



# WUDS PRODUCER'S GUIDE

## 2008

The aim of this guide is to serve as an introduction to anyone producing a WUDS studio show. It is designed specifically with the Warwick Arts Centre in mind, however much of what is said is applicable to any other project. We're not setting down exact rules about how to do things, or promising to answer every question you may have, we're simply giving you some guidelines as to how things work.

I apologise if any of this sounds patronising or obvious. I have tried to cover most aspects of the humungous role of the producer. However, if you don't like it, stop reading. Better still, read it, then set fire to it or roll it up and use as an environmentally friendly fly swat.

The WUDS exec, specifically me as Production Manager, are also more than happy to help you with any questions or queries you may have regarding the production. Do not hesitate to get in touch at any point with queries, problems or just for a chat. There is a list of contact details supplied at the end of this guide.

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*WUDS Production and Tech Manager*

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## What is the role of the producer?

*That* is a really good question (if I may say so myself). It is a question that has no definite answer; a producer's role changes from show to show and from person to person. However, there are some clear responsibilities that a producer has.

- **Keeping the cast and crew happy.** This is quite obviously a monumental task, but one that, when achieved, can make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful production. There are several ways in which a producer can unlock the key to eternal theatrical happiness,
  - **Schedule:** it is not fair to keep cast and crew waiting around. Sometimes it is inevitable, but most of the time good scheduling and planning can avoid this. **Get actors' dates** straight after they have been cast and encourage them to e-mail you if there are any changes in their timetables. **Plan rehearsals well in advance;** get the director to tell you who will be needed, so you can send out the relevant e-mail with plenty of time.
  - **Communicate:** use productions meeting to make sure everyone in the team is aware of what is going on, and that no-one has any issues. (See section on Productions Meetings).
- **Keeping good relations** with the Arts Centre, CAPITAL Centre or whatever venue is relevant. It seems obvious, but it so important that when things get stressful, to keep cool and not threaten to garrote a friendly Box Office assistant with nearby LX cable. Respect Arts Centre regulations. Their decision is final.
- If you need to speak to Howard, or indeed any Arts Centre staff, make sure you **e-mail in advance** and organise a convenient time. Don't just go into Howard's office and expect him to be able to help you there and then.
- **Be friendly and approachable.** Some people prefer to rule with a fist of iron. Tends not to work out (see John Toland's *Adolf Hitler: The Definitive Biography*). However, remain professional.

## Immediately after Submitting

Depending on when your slot is, things are likely to get moving very quickly after submissions. The sooner you can get all the initial administration out of the way, the easier everything will be. You will need to **meet with the WUDS Production Manager** early on, and they will go through anything you're unsure of. Also, get to know the **Resources Room** in Union North if you don't already – you're likely to spend a fair bit of time there! The WUDS exec will give you their log-on for the Students' Union computers so you can use those as well. If your show is in the Arts Centre studio you should also pop in to see Howard in the technical office to make sure he's aware your submission is going ahead. He should have already seen a pack, or been at the submission meeting, so just check he's up to date and that he has your contact details.

You need to set up your show account as soon as possible. To do this you need to fill out a **financial planning pack** – this requires a budget, contact details for your production team and a risk assessment. The WUDS treasurer will go through this, and then an account will be set up for you. Once this is done, you will get a finance card, which will give you the details of your account, and allow you to book rooms and spend money.

Next you need to make sure that you have the appropriate **rights for your production** – make sure the relevant company have all the correct details (Warwick Arts Centre Studio, Amateur performance, 140 seats, 4 performances) – and then obtain an invoice. You'll then need to fill out a money request form and get it signed by the WUDS production manager. Please do all this as soon as possible, and make sure you stick to your contract (with regard to alterations, cuts, etc).

If necessary, you also need to write your **entry for the Arts Centre diary**, if it is not already in your submissions pack and email it to Elena Holtham and Julia Barry (see address' below) as soon as possible. Have a look at the current diary to get a rough idea, although the Arts Centre may edit it to fit their space. Also, if you have any images which may be appropriate, then email these too. Have a good image ready; make the show look good in the Arts Centre

brochure; a lot of people read it. Some people just look at the pretty pictures (like me). Please forward your blurb to [exec@wuds.co.uk](mailto:exec@wuds.co.uk) as well. This needs to be done straight away.

## Auditions

One of the most important things at this early stage is – **organising auditions** with your director. The format is entirely up to you and dependant on the production, but make sure you've booked a room (see below) and put a sign-up sheet with all the necessary information on the WUDS noticeboard. Also, make sure you let the exec know your audition details so that they can publicise to members. Keeping auditions organised is pivotal. A badly run audition can be really damaging to a show's reputation, and a lot of potential actors will be put off, if the audition process is a mess. Don't make them too long, and make sure you give people plenty of warning if you want them to prepare a piece. Put the required reading in the WUDS pigeon hole in Union North well in advance.

Also, it is often helpful to make everyone auditioning to fill out a contact sheet. Include details such as name, e-mail etc. as well as a section in regards to availability during the production, availability for recalls and any hidden talents (underwater basket weaving, levitating, Jenga etc.).

Make sure that before you cast the show, **check and recheck everyone's availability**. It is amazing how many people audition and then realise that they are not available during the production week. Muppets.

## Room booking

You'll need to start booking rooms as soon as possible so you can organise your rehearsal schedule in good time. There are a number of different options here (see the contacts page for emails and phone numbers):

- In the Union – usually the meeting rooms in Union North or the Science Concourse, opposite the library. To book these you

- need to go to Union North reception or e-mail room bookings – they may ask to see your finance card if they don't know you.
- In the Arts Centre – rooms such as the National Grid Room and Butterworth Room may be available, but only if there are no paying companies using them – this means that you can usually only book these about a week in advance. To do this contact Nikki Cockcroft in the Arts Centre. Arts Centre rooms should only be used to rehearse shows which will be performed in the Arts Centre itself.
  - On Westwood – the music room, drama studio and the dance studio are available – talk to the exec about booking these
  - University rooms – can be booked online at <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/RoomBooking>.
  - Be courteous when rehearsing. If you are in a location such as the science concourse, be aware that there might be lectures happening around you. Or you find out the hard way and get shouted at for being too noisy, thus you go red in the face in front of your whole cast, wishing that the ground would swallow you up and regret deciding to do that scene again but 'with more umph'. Obviously, I am not speaking from personal experience.

### WUDS membership

You need to make sure that all of your cast and crew are members of WUDS (technical crew can be members of Tech Crew instead). This is for insurance purposes, and **no one can take part in a performance unless they are a member**. Otherwise, if people poke themselves in the eye with a straw from a carton of Ribena (in the studio), they are not insured, and may have to spend the rest of their life penniless, as well as having less than satisfactory vision. The WUDS exec can, and will, check up on your memberships in the week before your performance.

### Your budget

When your submission was accepted, one of the criteria was that your budget was feasible. It's hugely important you stick to it. Having said

that, it's almost inevitable that there will have to be some changes as you go along – spending less in one area say, to cover an unexpected cost elsewhere. The crucial thing is to make sure you keep track of everything. Keep in regular contact with the Production Manager – and let them know if you have any difficulties – they are there to help you find a solution.

### Making payments

Any money you spend through the Art Centre (venue hire, set construction and any technical costs) will be **deducted from your box office takings** after your show, so you don't have to worry about these payments. However, please do make sure you keep track of how much of your budget you have spent in the Arts Centre, by keeping in regular contact with the staff.

You can use your **finance card** to buy photocopying cards at Union North reception – these can be used in the resources room, and the photocopier just outside.

For items like props, costumes, etc you need to make sure that everyone keeps all their receipts – you can't claim money back without them. You then need to fill out a **money request form** (available in the resources room), attach the receipts and pass this on to the WUDS production manager, either in person, or via the pigeonhole. For amounts less than £20, cash will be given – this needs to be collected in person. For larger amounts, the easiest way is to fill in the relevant bank details on the form, and the money will be transferred directly into the account.

Wherever you are placing an order (for example, t-shirts, flyers or posters), you need to complete a **purchase order form** (again find these in the resources room). Get this signed by the WUDS Production Manager and then the finance office will process your purchase order number and forward it to the company. It's very important you allow time for this form to be processed – most of the companies that deal with the Union regularly won't start work on an order until they've received the number. Once you've done this, the

invoice will be sent to the union, and the money will come directly out of your account.

### **Sponsorship**

Getting sponsorship is tough, but can be really helpful if you need an extra couple of quid. There are companies in Leamington Spa that are more than willing to help out. It is worth asking. Be courteous and not too demanding. Write them a friendly, professional letter (which should be checked by exec.) and if they express an interest, go and see them in person.

Sell it to them. Give them flyers, mocked up versions of how their logo would look on a flyer etc. Think about what is in it for them.

Don't just ask for money and don't just ask anyone. Make sure there is some kind link between the production and the company. Often they can offer more than money (a suit from Moss Bros, or a ball of twine from The Twine Shop etc.). Businesses in Leamington are willing to help and get involved, so make sure you are tapping local resources. Forging links between the Uni and local businesses is always a good thing.

There are multiple clothing shops in Leamington that are generally very helpful in regards to costume. Likewise, try the Priory Theatre in Kenilworth. Be nice to them.

### **Production meetings**

There is an official Arts Centre meeting which takes place about four weeks before your show. Howard (technical director), Luke (master carpenter) and Elena (front of house manager) will all be there and you need to attend with your director, set designer, lighting designer and any other technical members of your team. These meetings are to be booked through myself, or the relevant productions manager. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the Arts Centre have the technical and administrative details of your show. You will need to show Howard and Luke your plans for the set. Make sure you speak to

the Arts Centre about any risk assessment forms that may need to be filled in. You will be given a copy of a checklist by the Production Manager so you can make sure you've covered everything beforehand. The Arts Centre will produce a contract, send it to the SU, who have to sign it, and then return it to the Arts Centre. When that process is complete, Elena will give you a copy.

It is also important to have regular meetings with the production team throughout the weeks leading up to the show. Once a week is probably a good idea. These meetings can be as formal or informal as you like. It is always a good idea, in the first meeting, to **get the whole team together** and come up with a schedule in regards to deadlines, when things should be completed by etc. and make it available to everyone. Not every member of the team will need to be there every week.

Also, have an agenda. Make sure you know what needs to be done and what needs to be discussed.

Also make sure you keep in regular contact with the exec. The likelihood is they/we will want you and the director to come into an exec meeting, sometime during the run up to the show and give some details about how well everything is going. If it is all going badly, you are more than welcome to sit there and cry. We could give you biscuits and say in soothing tones that 'everything will be alright'.

### During the rehearsal period

During the rehearsal period, your main job is to make sure that everyone is happy, and that they are doing what they're supposed to. Important things to keep track of are:

- That both the director and the cast are happy with the way rehearsals are going, that they are on schedule and that room bookings are up to date.
- That plans for the set are under control. If you are in the Arts Centre you need to liaise with Luke and Howard to make sure that designs are finalised in good time for Luke to order materials and build your set. You also need to make sure that there is a

team co-ordinated to come in and paint/finish everything. Given the technical/backstage team plenty of warning if you or the director decide upon any changes. Keep these guys on your side at all times. Leave nothing to the last minute.

- That the sound and lighting designers, SM and DSM are aware of the rehearsal schedule, and attend enough rehearsals (especially nearer production week). Also make sure that they are kept up to date with any changes (to blocking, props, cues, etc) which the director may have made.
- That props and costumes are being collected and that you are aware of any problems. The Production Manager has a list of things in the Arts Centre and can let you in to the store. Let them know if you are missing anything and they'll do their best to help.
- That publicity and press material is on schedule – see below for further details.
- That you are within your budget – get in touch with the exec if you anticipate any problems.
- Please check with Howard Potts which equipment is included in the hire fee and which needs to be paid for. For example fire proofing spray, material and smoke machines are all extra and will need to be arranged with Howard. You can get specific materials elsewhere or ask the Arts Centre to source it for you – this needs to be discussed well in advance!
- The DC cupboard is full of props, costumes and moth-balls. There are some fantastically useful things in there though, so use it and save money. Speak to the Productions Manager for the code (only myself and you, the producer, can know it).
- If any strobes, smoking, swearing, gunshots, nudity etc are going to occur we will need to put signs on the doors. In particular, any smoking during a performance will require a letter demonstrating artistic necessity. Please speak to Howard Potts regarding this.

- You will need to decide an age guidance for the show if any – this ideally needs to be done before the tickets go on sale. Please pass this information to Elena Holtham.

## The CAPITAL Centre

The CAPITAL Centre is a great space, and is as close to the studio as you can get, in terms of rehearsals. Treat it with care and respect. There have been issues here before, so be careful. It is not a storage space or dumping ground.

Go to [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/capital/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/capital/) for a full list of rules, requirements and information on booking the space.

## Publicity and Press

Publicity and press are hugely important areas of a production – you may want to have someone separate on board to deal with everything, or you may handle some or all of it yourself. The main things to consider are:

Photographs: Try to get **some decent quality photographs** of your cast in costume (or something similar) as soon as possible. These can be useful for posters, press releases, websites or a display board outside your show, as well as for the WUDS archive. If you don't have anyone to take your photos, get in touch with PhotoSoc.

Posters /Flyers: The type and quantity of posters and flyers will depend on the budget for your show, but whether they are printed in full colour or photocopied onto coloured paper, it is vital that they are eye catching, accurate and ready in time to do their job! Make sure that the dates, time, venue and price are clear and correct. You also need to make sure that the WUDS logo is on your design. The WUDS **exec**

**will check your posters and flyers** before they go to print. Talk to the WUDS Marketing and Publicity manager for printers' contact details and advice.

If you are doing an Arts Centre show, you need to include the **Arts Centre logo and box office details** on your design. You must get the posters and flyers **proofed by Julia in Marketing** before sending them to print – if the Arts Centre aren't happy you may not be able to distribute them.

Once you've got your publicity material ready it needs distributing:

- Campus noticeboards
- Departmental pigeonholes
- Halls of residence
- The Union (for indoor boards, give posters in at Union North)
- Flyering lectures
- Flyering other shows (check with exec/production teams)
- Shops, bars, cafés (**make sure you ask first**)

For Arts Centre shows also take about six posters and a stack of flyers to the marketing department and they should distribute them for you within the Arts Centre.

Finally, **do not fly post**. There can be a fine of **up to £1000** for every poster which is put up somewhere it shouldn't be. The Arts Centre will charge this fine to your account. Don't leave you flyers all over the Arts Centre either.

#### Hoodies etc.

These are a great idea to get your show noticed around campus, as well as being a memento of the production. Make sure you order well in advance – at busy times it can take up to four weeks. Your

budget will never stretch to t-shirts and hoodies so cast and crew are expected to pay for their own. Try and find out exact prices (make sure you include VAT) so you can let people know before you order. It's a very good idea to insist that people pay you before you hand over their t-shirts so you don't end up chasing money for weeks. This also means all the money should be in your show account before the invoice arrives. People need to make **cheques payable to UWSU** and you can pay them in to your account at the Finance Office in the Union.

Press:

See the WUDS Marketing Manager for examples of past press releases and for an up to date press list. You need to send out press releases about a fortnight before your show opens, and make sure you include all the necessary production details and a contact name, number and email. If you have digital photos make it clear they are available on request. You can also send your press release via email and attach digital images. Offer the press two complimentary tickets, and ask them to contact the Production Manager if they wish to accept and come to review the show.

When writing your press release think carefully about anything which makes your production different. A release with a 'story' behind it stands much more chance of being published than a simple announcement and synopsis of a show.

Campus media:

Get in touch with The Boar, Warwick Television and Radio Warwick to see if they can do any coverage in the week running up to your production. They may also want to come and review your show. You can also contact the Commercial Development and Communications Officer to get an article in The Word – the deadline is always quite early, so make sure you do it as soon as possible.

Website: Details of your production will be put on the WUDS website soon after your submission is accepted. If you have any photographs or other information talk to the WUDS Marketing Manager who will get that online for you as well. If you want to design a whole site dedicated to your show, that's great, and you can use some of the WUDS webspace ([www.wuds.co.uk](http://www.wuds.co.uk)).

Other: It might be worth looking to see if the play you are performing is an A-level text in any schools. If it is then Hoozah! You may want to contact that school and see if they fancy a trip, where you can all show the little blighters how it is done. You may even think about organising a post show talk.

Speak to other departments at the Uni as well, who might have an interest in the production. You never know what they could offer you. Likewise, they might encourage their students to go and see the play.

Don't forget if you have any questions, or need help designing publicity, writing press releases or putting a website together then don't hesitate to **talk to the WUDS Marketing Manager** or anyone else from the exec.

### Fire routes and evacuation in an emergency

Please keep fire routes clear at all times. If the Arts Centre have to evacuate during a show, the house lights will go up and the Arts Centre Duty Manager will make an announcement. The Arts Centre Stewards will lead the audience out of the venue. All members of the cast should leave the building immediately and not go back to dressing rooms. Please make your cast aware of this.

### Arts Centre Regulations

- Smoking is not permitted in any area.
- The use of naked flames is not permitted.
- Rooms must be left exactly as they were found. If furniture is moved, it must be replaced in its original position.
- If meetings are held in the upper bar area, please ensure no rubbish is left on the floor.
- Please do not obstruct the cleaners when the foyer areas need to be cleaned.
- Alcohol may not be consumed in the Arts Centre unless it has been purchased from Arts Centre bars.
- Rehearsals must be confined to the booked space. Foyer areas, the Hall concourse, corridors etc. should not be used unless specifically booked.
- All access to the workshop must be arranged in advance with Howard Potts
- Noise should be kept to a reasonable level. If groups anticipate making a lot of noise, warning should be given of this at the time of booking. If noise is disturbing other people in the building, the group may be asked to leave.

In addition, the following conditions apply to the use of the Hall, Theatre or Studio for rehearsals (other than in the agreed get-in time before a production):

- Technical support will not be provided, unless agreed in advance. (A charge will be applied for technical services.)
- Staging should not be moved.
- Access to technical equipment and control rooms is not permitted.
- Pianos may only be used if permission has been requested in advance.

### **Production week**

Before the week of your show you need to sit down with your production team and work out a schedule. The normal working hours in the studio are:

Monday 10am – 10pm  
Tuesday 10am – 10pm  
Wednesday 10am – end of first performance  
Thursday 6pm – end of performance  
Friday 6pm – end of performance  
Saturday 6pm – end of get-out

Make sure everyone is clear about where they need to be and what they need to do. Make people, especially the cast, aware that it will be a long week, and everyone needs to be rested, co-operative and understanding. These times are not flexible. **The tech crew will break between 1-2pm and 6-7pm.** You cannot be in the studio at these times.

**Bear in mind that the two days before the production begins are for the tech team to work.** Make sure you are well rehearsed and the cast know that there will be a fair bit of waiting around. Whilst it may be frustrating, these days are vital. Whilst the director and technical team are rigging, focusing, plotting and rehearsing in the studio, there are a number of things you should be doing:

Programmes Programmes for WUDS shows are normally free, and given out to every member of the audience. As such, they need to be fairly cheap to produce – i.e. black and white photocopies, maybe onto card. Try to get them designed as soon as possible, get everyone to check that their details are correct, and don't forget to thank the Arts Centre staff and anyone else who has helped with your production. You need to include the WUDS and Arts Centre logo in your programme, and also details of the next WUDS show – the exec will give you details about this.

Programmes can be sold by Arts Centre Stewards (commission attached) or if they are free can be given out by the Stewards. All programmes need to

be delivered to the Front of House office the day before the show

### Comp Tickets

Members of your production team who aren't involved in the show on the night can have free tickets to see the show, and you should also offer these to anyone who has helped you – for example photographers, sponsors etc. However, remember that every comp ticket you give out is one less ticket you can sell, so don't get carried away! You may also have members of the press who want free tickets to review your show – that's fine as well.

A list of all comp tickets needs to be passed to the WUDS Production Manager **before production week**. They will speak to the Front of House staff and make sure the tickets are ready for you. This is **the only way** to get your comps.

The person's name must be printed on their tickets so don't try and sneak people in. This is a serious point; it doesn't matter if people have travelled 400 miles on horseback to come and see the show, they must have a ticket. A producer, people will always ask you. **Don't take any risks**. If you are worried that the show will sell out and you know of people who are planning to see the show, make a bulk reservation.

### Display Board

At the official production meeting you can arrange to have a display board outside the studio. You can use this to display photos, reviews and any other information about your show. Try not to leave this to the last minute – think ahead so you can prepare a good display.

### At the end of your show

After your last performance, the technical crew, probably with the help of some of your cast, need to de-rig everything in the studio, and tidy up props and costumes. The Arts Centre staff will be on hand to help as well, but it is best to have a plan, and try to be as efficient as possible – the quicker you are, the sooner you can get to the after-show party and drink copious amounts of sticky and nauseating beverages, before topping of the evening with a slimy and greasy meat product. Don't forget to thank all the staff that have helped you, before you leave.

There are reports showing ticket numbers per performance, which you may find useful. Richard Evans is the contact, and he will usually invoice WUDS thirty days after the show. This is to allow time for equipment invoices to come through.

The following week, you will probably have a few things to tie up, such as the return of props and costumes and finalising your finances. Please note if materials are not tidied away within a fortnight after productions they will be discarded. Make sure all claims are made as soon as possible – they **must be completed within 30 days of your show**. Thank everyone who has been involved in the show, especially me. Because I am really kind.

### Useful Contacts:

(to call university numbers from external phones, dial 02476 5\*\*\*\*\*)

### WUDS Exec:

**President** Genevieve Raghu 07917 755046  
[G.M.Raghu@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:G.M.Raghu@warwick.ac.uk)

**Productions Manager** Matt Cooper 07738  
671631 [matthew.cooper@Warwick.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.cooper@Warwick.ac.uk)

**Publicity** Kimberley Atkins 07981 596330  
[K.Atkins@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:K.Atkins@warwick.ac.uk)

**Treasurer** Radhika Ravi 07852 991263  
[Radhika.Ravi@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Radhika.Ravi@warwick.ac.uk)

**Secretary** Millie Marsh 07792 130809  
[Amelia.Marsh@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Amelia.Marsh@warwick.ac.uk)

**Social Secretaries** Jesse Meadows 07969  
424257  
[J.L.Meadows@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:J.L.Meadows@warwick.ac.uk)

Caitlin McLeod 07749 551106  
[C.F.McLeod@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:C.F.McLeod@warwick.ac.uk)

**Arts Centre:**

**Technical** Howard Potts ext 23793  
[h.potts@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:h.potts@warwick.ac.uk)

**Assistant House Manager** Elena Holtham ext  
22793  
[E.Holtham@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:E.Holtham@warwick.ac.uk)

**Room Bookings** Nikki Cockcroft ext  
24439  
[N.Cockcroft@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:N.Cockcroft@warwick.ac.uk)

**Marketing** Julia Barry ext 24669  
[Julia.Barry@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Julia.Barry@warwick.ac.uk)

**Other university contacts:**

**University timetabling** Robert McClean ext 22787  
[R.McClean@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:R.McClean@warwick.ac.uk)

**Other Room Bookings**  
[room.bookings@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:room.bookings@warwick.ac.uk)

**Union contacts:**

**Union North Reception** ext  
72777

**Finance Office** ext 73988

**Resources Room** Pam Walker ext  
72818  
[pwalker@sunion.warwick.ac.uk](mailto:pwalker@sunion.warwick.ac.uk)

**Related Societies:**

**Tech Crew**  
[techcrew@sunion.warwick.ac.uk](mailto:techcrew@sunion.warwick.ac.uk)

**Codpiece**  
[codpiecetheatre@hotmail.com](mailto:codpiecetheatre@hotmail.com)

**Fresh Blood**  
[su247@sunion.warwick.ac.uk](mailto:su247@sunion.warwick.ac.uk)

**Music Theatre Warwick**  
[exec@musictheatrewarwick.co.uk](mailto:exec@musictheatrewarwick.co.uk)

**Warwick TV**  
[exec@warwicktv.co.uk](mailto:exec@warwicktv.co.uk)