

## **So You Want to Start a Theatre Group: 4 Things to Keep in Mind**

by C.S. Griffel -

<http://greatstorybook.com/start-a-theatre-group/>

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**Helping to start a community theatre has been one of the most rewarding challenges of my life. There were many difficulties and many times I wanted to give up, but I believed in the purpose of what I was doing and I was fortunate enough to see the vision that inspired us to start that theatre come to fruition.**

It also brought a lot of joy and fun to those who participated and most importantly created a sense family for young soldiers far from home, usually for the first time. It was this very conviction of purpose that sustained me through the challenges and kept my eye focused on the goal.

### **Here's what to keep in mind when starting-up a theatre group:**

**1. It's a lot of hard, thankless work.** Don't get me wrong, there are definitely some thanks. A cast generally acknowledges the director during the bows. There are often flowers and cards given at the end of a show run. And those things are great. But there are many, many lonely hours put in by the director that no one sees. It will take more hours than you think it will, but will also bring you more joy than you realize.

A small, start-up theater, especially, will likely require the director to wear many hats. Even with a partner, there are many moving parts in producing any show, even a relatively small one. Depending on your skill set, or sometimes the fact that you are a warm body and things just need to happen, you may

find yourself making costumes, painting backdrops, working lights, working sound, interfacing with organizations that have resources you need, promoting your show - along with directing it.

On top of this, the director must know the show inside and out. You must read and analyze the show like any piece of literature, mining its depths for meaning, beauty, purpose or humor. You must know the show so well that you can formulate an idea of what the most important kernels of storyline are and make sure they are emphasized so that the audience will understand this too. You don't want your actors or audience walking away saying, "I don't get it."

**2. It's nearly impossible to do alone.** If you can find someone to work with you, do it. A partner can talk you down from the ledge, help share the workload, and think of things you might miss. Starting and running even a small theatre can require hundreds of hours of unpaid work. Having a partner allows you to split this work and gives you at least one other person that believes in what you are doing. It's very important that you and your partner can agree on the vision, goal and purpose of your theatre; otherwise, you will undermine each other and your project.

**3. You must cultivate optimism.** If you aren't optimistic about your abilities and your theatre program, the sheer magnitude of the task and naysayers will defeat you. Remember that you will need to get people on your side. You probably need a little funding - if you are performing a copyrighted show, you need to pay for rights, minimally. Other costs include costuming and at least a rudimentary set. Not everyone will see the intrinsic value of the endeavor, and you will likely receive many "no's" and raised eyebrows. You may have to fight for your theatre program. Resources, including time, money and space are limited.

The reality is that no one is going to hunt you down and beg for you to enlighten the world with your awesomeness. It is incumbent upon you to bring something worthwhile to the people with the resources and to have enough optimism and confidence for both you and them. After a while, you will convince someone to share their resources. Don't give up. Enough persistence, conviction and enthusiasm can turn one of those skeptics around.

**4. Have a vision statement.** This alone can go a long way in supporting you through times when it seems that no one else believes in what you are doing or when it becomes otherwise difficult. There will be times when you have poured hours and hours of effort into a project and no one will even know or particularly care about the work you put in. If you have a vision and you know your purpose, others acknowledging your effort in that way will grow less important because the vision and the purpose are the most important things. They will buoy you when you feel about to sink.

You won't get very far with only the conviction that the world needs you directing because of your pure talent. There are a lot of talented people. You may be very talented, but likely, there is someone more talented than you out there. To see you through, you need more than just the conviction that the world needs your talent. If you are convinced, for example, that a theatre experience can produce confidence and teamwork and give a voice to at-risk youth then you have a purpose to fight for.

Additionally, a really strong vision statement will help you in the effort to secure support from the entities to which you go for it. If they can see they are investing in something worthwhile, then they are more likely to open their purses or buildings to support you.

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