

EBOOK

# The Theatre Postmortem Demystified



# Table of Contents

<b>Looking Back to Get Ahead.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Company Meeting.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Final Production Meeting .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Positioning Your Program for Future (Or Continued) Support .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Final Thanks .....</b>	<b>8</b>





# Looking Back to Get Ahead

After a show closes, it's important for everyone involved—from cast and crew all the way up to your sponsors and producers—to be able to reflect on the experience. Not only does this allow for deeper learning opportunities, it also provides valuable insights into what worked, what could have been more successful, and how you might choose to approach your next season or production.

In order to get the most value out of your postmortem analysis, you'll want to address different topics in different ways, with different stakeholders.

Your post-production goals for wrapping up the educational experience with the cast, for example, will be quite different from what you hope to achieve in the way of internal reflection and housekeeping with your Production Team or leveraging your successes with administrators to position your program for future support.

We've broken the entire process down for you to create an easy-to-follow roadmap. Follow the processes in the pages ahead and you'll be amazed at how much useful information you can glean...and how easy it is to create a growth mindset for your cast, your colleagues, your sponsors and producers, and even yourself!

# The Company Meeting

Schedule a final meeting with the entire Company to reflect on the production you've just closed. This is a time for congratulations and acknowledgment of all the hard work that paid off. It's also a great opportunity to identify and frame learning experiences in a constructive way that teaches your cast and crew to embrace the successes and failures inherent in any artistic endeavor.

The key is for the veterans involved in the production to model a growth mindset by introducing a process of combined evaluation and celebration.

By leading your cast and crew through the following exercises, you enable them to celebrate their successes while making note of areas in which they can improve and looking to the future with concrete goals and confidence.

## Best Practices

**Be sure to incorporate:**

### SELF-EVALUATION

- Invite the cast and other production team members to self-reflect on topics including:
  - Did we meet our creative objectives?
  - What are we particularly proud of?
  - What might we have done differently to achieve our goals?

### COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Read any congratulatory communications or reviews aloud, then ask individuals to share audience feedback that they may have received directly.

### CREATE A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMPLETION

Put the show to bed, so to speak, with positive feelings for the adventure you've shared.

# The Final Production Meeting

Gather your full production team one last time for a deeper analysis of how the production went. Be sure to allow for complete candor in your discussion of any problems that may have arisen. This honesty will only benefit your organization in the long run and the important processes to consider for the future.

Be sure to discuss these goals as a team, so you can evaluate whether the production met the expectations and objectives that were set beforehand. If the production did not meet certain goals, the team can identify the reasons and discuss ways to improve in the future. On the other hand, if the production exceeded expectations in some areas, the team can celebrate the successes and consider ways to build on them in future productions.

Let's take a look at a few key categories you should be opening up for your discussion.

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

As you reflect on your most recent production, it is important to evaluate how it was received by the community. The success of a production is not only measured by its artistic quality, but also by how well it connects with its audience and achieves its intended impact. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how your production was received, you should look to specific evidence, such as:

- Lobby talk, applause, immediate response during production
- Published reviews from school/local media
- Feedback from other community organizations and key stakeholders
- Attendance and involvement (ticket sales)
- Merchandise sales and other donations
- Offers for future partnerships (program advertising, for example)
- Any other internal goals you had set for the production.



**PRO TIP** Speaking of your organizational goals, we have the tools to get you exactly where you want to be. On The Stage is an all-in-one platform for ticketing, promotion, audience engagement, box office management, and online production and streaming. With a user-friendly interface and effortless reporting function, managing your production has never been easier. Say goodbye to the hassle of juggling multiple tools and hello to more time for what truly matters - delivering an unforgettable show that leaves your audience wanting more!

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

One of the most important aspects of running a successful production is managing your finances effectively. By preparing your financial reports ahead of time, you can facilitate a productive and nuanced discussion of your budget and expenditures. This will allow you to identify areas where you may be able to save, splurge, or make profits next season! Here are some questions to think about:

### **Did you stay within your budget?**

- Where did you overspend? Why, and was it worth it?
- Where did you spend it? Why? What impact might you have gained if you had invested more in this area?

### **What does your data tell you about:**

- Ticket sales?
- Merchandise sales?
- Marketing costs and return on investment?
- Did you reach as wide an audience as you might have?  
If not, where could you have invested more time, energy, or money?

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

No matter what the project is, there's always room to learn and grow as theatremakers. It's important to think about what could have been done differently to achieve your artistic and financial goals. This involves taking a critical look at how you managed your time during pre-production, rehearsals, and production meetings. Additionally, it may be worthwhile to examine how you delegated tasks among your team members and if there were opportunities to improve the final product by re-assigning responsibilities. Marketing, promotion, and sales, including ticketing and merchandise, are also critical areas to assess, as there may be room for improvement in these areas. Lastly, it's important to consider any accessibility issues that may have arisen and how you could have addressed them more effectively. By examining these factors, you can identify areas for improvement and set yourself up for greater success in future productions.

# Positioning Your Program for Continued and Future Support

Schedule a final meeting with the head of your organization- be that the principal, the CEO, the founder, etc.- especially if they've partnered with you to support a show with sensitive themes or approved increased expenditures. The more administrative decision makers know about the valuable work you do and the excellent educational outcomes you achieve, the likelier they'll be to support your program in the future.

The meeting itself should be part housekeeping and part self-promotion. Think of this as your chance to use everything you've learned and accomplished during this most recent production—and how those things speak to the bigger picture—to position your entire department for greater visibility, more creative latitude, or even a better budget going forward. Be sure to include your achievements and areas of accomplishments and don't forget to review and include all relevant data to provide greater insights.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND AREAS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

It is imperative to show how the vision and hard work of you and your team have paid off this season. This can be a source of pride and motivation for the person you're speaking with (be that who it may be) and can help them feel really connected to the ongoing work of the organization. On top of that, highlighting achievements can help build a case for continued support- so don't be too humble! You might want to touch on:

- Highlights of audience and/or community response, both anecdotal and published or hard copy;
- Organizational goals (like we spoke about earlier) that were met or exceeded
- Feedback from any stakeholders with whom you've partnered;
- Overall reflection on the production from the company.

## RELEVANT DATA (WITH CONTEXT)

### Present This Data

#### Budget: Original versus Final

#### Revenue - ticket sales, merchandise sales, donations

#### Audience Engagement

### In This Context

... with reflections from the Production team about how certain expenditures affected the final outcome.

... as a production-specific breakdown, as well as in terms of season-over-season or year-over-year growth. Be sure to point to the whys wherever possible, not just the numbers themselves. On The Stage makes this easy with built-in reports to give you a nuanced look at your data from many different angles.

... with quantitative and qualitative examples to show the impact your production had on your community. Be sure to consider not just your attendance numbers for the actual performance(s), but also participation in supplementary programming (such as talkbacks, round table discussions, or co-curricular events), relationships that were established (such as opportunities for partnership with outside organizations or potential donors to be cultivated), and other public response to your production that may have increased the visibility of your program.



**If you're a teacher, you might want to consider the educational impact**

... highlighting specific curricular and mission alignments, in addition to data about student participation. Be sure to emphasize any co-curricular partnerships with other teachers in other departments and show evidence of the learning opportunities you created, as well as student response and/or engagement.

**If you're a community theatre organization, you might want to consider the community impact**

... emphasizing how the production brought the community together and highlighting any partnerships with local organizations or businesses. You can also showcase how the production provided opportunities for community members to participate, whether through acting, volunteering, or attending performances. Be sure to include any positive feedback from audience members or community leaders, and demonstrate how the production contributed to the overall cultural vibrancy of the community!





# Final Thanks

At the end of it all, it's most important to express your appreciation for everyone who played a role in your production's success. Show your gratitude to your production leaders, crew members, technical teams, volunteers, donors, administrators, custodians, sponsors, and anyone else who contributed significantly to the production. You don't have to write a lengthy letter; even a few thoughtful words can make a significant impact! But by taking the time to craft a personalized message for each recipient that reflects their specific contributions, you can foster positive, long-lasting relationships.

# On The Stage

At On The Stage (OTS), we are passionate about providing performing artists with the resources they need to bring their visions to life. We believe that everyone, no matter the size of the breadth of their organization, deserves access to the cutting edge of theatre technology so that their programs can continue to thrive and flourish.

We Believe:

- Creativity thrives when artists, educators and organizations have the resources they need.
- Art is most successful in an environment of sustainable resources and engaged, authentic relationship with its audience.
- Everyone deserves access to the tools and support they need to bring their visions into the world.

And that's why we offer fully integrated, Broadway-level business and promotional tools to help theatermakers achieve their creative, marketing, and financial goals. With our comprehensive tools, you can focus on what you do best - creating powerful and engaging productions that impact your community.



## An All-in-One Technology Platform



A user-friendly online **TICKETING** system that saves time, increases accuracy and detail of reporting, and streamlines processes for producers, patrons, box office workers, and volunteers. Our ticketing system can be fully integrated into your existing site, or you can easily build an interactive site with our platform!



A public-facing **PROMOTION** portal, fully branded with client/production content and designed to function as a hub for all online marketing and grassroots promotional efforts.



Adaptable **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT** features, such as social linking, a customized and hassle-free merchandise shop, multimedia uploads directly to web pages, season subscriptions, donation processing, and list collection for future promotions.



An end-to-end **STREAMING PLATFORM** to let you produce, promote, ticket, and stream your show to a remote audience, whether you're recording everything virtually or staging a traditional production for at-home ticket holders.



Best-in-class **SUPPORT** from dedicated Product Specialists, from the first day with ON THE STAGE through final reporting and planning for your next production.

## In The Business of Technology, In Service to the Arts

At On The Stage, we strive to make cutting-edge theatre technology accessible to performing arts organizations of all sizes. Built by performing artists for performing artists, we are dedicated to the mission of making your life easier, with a user-friendly platform designed to be supportive to all of your production needs, on and off the stage.

With free-to-use features such as ticketing, box office, marketing, fundraising, and reporting tools, your organization can bring in larger audiences, more revenue, greater donations, and so much more. Book a personalized demo with our team today to explore how we can be your partners in success, this season and beyond.

**BOOK A DEMO TODAY**