



A Dance production at your own dance school

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This text is a summary of three brochures from the Landelijk Centrum Amateurdans, LCA (National Centre for Amateur Dance).

As an instructor or a school owner you want to show what takes place during the lessons and what the students get out of it. Having regular performances provides the lessons with an extra ingredient which makes them exciting. You can make such a dance production using students from one class, dancers from an existing dance group, or on an ad-hoc basis.

The organizer has final responsibility for both the professional and artistic aspects of the production. That doesn't mean you have to do everything yourself. It is very important to delegate. Depending on your own strengths you will either delegate more of the artistic side of things, for instance to a choreographer, or the business aspects, perhaps to a (temporary) production manager. To put on such a production you must always work together with other people: publicity assistant, set designer, people responsible for costumes, lighting, sound, make-up, catering, possibly transportation, and the box office. Sometimes these are paid workers, but often they are volunteers, perhaps relatives of the students. The following are important aspects of creating a dance production.

Artistic plan

You can hire a choreographer for your artistic project. You should make an agreement with the choreographer about the length of the choreography, rehearsal dates, ownership rights, and fees. First you make an artistic plan in which you describe your dance piece as specifically as possible. You ask yourself questions such as:

- What is the objective (to present students, to give form to your work, etc.)?
- Who influences the performance, and to what degree (choreographer, dancers, instructors, organizers)?
- What is the theme of the production, what character and/or emotion will it express, and which dance style will it employ?
- How does it differ from other productions of your own or of others?
- How many dancers are involved, what do you require in the way of technique, experience, age, personality, musical talent, improvisational skills, etc.?
- How long will the piece be?
- What is the work method of the choreographer?
- How often and how long will the rehearsals be?
- What choices need to be made for lighting, sound, music, costumes and scenery, and who will take care of these?
- Who is the production for (target groups)?
- Where will the performance take place? What are the possibilities and restrictions of the performance space(s)?



Theatrical resources

Sound, lighting, costumes, make-up, scenery – these are all means of increasing the choreography's expressiveness, by supporting the dance or acting as a base for it. Along with the dance, these theatrical resources form a whole.

Various pieces of music are often used to produce the *sound* for a performance. These can best be consecutively assembled, on a minidisc for example, so that you can shorten them or change them if necessary. Always test the equipment and sound beforehand and make a good arrangement with the sound technician.

Lighting allows the movements to be seen. Side lighting in particular exposes the dynamics and direction. Colours add atmosphere, and various kinds of lamps either blur or emphasize certain spaces or movements. Scenery and costumes also affect the lighting plan. The lighting technician fits the plan to the space.

You can have *costumes* made, or you can buy them (new or at second-hand shops) or trade with other groups. The fabric should not wrinkle easily, should breathe well, give with the movements, and be washable. Cotton or synthetic lycra, or tricot cotton, are nice fabrics. The form and colour are attuned to the body parts you want to emphasize or conceal, skin colours, and the lighting and scenery.

The main reason for *make-up* is to enable the audience to see the dancers' faces well. Basic make-up from the make-up box is normally used for this. The box includes various colours, powder, eye pencils, lipsticks and lip pencils. There are also brushes, a powder brush, cotton balls and cotton swabs.

You use the *scenery* to dress the space where you are dancing. This can be done with back-drops (painted or with projected images) or with rear walls and pieces of scenery. It should be practical, sturdy with respect to safety and stability, and easy to break down and transport. You start out by checking the sizes of the theatre spaces beforehand.

Dancers and rehearsals

Whether you know the dancers or not makes a big difference. If you are organizing an audition or introductory workshop, decide in advance what requirements the dancers will have to fulfil (see *Artistic plan*).

During rehearsals the dancers should be aware of what the choreographer wants to convey. This often requires a lot of explanation. So does the work method, for example collecting material by means of improvisation. If there is room for individual expression from the dancers, the movements get an inner impulse which adds to the persuasiveness of the piece. Everything comes together during the dress rehearsal: dance, lighting, sound, scenery, costumes and make-up. If there is going to be more than one performance, it may be useful to hold a public rehearsal to check the audience's response.

Premiere and tour

The most important guests at the premiere performance are usually relatives, friends, and the press. These people are commonly invited four to six weeks in advance. It is convenient to know beforehand how many guests are expected, to be able to arrange the catering, food vouchers for guests, and information folders for the press. After the performance everyone who helped with the production is thanked and/or received a bouquet.

If you are going to tour with the production, you make a tour schedule. It shows when and where the performances take place, what arrangements have been made with the theatres, and who needs to do what. Everyone should receive a copy of this in advance.

Organization



Creating a production requires a lot of organization: many people have to do a lot of work in a short amount of time. That can quickly become very complex.

This is why you need to make a production plan, action lists, and a scenario.

In the *production plan* the artistic plan and the business plan (finances and PR) are brought together. It contains what the performance includes, what the plan is, who is working on it, who does which jobs, what the various deadlines are, and what the budgets are. It also includes a list of names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

From the production plan you create *action lists* for the various workers. The list shows what they have to do, when it should be finished, and whom they should consult or show something to (costume designs, for instance). Everyone receives such a list.

For the most hectic days, such as the dress rehearsal, public rehearsal, premiere and performance days, you make a *scenario*. This describes who should do what and where, for each day or, preferably, each hour.

Money

It costs money to make a production. It usually costs more than you have to begin with. Often people invest their own time and money in a project. Working with volunteers can save money.

You should make a budget in advance. Important budget items are honoraria (choreographer, scenery- costume- and lighting designers), travel and accommodation (séjour), transport (when on tour), rental accommodation and equipment, materials (scenery, music, costumes), promotion and publicity.

The budget also includes an estimation of the income from ticket sales and merchandise or gifts. You may be able to bring in through sponsors. Sometimes you can also get subsidies, for example from the local government, the province or a fund.

Publicity

Publicity is necessary to sell the production, both to theatres and to audiences. A campaign is needed to bring people into the theatre. Often the hall where you are performing will help to draw in its own audience. In any case you should set aside part of your budget for making appealing flyers and folders. Make a media list in advance, with deadlines of when you should inform them. Use a press release or information folder for this, and make personal contacts. Send out effective (black & white, good contrast) photos along with the information. Most media love to get good visual material. You can also use social media to promote your project.

More information

On BeroepKunstenaar.nl you can find:

- Articles on agreements and liability
- *Subsidy & sponsorship*
- *Selling a production (pdf)*
- *Step by step: producing a performance, drawing up a project budget, apply subsidy applications, writing a press release.*