

# Guidelines for Directors



This is by no means an exhaustive list. At any point in your role of director, never hesitate to ask for advice and support from the committee.

## CHOOSING YOUR PLAY

- Will you be able to cast the play? Think about the actors available to you: age / sex / stature / ability etc.
- Will you be able to stage the play? Think about the set. Will it fit on the Sheringham Little Theatre stage? Can you acquire the necessary costumes / furniture / props? You must have a basic plan in place for any special effects.
- Is the play fresh? Make sure that it hasn't recently been performed locally, and that it is not being put on at the same time, or soon after, by another group.
- Can you obtain a licence? Most licences are acquired through Samuel French Ltd; however, there are other licensing companies, for example, Joseph Weinberger. You can phone the licensing company and make enquiries, or you can submit an on-line licence application. The licence will be approved (or declined) and will become valid when it has been paid for. If you change your mind, just cancel the application.
- Is the play affordable? Theatre hire, rehearsal-room hire, publicity, and books are fairly standard. But work out any unusual costs, for example: out-of-the-ordinary royalties / specialist costumes or props etc. Discuss any potentially expensive element of a production with the committee.
- Is the play appropriate for Sheringham? We need to make a profit, so there's no point in staging a production that nobody wants to see. We also need to maintain our good reputation.
- You must have approval from the committee.

## PLANNING

- Rehearsal rooms will already have been booked. If you would like to hold rehearsals at an alternative venue, arrange this with the committee before the date of the first audition.
- The theatre will already have been booked. If you would like to put on an extra performance (e.g. a matinee), discuss this with the committee before the date of the first audition.
- Get your books. You can ask the committee to do this for you, or you can buy them through French's, using your own credit / debit card, and submit the receipt to the treasurer for reimbursement. You'll need a book for each actor, plus a book each for: you (director), prompt, stage manager, (possibly) props manager, and theatre technician. Ensure that you have the books in time for auditions.
- If you plan to make significant changes to the script, contact the licensing company for permission.
- Discuss audition dates with the committee. The secretary will book the venue, and the chairman will send an email to all members, including a precis of the play and the characters, provided by you.

- It is advisable to arrange a stage manager and a set designer / builder at this stage. Discuss your ideas with them and take their advice regarding stage lay-out. Draw a plan of the set.

## **AUDITIONS**

- This is your gig, and it's up to you how the session is conducted. Decide on the format beforehand. Do you want people to sit: in a circle / around a table / in rows, facing you? Will you provide tea and coffee at the beginning / in a break / both?
- New members should be shown a copy of the Sheringham Players Data Privacy Policy and be invited to complete, sign and date the Sheringham Players Personal Data Collection Form. Directors must then hold the forms securely and pass them on to the Data Controller as soon as possible.
- Directors should where possible always cast from existing SP members. For specific productions, and in certain circumstances, this may not be possible, and in these situations, in the first instance, approval should be obtained from the committee for non-members to be auditioned.
- Directors should clarify with non-members their future commitment to SP, and report their findings to the committee for approval before being auditioned and offered a part.
- Ask everyone to read more than one part. Allow everyone to read for every part they're interested in, even if you believe that they are not suitable for certain roles. Keep notes.
- Offer parts to people in private. It's best to phone each person the next day (or as soon afterwards as possible). Always offer the parts to your chosen cast members before phoning those who have not been successful.
- If you haven't yet assigned the roles of stage manager and set design, do it now.
- Offer backstage roles: assistant stage manager / prompt / props / costumes / publicity.
- Submit the full cast and crew list to the committee. It will be displayed on the website and emailed to all members.
- Any additional auditions required other than the ones scheduled should be approved by the committee.

## **REHEARSALS**

- New members who were not at auditions should be shown a copy of the Sheringham Players Data Privacy Policy and be invited to complete, sign and date the Sheringham Players Personal Data Collection Form. Directors must then hold the forms securely and pass them on to the Data Controller as soon as possible.
- All projected expenses for a production should be referred to the committee in writing, for approval, before rehearsals commence, and any additional expenses should be approved by the committee before payment is made.
- Some directors like to have a read-through at the first rehearsal. This, of course, is up to you.
- Directors should ensure that any non-members complete an application form and fees are paid to the treasurer before rehearsals commence.
- It is your responsibility to provide refreshments. Submit receipts to the treasurer.
- Set out the rehearsal space to simulate your stage. This involves measuring the floor space and using furniture and masking tape to mark doorways, walls, furniture etc.

- Provide your actors with a rehearsal schedule. Impress upon them the importance of letting you know, in advance, about absences. Within the schedule, include a 'books down' date.

## **PRODUCTION**

- You will receive (via the committee) a contract between Sheringham High School and Sheringham Players. This contract will include a risk assessment. If you need any help with the contract, ask the committee for help. Hand the contract back to the committee.
- Arrange a meeting with the theatre technician at least two weeks before the first performance. Provide the technician with a script and talk to him about lighting and effects.
- Choose your music. Obtain copies of the music you want to use, but the technician can help with this if you're having problems. PRS fees are covered by theatre-hire charges, so you don't have to arrange royalties.
- Work with your publicity officer. Send text and photos to the local press and offer complimentary tickets in exchange for a review. Liaise with the committee regarding the design and printing of your poster and programme. Make sure that the poster and programme are proofread by at least one other person.
- Work with your stage manager and set designer regarding: set building / transportation / set striking. The set needs to be built and painted beforehand, and it may be necessary to hire a van for transporting the set to and from the theatre. In our contract with the theatre, we agree to strike the set on the last night.
- Ensure that every member of the company is a paid-up member of Sheringham Players. Using non-members will invalidate our insurance.
- Arrange for promotional photographs to be taken on the set. This is usually done by a professional photographer. Note that copyright of photos provided by a society member (directly or indirectly) belongs to Sheringham Players.

## **THE RUN**

- When you get into the venue (usually on the Sunday), make sure that you have all props and costumes. Ensure that actors leave their costumes at the theatre. Discourage actors from arriving and leaving in costume, even if they are every-day clothes.
- Display the licence backstage. Checks *are* carried out. If you are unable to produce a valid licence, the play can be taken off, with dire consequences to Sheringham Players.
- Have a technical rehearsal, which includes: costumes / lighting and other effects / full use of set (entrances and exits / props) / curtain.
- Have a dress rehearsal, which means: go through the play as if it were a performance.
- Once the dress rehearsal is over, you are no longer in charge. Responsibility for the smooth running of the production is transferred to the Stage Manager. It is the Director's responsibility to hand over the reins in a public and official manner. Allow the Stage Manager to address the cast and crew regarding backstage protocol. Display confidence in the Stage Manager and try not to interfere from this point onward.
- Work with your costumes manager to ensure that all costumes are present and in working order. Check that you have access to an iron and sewing tackle.

- Provide tea, coffee, milk, sugar, squash, and biscuits. Pass receipts to the treasurer. The theatre doesn't allow hot food or alcohol backstage.
- At the end of the run, ensure that props and costumes are returned to the right people / places. Leave the dressing rooms clean and tidy – even if they were not left in good condition for you.

Have fun!