

Playwrights' Center of San Francisco

Guidelines For Your Staged Reading

First of all, congratulations on getting to this point in the development of your play! We're looking forward to your upcoming reading, and we wanted to let you know what your staged reading can offer and how to get the most out of it.

What We Do For You

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

We're responsible for the following:

- We find a director and we cast your play.
- We pay the director and the cast.
- We publicize your reading on our website and in our newsletter.
- We manage the event.
- We run the post-performance feedback session.

The Payoff

Probably the greatest gift a staged reading offers 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."

Your Responsibilities

Meet with the director, either on the phone or in person. Some discussion points:

- **Pay for the rehearsal space.** Your director may have a space already in mind. Either of you may contact the Producing Director if you're having trouble finding a space. The Off-Market Theatre has plenty of rehearsal space available at only \$15 an hour.
- **Pay for any actors beyond PCSF's cast limit of six actors.** The Playwrights' Center simply can't afford to pay 12 actors per reading. We encourage double-casting wherever possible. Actors are paid \$15 per reading.
- **Provide the director and the cast with copies of your script.**
- **Publicize your reading.** Tell your friends, send out emails, make phone calls! The more people at your reading, the higher the energy level and

excitement, and the more feedback you'll receive! Evites are often an effective method of filling the seats. Keep this in mind: ticket sales are solely responsible for paying off the cost of your reading.

- **Create the program.** We will provide you with a template in Microsoft Word, and in the interest of consistency, we ask that you contact us if you wish to deviate from the template.
- **Where you are in the process of developing the play, and what you need or want out of the reading.**
- **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.
- **How you two will work together in rehearsal.** We strongly recommend that the actors take direction only from the director, while you are free to take notes during the rehearsal process and share them with the director during breaks.
- **Be respectful and appreciative to the director and the actors.**
- **Put your Playwright Center of San Francisco staged reading on your resume and bio!**

The Limits

We allow 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 a simple reading, where emphasis is on the written word.

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. In addition, a director can see things in your script that you're likely to miss, and conversely, if a director doesn't see something that you intended to be there, you need to do some re-writing. (This process is sometimes known as "director-proofing" or "actor-proofing" your script – making your creative intentions unmistakable.)

The Feedback Session

Immediately following your reading, a board member leads an audience feedback session. A valuable part of the reading, the session allows you to receive comments and insights from the audience and gives you a chance to ask questions. The moderator endeavors to keep the feedback positive and relevant. We ask that you not explain or defend your play, but listen to the responses and take notes. If you disagree with someone's comment, or feel that it's not useful or relevant, just nod and say, "Thank you. I understand." This usually satisfies the audience member and allows the moderator to move on.