a box set because you accidentally sat on the first one.
 - Which leads me on to **box sets**. You must have one, and it must be to scale. If you're unsure about how to do it then get in touch with me and I'll be more than happy to hunt you out an old example or put you in touch with someone who's done it before and can impart crafty wisdom.
 - **Know your panel**. If you know the general scene of Warwick drama, you should be able to anticipate the questions you might get judging by who's on the panel. Again, if you don't know where people's specialties lie then don't hesitate to get in touch and I'll give you a cheeky run-down of who you'll be presenting to.
 - **Finally field questions smoothly and gracefully**. Make sure everyone on the team knows what sort of questions they should be answering, and who should feel free to jump in after someone's spoken and add to it if they think necessary (generally just

you or the director). It looks horribly messy if everyone jumps in and tries to answer every question. Also make sure that everyone (including you) is calm and friendly, and don't have an attitude that's going to rub people up the wrong way. Don't be rude if someone asks a question that has been answered in the pack and point that out, just smile and explain it again.

You'll usually hear that evening via a phone call from Rob whether you've been successful or not, and it's quite nice to get the team together to celebrate if you have if possible. If not then make sure you let everyone know the results as soon as you hear.

ISDF

ISDF stands for the International Student Drama Festival (until recently the NSDF), and is something to think about with your director. Most studio shows from WUDS in the past have applied and we have a rather splendid history of doing quite well, but this was obviously when it was national and before it reached international levels. It's still something we very much encourage you to get involved in because it's an invaluable experience for everyone involved (and of course gives us another achievement to add to our proverbial trophy cabinet. But mostly the brilliant experience thing.). The way it works is this...

- The final festival will be from the **22nd – 30th June 2012 in Sheffield**. There will be 20 student productions performing at the festival, and this will be made up of UK and non-UK shows. There will also be endless workshops, Q and As, forums, master classes and discussions for you and any festival attendees to take part in from a variety of professional companies and persons, and they're mostly excellent.
- **Your show must be performing originally before 9th March 2012** (shows after that will be eligible for next year's festival). It can be any length from 10 minutes to 150 minutes, and any theatrical genre. In their own words, they 'look for pieces with exceptional theatre craft with a clear sense of ownership and commitment from the people presenting it, whatever the genre. We do not base our selection choices on our own tastes or emotions but clearly we have to be affected by the piece'.
- **You must pay £98 to cover travel and accommodation costs of the selectors** who come to see the show. This can seem like a lot, but is definitely worth it given the level of feedback you receive from the selectors even if the show isn't selected for the festival. Be aware also that they will decide which date to come and see the show on out of the available performances – you cannot specify a particular day.
- You need to **apply as early as possible**, but at least three weeks before the performance dates. I suggest you put your application in as soon as the show is through submissions to ensure you are considered.
- If you have applied and been seen by the selectors before Friday 18th December 2011 you may call up on that day and find out whether you are on the initial **short-list**. This doesn't mean you've been selected but means you're still being strongly considered. The final results are available on Sunday 11th March by ringing up the office headquarters.

Details of how to apply are on either the NSDF or IdeasTap websites, along with more in depth information about the festival and the process itself. If it's something you're considering I'd suggest jumping on there are having a look, but from a personal perspective I'd say go for it. It's an invaluable learning experience, gives you something to work for past the initial production, and is also just enormous fun. Even if you aren't selected (and be prepared for this – although we have a great history with it the standard is incredibly high) I'd recommend going anyway. Bring your team and all your friends and have a whale of a time.

Whatever your decision about it you need to put in your pack whether you'll be applying, and be ready to explain why/why not and how you're going to fund it in the submissions panel. Don't worry about technical and organisation details to do with the festival and getting everyone there though – that's something to think about if you're selected and not before, and WUDS will help a great deal with all of that (both financially and administratively).

IMMEDIATELY AFTER A SUCCESSFUL SUBMISSION

Your show got through! Woop! Now the madness begins and you will have no life whatsoever outside the show. 'Spare time' will become a long forgotten phrase. BUT IT WILL BE WORTH IT (disclaimer: WUDS are in no way responsible for any detrimental effect the show might have on your degree and social life). Here are the immediate things to be concerned with as soon as the show has been approved...

- Have a meeting with me! I'll catch up with you and discuss your process, answer any questions you might have and go through the **submission feedback** with you. The feedback will be gathered and given by Rob Morton, and will basically outline what the panel saw as strengths of the show, issues with the show, and things that need to be adjusted slightly. It might be something like 'auditions need to be earlier', or it might be 'publicity design needs rethinking'. Or it might be 'the show is perfect, don't change a thing'. Either way, meet with me and we'll talk it through.
- **Get in touch with Howard** and give him your contact details.
- Fill out a **financial planning pack** for your show (and don't fret if you hear someone shouting about an event planning pack – it's the same thing). For this you need a budget, contact details for the production team and a risk assessment. The WUDS Treasurer (Dan Hutton) is more than happy to help with this, and will sign off on it for you so that your account can be set up. Basically pop into the resources room in the union, fill out the form, staple it to the front of a copy of your pack and hand it in. You will then have your events planning meeting with the Union (usually the Socs Officer and Finance officer) and will be allowed to spend union/WUDS money (on the show, not just on whimsical things).
- Make sure you have the **performance rights**. You'll have needed to prove that they were available for the submission, but now you need to nail them down for the show. Make sure the rights company have all the final details of the show (the WAC Studio's address, the exact number of seats, the exact dates etc.) and get an invoice from them ASAP. You can then fill out a money request form and get it signed by the WUDS Treasurer. Just FYI – there are two ways of obtaining money from the society: either by having the society pay outright for things (this is usually what is done with things like rights, marketing costs and the bigger

payments), or pay yourself and get the society to reimburse you (usually for things like props and the smaller costs – make sure you keep your receipts in order to do this).

- Send your **website/programme blurb to the Arts Centre** (email it to Julia Barry – the Marketing Manager). They will usually also want a photo. This is the publicity that the Arts Centre will put in all their brochures and events listings, so it's important that you make it good. We do ask as an exec that you send it our way as well (just pop it in an email to me), preferably before you send it to Julia so that we can give it a once over.
- Make sure the whole team (and cast when you have them) are **members of WUDS**. This is absolutely vital, since it means they'll be insured for the duration of the production process. When it gets to production week I'll be taking a list of everyone involved in the show and making sure they're all members, and anyone that isn't will not be allowed into the Studio. It's literally that strict.

AUDITIONS (AND ROOM BOOKINGS)

Then we come to auditions. Auditions are notoriously tiring, whether you're seeing everyone in individual fifteen minute slots or throwing them all in together for three hours of madness. Before they start your director will be beside themselves with excitement and might need some gentle calming down, but they are guaranteed to be a complete mess by the end of them – be ready with hot beverages and comforting words. Whether or not you're in the room for the actual auditions depends on the director, production and format the auditions are taking. However, a general rule of thumb is that you should be there to meet and greet for the first round, and observe the recalls (it's general policy that there are recalls for Studio shows, simply because of the level of interest in the parts). Obviously if you have a show with a very small creative team, or a director who wants creative input from you, you might be in the first round of auditions as well. It's a decision to make with the director and is usually their final choice.

- The most important thing about auditions is **organisation**. Have a clear and accessible way for people to sign up (set up a Google calendar, get them to email you etc.) and make sure you publicize widely and thoroughly. Keep the exec in the loop so that they can help publicize (usually by using our various Facebook presences and the weekly email, but we'll also stand on top of a building with a megaphone if you think that might help).
- **Run the auditions as smoothly as possible**. Make sure you know exactly what's happening in the auditions themselves (the format, the timings) and make sure the director keeps to it. There's nothing worse than badly run auditions setting up a bad precedent for the show, and often it can put off potential cast members.
- **Take details**. Make sure you have everyone's contact details, other commitments and availability for the shows (check this at least twice – actors are lovely but slightly absent minded and tend to forget things like not being here for the whole of production week).
- **Get back to people quickly**. Having to wait around for a decision is unbearable, and it's cruel to make them sit for days. Usually people will hear about call-backs the day after the first round of auditions finishes, and the cast list will go out the evening of the call-backs.

And you will also have the satisfying and infuriating job of **ROOM BOOKING** (for the auditions and for the rest of the rehearsal process). This is satisfying because nothing feels better than when you

manage to get a great room for exactly the time you want it, but infuriating because this is often not the case. HOWEVER – here is everything you need to know in order to be better and more informed than anyone else trying to book rooms at the same time as you, and so hopefully you will be infinitely superior and get all the rooms you could want.

- **Central timetabling.** This is the main way to book rooms, and has control of some of the best rooms on campus – namely the science concourse rooms and lib1. You can book these by going onto your mywarwick page, and there's a tab in 'timetables' (in the menu on the left) titled 'room bookings'. Just complete the form and wait for the email confirming your booking. If you do this far enough in advance you should be able to get one of the good rooms.
- **The Arts Centre.** If you're performing in the Arts Centre, you can sometimes get rehearsal time in the building. Email Nikki Cockcroft who controls the Studio, Theatre and Helen Martin Studio. In order to get any of these you need to book WAY in advance and make sure you have a back-up from central timetabling (they can kick you out with no notice if a paying company wants to use the space).
- **IATL. They control the Capital Centre Studio, Rehearsal Room and Reinvention Centre** (fancy name for a big room full of bean bags and benches). To be able to book these you need to go onto their website and become authorised, and then you can sign up on their room timetables. Be careful though – they can also cancel your booking, although they'll give you more notice than the Arts Centre. The other thing with IATL spaces is that you can only book a week in advance for time during the week (at the moment you can book weekends and evenings further in advance but I'm not sure how long that will last).

So there you go. Room booking. What a bundle of fun.

Audition feedback is also something to think about. It's usually a nice idea to put into your rejection/casting emails to the auditionees that they're welcome to ask for feedback from the director and that you'll be more than happy to give it. However, only give feedback if it is asked for, NEVER send feedback to people who might not want it. It's very difficult to be rejected from a production (particularly if you know or are friends with the production team as is usually the case), and a lot of the time people would prefer to leave the whole experience behind rather than dwell on it. In the same line of thought then, it is also absolutely crucial that every person that auditions is treated professionally and consistently – if you're writing personalised rejection/casting emails then make sure every single one is personal; if you're writing general blanket emails then make sure every single person gets that email (i.e. don't send a special one to someone you thought was particularly good).

READTHROUGH

The readthrough is the first opportunity for everyone in the cast and crew to come together and start getting really excited about the show, so it's important that you try and get as many of the team there as possible. Book a lovely room (it's usually a good idea to get one with plenty of power sockets so people can bring the script on a laptop) and bring snacks, and make sure everyone has a chance to have a chat. It's important that everyone on the team gets to know each other, so make

sure that you introduce everyone and their role in the show to the group (think cheesy name game/introductory exercises). After the readthrough it's usually a good plan to set up a Facebook group with everyone involved in the show as a member so that people can communicate and organise easily, and become general best friends for life.

REHEARSALS

You will usually have thrown together some sort of rehearsal schedule for submissions, however this will probably have to change drastically depending on your cast since you won't have been able to factor them in earlier on. So, the first job is to **get everyone's availability** and nail down a **rehearsal schedule**. Try to plan **as far in advance as possible**, and it's usually better to set up consistent rehearsal times each week so that the commitment is a regular one. This will make your director a big fan, because they can plan their rehearsals knowing exactly when cast are available (and you can be strict about people missing rehearsals since they'll have known about them for absolute years in advance). Make sure the **schedule is easily accessible** to cast if they want to check it at any time (either by emailing it out regularly and keeping them up to date with changes, or by putting it up on the Facebook group).

It's lovely if you **pop into rehearsals** every now and then. This is obviously at the discretion of the director and dependent on what they're doing each rehearsal, but it's good for keeping the relationship between production team and cast healthy and shiny and it lets you keep an eye on what's going on. In a slightly less smiley way, it's also good for the cast to know that you're there should they have any issues or problems (with the production process or in a more personal sense – a lot of your job is making sure everyone's ok and supported if they're having difficulties). Personally I'd say try and get to a fair few rehearsals early on so that you become a familiar face, and then pop in about once a week for a quick hello.

It's also very important to **get the team into rehearsals** at the right time. Hopefully they'll have met the cast at the readthrough and at the many many socials throughout the rehearsal process (these are important – casual drinking/bowling/laser quest are crucial to a happily bonded team!), so when the time comes for them to jump into the rehearsals the cast will know who they are and why they're there.

- **Lighting and sound** should be in rehearsals for the much later stages of rehearsals – usually at least a couple of runs in the last two weeks. But if the director has a scene (or scenes) which need particular attention from the tech team, then make sure they have an opportunity to work through the scenes together before then.
- **Stage management** should be in rehearsals for the last two weeks. They don't need to be in every single one obviously, but they need to know the show incredibly well (tech, props, scene changes, script alterations, cues, entrances, exits etc.) before you get into the performance space and production week, so should attend at least four or five runs/rehearsals, and you should make sure to do at least one or two props runs (i.e. a run with all the props used so that the stage manager and cast can get used to working with them and see where they need to be and how they're used etc.).

- **Costume** is much the same. Obviously you'll have decided early on what kind of thing you want for costumes, and the designer will have taken measurements etc. But it's important that the costume team see them on the cast before the dress rehearsal, particularly if there are any odd bits (e.g. a pair of impossible heels or a gorilla outfit) that the cast need to be familiar with performing in before production week. Try and have at least one run with full costume before the dress rehearsal, and try and get any tricky or big bits of costume in for the last week or so at least. It's also important if you have any quick changes that the costume team and cast know exactly how those are working and are comfortable with them.
- **Publicity and marketing** should pop in fairly early on and throughout the process, just to get a general idea of the show but also to take some photos that you might want to use for either publicity or for your arts centre board during production week (see later section on production week). They only need to come to a couple of rehearsals during the whole process – I'd say one rehearsal in about the second week, and one run at the end.
- **Set design/creation team** might be nice to have duck in once or twice as well – just so that they can see how the set is being used and make a note of anything drastic (like eight people simultaneously jumping onto a climbing frame). They should probably appear at one of the earliest runs to make sure the set is all going to work smoothly (and fix it if it's not!).

KEEPING ON TOP OF THE BUDGET

Right. The budget. This is the great big giant most stressful part of your job as producer, and it's the biggest job of the entire production. If the money is a mess, the show will be a mess. So. Here is everything you need to know about budgets.

- There are two ways to access the society funds. You can either be reimbursed for money spent on the show, or you can request a payment directly to a company if the amount of money you need is fairly hefty (the production rights company, for example). Both of these use the money request form, and you must have either your receipt or the invoice. Once you've filled out the form and attached the relevant paperwork, bring it to our Treasurer and he'll check it's within your budget and then sign off on you receiving the money from the SU. Larger amounts and payments to companies will be dealt with via a bank transfer, and smaller amounts will be handed over in cash.
- **Costs from the Arts Centre** will be deducted from your box office takings (more incentive to sell the show – otherwise they'll send you a great big demand for money at the end of the run). This includes venue hire, set construction and any technical costs. Do keep track of how much it is, what's covered and what needs to be paid for separately by keeping in close contact with Howard (one of the reasons close contact with the Arts Centre staff is so important).
- **Transportation** costs (for set, costume, props etc.) are easy to forget. Don't forget them. Nice and simple.
- **Sponsorship**. It's very rare for an individual show to seek sponsorship, but there's nothing to say you shouldn't. According to the WUDS contract with Grant Thornton, we can have extra

sponsorship from anyone that isn't in the same field as they are. So as long as you don't ask a financial accountancy and advice firm then you're golden. Sponsorship is worth looking for if you have something specific you need or want extra funding for, such as an outrageous set or some mad kind of technical effect. It can also be useful if you're looking for non-monetary support – for example if you want to do the Godfather, you might ask Moss Bros to give you all the suits you want in exchange for publicising them as a sponsor. Make sure you pitch it via a friendly but professional letter or email, and you must run it past the exec first. Target local and/or relevant companies (preferably both) and include audience figures, publicity mock ups and all basic information in the pitch.

- **Stick to the budget.** Can't say this enough. Make sure everyone on the team knows exactly how much money they have to spend and make sure you keep track of what they're spending. It will always fluctuate slightly between submissions and performance, which is fine as long as fluctuating doesn't become flailing. Because then you're in lots of trouble with the exec and the Arts Centre and the Union. We'll also keep an eye on what you're spending throughout and our treasurer will keep a record of all money request forms submitted by the show (he likes it if you do this as you go along rather than all at the end if possible – makes his job a little easier). So we'll be watching closely and it'll be difficult to get away with things, so basically, stick to the budget.
- This means following budget rules. Once again I iterate that the **limit for breakeven points is 65%**. Anything higher is not acceptable, and even if you (for some inscrutable reason) have to change the budget after submissions, we will still ask you to keep it on or below 65%. Crucially **we also ask that term three submissions keep to a 60% breakeven point**. If there's no way of getting it lower than 62% then we'll allow it, but please do try. This is because due to the timing of exams and school terms and various things, term three shows are a much harder sell, and the society needs to avoid being financially crippled in order to keep doing shows.

PRODUCTION MEETINGS AND THE TEAM

- The most efficient and nicest way to make sure you're managing the team properly is to have **weekly production meetings**. Agree on a regular time and place so that it's easy for everyone to keep track of. Make sure also that in one of your earliest meetings you organise a production schedule so that everyone knows what they should be doing and when, and then write up the agenda for each week around all the various deadlines and jobs. It might seem a bit pedantic to have an agenda, but it means you'll be organised and people will know when they are crucial to the meeting and when it's not as much of a nightmare if they can't make it.
- Make sure you **know what everyone's doing and when**, and what still needs doing. Remember that although it's the other people on the team's jobs to do things like publicity, marketing, costume etc., it's also your responsibility to make sure they're getting it done. Do this in a nice friendly way rather than an authoritative dictatorial way though or you won't be too popular... Respect everyone and the fact that they're there because they either love you, love the director or just love theatre.

- Simultaneously though – **rely on your team**. Don't take on everything yourself or you'll lose your mind (and probably give yourself grey hair from stress). Gentle prodding of people is your job, filling their roles yourself is not.
- **Use the productions manager and the exec**. I generally can't stress enough how important this is, not only because we can be delightfully useful, but also because our job is to keep a friendly eye on everything that's going on. So please, please **communicate with us** and keep us up to date with everything going on at all times.
- We may also ask you who on the team would be willing to be involved in our **shadowing scheme**. This is a new initiative we're putting in place to give freshers (and older types who haven't managed to get involved earlier) a chance to get some experience, get involved and meet active theatre kids. We'll ask you and members of the team to take on board a shadow for some time during the production process (this will differ depending on the role, for example stage management won't be doing too much until the last couple of weeks, whereas set design or producer will be running around from the word go) and impart all your expert advice. So talk to the team about this and we'll talk to you about it, and hopefully between us we can make some keen bean freshers very happy.

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

General word of advice for marketing and publicity – **do things early**. Very, very early. It's so easy to leave it till slightly too late and then suddenly it's production week and the hoodies haven't arrived and there aren't enough flyers and everyone's freaking out. Also **talk to the marketing and publicity manager for WUDS** (Kieran Lucas) – he has lots of helpful pointers and contacts, and will make sure the society marketing ties in with the show marketing. Now more specific advice...

- **Ordering posters and flyers**. Get the design finalised as soon as you're through the submissions process and try and order them as soon as possible after that – always better earlier than later when it comes to ordering (sometimes there's a mishap and then you're in a complete pickle). Before you order them though you must have them **checked by the exec**, since according to our contract with Grant Thornton they have to approve all our show publicity (just in case there's a giant swear word or swastika or something of that ilk on it that they'd rather not have their name next to) as do the Arts Centre. So email it off to us and to Julia Barry so that we can look it over (to save time and back-and-forthing, general rules are that it includes the Grant Thornton, Arts Centre, WUDS and Tech Crew logos, box office information, ticket price, dates and times of the show). Also try and make sure the image is recognisable and photocopies well.
- When it comes to **actually postering and flying** – **time it well**. There's no point covering campus in publicity months before the actual show. I'd advise doing two weeks maximum of focused campus advertising, and sending out press releases/information to local media at least three weeks before the show. The actual grunt work of posters and flyers is fairly hefty, so definitely **draft in cast and ASMs** and anyone remotely related to the show to help out. Whack them into teams and create a schedule where everyone does a couple of flying shifts about an hour long. Lunchtime or when people are arriving on campus/leaving in the late afternoon are good times for this. Go anywhere busy with lots of people you can pester (halls of residence and outside lectures are excellent), but – **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** – **do NOT**

flyer in the Arts Centre. Or put up posters. They have their own system for publicising shows and you will be fined up to £1000 for every errant poster/flyer they find. Instead, take in about six posters and a stack of flyers, and they'll distribute them via stewards and the box office themselves. Posters in campus similarly are taken down every evening, so make sure you do your postering early in the morning (freshers are good for this – draft them in and they can do it when they get up in the morning) or cheekily on a Friday night (then they stay up for the weekend). Take a couple of posters to the Union (North Reception), and ask around in shops, bars and cafes to see if they'll put one up for you (The Jug and Jester are lovely about this). Posters can also be thrown about generally in Leam – Kelsey's bus stop is a favourite spot – but make sure it's a space that welcomes publicity and not a privately owned area.

- **Press.** It's always nice to get in touch with local media organisations and raise some interest in the show, and it's a good way of reaching people outside the university. Put together a press release (once again I'm going to say the magic words USE THE EXEC – we really are helpful, I promise), include all the relevant show information and make sure they know there are photos available if they'd like (if you're emailing you could pop one in as an attachment). You might also want to **get in touch with some schools** if the production is either a syllabus text or relevant to any syllabus texts – we have a long list of local and useful school contacts, so drop us a message if this is the case and we'll send it to you to use and abuse as you'd like. Don't overlook **campus media** either – talk to someone at the Boar and Radio Warwick and get some campus publicity that way. We can help you get in touch with them if you'd like (see, helpful).
- As far as an **online presence** goes, we'll help out a lot with this via our various exec representatives on Facebook, Twitter and our website. Be careful of overloading Facebook with plugs for the show – it can get to be counterproductive if it becomes annoying. Twitter is an excellent (if geeky) tool for self-promotion without throwing it in the same faces all the time. Some shows choose to create their own account, which has worked really well in the past. Make sure you use it to the best of its potential – make contact with local arts organisations, journalists, media, council information etc. We'll give you a fairly frequent plug with the WUDS account and our Facebook page though if you'd rather not jump feet first into tweetdom, so don't fret if Twitter or general social media isn't your thing.
- **Hoodies.** Everyone's favourite form of marketing, mainly because they get to keep it and feel special wearing it around campus (or at least I do – might just be me being overly keen). The cast and team traditionally pay for these, your publicity designer (you guessed it) designs them, and your marketing manager orders them. It's a good plan to talk to our marketing and publicity manager before placing your order, since we've built up a relationship with a company who tend to give us lovely deals on nice hoodies. The point of hoodies is technically to publicise the show, so try and get them ordered early enough to actually use them for their intended purpose. Another quick tip is don't give one out unless you've had the money for it, or you'll end up with cast and crew running amuck in them and a massive debt to pay off at your end. Not fun. Remember also that in the Summer people may be more keen on t-shirts than hoodies, and some shows prefer to use other forms of wearable marketing to save on money (hoodies are great but can be expensive) so ask around before you make a definitive decision.
- **Fundraisers!** These are fun. The trick is to spend almost nothing. Try and get a free venue (someone's house is ideal, but a few bars will let you use a room for free providing people

buy all their alcohol there and don't bring it with them). Throw in a load of games and get the cast to contribute – an auction of promises is always a favourite, but equally homemade baked goods and artwork go down a treat. People will expect to pay entry (and most of your money will probably come from here) but no more than £2 or you'll get grumpy faces and displeased funders. Also remember to talk to us about the best time to run the fundraiser so that we can make sure it doesn't clash with another society event and we can publicise it in all our various ways.

- **Stunts.** These are very tricky and need careful consideration – make sure they'll look good and not messy, and make sure everyone's on board (cast tend to hate them). Keep in touch with the SU about it, particularly if you want to do it on the piazza. If done well though they're brilliant – in the past we've had cast carrying cauliflowers around, storyboards and much more, so think outside the box and remember that a great stunt makes a pack much stronger and more interesting.
- **The programme.** This is again the responsibility of publicity to design and marketing to print. Make sure to do this far before production week as photocopiers can be a nightmare to sort out at weekends, and the design needs to be checked in advance by the WUDS exec. Be sure to include thanks to everyone relevant, all the necessary logos, and the WUDS news on the back page (get in touch with Kieran and he'll get you this). They eventually need to be given to the Arts Centre front of house office at least the day before your first show (I'll put a smiley reminder about this in the later section on production week).
- And finally **society socials to see the show!** We'll obviously run a WUDS social, complete with pre-show funsies and probably post-show drinkies. Usually the best day for this is the Wednesday or Thursday as Friday and Saturday traditionally sell better. Get in touch with all the other drama (or relevant) societies as well – there's been a lovely Warwick community feeling recently with lots of inter-society support, so hopefully they'll run a social to see it as well.

SET

Set is tricky. As a producer you're probably not also a qualified technician or carpenter, so a general bit of advice is make sure you're involving people who know what they're doing every step of the way.

- Make sure you **take on any submissions feedback** about the set and adjust it accordingly (particularly anything Howard said). The design needs to be practical, and since the designer will be a student it's unlikely they'll have vast technical and practical knowledge of set building. So make sure you use the Arts Centre resources as much as possible. Howard is brilliant and lovely and there to help. Also involve the stage manager in the set design and construction since they'll be in charge of the whole shebang when it's up and running, and make sure the technical manager is similarly with you every step of the way.
- Make sure all your **plans are thorough and exact** (including measurements – they should always be to scale) and have multiple formats available (i.e. inches/cm). This is partly for your own use (have one for cast/directors to look at in rehearsals so they know how to approach blocking), and partly because of **Luke**. He is the Arts Centre carpenter and will be the person building your set, and you must be very very respectful of him and not mess him

around. Don't leave anything till the last minute – be overly prepared and aware that he may need you to change things about the design (he may also change quotes as he goes, so make sure you have a fairly considerable set contingency allowance in your budget). Make sure you also think ahead to what you'll be doing with the set after the show – what can be broken down and what needs keeping.

- Also be aware that Luke doesn't paint. That's up to you. Draft in all the ASMs you have and even cast if you can, and muck in yourself. It can be fun if you make it fun (think Mary Poppins).
- And finally **the DC Cupboard** – it is a treasure trove of props and set dressing fun, and you are welcome to any and all of it. Get in touch with me and I'll sort out a time to take you backstage so you and the team can have a look at what's in there and plan your show accordingly. The only thing about the DC cupboard is you **MUST** keep it as clean and tidy as possible and you **MUST** put things back. The reasons why will become clear when you see it (it is very cramped and very prone to enormous messes, but has the structure for being beautifully organised if people follow the rules).

THE ARTS CENTRE

The one big rule for the Arts Centre is to **be so professional it hurts**. You're in a professional venue, and they do not compromise their standards for you, you rise to meet them. They will hold a vote of no confidence and take away your performance slot if they feel it necessary, and that's not an empty threat – it has happened. Because of this **WUDS has some particular rules** (not a fun word but unfortunately necessary) that must be adhered to with Arts Centre productions.

- All parts must be auditioned – we do not allow pre-casting (and we also strongly encourage recalls).
- Everyone on the production team must have only one key role (or people will go mad with stress).
- Production team cannot audition for the show. The only exception to this is publicity, since their job will be long finished by the time rehearsals become intense.
- Any budget changes must be passed through the exec.
- Any significant changes to the show (including artistic decisions) should be talked through with the exec, particularly if they will affect the society (for example bringing in more actors, changes to the production team or drastic script/concept decisions). This is mainly because when you apply for a Studio slot you enter into an agreement with the Arts Centre and WUDS that you'll perform the show you submitted. 'Significant changes' can be defined as...
 - Taking on new members of the team after submissions (i.e. if you decide you need an online marketer or a marketing team, or an assistant or shadow to an existing position)
 - Any changing of roles within the team (e.g. assistant director becoming co-director).
 - Someone having to pull out/re-casting issues/a vote of no confidence in a team or cast member.

- Altering a major part of the artistic vision that affects more than one weeks' worth of rehearsal (i.e. a dramatic change in style, extra actors etc.). If you think it's big, the exec will probably think it's bigger and want to know about it – we have a duty to both let the directors get on with it but also make sure the production doesn't (to put it bluntly) flop, or that our members are unhappy.
- Any changes to budget.
- Problems with external companies' influence on the production (i.e. flyers not arriving, sponsorship pulling out, difficulties with the hoodies etc.).

If you're worried about any of this then please just ask – we're here to help and will always talk to you about any concerns you have. Making sure everything is running beautifully and smoothly is my job and I'm always around for that.

The Arts Centre also have some rules and deadlines that you must meet.

- **Deadlines for the brochure/diary** (your show blurb and publicity photo for the website and Arts Centre pamphlets) are 21st October for second term shows and 27th January for third term shows (these dates are for this year only – there'll be shiny new ones next year). The deadline this year for the first term show was 8th July, so it will most likely be around this time again for next year. This should be sent to Julia Barry.
- The **Studio costs** are £784 for four performances and use of the Studio for the week, and an extra £196 for including a matinee. The Arts Centre takes 10% box office commission (and remember there's a booking fee and credit card commission as well).
- Included in your hire contract is a **technician for production week**. They'll supervise you in the space and help you in any way they can while you're in there. You also get Luke, the lovely carpenter. If you overrun your given time in the venue (usually only applicable if the get-out goes past midnight) then you pay an extra £15/£25 per hour depending on the skill of the employee.
- Your **allotted hours for production week** are 10am till 10pm Monday to Wednesday (for your get-in, tech and dress), and then for Thursday, Friday and Saturday (providing you aren't having a matinee) you'll be allowed in the dressing rooms from 6pm, and the Studio itself from 7pm. If you do have a matinee you'll be able to be in dressing rooms from an hour before the show. You then clear out pretty quickly at the end of the performance, because all the staff want to go home and sleep.
- You'll have an **official Arts Centre meeting** about four weeks before the show. You, the director and the technical team (including set designer) must be there, but anyone else on the team who'd like to attend should be welcome. Howard will be there, as will a front of house representative and possibly Luke. The point of the meeting is to make sure the Arts Centre have all the relevant information for your show (both technical and administrative). Your contract will be signed and you'll be given a copy, and you should also have all your set details, drawings and designs, as well as your risk assessments. Make sure to talk to them about any strobes, smoking, swearing, gunshots, nudity etc. and discuss an age guidance. Also make sure you start thinking about your list of comp tickets – this needs to be given to Sarah Chandler at least the week before production week. Just a quick note – Sarah is also very happy to field any questions you might have in general, and is sort of your go-to in the Arts Centre after the submissions process.

- During production week itself you'll have **rules for general conduct within the building**, and again you must adhere to these and respect that it's a professional space and one that you might be sharing with another professional company (remember that backstage for you is also backstage for the main theatre). No naked flames, obviously no smoking, rooms must be left exactly as they were found, and you must be quiet while backstage. The Arts Centre technicians take lunch and dinner from 1-2pm and 6-7pm, and no one may be in the Studio during that time (this is a serious rule – you are not insured to be in there and it is a dangerous area full of death traps and giant lights and potentially deadly falling rigging).

PRODUCTION WEEK

This is a very very stressful time for everyone, and this is where your job of **keeping everyone happy and healthy** really becomes important. Illness genuinely can kill a show, so seriously encourage healthy eating, sleeping and general care amongst the cast and the team. Make sure everyone's looking after themselves (and look after yourself) and be a general figure of love and support.

- Make sure you have a **comforting timetable** so that everyone can feel that they're prepared for the week (even though it usually descends into madness). Your **technical manager will draw up an official schedule** a few days beforehand, but it's a good idea to give everyone a general idea of what will be happening and when further in advance.
- **The get-in.** This will be run by your stage manager and technical manager (make sure your director knows this – there's nothing worse than a pushy director amongst stressed techies). They'll have a detailed plan and will only need you to provide support and the occasional pair of hands. Everyone in the Studio should be a technician – do not use cast as extra help (their time will come in the get-out but for now they need rest for the shows). A useful thing for you and the director to do is the board outside the Studio doors. The Arts Centre provide you with a board for publicity and show information, and it's a good idea to get this up first thing so that anyone passing through will see it. Throw on photographs of rehearsals (Peter Marsh is always willing to take some if you don't have a photographically able person on your team), posters, flyers, a blurb about the show, cast and crew lists and a bit of information about WUDS (we'll provide this – send us an email or drop me a message).
- **Don't forget the programmes** as well – these need to be given to the front of house office by at least the day before. They'll be given out for free by the stewards.
- **The tech run.** This will be the first time the cast get into the rigged space – it's important that they're given a walkthrough of everything (you can do this but it's usually the stage manager). The stage manager or technical manager should also give them a talk about safety and general conduct. This should be firm and clear, and is one of the few times you're allowed to step in and be a meanie. Also make sure the cast are aware of fire protocols – all fire routes must be kept clear and in the event that there is one, the house lights will come up and the stewards will lead everyone out (including cast – they must not return to dressing rooms). The tech itself will require a lot of waiting around and repeating single cues, so it's generally an idea to be on hand with comforting words and snacks for when people's stamina fails. Make sure everyone stays patient and no one loses their temper, because once one person blows they all will and it'll be an awful atmosphere for working it.

- **The dress run.** This should in theory be much more painless than the tech. You should definitely be there and it's a nice idea to bring in anyone on the team that wants to attend. Also don't forget about Peter Marsh (peter@ashmorevisuals.co.uk) – he'll come in and photograph it for you and provide us with some lovely pictures for the WUDS archives (as well as your own).
- **The shows!** This is the rewarding and amazing bit, where you get to see everyone's hard work come to fruition. Make sure everyone on the team has a chance to see the show with a comp ticket at least once (remember this list needs to be given to Sarah Chandler at least the week before the shows), and you should be there before and after each show preferably to once again provide support and enthusiasm to everyone involved. Make sure you sort out things like the aftershow party and congratulations/thank you cards for everyone before the final show, because then you have...
- **The get-out.** Very fraught and stressful for everyone, but can be over in a flash if you use everyone well. The cast can provide hands to help with things like stacking chairs, putting the railings in/out, gathering props etc. The technicians and your tech team will take care of the more tricky things, and as with the get-in the technical manager will create a schedule for this. The key to the get-out is to be quick and efficient, because the sooner you get it done the sooner you can all go and celebrate at the aftershow.

AFTER THE SHOW

I wish this were a whole section about how to throw a brilliant aftershow party (plenty of alcohol, lots of emotional thanking, presents for production team and cards for cast). Unfortunately it isn't, your job is far from over when the final curtain comes down.

- The Arts Centre thankfully will take all their **costs out of your box office takings**, so you don't need to worry about that enormously (unless you haven't sold any tickets). The invoice for this usually arrives 30 days after the show – just make sure you wave it in front of the exec.
- **Return all your props and costumes.** It's easy to just dump them all in the DC, but you can be fined for doing this so make sure it all goes to the relevant place (obviously if it was bought with DC money then tidy it away in there, but if not then make sure it goes to the relevant owner).
- All **money claims from the SU** should be made within 30 days of the show – make sure everyone knows this and you stick to it or you'll have a disgruntled production team on your hands.
- **Thanking people!** Do make sure you do this – even for the lowliest person on the production team it's important and often people can be overlooked despite putting in mountains of hard work. Hopefully you've managed to do this at the aftershow with a card and a small present, but if not then make sure they're recognised afterwards for their effort.
- You'll have a **feedback session with the exec** where we'll discuss things that went really well and things that didn't go so well, your response to us as an exec and advice for future productions. We ask that at least you and the director attend, but also warmly invite everyone else in the team to attend. We'll be asking for feedback from everyone involved in

the show (both cast and crew) so everyone will have a chance to contribute, but I and the president will collate and organise it so that it remains anonymous.

And that's it – that's your show. Remember that I and the rest of the exec are always here to help, and if you have any questions about anything included in this guide then don't hesitate to ask them. I hope you've found this in some way useful and not too mind-numbing to read, and I'll leave you with the list of helpful contacts I promised you. Voila:

CONTACTS

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Marketing
Julia Barry

Julia.Barry@warwick.ac.uk

Union contacts:

(to call university numbers from external phones, dial 02476 5*****)

Union North Reception

ext 72777

Finance Office

ext 73988

Resources Room

(Pam Walker)

ext 72818

pwalker@sunion.warwick.ac.uk

Related Societies:

Tech Crew

techcrew@sunion.warwick.ac.uk

Codpiece

codpiecetheatre@hotmail.com

Fresh Blood

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Music Theatre Warwick

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Warwick TV

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