

## Writer's guide to developmental readings

First of all, congratulations on getting to this point in the development of your play! We're looking forward to your upcoming developmental reading, and we wanted to give you some information about how the evening will go, what your responsibilities are as a selected playwright and how to get the most out of this opportunity. If you have any questions about the following responsibilities and guidelines for developmental reading playwrights, email your producing producer at [developmentalreadings@playwrightcentersf.org](mailto:developmentalreadings@playwrightcentersf.org).

### What We Do For You

We're here to make your reading as successful and useful to you as possible.

PCSF is responsible for the following:

- We cast your play.
- We pay the cast (up to the first 6 actors).
- We do some publicizing for your reading on our website and in our newsletter.
- We manage the event.
- We facilitate the evening including the post-performance feedback session.

### Playwright Responsibilities

PCSF also hopes that you will put some time and energy into making the most out of this staged reading opportunity. The following are **your responsibilities** as a selected playwright. **Failure to follow these guidelines** may prevent you from having another reading produced by PCSF in the future.

*Playwrights must be able to attend their staged reading in order to see their play and listen to the feedback session afterwards.*

- Because this developmental reading is being produced by PCSF to help you in the development of your play, it is imperative that you are able to attend.
- Be sure to let your producing producer know when developmental reading dates are assigned for the season if you are **not** able to attend any of the available dates.

*Be respectful and appreciative to your producer and the actors.*

- Keep in mind that producers and actors are not paid much for the time and effort put into your staged reading, so please make every effort to be respectful and appreciative to your producer and cast.

*Attend the orientation, held prior to the auditions each season.*

- Your producing producer will organize general auditions for all the producers and playwrights chosen for any PCSF readings this season. A playwright/producer orientation will happen on the same day. It is important that you are able to attend to get more information about how your reading will be produced, and to give any casting suggestions to your producer.
- It is ultimately the producer's responsibility to cast your play, but your feedback is appreciated.

- You are welcome to stay for the auditions, but it is not required for the developmental reading playwrights.

*Playwrights are responsible for providing the cast with copies of your script.*

- Mail electronic copies of the final version to the producer no later than 1½ weeks prior to the night of the reading. The producer will distribute the electronic copies. Do not make rewrites after this point.
- Provide printed copies of the script to the cast on the night of the reading. These must be the same as the electronic scripts you provided to the producer.

*There is no rehearsal for a developmental reading.*

- Actors will receive the script electronically at least one week in advance of the reading and will have the chance to read through the script and make notes or work with it several times before the reading.
- If you would like to discuss general things with the actors, you will have the opportunity in the half-hour before the reading. Only give notes if they are necessary and not in the script or if the actor has a specific question.

*Playwrights must pay for any actors beyond PCSF's cast limit of six actors.*

- The Playwright's Center is budgeted to pay for only up to six actors per developmental reading. We encourage double casting whenever possible.
- Actors are paid \$10 per reading.
- It is the playwright's responsibility to pay for any additional actors cast in your reading. Be sure to communicate with your producer before casting begins if you are willing to pay for additional casting or not.
- Playwrights must pay PCSF directly for any additional actors cast. You pay in cash or a check made out to PCSF. This payment is to be given to the producing producer on or before the night of your reading. PCSF will have individual checks cut for each actor to be given out the night of the reading.

*Playwrights are expected to work to publicize their own reading.*

- While PCSF does some printed publicity for the staged reading series and on our website and through our e-newsletter, it is the playwright's responsibility to publicize their own staged reading.
- PCSF will be producing postcards for the staged reading series which you may also distribute.
- Tell your friends, coworkers, theatre professionals, etc. Send out emails, evites, and make phone calls! The more people at your reading, the higher the energy level and excitement, and the more feedback you'll receive! Attendance is free for everyone.
- Refer to the [PCSF Publicity Guidelines](#) for further information on how to promote your reading.

***Playwrights must create and print the program for their staged reading.***

- Download the [PCSF Developmental Reading Program Template](#), and fill in the appropriate information for your staged reading (title, cast, producer, venue, dates, etc).
- There is a section for you to personally thank anyone who helped with your play and/or reading.
- You may also replace the questions that PCSF provides for audience feedback with questions specific to your play. Make these the same as the questions you give your feedback session facilitator (see Feedback Session below).
- Add your email address for audience members to email further feedback to.
- In the interest of consistency, we ask that you not deviate from the program template that PCSF provides. You may add artwork to the program, but your producer must review and approve before printing.
- Print double sided copies and fold enough programs to give out at the reading. About fifty programs is usually plenty. Give the programs to the producing producer when you arrive on the night of your reading as they will serve as both tickets and programs for the event.

***Playwrights are requested to bring refreshments to their reading.***

- It is a good idea to provide some light refreshments for the developmental reading. It relaxes and welcomes your audience.
- Refreshments can be as simple as cheese and crackers or a vegetable tray or cookies or samosas. Include some simple beverage choices, wine and sparkling water for example. If you want to get creative, you can tie the refreshments to a theme in your play.
- If you are unable to provide refreshments or need help, please let your producer know early enough that other arrangements can be made.

**The Limits**

- Playwrights are not allowed to direct their own work. Developmental readings are self-directed by the individual actors. It's important to let go and let your play take its first few tottering steps on its own.
- Minor edits or rewrites are allowed leading up to the week and a half prior to the reading, but playwrights are expected to avoid major rewrites and must not add characters (who won't have been cast). You are expected to communicate about and discuss any potential rewrites with your producer.

**The Feedback Session**

- A PCSF board member or volunteer will introduce your reading and lead an audience feedback session with your cast and producer immediately following the performance.
- A valuable part of the reading, the session allows you to receive comments and insights from the audience and gives you a chance to have some questions answered about your script.

- You will take the stage with your facilitator following the curtain call, but we ask that during the feedback session you remain a silent observer in order to fully digest all the comments you will receive. We ask that you not explain or defend your play, but listen to the responses and take notes. You would best view questions asked as something to consider and address during your rewrites.
- A facilitator will be assigned to your reading and contact you a couple of weeks prior for your feedback questions that are specific to your play.
- Remember to think about what you hope to learn about your play from the reading as you write your questions.
- Avoid questions that elicit a yes or no response, or depend on people's impressions or feelings. These will be limited answers that add very little value. For example, this question "Did you like the way the play ended?" would better be replaced with something like "What did you take away from the ending of the play?" or "What, if anything, was unresolved that you felt needed to be resolved?"
- These questions or any additional ones may also be added to your program template for audience consideration during the reading.
- The facilitator will ask for your closing statement at the end of the feedback session where you may thank your audience for attending and briefly respond to anything that came up during the session.

### **The Payoff**

Probably the greatest gift a developmental reading offers a playwright is the opportunity to discover what works and what doesn't. It can answer questions you may have about your play and present new ones, as well. It's a way to get a fresh perspective on your work and get creatively re-energized. A developmental reading is intended to launch you into your next re-write; it is not, therefore, for those who feel that the play is already "done" or "perfect." PCSF hopes that this developmental reading opportunity will help you take your play to the next level.

Updated 10/2008