



Planning publicity performing arts

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Publicity for the sale of a production

For productions which are sold to theatres you should make a plan for the sale and for the publicity which the theatres are going to create for the production.

Sales information (September/October preceding the season of the performance)

Your planning should begin depending on the performance period that is between a year and a year and a half in advance. Timing is important for the sales of productions. Bigger productions are often sold sooner than smaller ones. Agents and theatre bureaus put together the annual the offerings for the following season. Because of this the preliminary text of a production has to be ready at the beginning of the season before that. If you are taking care of the sales yourself, make sure that by autumn you have sent all the information to the programmers: besides the text also the playing period, type of stage, price and if you have reviews, a picture or a trailer.

Season brochures (March, prior to the season of the performance)

Most programmers finish off the programming in March and the theatres begin producing their season brochures. The publicity fair is usually the last opportunity to you hand in your most recent text and pictorial material: this will be used in these brochures. If there are no changes or additions it can be the same material you used for the sales.

Coordinating with the theatres

Make sure that all the agreements with the various theatres concerning publicity are clear well in advance. Also always hand in changes in publicity texts or new images directly at the theatres so they will not pass on old information to the audience and (local) press. Check the theaters websites.

For some theaters you might want to distribute posters and flyers throughout the city, place an advertisement, or show a clip on the (local) television channel. Plans and deadlines for reserving these differ from city to city; the theatre should know more about this. Such (additional) activities are mainly done in the big cities. You may have to arrange and pay for them yourself.

Keep an eye on the presale positions. People buy their tickets still later so it is hard to measure the meaning of these charts. Decide with the theatres what you can do to stimulate the sale of tickets if necessary. Take into account that theatres have little time: they rather spend time on plays with a doubtful ticket sale but with potential, than on plays with a really bad presale.

Planning printed matter and press contact

If you already have information about the production at the beginning of the season it is smart to send it to periodicals with infrequent publication (like glossy's) and to the most important press contacts so that they can include the production in their season's planning.

Ca. 3 months before the first tryout

- Plan a publicity meeting with the group to find out as much as possible about the content of the production in order to determine how you want to make publicity for your performance and using which promotional resources.
- Decide what printed matter you will have made, and make agreements with a designer and photographer.
- Write the first press release and, after approval from the artistic leader(s), send it to the monthly periodicals as soon as possible. Also send in a picture: the better the image, the bigger the change it is picked up.



- Send this press release to the theatres where the performance will play, along with an order form for publicity material. On this form they can order posters, flyers and photos.

Ca. 10 weeks before the first tryout

- Call the monthly periodicals to encourage placement of announcements, pictorial material or interviews.
- Write the text and gather all the practical information for the flyer.
- Determine the number of printed copies you need, ask for an estimate and plan the dates with the printer.

Ca. 8 - 6 weeks before the first tryout

- About 8 weeks in advance send the definitive information to the designer and state clearly what it should be used for (for instance, consider space for labels and 'port betaald' ('postage paid') on the flyer, space for printing text for local information on the poster, facebook logos).
- Make a trailer
- Make a fan page of the play on facebook or put information on the page of your company. This is a flexible medium you can use to announce activities and competitions.
- If necessary write a new press release and send it to the weekly papers, agendas of the daily papers, radio and TV programmes, websites and blogs.
- Discuss the designer's concept with the artistic leader(s), and check if everything on it is correct.
- Make sure the printer has the definitive design 6 weeks before the first tryout.

Ca. 5-3 weeks before the first tryout

- Make sure 5 weeks in advance that a large 'block' of tickets are reserved at the theatre for invited guests, staff members and press for the premiere or for other dates for which you'll send invitations.

NOTE: depending on the popularity of the production and the theatre's ticket sales policy, this may have to be done much sooner!

- Send the requested printed matter to the theatres about 4 weeks in advance, and make sure they have the latest information (press release) about the production.
- Call the press, radio and TV programmes to encourage pre-publicity.
- Prepare the mailing to fans, relatives and invited guests (selection of the press contacts and relations) for the premiere, and send them about 3 weeks prior to the premiere date. Pay attention to who should receive which information.

Ca. 2 weeks before the first tryout and up to the premiere

- Plan the scene photographs. These are usually taken in the week prior to the premiere, and have to be available at the latest on the day of the premiere for sending or handing to the press.
- Prepare the contents of the press folders (including any background information about the company, staff members' CVs, prepublications, press release, flyer, copies of photos if available). You hand these out to the journalists present at the premiere.
- Call important press contacts who you think should be at the premiere if they have not made reservations themselves.
- You can send an e-mail or e-flyers as an extra reminder. You can also do this per city.
- Make sure scene photographs are made and chosen (portrait and landscape press photos and pictures). Send the press photos to the agendas and art editorial offices of the most important papers as soon as possible, and to the theatres later on.
- Check the theatre's reservation list for the premiere regularly.
- Take an (extra) pile of scene photographs and press folders along to the premiere.

During the tour

- Hand out press maps to players of the local press.
- Keep an eye the sale charts, work with the theatres and make agreements about additional activities, and the approach of local press.
- Think about doing educational activities related to the play.
- Send additional material to the theatres: reviews and e-flyers.
- Follow social media.



Afterwards

After the final performance, evaluate your publicity effort. This can be a great help in preparing the next production. Some of the matters to consider:

- Assess whether you ordered and distributed the right amount of printed material. Would you need more or less for another similar tour?
- Review important agreements reached with individual theatres. Are they worth repeating or suitable for other venues?
- Keep a list of all your media coverage. Not just the advertisements you place yourself, but also items about you on radio, television, the internet and the press. Also note the details of the contact persons or writers so that you can approach them directly about the next production.
- Keep all articles from the printed media. Good reviews or quotes can be used to publicize your next production or help when applying for funding.

More information

You can find more information on *marketing* on BeroepKunstenaar.nl.

For example:

- *I want to make publicity*
- *I want to use online marketing*
- Article on *selling a production* (pdf) to theatres
- Article on *marketing in the arts* (pdf)
- Article on making *printed matter* (pdf)