

•Wait, how much paperwork did you say it was?

Producing a Musical

•THTR 4460 Senior Project
Jonathan Furlow

What does the Producer do?

- Moneybags
- Contracts
- Budgets
- Contacts
- Emails
 - Emails
 - Emails



The role of the producer is rather simple in writing, but in practice it is a mass of paperwork with the added bonus of being the person in charge of money flow. The producer is in charge of everything beginning with the acquisition of rights, followed by the hiring of the director and stage manager, then the fun of contacting designers, music directors, and musicians begin. The majority of contact between producer and everyone else comes in the form of emails.

Producing Bright Star

- Emails Received and Sent – \approx 300
- Rehearsal Reports Read – 36
- Production Meetings Attended – 7
- Text Messages Sent to the Band and Designers – 80

Emails are the best way to contact people in the working world, the amount of times I look at my email in a day is probably a scary number. So to say that I sent and received only roughly 300 emails is probably an underestimation because we worked on this show for so long. I would have been lost without the paper trail of the emails that sent and received and honestly I'm convinced that nothing would have gotten done if I had forgotten to send emails or make sure that the right people had them. Rehearsal Reports are extremely important to the producer because they tell them where the money is going to be spent next. Say the rehearsal report says "need new lamp for scene 3" the producer then knows that one of the next expenses that will come across their desk will be for a new lamp. It also allows the producer to see who is not at a given rehearsal which allows them to check in with Stage Management to see if this was a known conflict thus allowing the producer to take necessary action. You can't get paid if you don't show up to work folks.

Production Meetings... The bane of my existence simply because I hate sitting in rooms with people and listening to arguments unfold. The production meetings for Bright Star were tame in this aspect thankfully, which allowed me to pay more attention to what was going on in each department and not worrying about defusing a situation before anything negative happened amongst the team.

Text Messages sent may seem like a small number in comparison to everything else, but of those 80 text messages at least 10 were crucial in bringing on people that knew

what they were doing, and how they were going to do it for us at Piedmont. I had a series of text messages with two of our designers that culminated in a phone call that led to them both agreeing to come onboard as designers for the show.

All of these numbers may seem rather small, however I would like to remind you that this show only had a three month process, a production with a longer run, no chorale, and full time workers would have blown these numbers way up.

Building a Budget

- Starting Budget Overall – \$9000
- Breaking the Budget Down
 - Rights to Produce *Bright Star* - \$1,450
 - Personnel – \$4,000
 - Sets - \$3,000
 - Costumes - \$500
 - Props - \$500
 - Total Budget Needed - \$9,450
- ▶ Breaking the Budget Down with FOTA
 - ▶ Rights to Produce *Bright Star* - \$1,450
 - ▶ Personnel – \$6,000
 - ▶ Sets - \$5,450
 - ▶ Costumes - \$1,050
 - ▶ Props - \$500

Padding the Budget with Money from Friends Of The Arts
Total Budget with FOTA funds – \$14,450

So when you begin to budget a show the first place you should look is the actual budget line that you will be pulling from. In this case it was Piedmont Theatre’s Musical Expense budget which had \$9000 at the beginning of the fiscal year. The first expense that came out of that account was for the rights to produce the musical - \$1,450. Leaving us with \$7,550 to build the show and pay outside contractors, probably not feasible. With the help of Kathy, I began to break down the expenses and assign budget numbers to each “department” which you see above. These numbers ultimately changed for the better once we introduced funding from FOTA. What is FOTA, Piedmont has built an amazing connection with the community members in the area and a donation fund has been in existence for years called FOTA which allows the Arts at Piedmont to pull funding for special projects that benefit students, *Bright Star* being one of those projects. The additional funding allowed us to change the budget numbers from their originals to our actual working numbers.



Contracts

- Reading and knowing every little detail of the contract that we signed with Theatrical Rights Worldwide in order to produce the show.
- Poster and Program Information
- Can we make a trailer using recordings of the rehearsal tracks?

Contracts are the bane of my existence; however, I also love getting into the nitty gritty of a contract. I enjoy looking for contradictions, inaccuracies, and fun riders in contracts. For Bright Star, the only things that I truly looked for however were the important credit texts that were required for the programs and posters. In this case there were not as many as some shows, however, there still was a good bit of required things.

As far as the age-old question of can we make a trailer, the answer is no absolutely not. This holds true for most shows, but according to Theatrical Rights Worldwide, there is a very specific section in the contract that says you cannot use music from any source other than that of which is recorded and produced by the company in which the production is taking place, and this recording shall not exceed 30 seconds. Basically, this means you must record the band that is playing your production of Bright Star to have any music for the trailer that is from the score by Edie Brickell and Steve Martin.

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly



What went well?



What were the struggles?

Positive – I loved the opportunity to see what it is like to have a small mountain of paperwork in front of me every single day. One thing about me that gets me made fun of regularly by adults is that I LOVE meetings, if they are productive meetings that is. Overall, I had a very enjoyable time making everything happen with this show, I love to be as busy as possible, and this show ensured that I was never not busy. A majority of the positives of this show have been highlighted in this presentation already, so I won't bore you with those things all over again.

Struggles – The major struggle that I faced in this process was making sure that I shared the information that I was receiving from different sources with the people that needed it. I would receive information from say the lighting designer and completely forget to give the information to Bill or Dante the Master Electrician. This would then cause unnecessary tension amongst the crews and would ultimately fall back on my failure to communicate.



Capstone Binder

- The link below is an online copy of my Capstone Binder, this binder is an exact replica of the binder that I have here in the classroom allowing each of you to see what I did portfolio wise.
- <https://www.livebinders.com/b/3380057>



Questions?



Obligatory Photo of Keke The Spidermonkey for Bill... Come on KE!