The producer is responsible for putting together and supervising the entire production: obtaining the rights to the play/musical; raising/administering the money; booking a theatre and making sure it’s staffed with box office personnel, house managers, ushers; as well as assembling the “creative team” of director, designers, and cast; setting schedules and deadlines; publicizing the show; seeing that bills, salaries, and royalties are paid; and then basically overseeing every aspect of the production from the first rehearsal through to closing night and beyond. Many of the producer’s tasks can be delegated to others, but the producer is ultimately the person who says “yes” or “no” to pretty much everything, including expenditures. The producer is responsible for the business success of a production. The director is responsible for its artistic success.

FINDING A PLAY TO PRODUCE

In consultation with your director talk about what play you might like to produce. There are many avenues to explore here. Before you decide on your piece think about why you want to produce this play? Are you doing it because you know it? Because you’ve always wanted to direct it? Because it says something meaningful about the world today? Why is it important for audiences to see this play today? Putting on a piece of theatre is hard work – if you don’t have something that is driving you beyond the idea that it might be fun or you’ve seen a production before and it was good – it makes it really hard to keep going when the going gets tough and nothing is working the way you want. How long do you want the play to be? What cast size (or range) do you want? What about the subject matter? Are there any content limitations? Are you thinking of casting diversely?

WHO DOES WHAT?

The first thing to do is to organise who is doing what and set up clear guidelines for roles and responsibilities. Casting comes later. You need a list of who does what and delegate production roles to each person. Then ensure you have a code of conduct, so everyone clearly understands their roles and their responsibility for the production. It’s a good idea to have a simple written agreement with each person, outlining what he or she is expected to do, and a timeline. The producer’s role is to organise the event and work closely with the production manager and director. Usually producers oversee the financial aspects of the show as well as working closely with the production manager to make sure timelines are set and things run smoothly.

Potential roles:
- Director
- Production Manager
- Set &/or Costume Designer
- Lighting Designer
- Sound Designer
- Marking and Publicity
- Front of House
- Technical Director
- Stage Manager

THE SPACE

- Before you even think about booking a theatre space, you need to choose the piece of theatre you want to present. Think really carefully about the appropriateness of the theatre for your play. Go have a look at the space before you book it in. What is the seating capacity? Talk about all of this with your director.
- What are the technical capabilities of the theatre space itself? Have you talked to the UHT production manager about the theatre’s technical specifications? Tours are held at the beginning of each Semester. What in-house equipment do they have (eg lights, microphones, rostra? What lighting, sound set equipment will you need? Will you need to rent additional equipment?)

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

- Union House Theatre has a standard lighting rig – best to talk to our production staff about how best to utilise the set-up that we have. We also regularly run lighting tutorials for those interested (usually towards the beginning of Semester – check out our enews for more information).
- What are the sound capabilities (e.g. speakers and their capabilities—for instance, can they pan the sound?)? What are the acoustics of the space like?
- Do you need mics? Currently UHT has no radio-mics available you will need to hire them, and have a person who is qualified to operate sound. Again best to talk to UHT production department about microphone options.
- Is there fly space? Wings? Where can actors enter and exit from?
TICKETING / AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

- Box Office – do you have a Front of House manager – who looks after tickets and ushers on every night of the performance? Where is your box office? Who is taking care of the money from door sales?
- Food/Drink - Will you be providing food/snacks and drinks pre or post show? There are restrictions at Union House as to what food can be sold. Be sure you check food safety regulations and liquor licensing. (UHT office staff can help you here). Have you organised a function for opening night? Have you checked about the policy for serving alcohol?
- Accessibility - Have you let your audiences know about the best way to get to the theatre? Parking? Accessibility? Can someone in a wheelchair make it easily into the space and have a reasonable place from which to view the show. Have you thought about an Auslan interpreted performance?
- What ticketing program are you using? We highly recommend Chook.as

BUDGET

- What are the costs of the production? A budget should be drawn up within the first few weeks of the production schedule. What money are you expecting from box office? Have you received any grants? What do you imagine your expenditure will be? How will you pay for things that you have forgotten to include in your budget? If you need help drawing up a budget, please come and talk to the AD or Production Manager in the UHT office.
- Are there additional costs if the show runs late? (Eg. Outside of University operating hours)
- Are your cast and crew clear about their participation in the production? Usually, it would be advisable to draw up a contract to ensure that there is no confusion re Payment / Profit Share/Volunteer agreement. In the case of casting students, you will most likely not being paying them. However, if you are paying for the services of a lighting designer or sound designer and are paying them for their expertise – it is best for everyone involved if there is a contract/agreement that is signed by producer and contractor.

RIGHTS AND ROYALTIES

1. To produce a play, you must get permission from the playwright or the playwright’s agent (e.g. a publisher) in advance. That generally means you have filled out a contract or licensing agreement, and have either paid the royalty or made arrangements to pay it.
2. Generally speaking, plays written before the early 1900s are in the public domain (e.g. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Moliere, etc). If however the translation is recent and still copyrighted- it will require a royalty.
3. Payment of royalties is required regardless of whether admission is charged or whether a play is performed for profit or whether the cast/crew is paid or whether a play is performed “for educational purposes.”
4. You must purchase sufficient copies of the play for your cast and crew. You cannot photocopy the script or any part of the script, unless you are specifically given a photocopy license.
5. Whenever you perform the play in front of people who are not cast/crew, it counts as a performance--for which you must pay royalties. This includes in-school performances, previews and invited dress rehearsals. It is your duty to pay a royalty for EVERY performance of the play, not just one.
6. Just because a play or a monologue is on the internet does not mean that it is public domain. It is usually still copyrighted, and you must get permission to use it.

Using Music - APRA

Most of the time, the rights to the songs don’t come with the play. Contact the Australian Performing Rights Association to see whether the music you want to use is available and register your intention to use it. https://apraamcos.com.au/login/
MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

There are many, many ways to publicize a show: newspapers, magazines, radio, the internet (websites, email and social media), as well as posters, flyers, postcards and good, old-fashioned word of mouth. Deciding on which methods are right for you depends on your budget and people available to help.

Flyers/Posters
The idea of distributing flyers or posters in your area is often a good one. Try to identify high traffic locations, or places that might draw people who are likely to attend theatre. Make sure you check with the Theatre Office about where is suitable for you to put your posters up at University. Ask at cafés or local businesses - they may have a place for flyers, or even allow you to hang a poster in a window.

Newspapers (including Farrago)
Most newspapers have calendar listings that are separate from their feature articles. Deadlines to submit may be as much as 6 weeks in advance, but you'll have to check with each specific paper for their guidelines. These are typically very basic: title/author of the show, venue, dates and times, ticket prices, contact phone/email/website and potentially a very short blurb about the play. OR Feature coverage. In this case, you'll typically send a press release, and the newspaper will either tweak your press release or publish it, or they'll assign a reporter, who will come out and do an interview.

Reviews
While there's no way to guarantee a reviewer will come, it doesn't hurt to send a specific invitation to reviewers, offering them and guest complimentary tickets.

Creating a Word of Mouth Campaign.
The most effective tool of advertising in word of mouth. When a trusted acquaintance recommends a show then that suggestion carries added weight. The inner circle of the ad campaign begins with the production artists. These are the people who have direct contact with an audience who will attend.

Experience has taught that success at reaching this fertile audience increases in direct proportion to the amount of responsibility that is assumed by the producer. People intend to make an effort on behalf of the show, but the demands of the production and distractions of life often undermine their efforts.

The next easily accessed group of potential patrons are professional contacts. Members of your production team are usually part of several circles. These reach a very select audience of people who share some bond with your project participants. Word of mouth advertising is simply about imagination. What can I do to get my project inserted into the dinner table discussion?

The Program
When the audience arrives to see the show, into their hot little hands will go the program. At its most basic level, the program is there to give the audience information about the production: what they're seeing and who is involved. Somewhere, there should be a place to thank those who have assisted, either by donating time, expertise or goods/funding. That may be a formal "patrons" page, or a more informal "special thanks to..." list. Some programs will also feature a director's note, or there may be a note from the artistic director or producer about the season, or a blurb about the company.

keep them informed of upcoming events. Make sure that all emails are sent out using a method that protects the privacy of those on your list.
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MUSICAL DIRECTOR
Responsible for all music in the production, including vocal (singing) and instrumental. Arranges for audition accompanist, and sits in on auditions to verify ability of potential cast members to handle the music, then teaches coaches actors in rehearsing the score. Arranges for hiring of rehearsal accompanist, and band or orchestra, does arrangements of the score where necessary, and runs music rehearsals with orchestra and singers. Conducts orchestra in performances. If amplification is used, works with sound designer to assure proper balance between orchestra and singers.

SET DESIGNER
Discusses set requirements with playwright, producer and director - then designs set, subject to approval. Draws up plans for construction of approved set, taking into account allotted budget. Presents detailed plan, showing placement of furniture; presents scale model of set, showing colours of walls, etc. Discusses placement of elements, colours, etc., with lighting and costume designers to coordinate overall look. Supervises gathering of furniture, painting, set decoration, and so on, to ensure fidelity to design.

COSTUME DESIGNER
Discusses costume requirements with playwright, producer, and director. Designs and/or selects costumes (from rental houses, cast members’ wardrobes, and so on) subject to approval and budget. Consults with set and lighting designers regarding colours and practicability. Takes measurements of all cast members, does fittings, tailors and adjusts pieces as necessary. Organizes quick changes when necessary, adapts costumes to permit same, and trains and rehearses dresser(s) to perform the changes, in coordination with the Stage Manager. If desired, organizes costume parade for creative team.

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Discusses lighting requirements with playwright, producer, and director. Creates lighting design subject to approval and budget. Arranges for purchase and/or rental of additional equipment as needed. Supervises hanging and focusing of lights prior to tech rehearsals. Supervises writing of cues in conjunction with director, and modifies lighting plot as needed.

SOUND DESIGNER
Discusses sound requirements with playwright, producer, and director. Creates sound plot subject to approval and budget, and delivers it on media suitable for the theatre. Supervises installation of sound equipment as needed. Supervises writing of cues in conjunction with director, and modifies sound plot as needed. If cast is to be miked, supervises fittings and sets proper levels.

CHOREOGRAPHER
Creates dances and movement for musical numbers in the production, working with the director to assure each character’s proper development through movement. Teaches the dances to the cast in movement rehearsals, and assigns one of the performers to be “dance captain” in his or her absence.

TECHNICAL CREW
Everyone needed for loading in and building the set, hanging and focusing lights, setting up the sound system, and the like. While some positions can be filled by people with no prior experience, others require very specialized skill and expertise.

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Typically handles the day-to-day financial and logistical operations of the production, including paying bills, doing payroll, arranging insurance, securing permits, arranging for space rentals as needed, and so on.

FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER
Supervises everything in front of the curtain during and before performances. This includes making sure all public areas — the house, lobby, concession and restroom areas — are clean and presentable; that the box office is staffed and ready for customers; that the concession stand, if there is one, is staffed and ready; and that ushers are in place, with programs to be distributed. The House Manager determines, in consultation with the Stage Manager, whether the curtain will rise on time or will be held, depending on how many tickets remain unclaimed, and informs the SM when it is safe to call places and begin the show; s/he also determines when lights in the public areas are flashed and/or warning chimes are sounded to alert the audience to take their seats. The House Manager
determines whether and when to seat latecomers, having consulted with the artistic staff as to when would be least disruptive. At intermission, the House Manager supervises the lighting in the public areas and the sale of concessions, and again consults with the SM as to when places should be called and the show resumed.

BOX OFFICE MANAGER/STAFF
Conducts ticket sales, in person at the theatre and/or online or over the phone. Balances sale of tickets so as to apportion the audience in the most effective way when all seats are not filled. Makes sure to have sufficient cash on hand to make change, and that credit card terminals are operating properly when used. Submits a report for each performance indicating how many tickets were sold at full price, how many at discount and/or to subscribers when applicable, how many press or other complimentary, with a total gross dollar amount for the performance. Arranges for deposit of funds.

USHERS
Show people to their seats, distribute programs, watch for prohibited activity such as taping or taking of photographs, and eject unruly audience members when needed.

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER
Does rehearsal shots for advance submission to press outlets, as well as production photos for lobby boards, follow-up press, and archival purposes.

WEBSITE CREATOR
Creates a website for the production with as much information as the creative team wishes to reveal. If desired and feasible, the production website can also be where tickets can be purchased.

STAGE MANAGER
Outside of the “Big Three” of the creative team (playwright, producer, director), the Stage Manager, or SM, is the most pivotal person on the production team. The SM’s responsibilities straddle the artistic and technical realms. The SM should be considered the Chief Operating Officer of the production. While the SM may delegate or share responsibilities with one or more Assistant Stage Managers (ASM), as well as staff for props, costumes, and the like – they are ultimately responsible for everything onstage and backstage, including the dressing areas. The SM’s duties include:

During the initial Rehearsal Period:
• maintain the prompt book, noting all changes, additions, or deletions to the script
• record the director’s blocking in the prompt book, for later reference
• consult with the director to devise a rehearsal schedule, and distribute it
• ensure presence of necessary cast for each rehearsal, calling no-shows as necessary
• set up rehearsal room to be ready for scheduled start time, arranging furniture, rehearsal props, and rehearsal costumes to be available as needed; at end of rehearsal, secure all props, costume pieces, etc., and close room
• monitor rehearsal times to allow for contractually-mandated breaks
• “sit on book” when actors are off book, prompting as necessary
• give line notes after each rehearsal, informing actors when lines have been said inaccurately
• Help the director manage rehearsals

During Technical Rehearsals
• Consult with director, prod manager, design and technical staffs, theatre office to determine load-in and tech schedule
• Supervise load-in and technical rehearsals, and determine when actors are needed
• Write sound, light, and other technical cues in the prompt book
• Plan set changes and arrange for and rehearse needed personnel
• Assign backstage personnel as needed for costume changes, live sound, and so on
• Supervise placement and spiking of onstage furniture, as well as placement of Glo-tape
• Make sure adequate light is provided backstage for safety, as well as to provide for quick changes or other necessary business

During the Run of the Show
• Make sure dressing and backstage areas are clean and free of debris
• Supervise pre-set of stage and backstage areas, including furniture props, and costumes
• Ensure that all personnel are present in the theatre at their assigned call times
• Collect and secure valuables at half-hour
• Give calls to cast at regular intervals to alert them to how long to curtain
• Consult with House Manager as to when house will be opened, and alert cast
• Consult with House Manager as to when places is to be called, and alert cast
• Check communications between SM station and backstage and front of house personnel
• Call sound and light cues for each performance
• Stop the performance in case of emergency, and have access to PA system to alert audience and theatre personnel
• Determine number of curtain calls
• Conduct understudy rehearsals as needed
• Conduct brushup rehearsals as needed
• In absence of the director, give acting, blocking, and/or script notes when needed

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Assists the Stage Manager in performing the SM’s various tasks; depending on the size and complexity of the production, there may be more than one ASM, or none at all. In theatres where the SM station is not backstage (e.g., when the SM calls the show from a booth at the rear of the house), it’s advisable to have at least one ASM backstage and in audio contact with the SM in the booth in case of problems.

ACTORS
• Actors must always arrive on time. This means in place, ready to begin, at the start of rehearsal.
• Actors focus exclusively on their own role. It is the job of the director to comment on the performances of all the participants. An individual actor discusses his specific needs with fellow thespians and may explore shared information, but one actor never advises another on acting choices.
• Any comments about another actor’s behaviour on or offstage should be made directly to the stage manager.