

Sample Pages from The Production Publicity Toolkit

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The Production Publicity

TOOLKIT



By Lindsay Price and Lea Marshall

The Production Publicity Toolkit
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e-mail: help@theatrefolk.com
website: www.theatrefolk.com

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Welcome to The Production Publicity Toolkit!

Get butts in seats, create awareness, and keep your sanity!



What do you do to get an audience for your productions? Put up a couple of posters? Get your cast to sell tickets to their friends and family? Nothing because you're swamped with rehearsals, not to mention the day-to-day of running your program?

Publicity may seem like another job that you don't have **time** for, don't have a **budget** to implement, and doesn't bring **results**. Perhaps you've tried and feel the community just isn't interested in coming to a school show.

These three roadblocks (time, budget, results) can seem insurmountable, but the Production Publicity Toolkit is here to help – with Reflections, articles, worksheets, and case studies specific to the school production experience. For our case studies, we asked publicity guru and theatre teacher Lea Marshall to offer her best publicity event ideas.

In addition, you can adapt all these elements into classroom projects with our suggested activities. It's a win-win for you, your production, and your students!

You can overcome the roadblocks of time, budget, and results with a production publicity that is not only a lot of fun for your students to implement but will give you the desired outcome of a well-attended show.

Lindsay Price & Lea Marshall



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Publicity vs. Marketing



What is the difference between publicity and marketing?

These are two words that come up often when it's time to sell your production. Some feel that they are interchangeable. But are they? Don't they both work to get an audience to your show? In fact, they have specific definitions and specific goals to accomplish when promoting a product:

- **Publicity** is an act that promotes and creates awareness and attention for what you're doing. Publicity is creating a story about your production, your actors, the themes, and plot elements. **Why** will people want to come to the show? You can't control how the public will react to your publicity efforts because you can't control how they will connect to your storytelling.
- **Marketing** sells to a specific market with a specific audience through paid advertising. Marketing puts information about the production into the hands of your potential audience. **What** is the show, **when** is it, **how** much is it, **where** is your audience going to buy tickets? Examples of marketing include commercials, paid social media ads, offering a discount for buying at a certain time, creating a website, creating a postcard campaign. You can control how the public reacts to marketing materials because you set the message of the information you're sending out.

You can further boil the difference down into one sentence: *Marketing is something you pay for; publicity is something you don't pay for.*

In the school market, you rarely have a marketing budget. But you have a lot of resources for publicity. You have social media, your students, community outreach.

To that end, in this toolkit we're going to focus on publicity events that you can implement to create awareness and attention for what you're doing.





CLASSROOM APPLICATION

- Have your students infer the definitions and the differences between publicity and marketing. Then have them work in groups to research an upcoming movie. Each group presents their findings to the class.
 - What publicity elements does the movie use?
 - What are the marketing elements?
 - Which are the most effective and why?
 - Which are the least effective and why?
- Have students reflect on following question: *Which is the more effective strategy to publicizing a product: publicity or marketing? Explain your answer using examples.*
- Have students analyze the difference between **print** publicity/marketing materials and **digital** publicity/marketing materials.
 - Which materials are most effective and why?
 - Do you need both print and digital materials when publicizing a show? Why or why not?
 - What is the difference between a print ad and a social media ad?
 - What is the difference between an in-person publicity event and a YouTube video?



Who, What, When, Where, Why?



Before deciding on specific publicity events – which is the HOW of publicizing your show – you need to identify and define some other elements.

WHO is your audience?

Have you ever analyzed your typical audience?

WHAT is the show you're going to perform?

The more you analyze the "what", the easier it will be to create publicity events.

WHEN are you going to perform your show?

School calendars can be a nightmare to negotiate. But, further to that, can you schedule your show to coincide with another event, a curriculum tie-in, or a holiday to guarantee you an audience?

WHERE are you going to perform your show?

What is your theatre space like? Have you ever performed elsewhere? How does your theatre space affect the audience experience at your shows?

WHY are you performing your show?

This is a question that we sometimes forget to ask – we're doing a show because we have to do a show, right? The "why" of a show can help your publicity strategy because your "why" makes your play unique. Any time a production is more than putting on a play, it's going to spark interest.

Space and Audience Reflection



Reflect on “where” your shows take place and “who” typically comes to see your shows.

1. Describe your theatre space(s). Where does your audience atch your shows?
2. Are you happy with your theatre space(s) in terms of audience experience? Why or why not?
3. What would you like to maintain about your theatre space(s) in terms of audience experience?
4. What would you like to change about your theatre space(s) in terms of audience experience?
5. Is it possible to perform in another space? Why or why not?
6. Reflect on the typical audience that comes to your shows. Who are they?



7. What are your typical audience numbers like? Do you sell out your shows? Why or why not?
8. How do you feel about your audience numbers? Happy? Frustrated? Why is that?
9. What do you want to maintain about the audience that comes to your shows?
10. What do you want to change about the audience that comes to your shows?
11. Do you find the audience differs between musicals and straight plays?
12. Of time, budget, and results, what is your biggest roadblock when it comes to getting an audience to come to a play?
13. What's one thing you can do to alleviate this roadblock for your next show?



CLASSROOM APPLICATION

- Have students analyze your theatre space. What are the facts about your space? How many seats do you have? What are the sight lines? What are the acoustics like? What is it like to sit in the audience to watch a show?
- Have students come to a show and analyze the audience. What is the demographic? How does the audience respond? How many people come to the show?
- Based on their findings, have students write a Reflection on the audience experience.
 - Who is the audience and how do they experience shows?
 - What could be changed to improve the audience experience?
 - What could be changed to improve audience attendance?



Scheduling Reflection



Reflect on “when” you schedule your shows and any possible tie-ins.

For example: When our publicity guru, drama teacher Lea Marshall, produced *To Kill A Mockingbird*, every student in grade nine had to read the book. She scheduled the show during their unit and thus created a cross-curricular tie-in. She produced *Antigone* in November during an election year and used that as a tie-in.

Name of show	
When do you want to perform?	
Why did you choose these dates?	
What else is on the school calendar that might compete in terms of audience?	
What is happening outside of school that might compete in terms of audience?	
Are there any cross-curricular tie-ins with your show?	
Are there any holiday tie-ins with your show?	
Are there any event tie-ins with your show?	



CLASSROOM APPLICATION

- Have students take a Shakespeare play or another play they are reading in class and analyze the “when” of a possible production. They should decide on potential production dates based on the following:
 - Your school calendar and events happening at the school that might limit your audience.
 - Your town/city calendar and events happening that might limit your audience.
 - Curriculum tie-ins
 - Holiday tie-ins
 - Event tie-ins



Current Publicity/Marketing Reflection



Reflect on your current publicity/marketing tactics and strategies.

1. What frustrates you about your current publicity/marketing strategy?
2. What excites you about your current publicity/marketing strategy?
3. How do you currently publicize your shows?
4. Which of the following items do you create for each show?
 - a. ☐ Press release
 - b. ☐ Poster
 - c. ☐ Program
 - d. ☐ Ad copy
5. How much time do you spend on publicity/marketing?
6. Do you have your students help with publicity/marketing? Why or why not?
7. Do you have a budget to pay for advertising?
8. Are you happy with your current results? Why or why not?



CLASSROOM APPLICATION

- Have students put together a publicity and marketing strategy for a play – this could be a play that you are studying in class.
- Have students work in groups and then present their findings for assessment.
- Or if you're doing a class production, have students put together all the elements to actually sell the show.
 - Identify the audience and brainstorm how to reach that audience.
 - Create a poster and a flyer. What are the similarities and differences in these two print elements?
 - Write a press release.
 - Write ad copy for morning announcements.
 - Create social media posts. This could be a lesson all on it's own: How does a Facebook post differ from an Instagram post, from a Twitter post, from a YouTube video? Have students identify how the same material has to change to reach the audience of each platform.
 - Create a lobby display – how can you visualize the play to attract an audience?
- If you do a show, have students reflect afterward. *What worked? What didn't work? What could be changed for next time?*



Specific Show Worksheet



Identify the specific elements of your upcoming show.

SHOW DETAILS

What show are you producing?	
Who is the author(s)?	
Is it a full-length or a one-act?	
Is it a musical or a straight play?	
Is this title known to your audience?	
Is the author(s) known to your audience?	
Is the story known to your audience?	
Is the show being studied in other departments?	

STORY AND THEMING

Describe the story of your show in one paragraph.	
Describe the story of your show in one sentence.	
Describe the story of your show in one word.	

Lindsay Price & Lea Marshall



What is the main theme of the show?	
What is the main conflict of the show?	

STAGING AND VISUALS

Describe the vision of your show in one sentence.	
How do you plan to visualize your vision?	
What era is the play set in?	
What staging elements are you using for your show?	
Is there anything unusual or unique about the staging?	
What is the one image that would visualize your show?	



What colour palette visualizes your show?	
What shapes visualize your show?	
What font visualizes your show?	

QUOTES

Write down the five most important quotes in the show:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Brainstorm below possible community connections. Can you connect your theme to a community group? Is there an unusual element to your production that you can find a connection for? Does the show take place in a specific location? Does the main character have a job or work in a specific place that also exists in your community? Is there a specific food featured in the play? Explore the possibilities.



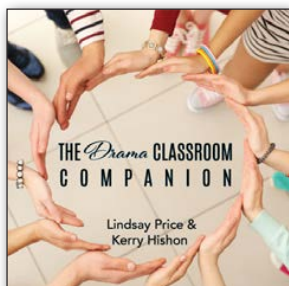
CLASSROOM APPLICATION

- Have students complete the worksheet for a specific show, either in groups or working individually. You can have students submit their worksheet for assessment.
- Then have students create ten publicity events based on the source material they've created for the show.
- Afterward, students should reflect on the process. *What was easy about the activity? What was difficult? What would they change if they repeated the exercise?*



Teaching Resources

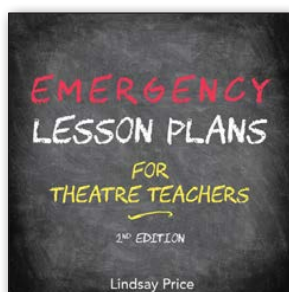
Quality resources to use in your drama classroom



The Drama Classroom Companion

The Drama Classroom Companion is filled with articles and exercises to build the skills needed for theatrical performance as well as real world skills like creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

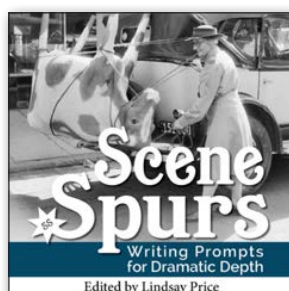
theatrefolk.com/companion



Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers

Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers, 2nd edition gives you the tools and resources you need to confidently leave your class in the hands of a substitute teacher. Customize your lesson plans to suit the specific needs of your class when you can't be there.

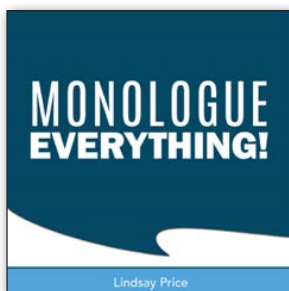
theatrefolk.com/elp



Scene-Spurs: Writing Prompts for Dramatic Depth

Scene Spurs is a collection of photo-based writing prompts developed by playwright Lindsay Price. The set includes 35 different Spurs along with an instruction guide to integrate them into your drama classroom.

theatrefolk.com/spurs



The Monologue Everything Program

Want your students to write their own monologues? Have you tried to incorporate monologue units into the classroom with less-than-satisfactory results?

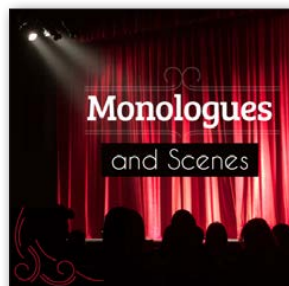
theatrefolk.com/monologue-everything



Practical Technical Theater: The Complete Solution for Technical Theater Classrooms

This series of instructional DVDs is perfect for the teacher who feels more at home with a prompt book than a hammer, and would welcome a new, visually oriented teaching tool for their tech classes and production crews.

theatrefolk.com/ptt

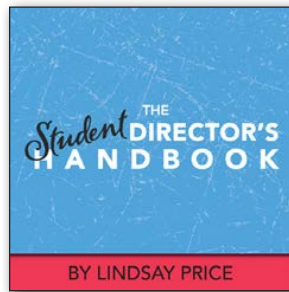


Monologue and Scene Collections

Whether it's for classwork, competitions or auditions, these collections of student-appropriate monologues and scenes can help you find what you're looking for.

All monologues and scenes come from published plays and include running-times, descriptions, character notes and staging suggestions.

theatrefolk.com/collections



The Student Director's Handbook

Help students take their show from first audition to opening night with *The Student Director's Handbook*. This easy-to-use ebook is full of guidelines, tips and templates designed to help students create a vision, circumvent problems and organize rehearsals on their way to a successful production.

theatrefolk.com/student-director



Write Your Own Vignette Play

Your students want to write and perform an original play. You want to include a playwriting unit in your program. But where to start? What if your students have never written a play before? What if you've never written before?

Write Your Own Vignette Play will answer all your questions and more

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Competition Material

Plays, monologues, and scenes for drama competitions including royalty information and exemptions.

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