

MUSIC ROOM – KEEPING THE MUSIC GOING PODCAST

SERIES 1 EPISODE 7

PUTTING ON A SHOW

<https://www.bushfirepress.com.au/2019/12/05/lynne-bartlett/>

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If you are listening to this podcast you are either happy, or really stressed with the idea of putting on a school production. These are my suggestions on how to start this procedure –

Give yourself enough time to rehearse the actors, singers, dancers, even if your boss tells you that you need to have a first-class production ready in 4 weeks (this is a slight exaggeration) but you get the point. Most primary schools require that the main cast comes from the grades 5/6 but you also need to incorporate into your show possibly grades 1, 2 & 5. If this is the case you chose the songs and dances that you want these grades to do, and hand over the responsibility of the training to the teachers of the relevant grades and tell them that you will check in with them approx. 3 weeks before the start of the show and hope they get on alright.

What show does the school want to do, if they don't know makes some suggestions on what show YOU would like to do. There are a number of choices, the most popular at the moment are the Hal Lenard Disney productions – Annie, Mary Poppins, Matilda, Lion King etc. these are musicals with a smaller amount of dialogue or you can go to a company in the US called SCRIBD and download a stage version of a large variety of titles. This is my preferred option because I'm a drama teacher. And last but certainly not least go onto the Bushfire Press website and have a look at the choices of musicals they have to offer. Then cast your eyes around the staff room to see who just might help you in the task of putting on a school production. WHAT no one is interested – oh no!!!!

Before you go into a complete panic – go to your local secondary school and ask for the head of performing arts – always a good idea to go right to the top. Tell him/her that you know that singing and dancing is part of the curriculum so given that is the case could they ask if any of their year 10, 11 or 12 students would like to 'volunteer' to help out. Good luck.

Then you need to find out how much rehearsal time you have been allocated – in school time, lunchtimes or after school rehearsals. If you are lucky your school will allocate a morning or two mornings a week for rehearsal and this time will increase in the last 3 weeks when you put the show together – this is a theatre term – you need to use these terms as it makes you look like you know what you are doing.

Moving on, find your theatre, you will need to get this advice from the business manager – they pay the bills and will remember from 2 years ago which theatre was used. Please, please get a theatre that comes with a sound and lighting tech. It is much cheaper than having to hire sound and lighting equipment, hire a lighting technician to do the bump in and out and also to run the show. Your sound equipment is the same if you need to hire the equipment, head mics and a sound tech to run the show – how do I know this – I've just done this and trust me it is very, very expensive.

Next, when you've chosen your show, check out costumes needed. Put a 'call out' to the parents asking for help with costumes, if you don't get any response there are a number of costume hire places that do a very good job – I used Costumes without Drama for my last production and they were excellent and very inexpensive. If you've still got problems, go to SAVERS.

If you are able to do this put together a production team that can handle tickets, publicity I've always gone with a real estate board outside the school to advertise the production, bus hire, props – a good way to go is to ask the art teacher if you can incorporate the making of props into their program for the term, Programs – have a competition through the school for the best cover, putting the program together and printing it out, photocopying the scripts and the list goes on.

All of this and you still haven't started rehearsals. Better start now as time is ticking. This is my favourite part training the actors, but you have to get through auditions first. In my case this was 2 days solid of auditioning and deciding on who would get parts. I've done this for many years and have developed an instinct on the best choice to make. It isn't always the best actor on the day it is sometimes someone who you think you can train to become the best.

One of the questions that I'm asked when I'm 3 weeks out from performance date, my brain is absolutely fried with waking up in the middle of the night thinking about the show and I still have another job to do as well during the day – for me it is something that is so entrenched into my being that I can't imagine doing anything else. The pure joy of watching the show come together, knowing the exact moment to tell the cast it is time to give it your all. Younger performers hold off towards the end and you have to trust that on the night/s they will be remarkable. To see children who have struggled through school or have been bullied to come into their own. To take a child with a handicap or shows autistic tendencies and give them a part, put a head mic on them and watch them shine on stage with their 2 lines is the most rewarding feeling in the world.

Good luck, if you need any help or support please contact me – email, skype, zoom or if you are reasonably near my area I can come and assist in anyway. Unfortunately, there is a fee - but it is not too high.

Cheers, Lynne

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for all links and contacts.