

writer's guide to sheherezade

Sheherezade is the PCSF's annual short play festival and benefit production. It is our opportunity to have some fun, strut our stuff, and garner revenue for operating expenses for our various programs throughout the year.

About the Sheherezade Process

Unlike the reading season, Sheherezade is a fully produced festival and follows a more traditional format and process for production. We still want our playwrights to benefit and learn from the process, but it is less centered on developing a specific play and more focused on the successful production of a collection of plays and raising exposure and funds for PCSF. I.e. there are no facilitated feedback sessions and we don't have facilitators working with the playwright to determine what they are trying to get out of the evening (we hope exposure, pride, and some fun!).

1. Each year we announce the theme and deadline for submissions sometime in the early to mid-summer. While the theme has been "A Year in Review" for several years, we reserve the right to change that theme for any given production, so please make sure to read announcements and the submission guidelines for each year before submitting!
2. Directors and the production team are assembled and the venue is booked during the summer.
3. Once the submission deadline is reached the selection committee reads the submitted plays and narrows the selections down to a specific number of plays that meet the selection criteria for that year's theme and production needs. The number of plays the committee recommends will vary depending on the theme and production needs, but is set by the producer and is a couple of plays more than what will be finally selected. In other words if the production will be eight plays, the literary committee may be asked to narrow the selection down to ten plays from all plays submitted.
4. The production team, including, but not limited to the producer and directors, then make the final selection for the production. All playwrights are notified of the outcome after this time and the final selections are announced on the website and in the newsletter.
5. The production schedule will then follow a typical production timeline and process: planning, publicity, auditions and casting, rehearsal, tech, dress, performance, etc.
6. Once the plays are selected the producer hosts a (closed attendance) development reading for the playwrights and production team. Unless there is an unavoidable scheduling conflict, playwright attendance is considered mandatory.
7. Once the show has been cast the producer hosts another read-through of the plays – about a week before rehearsals begin. Playwrights are strongly encouraged to attend the read-through. Casting for specific roles may or may not be adjusted after the read-through, especially if we are using an ensemble cast that year. Play order will be determined after rehearsals begin.

8. The playwrights will be invited by the director to attend rehearsals at the director's discretion, but we encourage directors to include the playwright in rehearsals by the second week of rehearsals and no later than the week before tech week. We require the director to discuss the play and any possible production adjustments necessary with the playwright as early in the process as possible – i.e., during casting, at or after the read-through, etc. *And we encourage the playwrights to cooperate with rewriting suggestions/requests -- remember, it's a first-time production of your brand new work; the director and cast are discovering things about your play in the theatre that you probably haven't considered.*

The following sections outline some basic information about rehearsals, rewrites, publicity, and working with the directors, cast, and producers.

Development Reading

There will be a minimum of one development reading (closed attendance) shortly after the plays are selected. This is a perfect opportunity for the playwrights to meet the production team and directors. It is also a great time to hear the piece read in context with the rest of the plays and discuss any expectations with the director. **Expect requests for rewrites to come out of this reading.** The producer will also layout the production schedule and answers any questions the playwrights may have about the show or expectations. For these reasons all playwrights need to attend this session. Unless there are unavoidable scheduling conflicts, consider attendance mandatory.

The Read Through

There will be a read through roughly before rehearsals begin with the ensemble cast. In addition to allowing the designers and production team an opportunity to “visualize” the show, the directors also use this to determine if any casting changes are needed (i.e. we “soft cast” the plays from the ensemble and sometimes re-arrange some of that casting within the ensemble). In the past the playwrights have found this very helpful in identifying any last minute rewrites, and get a chance to meet the designers and actors. Again, unless there are unavoidable scheduling conflicts, we really consider this a mandatory event.

Rewrites and Edits

A final version of the play will be required by the week prior to the read-through. The exact date will be published with the production time-line after plays have been selected.

The director will consult with the playwright on overall interpretation and discuss any production driven changes that might be necessary (i.e. due to timing, casting, space, etc.).

Props and Costumes

Sheherezade is a benefit production with a very small budget. We ask the playwrights to help us with obtaining any special or out of the ordinary costume pieces and with props. In

other words, if you write it in and it's not something we can reasonably expect the actors or our production team to have in their closets, you need to help us provide it.

Casting

Sheherezade is generally an ensemble cast. Auditions will be held and an ensemble between 8-10 actors is selected, before individual plays are cast. We are committed to having a diverse cast. We ask the playwrights to provide any recommendations, if they have any, but casting is at the sole discretion of the directors and production team.

Rehearsals

In general we allow the directors to determine when they are ready to have the playwrights attend the rehearsals. Typically this will be after the first week of rehearsals begin and no later than the week prior to tech week.

Comps

It is the general policy not to provide comp tickets, because the show is a benefit production. Depending on the year and the situation the producer may decide to offer some free or half-price tickets to drive sales or fill the house or for special guests (i.e. artistic directors, large contributors, etc.). If the playwright cannot afford to attend the show, they should discuss the situation with the producer.

Sheherezade frequently sells out! Don't assume that there will be seats available; buy tickets early.

Publicity

PCSF and Wily West Productions will publicize the show and do everything in our power to get an audience. We hope that the playwrights will take an active interest in spreading the word as well. PCSF will provide postcards and other materials that can be used to help. Advertising only gets a small percentage of people in the door, it's almost all word of mouth. The more people spreading the word, the more people see your play, and the more money PCSF is able to raise! You will be prodded by the production team to remind you to post, email, and otherwise be an active part of the publicity plan.