



The process of production

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The process of production of a theatre or dance performance almost always follows a fixed pattern. The production and business activities can be broken down into five stages: the initial stage, preparation, production, performance, and clearing up and evaluation.

1. Initial stage

In this stage you achieve a balance between the artistic and commercial aspects of your concept. You do this by elaborating the concept in practical terms, drawing up a general planning, making an estimate of costs, and drawing up a financial coverage plan. At the end of this stage you want to have a balance between the artistic plan, the planning and your budget. The importance of this point in the process is often underestimated, but we advise you to challenge yourself and to work out your plans in meticulous detail. What does my performance add to the cultural range available? What is the aim of this project? Do the audience, subsidising parties and sponsors get value for money? And how can I tell? Are the costs in proportion to the public it reaches? These are questions that you will come across if you apply for a subsidy, look for sponsors, or want to involve volunteers or a team. They are the essential questions that you must ask yourself at this stage in relation to the budget and the planning.

Do this together with an experienced cultural sector entrepreneur. If you can answer all these questions, applying for a subsidy is simply a matter of filling in forms. Of course, the outcome may be that you that the expenses you incur are too high or that your planning is too tight. If the three elements come to form a balanced unity by postponing your ideas for a season, you can easily decide to do that at this stage. It is also possible that your plan turns out to be completely infeasible. In that case, decide to stop here, however painful that decision may be.

General planning

You make a general planning in order to be able to link your idea to a trajectory at an early stage. Besides the rehearsal period and première date, you also determine the critical path and pin down the moments at which important choices have to be made. Besides, your planning helps you to estimate costs and to draw up a financial coverage plan.

Project budget: estimation of costs and financial coverage plan

You base the budget on your concept and planning. You determine the costs and draw up a financial coverage plan to meet them.

2. Preparation

Your plan is financially feasible. That means that the business manager can get down to work on the applications for subsidy and the sale of your performances. As the brain behind the project, you take on a production manager at this stage. In the meantime the artistic director tackles the content of the performance.

These preparations may take up a good number of months, especially because at the end of this stage you want to know whether the costs are covered. It takes a minimum of three or four months before the results of applications for subsidy are announced, so it is wise to plan at least six months



for this process. At the end of this stage there is another moment at which an important choice has to be made on the critical path in your planning. Have you raised enough funding to be able to move on to the production stage?

Factors requiring attention during this stage:

Coordination

Coordinate all the affairs in hand that require coordination. Hold regular production meetings and make a checklist or survey of tasks to be examined in these meetings.

Copyright

If you make use of existing plays, choreography or music, you will probably have to pay copyright. Find out whether that is the case, and ask for permission if necessary.

Production planning

Make a detailed planning that includes the following stages: rehearsal period, assembly period, performance period and clearing up. Include clear deadlines and discuss this planning at the production meetings so that everyone is in the picture.

Production budget

By the end of the preparations it should be clear how much money will come in from ticket sales, subsidies and sponsoring. Now you can divide that budget among the different expense items. Is your budget a little less than you had included in the financial coverage plan? See where you can cut expenses. Now you draw up a definitive project budget.

Accounts and personnel administration

You form a team with actors, designers and technicians for the remaining stages. Ensure that the accounts and everything connected with employment is properly administered and arranged. Record all business agreements. Take into account the requirements that the Tax Office and funding bodies demand of the accounts.

3. Production – rehearsals and assembly

You really are going ahead with the performance. When you and your team enter the rehearsal and assembly period, you will be faced with the following aspects:

Coordination

A lot goes on at the same time during the production stage. That makes it a busy and expensive period. Continue to hold regular production meetings. Maintaining a good atmosphere is equally important: have a chat with everybody on a regular basis and intervene if something goes wrong, if there is dissatisfaction, or if there is the risk of conflict. Ensure that the 'secondary conditions' are good: if everyone eats and drinks well, the rehearsal space is clean, the dressing rooms are warm and tidy, the showers work and the information is clear, everyone will enjoy working more and no attention will be diverted from the performance.

These elements – lighting, audio, décor, costumes, and of course the dancers or actors as well – all come together for the first time in the assembly week. Everyone is working hard to do their best when time is short. The production manager plays a leading role and ensures that the process runs as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Rehearsal space

Take the following factors into account in arranging a rehearsal space: what are the dimensions of the space, is it easy to reach (by car or public transport, whatever your actors are dependent on), is there daylight, can the space be blacked out, if you want to rehearse with a trial décor what is the height of the space, does it have a piano and CD player, tables and chairs, dressing rooms and



showers, what kind of floor does it have, are there coffee and tea, what does the price include (gas, water, lighting, VAT)?

Décor, costumes and props

Ensure that the décor and costume designs are made and that the props are purchased or hired. You can contract the production of the décor out with a workshop or look for the various components yourself. The same goes for the costumes and props. Bear in mind the artistic wishes, technical demands, costs and transport possibilities. Your (first) technician can help you with this.

Include in the planning when you need certain parts and monitor the progress of your search or in the workshop. Visit the workshop regularly to keep an eye on quality. Discuss the progress and any problems during the production meetings.

Lighting, audio and video

A lighting, audio and video design can be made if necessary on the basis of the stage concept. The materials required depend on this design.

Discuss with your technician whether he expects to have to take equipment with the company on tour. Do you have it available, or do you have to hire it? What does that cost? Will it fit into the vehicle along with the décor, costumes and props?

If you are making a sound recording, discuss what the best recording medium is (MD, CD, DAT) and make a timely studio reservation for a rehearsal tape and the final performance recording.

Transport

Arrange transport for your technical material, décor and costumes. Do this in consultation with the head of technique or first technician so that you can arrange the right transport format.

Technical team

The choice of a designer is based on artistic quality and input. Determine in consultation whether the designer only delivers the design, or also implements it and/or goes with the company on tour.

Involve the head of technique or the first technician as much as possible in the production process and décor construction. Discuss with them what your technical team for the assembly and performance period will look like.

Technical letter

The purpose of the technical letter is to communicate clearly and comprehensively with the theatres that you will visit on your tour. This letter includes full information on your performance, so that the theatre can make the appropriate preparations. Ideally it should be sent six weeks in advance.

Production Risk Inventory & Evaluation (PRI&E)

When you send the technical letter to theatres, you include the PRI&E as an appendix. This document is an inventory of the risks that your production involves. It evaluates those risks and indicates which (precautionary) measures you have taken to reduce or avoid the risks. The theatres visited on your tour are obliged to have this document in their possession.

Budget monitoring

Once the budgets have been fixed, everyone must abide by them. The budget is always the starting point. You can adjust it as you go along if the sums turn out to be impractical. In that case you can between switch funds between different categories. Budget administration is done via two instruments: the petty cash book and the daily balances.



You record exactly every cash expenditure in the petty cash book. Keep the receipt for each item of expenditure. The amounts are listed in chronological order in the petty cash book. For a clearer picture of how much money you have spent per category of expenditure, you can keep daily balances: a simplified version of the ledgers with which accountants work. You can keep a separate daily balance sheet for each type of expenditure: décor, costumes, office expenses, etc. You enter the sums from the petty cash book and the expenses per bank transfer on the daily balance sheet. The bottom line shows your total expenses. If it exceeds the budgeted sum, you must stop spending on that category or cut down on spending on another category to release extra funds.

Monitoring progress of your planning

Monitor the progress of your process. Is it taking longer than anticipated or are you unable to meet your deadlines? In that case, adjust the planning. That way you will not get behind and you maintain a realistic planning. Always discuss the current state of play in the production meetings.

Roster

Make a comprehensive roster for the assembly period. It should contain agreements regarding the use of the stage during the assembly period, for rehearsals and technical corrections. Keep a close eye on whether everything is proceeding as it should and help people to stick to their times. Adjust the roster when necessary and inform everybody about any changes.

Catering

Do you continue working in the evenings during the assembly period? In that case you should arrange the catering beforehand. Do not be stingy in this respect. Everyone is working long hours and needs the necessary vitamins and enough to eat.

Première

Send invitations to your première in good time. Make arrangements with the theatre beforehand if you plan to organise a reception with drinks. And of course do not forget to wish everyone good luck.

Publicity

Invite the press to your première and ensure that they are provided with press material when they enter so that they can easily write a review or article about your performance.

Play list and travel schedule

Before you go on tour, make a travel schedule for each performance. Calculate how much time you need for the trip, assembly, warming up, dismantling and unloading.

Model travel schedule

Title of performance

Play period

Name, address, telephone number of the producer

Personnel, possibly with mobile numbers

Emergency number(s)

Numbers of bus company/drivers, etc.

Other permanent information, such as an address list of all personnel

Per performance:

Name of theatre or venue, address and telephone number

Theatre contact

Route description

Starting time of performance

Time at which various personnel must be present

(optional) information about cast (who plays when)



Name, address and telephone number of hotel, if applicable
Time at which the room key must be collected
Information about catering, if applicable
Other (try-out, première, special location, etc.)

Transport

Arrange transport beforehand. Remember the deposit and petrol expenses if you are hiring transport. Borrowing a small bus or van is a lot cheaper, but make sure that you are properly insured. Make a list of everything you are taking with you (a packing or freight list) so that you can systematically check whether you have everything with you during loading and departure.

Insurance

Do you need a transport insurance for the hired items and technical material (usually you do!)?

4. Performance

The première has taken place and the tour can commence.

Coordination

Be prepared for everything! Take a first aid box with you containing plasters, safety pins, sport tape, an ice-pack, reserve costume, etc. A tool kit can also come in handy. Take a reserve audio tape (in a different bag from the original!), because if playing equipment breaks down, it often destroys the tape. If you are working with a DAT recorder or minidisc, take the music on a CD as well.

Publicity and reviews

Collect the reviews and all press items. Send them on to the next venues. They can use this to attract a larger audience. You can also put them on your own website and social media to generate attention.

Quality control

Keep in touch with the technical team and the actors about the progress of the tour. Are they satisfied? Go to watch the performance regularly and check the quality of the performance for acting (should an extra rehearsal be planned?), décor, costumes and props.

Daily expense allowance

Everyone on tour is entitled to a daily expense allowance to cover food and drink. Depending on the arrangements you made at the start, you must pay this allowance in cash or refund it per declaration.

Preparation of the clearing up stage

Prepare the conclusion of your project while the tour is still on. Decide whether you want to document the performance and store the décor and costumes for a repeat. Make arrangements with suppliers of hired material about when you can return it or they can collect it. It may be useful to devote an extra production meeting to this and to make a roster.

5. Clearing up – dismantling and evaluation

The tour is over and you have reached the clearing up stage.

Coordination

Coordinate dismantling the performance and returning all the material. Put your décor and costumes into storage if necessary, so arrange a storage facility. Take into account such factors as climate control, accessibility and costs.



Evaluation team

Take the time to thank all your personnel and suppliers and to evaluate the process with them. Learn from their feedback for a following production.

Evaluation artistic result

Make sure that you document all reviews and make an evaluation of your performance with the artistic team. Are you satisfied? What would you do differently next time?

Balance of accounts

After the project is over, all expenses have been paid and all expected income has been received, the balance of accounts can be made. Base it on the latest version of the budget. Make a survey of the totals by setting the actual totals in an extra column next to the budgeted sums. You can copy these actual totals from the daily balance sheets. Do the same for income. Book unforeseen expenditure as 'unforeseen'. If you have kept a good budget administration, the outcome (surplus or deficit) will not come as a surprise.

Giving an account to funding bodies

The balance of accounts and artistic evaluation are also necessary for the conclusion of your subsidy: you usually receive a part of the allocated sum as an advance and the rest when the project has been successfully completed. If certain items do not match the budgeted sum, you will have to be able to explain why.

More information

- See the step-by-step 'making a project planning' on [BeroepKunstenaar.nl](https://www.beroepkunstenaar.nl)
- See the models 'simple budget' and 'extended budget' in Excel on [BeroepKunstenaar.nl](https://www.beroepkunstenaar.nl)
- See 'Technical letter', 'Production Risk Inventory & Evaluation' (both in PDF), 'Cash book and daily record' and 'Example schedule production' on [BeroepKunstenaar.nl](https://www.beroepkunstenaar.nl)



Process diagram

	STAGE				
FUNCTION	I INITIAL	II PREPARATION	III PRODUCTION	IV PERFORMANCE	V CLEARING UP & EVALUATION
Director/ Choreographer	Artistic idea	Drama/dance concept Auditions Preparation rehearsals	Rehearsals and assembly Décor, costumes, lighting and audio	Première and tour	Evaluation artistic result Thanks to personnel
Production manager	General planning	Contracts of personnel Preparation rehearsals Production planning Production budget Start up technique and décor	General coordination Production of décor, costumes, props, technique Coaching rehearsals	Ticket sales Organisation première Organisation tour	Dismantle and clear up décor, props, etc. Thanks to personnel
(or marketing manager)	Marketing plan	Longer-term publicity (flyers, adverts)	Short-term publicity (programme, adverts, press)	Collect reviews	Thanks to partners
Business manager	Cost estimate Financial coverage plan	Contracts of personnel Sale of performance Fund raising Budget planning	Budget monitoring	Première Budget monitoring	Settlement of accounts Justification of expenses Thanks to subsidy bodies, funds and sponsors
General	Division of tasks and responsibilities				Evaluation