

Playwright & Theatre Communications

When a playwright and producing theatre company embark on a relationship, it is an artistic and business relationship, and must be conducted with professionalism and mutual respect. Here are some elements that both playwrights and producing theatre companies should consider when establishing this relationship.

Playwrights

Theatre Companies

Submissions

Do you wish to submit unsolicited scripts to a theatre?

Do you solicit or invite script submissions?

Follow the guidelines provided by the theatre

Yes: What are the parameters, and is this information available on your website?

No: Is your policy stated on your website?

We advise playwrights not to send unsolicited scripts to theatre companies that have a “no unsolicited script” policy. If in doubt, establish contact with a theatre you are interested in working with and ask permission.

Managing expectations can result in improved relationships and appropriate submissions from playwrights.

Identify whom you should be speaking to about submissions and new play development.



Identify the person(s) in your organization responsible for submissions and new play development.

Have you researched the type of scripts the theatre is looking for?

What kind of scripts are you looking for?

Your submission should reflect that research.

State upfront how your submission fits within their criteria.

Think twice about sending a submission that does not fit what the theatre is looking for. If you really want to send it, contact the theatre first to make your case. If they refuse, accept their decision.

Research the theatre's past and current programming. You may also want to contact the theatre's decision makers to find out what they're looking for.

Is there a clear and accessible statement on what submissions will be accepted?

Do you have a clearly expressed artistic mission/vision on your website?

Consider including information such as genre: drama, comedy, musical, adaptation, contemporary, historical, TYA, physical, culturally specific, etc.

Include desired running length and cast size if you have programming with specific requirements (i.e. one-act play festival, chamber musical series, etc.).

Know what is expected in a submission.

Clearly state what is expected in a submission.

Synopsis, approximate running time, casting breakdown, playwright biography, development or production history, contact information, etc.

Follow up?

Who reads the submissions?

Yes, and we advise that playwrights respectfully follow the process the theatre company has outlined.

Do you utilize a Reading Committee?

Do you need assistance reading plays (both submissions and published works)? Is there an honorarium for this?

Are you open to collaborations?

Both playwrights and theatres should make it known if they are open to collaborations.

Collaborations can include playwright-driven projects where an in-kind arrangement of venue or dollar support with actors or other such matching funds is provided by a producing theatre. They may also include projects with other culture groups (i.e. museums, galleries, historic sites).

How do you manage your correspondence?

How do you respond to submissions?

Keep a record of the theatres you've contacted, the people you've spoken to and the projects you've discussed for future reference. You can use this information to follow up, particularly if some time has passed or personnel has changed at the theatre in question.

Clearly state what playwrights should expect after they submit a script to your theatre. State if and how you will acknowledge receipt of their submission.

If you have an agent, get a list of the theatres your agent has submitted your plays to so you are able to follow up on your own, formally or informally.

Other things to consider making known are:

- How long will a response take to reach the playwright?
- Do you provide feedback in your response?
- Can a playwright follow up if they haven't heard a response after a certain time?

Development

Are you looking for development opportunities?

Do you offer development opportunities?

Consider what kind of development opportunity you're looking for when researching specific theatres.

Great! What are they? Playwriting groups or circles, workshop opportunities, script reading and feedback services, writing retreats, etc. are all development programs and communicating what you offer can more clearly match you with playwrights that you want to work with.

Is it for a pre-existing play? A completely new work? Do you work best one-on-one, or in a playwrighting unit? Pursue what best suits you and your play.

Not all theatres are in a position to offer development opportunities. Is this clearly stated in your material to playwrights?

Applying to a theatre for development?

If you do offer development opportunities:

Research the development program and find out how applicants are selected.

Be prepared to consult the theatre company's website, then contact the theatre directly through phone or email. Also contact other playwrights who have gone through the program.

How do playwrights find out about these opportunities and if they are eligible? Via your website? Or by invitation only?

Gateway to production?

What can playwrights expect from development?



Research the theatre's track record of either producing the plays they develop or producing plays written by playwrights who have gone through their program.

Research what you can expect from participating in development with a particular theatre, and set your expectations accordingly.

Clearly state what playwrights can expect to receive out of a development process with your theatre. For example, does development with your company increase the likelihood of production with your company? Set realistic expectations up front.

The PGC MEMBERS LOUNGE WEBPAGE contains the following resources related to this document:



[Opportunities for Playwrights in Professional Canadian Theatres](#)

[Working with Theatres: A Guide for Playwrights](#)

[Contracts Handbook](#)

[Listing of Community Theatres](#)

www.playwrightsguild.ca
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