

The RPI Players present

# Docens Ducentem

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To whom it may concern,

You have chosen or been chosen to become a producer. I once did that. It was ok I guess. It would have been helpful to know what being producer meant before-hand; I had no idea whether or not I did a good job. I still don't. Which is why I am writing this. So that you, Mr. or Ms. Future Producer can do a better job than me. You don't have to listen to this. It's just a starting point. I invite you to add to this when you are done producing, adding what I forgot or what you learned, or to write your own if this really isn't helpful. Good luck with producing.

Sincerely,  
Scorza

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## Section 1: Producing

Being the producer means you are three things. The first is a living, breathing email account. You must handle all the emailing, which can get pretty overwhelming. Second, you are a bag of money. But the bag is empty, because all the money is actually in the Union. Now you just have to keep track of how much money you would have if you were allowed to have money. Third, you are the peace keeper. I know you probably haven't seen this, since you have always worked in a theatre where everyone just loves everyone else all the time and no one ever gossips, but during rare occasions sometimes people don't get along.

Here are some things you should do right away:

- A. Email- Clean it out and get ready for the storm. Make a folder for the play, then make two sub folders- one for emails about money and one for emails about events. As soon as you get an email dump it in there.
- B. Money- Make an excel sheet. I'll attach the one I used to this document so you have a good idea of what one CAN look like. Feel free to change it anyway you want. See Appendix B.
- C. People- Don't do anything that would make people angry right away. If you're a grumpy person, get nicer.

If at any point a problem arises that you don't know how to handle, or with which you don't feel comfortable, please ask for help. This is the single greatest point that is forgotten. The E-Comm knows what they're doing and can help you out of most situations. The first thing I did was schedule a meeting with them get us talking about potential problems and how to avoid them. In addition to this, a producer must regularly attend all E-Comm meetings and General Meetings. The purpose of attending the E-Comm meeting is to let them know how the production is going. Actually use this time to communicate with the E-Comm; don't do what your prod team does to you and just say "Everything is fine."

Conflict within the prod team can be the biggest hindrance to having a successful play. Everybody handles pressure differently, and everybody deals with people differently. But when there is a problem, the producer is generally the one that has to sort it out. I know this sounds like something you'd hear in preschool, but I'm going to tell you anyway. If there are no conflicts, you are an excellent producer and please feel free to skip to the next section.

When there is a fight, I do my best to talk to the two sides, independently at first, and hear both sides of the story. In my experience, most conflicts boil down to one person not liking the other, plain and simple. That dislike causes one to blame the other. I know I can't change people's opinions, so often I just let them vent, remind them that this play production is supposed to be fun, and to try to not let the other person get to them. If the two need to work together on something, find some way to split the work. Clear responsibilities will stop overlapping duties, and thus conflicting opinions on how things should be done. I've found that if the problem is being caused by one side dropping duties or skimping on work, the other side will be more than happy to pick up the slack. Like I said, just make sure that both sides are clear about the division of responsibility after redistribution of duties. Never threaten anyone with being fired. If someone is truly not doing their job, and no one else can do it, then remind them that if school or the outside world is hindering their performance, there is absolutely no shame in stepping down. There is plenty of historical precedent for it and academics and real life come first. It's better to admit to needing help, than not do the job and force the rest of the team to become upset with you.

## Section 2: Crew

In the play I produced, I had to pick some members of the Production Team before the cast. I recommend breaking up the calls for roles into groups, with staggered ending times. This allows people who are not chosen in one round to try again for a different position. In addition, opening calls before and after auditions provides people who don't get cast with a chance to still be involved. I broke it up like this:

Group A: Assistant Producer(s), Stage Manager, Assistant Director (have director handle Assistant Director if s/he wants one)

Group B: Design Roles. These include:

Set Designer, Costume Designer, Lights Designer, Sound Designer

Hair and Makeup Designer, Prop Master, Publicity Artist

Group C: Auditions

Group D: Implementation Roles. These include:

Master Carpenter, Set Dresser, Master Electrician, Publicity Coordinator

Box Officer Manager, House Coordinator

These groups are not hard and fast. I have seen people split up those calls in various ways to varying degrees of success. I like this order for three reasons. First, it gives people who didn't get cast a chance to get involved. Second, it makes all the jobs equally important. Sometimes a producer tacks box and house on at the end like an after-thought, but then no one wants to do it. Lastly, it gives the designers more time to design.

The producer should run his picks by the E-Comm to get a second opinion on personnel, and hear information to which he may not have been privy. I also highly recommend you ASK the director what s/he thinks about your picks before you show the E-Comm. A designer's plans for their department may not match the director's vision. A healthy conversation should happen between you and the director before you announce the picks, not after. Also remember to include your assistant(s) in the decision.

The producer is also technically in charge of picking assistants. I did not act on this. I let prod team members pick their own people. I did ask that they try to include as many new or inexperienced people as possible in order to potentially train the next play's prod team. There are, however, some important things you should mention to your team about assistants. Courtesy of Linda Quartner ~

1. An assistant is there to learn, not just do manual labor for you. Teach them so they can hold the master role later
2. Do not take on too many assistants. The producer should maybe even set a hard maximum of one or two. If you need more labor, you can ask the other people who submitted to help, but don't make them assistants because too many assistants will lessen the experience for everyone.
3. Tell your production team that calls for assistants should be professional. The call needs to include information about the role and what they are looking for in an assistant. In general, calls for role submissions (by both the producer and production team) should include more information about the role itself, the desired qualities in a candidate, and request information from the candidate such as prior experience, why they want the role, etc.

Special note: a lot of producers (myself included) have waited to send out a call for a set dresser because they want to see if one might not be needed. They have ALWAYS been needed, and waiting has ALWAYS caused problems. Don't wait, pick them with everyone else.

### Section 3: Cast

The producer must schedule auditions. Talk to the Director to see what s/he has in mind for the process (cold readings, prepared monologues, etc. For an example of a typical RPI audition, see Appendix C) Make sure

everyone is clear about who is preparing the audition sheets. Also remember to bring a camera along to the auditions to get headshots and a computer to display the pictures you have taken.

Try to schedule auditions on two different days to get the most people able to come. Talk to the director about scheduling individual auditions if someone can't make it. It is up to the directors if s/he wants to see them or not.

When auditions are over, the casting couch (generally you, the assistant producers, the stage manager, and any ASMs/ADs) sit down with the director while s/he chooses the cast. With all those people in the room, opinions can get pretty hot. It is the producer's job to keep the conversation as productive as possible, and to inform the director of any details about a potential actor s/he does not know in as unbiased a way as possible. Getting pizza for this part helps.

Once the cast is chosen, the producer asks the E-Comm for approval, usually by phone. It is helpful to remind the E-Comm several hours before casting that you will need to contact them later so they don't go to sleep. Remember to only include the unbiased members of the E-Comm in this conversation. For example, don't send the preliminary cast list to any E-Comm members who auditioned. If such approval is granted, then you or your assistants must get into contact with the actors to ask if they accept the part. Remember to send an email to everyone who tried out, thanking them for their auditions and time, and encouraging them to stay involved. This is super important.

## Section 4: The Production

After everyone is picked, the cast will go off to rehearse under the guidance of the director and the scheduling of the stage manager. Make sure that you receive that schedule, and that there are no obvious conflicts. Make the schedule available to everyone, so they can attend rehearsals.

Next, you must make sure that the production team is both aware of what they must do and that they are able to do it. If you are unsure what they must do, see the Appendix to this document.

Your main weapon now is the production meeting, which you should hold every week. It's a chance for everyone on the team to come and say what they have done, will do, and the resources they need in order to do it. It's also a chance for the director to meet with everyone and make sure s/he likes how things are going. It took me a while before I found these meetings useful, because everyone just always says "I'm fine." Towards the end of the production I had one of my assistants make a list of everything that needed to get done before the play could open. I then went through this list each meeting to see what could be crossed off. This isn't the best metric since it is self-imposed and people can just give themselves less to do. Try finding one that's more effective and implement it right away.

Invite the current Business Manager to your first production meeting. S/he can tell you and your team all the newest procedures for making purchases.

Make sure your production team knows what is going on in the play. This is most easily accomplished by having the production team attend a non-blocking rehearsal, such as the first or second full run of the show. Enforcing production team attendance at rehearsals was perhaps the most important feedback I received while producing. Having the team see the show eliminates most surprises and provides a better idea of what they must do. Props will see the context for their props, costumes will know what outfits it needs to create, etc. Have your team talk to the director and cast after that rehearsal, just to make sure they got everything,

and everybody shares the same ideas. If this happens, it will literally stop ¾ of all problems. Your team will probably not want to make time to go, but make sure they do. Offer incentives. Like cake.

After hearing what everyone thinks they need to do, construct a budget. Split up the money you were given by the Business Manager and make an Excel sheet which totals how much everyone has spent. Typically set is the largest expense. Even in small productions they can spend around 50% of the budget. Costumes and set dressing are next, both able to spend large sums on fabric and paint. Publicity is a little bit special. They get their own budget which covers playbills, lobby shots, and RPI TV. Publicity does other stuff that's not these three things, so you should also give them part of your budget. I also recommend you budget for Tech Sunday food in the beginning, and not wait until Tech Sunday. You can tell everyone about the budget at your Production meetings.

Other things to do earlier rather than later:

TANYS: If the director wants it, you could ask someone from TANYS to come adjudicate your show and give you professional feedback. The website is this one: <http://www.tanys.org/onlineAdjReq.html> Request adjudication for fun, and put the names of the requested adjudicators in the comments box in the order you want them. Ask the director if he wants anyone in particular. If not, request Paul Nelson, because he is very fair and knows how to help people of our skill level. Please do not request Joel Lord; due to a conflict of interest he will not Adjudicate us.

Publicity: Attached to this document you should find a list of everything Publicity should be doing. Give them that list, and then check in.

## Section 5: Tech Sunday

Tech Sunday is the first full rehearsal, and traditionally happens a week before opening night. Normally, three things happen in quick succession: A cue to cue, a dry run, and a full tech run. The schedule for the Sunday I ran is presented below:

8:00 am, cooks arrive

8:30 am, tech breakfast (lights, sound, stage crew), also Stage Manager gets cues

9:00 am, Cue to Cue

10:00 am, actors and other tech arrive

10:30 am, Tech Talk

11:00am, "Dry" run

2:00 pm, lunch and break

3:00 pm, calls begin for actors

5:00pm. full run

Please be aware that I had a 2 hour 10 minute show with little tech, so if yours is longer, or more complicated, plan more time!

### Cue to Cue

A q2q is a run of the show without actors. All tech departments that are involved in the show go through every time they do something in order. A stage manager will meet with each department beforehand (typically during breakfast) and write all the cues into his/her script. Then you go through each cue to make sure the director likes their tech.

### Tech talks

Tech talks happen after the cue to cue and before the dry run. This is when all the departments explain to everyone else any special dangers to be aware of (not to kick the mics, any special lights hung in weird places, don't eat or drink in the costume shop, etc.) The stage manager should also talk about the fire curtain. In the past some people have over-exaggerated the consequences of breaking the rules with exorbitant fictitious punishments. Tech talks are there to make sure that everyone has a safe and pleasant experience, so make sure the important things are emphasized to an appropriate amount, and everything else is kept in check.

### Dry Run

A run of the show with full tech but no costumes or make up.

### Food

Make sure you have planned for people to eat during the break and in the morning. The traditional recipes and food per person amounts are attached in Appendix E.

Sometimes a producer just sends out a call for cooks. I asked my house manager to take the responsibility since he didn't have much else to do on Tech Sunday. I would like to make this a thing that is permanently part of his/her job.

### Full Run

This is a run with no holds barred. Full costumes, make up, effects, etc. For all intents and purposes this is what the show should look like on opening night.

## Section 6: The Play Week

During the play week your main responsibility is to run power circle. Power circle is the time for announcements, awards, and an opportunity to pump up the cast. If anyone would like to say anything to the whole team, now is the time.

Typically awards are given at Power Circle. First is the Gilded Lily. It is given to someone who has done a really good job doing something for the first time. It can be given to any role. I asked the team to send me an email in secret if they thought someone other than themselves deserved one, and a lot of people put forth their assistant's names. You can also give as many as you want. Smaller productions typically give out only one per night, but bigger productions could give out two per night. Lilies are \$2 each at the Hobby Lobby. Spray paint them gold. If you want to check if this is someone's first time doing something, you should look here: <http://www.players.rpi.edu/About/players.php>

The screw and whoopee is given to a department that has gone above and beyond the call of duty. It starts as a piece of wood with a screw in it, that has been spray painted gold. Every night the department you give it to will add something reflective of their time spent on the production and spray paint it gold. You then give it to the next department you think did a good job and so on. On the last night of the show the department that did the best job will keep the screw and whoopee. There are rules, they are:

1. The entire screw and whoopee must be spray painted gold
2. What you add can never have been alive (except wood)
3. It must fit through the smallest standard door to the stage
4. It must be able to be lifted by the smallest person in the production

Get a piece of scrap wood from the set shop, put a screw in it, and paint it gold.

Lastly you must pick someone to give the starting note for power circle.

Typically power circle starts at 7 pm, or an hour before call time. It also functions as the transition to opening the house, so all tom-foolery must cease. Back stage becomes quiet afterward.

On Saturday, the production goes to a dinner, typically the 76 Diner. (518) 785-3793 Call them the day before and reserve the space. Make sure the number you tell them is reflective of the entire cast size, even though in general only about half end up going. You should be able to get there around 11pm, unless adjudication is happening, in which case, you will get there at 1am.

## Section 7: After the play

The only thing to do after the play is to hold a Post-Mortem. I have seen three types.

The first is completely online. The Producer creates a survey and everyone can tell the producer how each department did. This, however, leads to the sharing of uninformed opinions, because one department might not have the clearest idea of how another did.

The second is a big meeting in which the Director gives comments on the performance of each person/ department getting reviewed. The person then responds, and the producer copies down the conversation, or at least the main points mentioned.

The third is my personal favorite. The producer holds a big meeting in which s/he asks for feedback from each department directly on how they think they did. This tends to be a more positive way to do things. When I held my post mortem I asked each department three questions.

1. What was(were) your biggest obstacle(s)? What was(were) the most challenging thing(s) you did?
2. What do you know now that would have helped you overcome/ avoid that(those) problem(s)?
3. What about the system could change to make the process easier, or what could others have done to aid you in overcoming the obstacle(s)?

In this way the responses very much lend themselves to solutions, or information is easily passed on to the next generation.

## Section 8- Miscellaneous Tips to Tell your Team

Holding a post mortem is useful in the sense that you see what could have been better. In my experience no one actually ever reads post mortems, so I've extracted the juices from mine and boiled them down to these hints.

For Everyone:

1. Have tech go to rehearsals.
2. Have clear expectations (see Appendix A and the online resources specified there)
3. Advertise all fields of work to newcomers at workparty
4. Make sure the purchasing process is clear.
5. Introduce all designers to methods of communication with outside theatres

For Props master:



1. Have a meeting where Set dressing and Props split the specific items for perfect clarity,
2. Tell next Props master you can hold items at goodwill
3. Set a date for rehearsal props

For Sound:

1. Have Standard Operating Procedures (aka checklists) for equipment prep before each show

For Set:

1. Involve assistants in manager/ secretary role, so they can learn more than just carpentry.

For costumes:

1. Solicit donations of stock things like black pants and shirts, to save the budget for other things

For Stage Manager:

1. Make sure SM is calling cues
2. Make sure SM is not only filling out rehearsal reports, but making sure the rest of the tech is aware of what is in rehearsal reports. AKA follow up on what you put in
3. Find out from Tech what is being done when, and communicate that to the actors.

Appendix A: Things that are not your job, but it is your job to make sure they get done:

Stage Manager- scheduling and reserving space for rehearsals

Set Designer- Making plans for the set

Costume Designer- planning and making or acquiring all costumes

Lights Designer- making a light plot, running the board during the show

Sound Designer- making sounds happen during the play

Hair and Makeup Designer- designing the look and putting it on people before each show

Prop Master- finding acquiring making all props and handling them each show

Publicity Artist – drawing the art and marquee

Master Carpenter- Building the set, running workparties

Set Dresser- Finding/acquiring all things to go on a set, and painting it

Master Electrician- hanging the lights and running the show

Publicity Coordinator- See publicity section

Box officer Manager- Running the tickets thing, and collecting reservations

House Coordinator- keeping the ph in show conditions, putting out chairs, see tech Sunday section

For more complete description look here: [http://www.players.rpi.edu/wiki/index.php?title=Production\\_Role\\_Expectations&redirect=no](http://www.players.rpi.edu/wiki/index.php?title=Production_Role_Expectations&redirect=no)



## Appendix C: Typical Auditions

The most common auditions for the RPI players are outlined below. Keep in mind this is by no means the only option, and variations or completely different styles are completely acceptable. This is just one way that works well.

Upon arriving, potential actors should fill out an audition sheet, which details personal information, previous experience, availability, and part preference. In addition, anything unusual that may happen in the production is listed, to make sure that actors know what to expect and are comfortable in the forthcoming situations. The sheets are then collected. An example sheet is shown at the end of this section.

Character descriptions should be provided for each part in the play, in order to assist actors in portraying characters.

Cold readings of 2-5 sides (short sections of dialogue or monologue) taken from the play are then passed out and performed after giving the actors a short time to prepare. Most characters in the play should appear in one or two of the sides, with a decent amount of dialogue, so that the director can get a feeling of how that actor will portray that character. The director will usually take care of choosing the sides. If multiple plays are being auditioned for at once, there should be about an even number of sides from each, so no one play is more important. Sides can be anywhere from one to four minutes in length, but should not be longer. Multiple sets of sides should be passed out at once, so that actors have time to view them while another group is performing. In this way, time is used efficiently.

Actors requesting specific roles should always be given a chance to read for that role.

**Contact Info**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ RIN \_\_\_\_\_

Best Phone Number to reach you by: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Best Email Address to reach you by: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Local address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Info (all questions are optional)**

Preferred Gender \_\_\_\_\_, Genders you are willing to play \_\_\_\_\_

Past Experience and/or attached resume (continue on back if needed).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please rank your preference to participate in each show:

“A Dollar” (\_\_\_) / “The Whole Shebang” (\_\_\_) / “Promageddon” (\_\_\_)

Indicate if there are any roles you DO NOT want to be cast as.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the roles you would like to audition for (NOTE: you may be asked to audition for additional roles).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to change your hair style and/or color as it appears during your audition? Yes No

Are you willing to remove your shirt on stage (NOTE: for Male Characters only). Yes No

**On the BACK of this sheet, please indicate**

1. Your weekly AVAILIBLITY starting in the Spring 2014 Semester
2. Specific DATES you know you will be unavailable (NOTE: you must be available Tech Sunday 2/9 and Show Dates 2/14, 2/15, 2/16 (matinee), 2/21, 2/22)

## Publicity Guide

- Take orders from everyone who wants a T-shirt (\$15) and get money, then place shirt order
  - To get a quote for this, I would suggest just calling them (Screen-it) and giving them the information on the phone, since their online form is broken. Make sure to take notes on the quote breakdown for the Business Manager
  - Best situation is having shirts come in in time for Tech Sunday, plan in advance for this
- Contacting people at local news sources to ask them to include our event on their event calendars
  - Some of these sources allow you to just fill out forms on their websites to put up the events, others require an email
  - Sources: Times Union (has a form), Daily Gazette (has a form), Metroland (need to email, [metroland@metroland.net](mailto:metroland@metroland.net)), Troy Record, News 10, News Channel 13 (has a form), Channel 3
  - Troy Business Improvement District Calendar - <http://www.downtowntroy.org/special-events/events-calendar.html>
  - Visit Troy.com - <http://www.visittroyny.com/eventscalendar/eventsCalendar.aspx>
  - City of Troy Calendar - <http://troyny.gov/Newsroom/addeventmeeting.aspx>
  - Albany.com - <http://www.albany.com/events/>
  - Albany.org - <http://www.albany.org/events/>
- Contacting of RPI sources
  - Poly, S&W, Concerto, Union Calendar, RPI TV (schedule them to come tape the show for one of the days – will need a quote for this as well), WRPI
  - email Cristina Lowery ([lowerc@rpi.edu](mailto:lowerc@rpi.edu)), the Assistant Dean of Residential Commons, saying that we'd like any RAs who are interested to make a group reservation for their residents, and they can get a discount – tickets for \$2.50 each
  - email Cary Dresher ([dreshc@rpi.edu](mailto:dreshc@rpi.edu)), the Off Campus Dean, asking for him to include details about the show in his weekly Off Campus Newsletter
- Order posters and business cards from Alchar
  - Get quote by filling in the information on their form on the website
  - Once posters are in put them all around campus – only allowed to put them on bulletin boards and on the poles/walls in the wind tunnel
  - Get 5 stamped by the union admin office and then you can put them inside the Union
    - Must be done during working hours, 5 is maximum that can be approved for this
  - Put business cards anywhere people may take them
- Paint marquee
- Can place an ad in the Poly using Poly Credits
- Get quote for Playbill printing and print those (also for Alchar, can get quote by filling out form on website)
- Send out a press release to [players-announce@union.rpi.edu](mailto:players-announce@union.rpi.edu)
- Create facebook event - do it through Players facebook page so can invite entire group automatically
- Get S&W and the Poly to send someone to tech Sunday to review the show
- Additional publicity things – shirt days, tabling, dorm storming, etc

In addition there is also this:

[http://www.players.rpi.edu/wiki/index.php?title=Publicity\\_Manual#Local\\_Contacts](http://www.players.rpi.edu/wiki/index.php?title=Publicity_Manual#Local_Contacts)

## Appendix E: Recipes

### TECH SUNDAY FOOD

#### Recipe: ArchieChicken

Boneless Chicken Breasts(~1 per person)

Bread Crumbs

Olive Oil

Butter

Seasoning(a mix of garlic powder, onion powder, and lemon-pepper salt in a 1:1:1 ratio... though that is very rough and it realistically is just whatever seems good)

Aluminum foil

Prep:

1) Heat oven to 375

Steps:

1) Cut chicken breasts in half length-wise

2) Rinse breast halves in water

3) Roll breast halves in bread crumbs

4) In frying pan, heat oil and 1/2 Tsp of butter

5) Fry breast halves 2min/side -> you should be able to do several at a time in the same pan

6) Dust bottom of baking pan with bread crumbs(to collect excess oil)

7) Place fried breast halves in baking pan

8) Cover baking pan with aluminum foil

9) Bake ~14min(make sure you check to see that the breasts have cooked through before you call them done, if they aren't done after 14min, recover and bake for another 14min)

10) Serve with your choice of side dish

Cost:

Chicken: \$12 for 8-9 breasts

Oil: \$13 for a gallon jug(you need far less than this, covering the bottom of a pan should last several rounds of frying)

Bread crumbs: \$10 for two pack of crumbs(not sure the size, but the ones in yellow house)

Butter: \$4 for 4 sticks(I think)

Seasonings: No idea, but you may be able to borrow some from yellow house, ask them

Aluminum Foil: Again, not sure, but you only need about 1.5-2 feet

In the end it comes to about \$2/person depending on what you have on hand and how many people you are serving. I would also recommend some sort of vegetarian side dish, pasta is easy and is generally \$1/lb and you should be able to serve 3-4 people with a lb.

David Archibald  
RPI EE/CSE 2012