



## **PCSF Playwright's Guidelines for Staged Readings**

First of all, congratulations on getting to this point in the development of your play! We're looking forward to your upcoming staged 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 staged reading playwrights, email your producing director, Sara Staley [sara@playwrightcentersf.org](mailto:sara@playwrightcentersf.org).

### **What We Do For You**

We're here to make your reading go as smoothly as possible and to be as successful and useful to you as we can.

### **PCSF is responsible for the following:**

- We find a director and we cast your play.
- We pay the director and the cast.
- We do some publicizing for your reading on our website and in our newsletter.
- We manage the event, and provide some complimentary libations/refreshments.
- 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 staged 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 director know when staged reading dates are assigned for the season if you are NOT able to attend any of the available dates.

### **Once you have been assigned a director for your staged reading, here are some initial discussion points for you to talk about in person or on the phone:**

- Discuss where you are in the process of developing your play, and what you hope to get out of the reading.



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- Talk about any vision you may have for staging the reading, which can be anywhere from a music-stand reading to a fully-blocked performance. Keep in mind that while you may have input into the staging of the reading, it is the director's job to stage it, and his or her creative integrity should be respected.
- Playwrights are encouraged to attend and observe rehearsals for their staged reading. You should also have a brief discussion with your director about how you two will work together in rehearsal.

## **Be respectful and appreciative to your director and the actors.**

- Keep in mind that directors 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 director and cast.

## **Attend the general auditions and staged reading orientation with your director.**

- Your producing director will organize general auditions for all the directors and playwrights chosen for any PCSF readings this season. A playwright/director 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 director.
- It is ultimately the director's responsibility to cast your play, but your feedback is appreciated.

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

- Playwrights should provide printed copies of their scripts to the director and cast on or before the first rehearsal.

## **Playwrights are responsible for paying for rehearsal space.**

- Talk with your director about how many hours he or she anticipates rehearsing your staged reading, (see rehearsal limits below) and discuss how much you can afford and/or would prefer to pay per hour for space rental before a rehearsal schedule is determined.
- \$15-25/hour are typical rates for rehearsal venues around the city.
- If you would like to have receipts for rented time from venues where your director rehearses, then you should communicate this to him or her prior to the space being booked. PCSF does not require that director's provide receipts.
- It is the director's responsibility to schedule and find the rehearsal space, but if he or she has trouble securing a space, then it is fine if the playwright assists. Your director may have a space already in mind before rehearsals begin. Either



of you may contact the producing director for suggestions if you're having trouble finding rehearsal space.

- Reimburse your director for any rehearsal time on or before the night of your reading whenever possible.

### **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 staged reading. We encourage double casting whenever possible.
- Actors are paid \$15 per reading.
- It is the playwright's responsibility to pay for any additional actors cast in your reading. Be sure to communicate with your director before casting begins if you are willing to pay for additional casting or not.
- Playwrights should pay PCSF directly for any additional actors cast. You pay in cash or a check made out to PCSF. This payment should be given to the producing director on or before the night of your reading. PCSF will have individual checks cut for each actor and the director to be given out the night of the reading.

### **Playwrights should 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!
- Refer to the [PCSF Publicity Guidelines](#) for further information on how to promote your reading.

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

- Download the [PCSF Staged Reading Program Template](#), and fill in the appropriate information for your staged reading (title, cast, director, 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. These should be similar for the same as the questions you give your feedback session facilitator (see Feedback Session).
- Add your email address for audience members to email further feedback to.



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- In the interest of consistency, we ask that you not deviate from the program template that PCSF provides.
- 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 director when you arrive on the night of your reading as they will serve as both tickets and programs for the event.

### Limits

- PCSF requires no more than 12 hours of rehearsal for a staged reading, and no less than 6.
- A good staged reading, capable of bringing your language and vision to the stage, needs no more than 12 hours. Once you go past this limit, you start adding production values and in-depth character work that really aren't necessary for what this is - a simple script-in-hand reading, where emphasis is on the written word, not so much on the staging, and definitely not in costumes, props, or lights which we don't use in staged readings.
- Actors should take direction only from the director. You are free to take notes during the rehearsal process and share them with the director privately during breaks or after rehearsal.
- Playwrights are not allowed to direct their own work. It's important to let go and let your play take its first few tottering steps on its own. Also, a director can often see things in your script that you're likely to miss.
- Minor edits or rewrites are allowed leading up to or during the rehearsal process, but playwrights should avoid adding any major characters or scenes to their plays before the reading as this can throw a wrench into rehearsals. Any potential rewrites should first be communicated to and discussed with your director.

### Feedback Session

- A PCSF board member will introduce your reading and lead an audience feedback session with your cast and director 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.
- 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.



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- These questions and/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.

## **Payoff**

Probably the greatest gift a staged 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 staged 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." You may also use your staged reading as an opportunity to showcase your play for any local theater companies and/or directors who may be interested in producing your work. PCSF hopes that this staged reading opportunity will help you take your play to the next level. Be sure to put your Playwright's Center of San Francisco staged reading on your resume and bio!

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