

LALT Producer Jobs: *Jim Sicilian, August 2008*

General Description: The job of the producer will vary greatly in response to the expectations and skills of the director and the producer. This document is based on my own personal experience working with a variety of directors. In general, I see the producer's job at LALT to be assisting and complementing the director of the show. This usually leads to the producer taking on responsibility (to a lesser or greater extent) for the technical and organizational side of the work, while the director focuses on the artistic aspects. The line between the two is, of course, blurred. This leads to my most important rule for the producer:

- ✓ Discuss the roles and responsibilities with the director. A major part of this is to ascertain what each of you will undertake. Care must be given that no task is neglected because each believes the other will handle it.

Depending on the experience of the director with respect to that of the producer, one will often determine limitations that arise from the specific skills of LALT volunteers and limitations that result from the physical plant of the theatre. My own experience has often been helping a new director to LALT, so I have often found it necessary to point out potential problems. The producer must keep an open mind while doing this, so as to allow novel approaches to what we may have seen as limitations in the past. I have felt, however, that the producer should have an eye toward the future effects of each show on the physical plant of LALT, both positive and negative. Obviously, everyone involved in a production should be aware of long term impacts, but the producer job includes liaison with the board of directors on issues that impact future productions.

Website: The LALT Website (www.lalt.org) is a great resource for finding information, and for providing information to the LALT community in general. The current web master is listed on the website under resources/Who do I contact for help.

Timing: I've tried to give some idea of timing of events in this document, but these are at best rough estimates because of variations among productions. Some of the early duties of the producer that I list below may actually be over and done by the time a producer is assigned to a show – lucky you!

Musicals: I haven't personally produced a musical in a very long time ("Stop the World, I Want to Get Off", 1984) so I won't pretend to be exhaustive on producer tasks for them. Obviously, there is a lot more involved in musical productions, and the producer will have his or her share of additional work.

Delegation of Chores: Feel free to delegate any of the chores described below. This is a community theatre, which means that we strive to involve as many people as possible. Doing too much yourself is definitely counterproductive. However, the producer has to "ride herd" on all the crew throughout the production, making sure that each chore really does get done correctly. At the same time, it is important to give the crew heads room for their own creativity and sense of accomplishment. It is definitely a balancing act!

Reimbursement of Expenses: Most expenses incurred by the producer and crew members will be reimbursed by the treasurer. I've found it best to have each crew head coordinate reimbursement directly with the treasurer. Exceptions: food and beverages are not normally reimbursed. Gifts are never reimbursed.

Documents: It is a great idea to date all the documents that you create as a director. These include cast and crew lists, rehearsal schedule, etc. There are often multiple versions of such documents, and dating them helps everyone keep them straight.

Videotaping Performances: The right to videotape performances is not generally included in our production contracts. Therefore, it is LALT policy that performances not be videotaped.

A) Tasks before a show is accepted for production (begin these at least 3 months prior to anticipated production dates)

1. Order a limited number of scripts for the purpose of a play reading
2. Organize a play reading
 - a. Advertise the play reading (perhaps with help from a publicist)
 - b. Coordinate with the LALT board play reading committee
 - c. Musicals Only: Provide at least a sample of the music to be heard at the reading
 - d. Provide snacks and beverages
 - e. Arrange furniture for the reading
 - f. Clean up after the play reading
3. Assist the director in presenting a proposal to the board of directors
 - a. Be prepared to give a rough idea of the anticipated budget
 - b. Discuss potential time slots and the pros and cons of such
 - c. Discuss interactions with prior and subsequent shows with the board
 - d. Bring up any special needs or impacts of the proposed show

B) Tasks immediately after approval and scheduling

1. As soon as the show is approved contact the treasurer to obtain rights for the production and to order sufficient scripts for cast and crew members. This becomes much more complex for musicals because of the need for librettos and instrumental parts, which are often only available as rentals from the publisher.

2. Enlist a publicist right away. This will reduce the producer's burden for publicizing auditions and enable the show to get a head start on newspaper articles.
3. Enlist an artist to design the show logo immediately. The logo will be most effective if it is used on all advertizing, even that for auditions and coming attractions.
4. If desired, get permits from Los Alamos County for hanging banners (contact the Kandu center, 662-8075). The permit is required for banners hung on the overpasses near the High School. I am told that banners may be hung on a cyclone fence in White Rock without a permit, but I haven't done that.
5. If desired, reserve a cover article date for immediately before production with the Los Alamos Monitor (This may be done by the publicist instead of the producer)
6. Schedule dates and times for auditions. Include the possibility of call backs if desired by the director
7. Provide 2 or 3 scripts to the reference desk at Mesa Public Library well in advance of auditions.
8. Talk to library administration staff about reserving a display case in the lobby as advertisement for the show.
9. Advertize auditions (with help from the publicist). I find that post cards are a very effective way of targeting specific potential cast members. I recommend that these be mailed about two weeks before auditions. We normally run a single advertisement in the Los Alamos Monitor and use the LALT email list to get the word out in general.
10. Most crew heads and members are enlisted after auditions. However, it is useful to begin contacting people earlier and enlisting help if possible.

C) Auditions (Auditions are usually held about 2 months prior to the first production date. However, holiday schedules may force changes to this general rule. Also, musicals audition much earlier, generally at the discretion of the musical director.)

1. Retrieve the scripts from Mesa Public Library just prior to auditions.
2. Coordinate an audition signup sheet with the director. These always include name, gender, age, experience, contact information (phone, email), time conflicts, and interest in specific roles. The director may want additional information. (Appendix A shows an example audition form.)
3. If auditions are to be held outside the main auditorium (due to conflicts with rehearsal of other shows, for example), print some signs indicating where to meet (and where not to trespass).
4. Arrange furniture for the audition
5. Arrange stage for audition

6. Musicals Only: arrange music accompaniment (piano or recorded). Anticipate that some may want to bring tapes or CDs for their own audition.
7. Assist the director in keeping the audition sheets organized during auditions.
8. Keep your own notes on each auditioner for reference during discussions of casting with the director.
9. Be prepared to meet with the director after each audition session to summarize impressions of those auditioning. (NOTE: This depends a lot on the disposition of the director.)
10. Pick up and clean after each audition session. Replace furniture as appropriate.

D. Immediately After Auditions

1. Notify all who auditioned of the chosen cast. (Note: This is often done by the director rather than the producer.)
2. Approach those who are not cast with requests to work on the production.
3. Create and distribute a cast list with contact information so cast members can easily communicate.
4. Distribute scripts to cast members. (Note: Some musicals provide only rented parts that must be returned after production. Be sure to keep records of who has what parts in this case.)
5. Schedule (with the director) the first read through of the script by the cast.
6. Schedule a location for the read through.
7. Arrange furniture for the read through.
8. Musicals Only. Provide music in some form for the read through.
9. Optional. Provide snacks and beverages for the read through.
10. Clean up after the read through.
11. Produce and distribute rehearsal calendars (together with the director). These should be distributed to crew as well as cast.
12. Paint the "Coming Attractions" billboard and hang it outside the entrance to the theatre. Include the performance dates, and possibly audition dates as well. This cannot be done until the show immediately prior to your show completes its use of the sign. Coordinate this with the producer of the prior show.
11. Optional: T-shirts. If the show wants to have t-shirts (most do) start a sign up list as early as possible. "Red Barn" (Betty Lou Lebeda, 662-2766) usually does our t-shirts. The price varies by

material, type and size. If possible, get the order in early. This will allow a wider choice of colors, and once cast and crew start wearing them around town it serves as good publicity. Include the Logo if at all possible. It's also nice to have the dates and year of production on the shirts. I've attached a sample order form as Appendix B. I have generally advanced the payment for the t-shirt order then collected from cast and crew as the shirts are distributed. This is simpler, but it does run the risk of being unable to collect for a few of the ordered items. You might also demand payment at the time of the order, but that means keeping a record of payments over some period of time. Sometimes a second order is placed as crew accumulates after the initial order.

12. Optional(sort of): Gifts. It is traditional for the cast and crew to collect funds and buy a nice gift for the director (Sorry, there's no such tradition of gifting the producer). It generally falls on the producer to both collect funds (usually not until the production is "on the boards") and to select and purchase a card and gift. I also find some token gifts to give to all the members of the cast and crew. The large number of gifts makes it necessary that each gift be inexpensive. I often print notepads using the show logo and use them as gifts. This has the added advantage that you can write a thank you on the first page of the note pad, and not have to also select and purchase cards to go with the gifts. I think these are usually pretty well received (except possibly for those who already have quite a collection of notepads). Sometimes the director likes to share in the cost and credit for these gifts.

E. Enlist Crew Heads (This should be done as early as possible, but deserves its own heading because it is the single most important task of a producer.)

1. I've included a fairly comprehensive list of crew heads as Appendix C. For some productions some crews will not be necessary.
2. Assist crew heads in filling out the crew as necessary. Schedule a meeting of the entire crew with the producer and director as early as feasible. This meeting serves to get the crew to know one another. There is always some need for coordination among crew members, and this is a good opportunity to begin communication. Review the budget and rehearsal/production schedule during the meeting. Have the director explain their expectations for crew heads during the meeting. Answer questions from the crew as necessary.
3. Create a crew list with contact information. Distribute the crew list to both cast and crew. Distribute the cast list to the crew. Keep the lists as up-to-date as possible as this makes the job of creating a program much easier and less prone to error.
4. Discuss expectations with crew heads as needed.
5. Help crew heads get access to theatre keys consistent with needs and the policies of the board of directors.

F. Budget

1. A detailed budget is due to the board of directors at their first meeting after auditions are completed. (Currently, board meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month.)
2. I've included a sample budget as Appendix D. The amounts in the sample budget are typical for an "average" show, but there can be substantial variations because of specific requirements for any production.
3. Confer with crew heads as to their budgetary needs as much as is feasible (constrained by required submission schedule).
4. Get copies of the approved budget to every crew head working on the show.
5. Budgets can be amended after submission to the board. I don't recommend amending them for small amounts, but substantial changes (perhaps exceeding \$100) should be reported to the board as soon as they become evident.
6. I have never made a practice of keeping ongoing track of expenses, although it might be a good thing to do. The treasurer provides a running report to the board of directors itemizing each show's expenses by category. Most often, expenses continue to accumulate after the show closes.

G. Rehearsals

1. Each show has priority on the main stage once the prior show closes. Before then, rehearsals are often scheduled for the green room or office space, depending on other activities. The producer is responsible for reserving whichever space is used for rehearsals. The "Building Use Committee" of the board of directors is in charge of reserving space. You can find the current contact on the LALT website.
2. I generally like to attend most rehearsals as a producer. This enables me to identify and address problems that may arise early in production. There are often issues that will only come to the surface during rehearsal. This is also an opportunity to communicate with the director if you identify potential conflicts or problems. Doing this early minimizes the impact on both the cast and crew.
3. The producer is often responsible for opening up and closing down the theatre during rehearsals. Heat up water in the "coffee" pot, adjust the thermostats, open doors as needed and such. Be sure to close down at the end of rehearsal by reversing the above actions. Remember that there are thermostats in the kitchen, behind the stage, in the Green room and in the costume storage room.
4. As production dates approach, more and more of the crew will also be present at rehearsals. Sometimes it is useful to specifically schedule rehearsals for props, stage manager, lights and sound prior to tech rehearsal.

5. When the show begins “run throughs” it is useful to begin timing the show. This helps all the technical staff to understand when events will happen. In particular, it is useful for those who will serve refreshments.
6. Musical Only: Set up the “pit” space for the combo / band as necessary.
7. Check all published material for the information required by our production license. This normally specifies that the author’s name and the publisher be listed and that the font be a specified fraction of the largest font in the document.
8. Once the prior show closes, the producer should arrange for someone to paint and hang the Marquee sign that hangs over the entrance to the theatre. We usually include the show logo on the sign, together with the dates and times of productions. There are controls for the timing of the light on the Marquee inside the ticket booth to the left of the ticket window.
9. If a banner permit was procured from the county, arrange for it to be painted and hung.
10. Schedule a time for taking lobby photos. These are most often individual “head shots” of the cast, director and producer, with one or more group photos of crew. This must be done early enough so that the finished photos are available on time for setting the lobby display.
11. Theatre Lobby Display: This task is often left until the last moment. I suggest having it complete not later than “Hell Sunday”.
12. Determine the time schedule for “Hell Sunday” and provide it to all the relevant cast and crew. It may be a good idea to discuss with crew members the time you expect them to arrive. Try to guess about how long the ordeal will last and let cast and crew know what you expect.
13. The producer is usually responsible for moving trash from within the theatre and placing it in the outdoor trash barrels as necessary. This responsibility runs through rehearsals and performances.
14. The producer is usually responsible for checking that the bathrooms have the needed supplies (paper towels, soap). This responsibility runs through rehearsals and performances.

H. “Hell Sunday”

1. Traditionally the big tech rehearsal day is the Sunday before opening. However, I like to schedule this about two weeks before opening night. This leaves enough time to correct issues that may be identified during the rehearsal. I also like to reserve the theatre for the Sunday before opening in case the director decides on a second full tech rehearsal, although this rarely happens.
2. Get to the theatre in time to open up for the cast and makeup crew. They are usually the first to arrive, unless some crew have individual tasks that have been left to the last moment.

3. Work with the makeup crew to establish a schedule for cast to show up on show dates for makeup. Pass this information on to the cast and crew as soon as possible.
4. Get a final time for the performance. Break out the time for the first act to help those who will be preparing and serving refreshments during intermission. Sometimes the tech rehearsal isn't the best day for timing. If there are too many interruptions, do the timing during the rehearsals before opening night.
5. Decide (with the director) what technical crews need to practice more than at "Hell" Sunday and schedule rehearsal(s) for their practice.
6. Optional: We often provide food and beverages at some point during the day because it often drags on for many hours. You can do this job yourself or delegate it. The theatre does not generally reimburse anyone for this, so you can pay for it yourself or collect donations from the cast and crew.
7. Close down the theatre at the end of the day. This is often a more time consuming task than normal because of cleaning whatever got messed up during the day.

I. Production Dates

1. Arrange for a crew to put down chairs and risers. I really don't like to use the cast for this – they have more important things to do at this point in time. My experience is that about six people are most efficient for this job. It should only take about 15-20 minutes to complete the task. I like to have this done before performance nights, but sometimes it has to be left until the night of performance. In that case, try to complete the task before the beginning of makeup calls. I have never arranged for a crew to put chairs and risers back up – there are generally plenty of people hanging around who will help. However, someone should be responsible for seeing that this does get done. This is usually either the producer or the stage manager.
2. The treasurer should contact the cleaning service for the theatre and have the theatre cleaned before each weekend of performances, but it is a good idea to check to make sure of the dates.
3. Optional: I like to be present at most performances, mostly to handle any last minute issues that might arise. It is really the stage manager's job to open and close the theatre at performances, however, the producer sometimes winds up doing this.

J. Cast and Crew Parties

1. It's often the case that people want to have parties at their homes after performances. This is a good time to "come down" from the performance high and to strengthen the bonds that develop during the production. The producer helps to determine a schedule for the parties. Sometimes the party is held at the theatre as "pot luck". The producer then often decides on a "theme" (if there is one) for the food.

2. There is almost always a closing night party, often at someone's home, but sometimes at the theatre. The closing night party usually includes a "congratulations" period, when cast and crew thank one another for their help. This is also when the director's gift (and thank you card) are presented.

K. Strike / cleanup

1. Ok, so this is the final task. Schedule a time for cast and crew to meet at the theatre and strike the set, put away props, furniture, etc. This is almost always the Sunday morning after the closing Saturday night. I don't like to start too early because the party the night before often runs late. I think 10 am isn't a bad compromise. The set carpenter is usually involved in striking the set. If the carpenter is not available the producer is in charge of that task.
2. Finally, the theatre should be put back in good shape by cleaning and restoring anything that was modified for the production. It's good to talk to the producer of the next scheduled show to see if they want anything left as it was during your production.

Append A. Example Audition Sheet (Note: real forms need more space for some responses.)

Audition Registration for "Show Name"

"Author's Name"

"Production right attribution"

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Age: _____

Interest in Specific Parts:

Please indicate your interest in backstage work, if any: _____

Brief summary of your theatre experience:

List Day / Date conflicts:

Append B. Example order record for t-shirts

“Show Name”

“Author’s Name”

“Production right attribution”

Shirt Order

Total Cost = \$ -

Name	Cost	Paid	Size	Additional Quotation Charge	Sweatshirt 50%	Short Sleeve 100%	Short Sleeve 50%	Women's Tank Top	Long Sleeve 100%	Long Sleeve 50%
				\$3.00	\$20.00	\$13.00	\$11.00	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$14.00

Reorder

Append C. Potential Crew Heads

Stage Manager
Director's Assistant
Publicity
Programs
Tickets
Logo
Marquee Painter and hanger
Banner Painter and hanger
Sound Design
Light Design
Sound Ops
Light Ops
Set Design
Set Construction
Set Painting
Set Dressing
Properties
Stage Crew
Costumes
Lobby Display
Photography
Videography
House Manager
Makeup
Hair
Refreshments

Append D. Sample Budget

“Show Name”
“Author’s Name”
“Production right attribution”

Director: *director name*
 Producer: *producer name*
 Production Dates: *dates*
 Budget: *date of budget*

Category	Proposed	Approved	Final
Scripts			
Royalties			
Publicity			
Set Construction			
Set Painting & Decoration			
Props			
Costumes			
Tickets			
Programs			
Lobby Display			
Photography Lobby			
Videography			
Total			