A theatre production takes a lot of time to execute, so it’s very important for the Musical Director to follow procedures and systems that have been developed at NADMCS over the years. We have developed this short guide so that all involved can enjoy the process as much as we eventually enjoy the performance.

Because of the size and scope of our productions, it’s necessary for a lot of people to be involved. As the Musical Director of the production, you are responsible for the musical aspects that bring a show to life.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that we expect you do to everything on your own, being part of the production team and winder community means you can, if able, delegate parts of the musical adaptation to others with the necessary skills to complete the task given. However, given the more technical nature of music this is not always possible!

We are all here to help; you just need to be aware of all the steps involved so you know who and what to ask. In the end, we all want this to be successful!

**The Production Meeting and Deciding Musical Content**

Before a Musical Director moves forward with any production, a production meeting takes place. Generally the meeting is held by the Director, Choreographer and Musical Director, plus (if possible) any other person who will be part the production over the lifespan (such as Stage Manager, Visual Director, Head of Costume, and so on).

The production meeting is a time for the Musical Director to meet the team and organise the thoughts about the show. When they come to the meeting, they should have a breakdown of the production by scene along with a list of items, ideas and thoughts on musical content they need in order to bring the production to life.

This also gives the chance to meet with a team that also wants to be creative so encouraging ideas is an excellent approach, and you will experience much better results. However, you want to be specific enough with your vision so that your idea is realised.

The production meeting is where you give your musical ideas and the reasons behind what you want the musical content to be. During the production meeting you will also be able to discuss sets, cloths, staging, props, lighting, and sound, if applicable.

The more specific you can be with expectations for what will happen during each stage of the production, the better it will be for the team.

**Professional Level Auditions**

Every production begins with auditions.

Part of your goal should be for your auditionees to feel welcomed, relaxed, and informed. The better prepared and relaxed an actor is the better performance they will give in audition. Be clear about what you expect at an audition from the aspect of a musical audition, and make sure they know with plenty of time to spare.

Practice breeds confidence. The more they are exposed to the process, the easier it will be for them to handle the stress and jitters of auditions every time.

Ensure you get ALL absence dates from ALL auditionees before they audition. This is a key element of your decision-making and subsequent planning.

If you need pointers about how to conduct your auditions in this manner, please do not hesitate to ask a senior member of the society who has had experience in running auditions.

Once the auditions have been completed take your time making your final decisions. These decisions should be made in conjunction with the Director and Choreographer. Once you have made your choices then get those decisions out there (no-one likes waiting!) and you can then move onto rehearsing!

**Your Rehearsal Plan and execution**

Build your rehearsal schedule on the skeleton framework of what you need to complete and work backwards.

When you prepare your rehearsal schedule, only ask the cast involved in that day’s rehearsal to be present when they will be actively practicing something.

Your goal is to avoid having cast members sitting around doing nothing. This kind of planning and organization allows you to get more accomplished because you are focused on working with that group of actors. You keep your cast happy and enthusiastic because they are actively doing something with their time.

You keep cast members happy because they know that you are trying to respect their time as much as they are trying to respect your show.

Stick to your plan as closely as possible but be prepared to make changes or additions as rehearsals progress. Sometimes a show moves on quickly and you find you can re-visit scenes more often, at other times it slows, and you will need to adapt to this accordingly. It may be that you need additional time for a song or find that you have more time than needed and this can be handed over to the Director or Choreographer.

Another useful piece of advice is to listen to your cast. Encouraging suggestions is an excellent way of improving a production, many cast members have lots of experience. Take all suggestions on-board and if it is not what you deem suitable then take time to explain why, rather than dismissing it out-of-hand.

Following each rehearsal, it is a good idea to give out notes verbally (if time allows) and then through email, this way the cast and crew have your thoughts and advice to work on prior to the next rehearsal.

**Exercising your authority**

Be prepared to be firm with anyone involved in the production. If they need reminding to stay quiet in the rehearsal room then tell them; if you have a vision or idea and there is resistance to it then have an articulate, adult conversation about it, and you’ll find a solution will be found.

Remember that YOU are in overall control of the musical content and it is YOUR name that is written against it.

**Help and support**

Being a Musical Director can, sometimes, be a lonely place, especially if you have been a cast member in other productions. However, there are many sources of help, advice and guidance available.

If you come across a challenge or difficulty, the best port of call is one on the committee members. They will either be able to give you direct advice or point you in the direction of someone who will have the answer. Never be afraid of asking for help.

Please do not take on more than you can achieve, you are there to create the production itself and delegate other responsibilities to other crew members. This is especially important with regards to costumes, set, props and front of house.

**Summary**

We, at NADMCS, want you to have a happy and enjoyable experience as a Musical Director and hope that these notes help towards that. The key points to achieving this are:

* Be prepared with your own ideas
* Be aware of the human assets available
* Plan an effective audition session(s)
* Cast according to strengths and not loyalty
* Plan and execute a strong rehearsal schedule
* Delegate the tasks necessary to produce an excellent show
* Listen to others
* Take advice
* Ask for help

We hope you have found this guide useful in making your decision to apply to become our Musical Director.