

- If you build it, will they come?

The next inquiry you need to make relates to how you'll market the show, and put "butts in seats", to be crass about it.

- How will you market the show?

In order to market a show you need to have some basic information about the show itself, the audience, and the overall marketplace for theatrical entertainment.

- The Show
 - First off, it pays to really look at what the show is? If it's a show that's previously been produced, you'll have lots of data at your disposal. A bit of research will probably turn up some reviews, news reports and other publicly available information about the show and how it performed from an artistic, and from a ticket-sales perspective.
 - You may also want to make contact with the producer(s) of earlier productions... they can offer you some valuable insights into the challenges you may face as you market your production. They may also express interest in joining with you as co-producers, or have other business ideas that could be beneficial. Be cautious, though, as you consider contacting prior producers. Some may have an ax to grind, or an agenda that would lead them to try to sabotage your efforts. Also, letting a prior producer know your plans could lead you into a bidding war for the rights to the material.
 - If you're looking at material that's never been produced before, you've got to rely on your own analysis, instincts and intuition. You'll want to determine the nature and scope of the show's appeal. The Title, Authors, subject matter, timeliness and of course performers involved can, of course, have a marked impact on a show's success. But, you should also take a close look at the 'message' the show conveys, and to whom it will most appeal.

- Who is the audience?
 - Now, once you know the show, you can begin to gauge the audience in terms of demographics, and importantly, size. A show that appeals primarily to women in their 20s will require very different marketing approaches to one that appeals largely to men over 50. (If there even IS such a show).
 - Shows may appear to have very narrow demographic appeal, but be so strong in other areas, that this analysis shouldn't be determinative over whether you produce the piece, but it will definitely color your approach to marketing. Some marketing approaches are very effective with typical Broadway audiences, while others prove much more advantageous with

younger, ethnic minority audiences. The point here is you have to know who your most likely ticket buyers are, so you can best reach them with the marketing message.

- Who is the audience for typical Broadway shows?
 - The Broadway League is the trade organization of Broadway producers. Every two years, the league conducts a research survey into the demographics of the Broadway audience. The results of this survey have, in recent years, been fairly consistent. The details are too voluminous to go into here, but the bottom line is that most ticket buyers for Broadway shows are married women in their mid-40s. They typically buy several tickets which indicates that they're bringing their families to the theatre, and the majority of Broadway theatergoers are from out-of-town, and attend 1-2 shows (per year?)
 - So these soccer-moms are buying tickets for themselves, their husbands and kids... doesn't it make sense to choose shows that are likely to appeal to this demographic?

- Will they unplug?
 - Younger audiences present a host of other challenges we as producers need to overcome. Generation X and Y are used to near constant connectivity. They've got their mobile phones and ipods with them wherever they go, and are accustomed to texting, calling and consuming electronic media on demand. The experience of attending theatre may seem very alien and uncomfortable to this crowd. So you have to ask whether the promise of the production you're proposing will be sufficient to get them to unplug and sit-still for 2 or 3 hours.

- Will they want to see this show? Why?
 - So, you need to start now, thinking about why your intended audience will want to see your production of this show. Using the Lesson 1 worksheet you downloaded in Lesson 1(a), or just a legal pad, start making a list of all of the 'appeal points' of your show. Is it a famous title? Famous author? Famous or notorious subject matter? Is the Director someone whose name brings cache to the project? Are there STARS in the show?

- Can they afford to see the show?
 - Another important factor to consider is the economic position of your proposed audience. Essentially, you've got to ask whether your target audience can afford to buy tickets. It's great to have a show that will absolutely appeal to urban youth, but if they can't afford to pay your ticket price, marketing to them isn't likely to get you very far with ticket sales. The
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producer's job is to develop a plan to reach LIKELY ticket buyers with a message that compels them to buy what he's selling

- Will they come more than once?
 - Another factor to consider, is whether there's something about your show that will appeal to your audience so that they'll be motivated to come more than once. Recent Broadway history shows that some audience members can feel so drawn to particular material, that they see the show several, or even dozens of times.
 - Essentially, what we're talking about is 'raving' fans. If you can figure a way to attract, serve and connect with folks, and build a strong rapport, you'll have not just a ticket buyer, but also a ticket-seller. These folks don't come alone, they tell their friends, family, and social networks about your show. You can't ask for better marketing than word-of-mouth from raving fans. `

So, as you mull your decision about which play, or musical to produce, keep asking the question... If you build it, will they come, and if so... Why? Knowing these answers can mean the difference between a smash hit, and a flop.

Well, that's it for this part of lesson 1. Next up, a closer look at the financial inquiries you'll need to make as you evaluate material to produce.