

PASSION PLAYS

# PASSION PLAYS

**A GUIDE TO PRODUCING THEM!**

# PASSION PLAYS

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# PASSION PLAYS

## WHY DO A PASSION PLAY?

Why not? Working on these plays is a fabulous way to reach out to your community and to work within that community, bringing the message of Jesus to each generation in a fresh and inspiring manner. The Church was born when a group of people all began to work together and a new community was created with a common purpose. Those then reached out to the wider community in practical terms of help and teaching.

This theatrical form was born out of a desire from the Church to communicate the Gospel to the general public. The first recorded piece of theatre in Britain was four lines, spoken by two choirs addressing each other in a dramatic form – called the Quem Quaeritis. The Church soon realised the power of Theatre as a way to communicate and provoke a response and began to produce what we now know as Mystery Plays and Passion Plays. The term “Passion Play” actually refers to the last part of Jesus’ life from the Last Supper to the Ascension. However, remember that not everyone knows what a Passion Play is and the term can be misleading! Here, ‘passion’ is used in its archaic sense of ‘suffering’ – but it could also reflect its modern meaning of ‘zeal’ or ‘excitement’. Just like the Church in medieval times, we still have a need to bring the story of Christ to our society, and theatre is one of the most powerful mediums that we have. Jump forward hundreds of years and we still see Passion plays being produced around the world attended by thousands of people - the impact not lessened by the passage of time.

One of the trends in Theatre today is a recognition of the changing face of Theatre. It is harder to attract people into a Theatre and so we are bringing Theatre to the audiences! Companies such as Grid Iron and The National Theatre of Scotland have all produced site specific Theatre - not only does it enable you to use the natural site as a backdrop (who wouldn't want Edinburgh Castle as a backdrop?) but it breaks down the barrier between audience and actors and that makes for exciting theatre for both audience and cast. So, always look for open spaces with interesting landscapes.

As a director of a number of these plays, it has been a privilege to work with those who have had the vision to produce them and to see their hard work and dedication. The term Community Play really does describe the cast and crew. A small amount of professionals are hired [lead role of Jesus and understudy] but the remaining cast are made up of anyone who is interested, from professionals to children and everything in between! Because the plays take 6 months to rehearse, the cast really does become a new community and it is great to see friendships being made, romances happen, and support for each other when difficulties occur. Whether the cast have any religious faith or none is irrelevant - everyone works together to tell one of the greatest stories of history. These truly are Community Plays.

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## **FIRST STEPS**

So, you have an idea to produce a Passion Play. Where do you start?

First things first. Find someone – it might be you - who has the vision to see it through and the drive to push the project on and inspire others. It can be a long climb and you need strength, endurance, vision and faith to see it through! That person should be the Chair of your Steering Committee (the main committee that will handle the production through the nuts and bolts).

Then look for like-minded people with different skills to be on your committee. Ideally, you are looking for:

- Someone with Finance skills to be the Treasurer
- Someone with Practical skills to oversee the building of the set and co-ordination of the area in which you will be performing.
- Movers and Shakers who know other influential people, especially in the fundraising area.
- Someone who can liaise with the local Council.
- Someone who will co-ordinate Health and Safety.
- Someone who will co-ordinate Stewarding.
- Someone who will co-ordinate Press/Marketing and Publicity.
- Someone with some Technical knowledge. A Sound Engineer is useful, but not necessary if you have a professional Stage Manager/Director. They can often liaise with the Sound Company.
- The Director of the play.
- The main Producer of the play (where the buck stops!).

Some of these roles can be merged. Some roles may be filled by others who do not have to be on a Committee but will have regular meetings with the Director.

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## **ORGANISATION**

There are a number of ways you can organise yourselves:

- As Trustees who accept liability (financial and otherwise) for the overall project. These people should be well connected in the Business Community/Council/Legal/Finance.
- As a Steering Committee which will manage the project on a day-to-day basis. They are the ones who will make the decisions (They could also be the Trustees).
- As an Operations Committee – the people on the ground who will build and cover all things practical. This could also be done by a Production Manager.

You should decide how you are going to operate legally:

- You can form a Trust and to accomplish the work
- You can become a Registered Charity.
- You can come under an existing charity or company.

Roles in the Production: [see Appendix for Job Descriptions]

Producer

Director

Stage Manager/Production Manager

Props Crew

Construction

Costumes

Makeup

Health and Safety Co-ordinator

Head Steward

Set and Props Co-ordinator

Press/Publicity/Marketing

Ticket Sales

Catering

BSL Signer

Animal Co-ordinator

Church Liaison

Security

First Aid

Information Area

Photography/Video

Accounts/Treasurer

Child protection

Admin/Enquiries [how do you handle people asking to volunteer]

Fundraising

Site liaison

Sound liaison

Council liaison

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Graphic Design  
Insurance  
Licences  
Prayer

## Delegation of Authority (see Appendix for diagram)

There should be clear communication guidelines set out and everyone should be aware of the decision-making process and who makes what decision!

## Information for the Steering Committee

### 1. Production

The play is an open air promenade performance, i.e. the audience move with the actors as the play progresses around different parts of the performance area. It can be split into two sections with the first part taking place before lunchtime and lasting around 2 hours. Then a one hour lunch break for actors and audience alike. Then the second part lasting approx 2 1/2 hours. There is a shorter version for smaller venues and also a one hour version which deals with the Crucifixion only and is primarily for city centres. The cast should ideally be drawn from local communities with one professional actor playing the role of Jesus Christ (although for the one hour version, a talented amateur could play the lead role).

### 2. Statement

We will endeavour to ensure that, at all times, any Policy document is adhered to by the company, contractors, and all involved in the project. Company members will be informed of the policies where applicable and contractors given a copy of the document if required. We will insist on each contractor giving us copies of their own Health and Safety Policies and test certificates where applicable. The company will do everything possible to ensure that the performance site is a safe environment for performers, contractors, workers and the audience alike. Training will be identified and carried out where necessary.

### 3. Insurance

The production should be covered by Public Liability Insurance and the Producers accept vicarious liability for any action "reasonably" undertaken by employees, volunteers, stewards, cast, etc. If the production is employing personnel, and volunteers, it should also have Employers Liability Insurance. Sound/lighting companies may not have their own insurance and might assume equipment (after delivery) is under the play's insurance. Be aware of that!

Each contractor should have their own insurance and should be able to provide the Producers with a copy should they require it.

### 4. Terms used:

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- **Build up** - the planning phase, design, selection of workers and construction
- **Load in or get in** - planning for delivery of equipment
- **Show** - planning crowd management, transport management, fire, first aid, incidents
- **Load out or get out/strike** - planning for removal of equipment
- **Breakdown** - disposal of rubbish, waste water, control of risks

## 5. Meetings

There should be regular meetings with the main decision-making committee, probably once a month. Frequency of meetings can increase as and when the need arises - and as you get closer to performance dates. Health and Safety is discussed by the Steering Group on a regular basis and separate meetings and briefings should be held by the relevant personnel as and when required. A debrief should be held post-production.

## 6. Familiarisation

All cast and crew should be taken around the site and made familiar with all areas, including evacuation routes. All cast, crew and volunteers should be briefed on Health and Safety rules and given hard copies of any relevant documentation.

## 7. Audience

If you are targeting schools, then they tend to come on the weekdays. Fridays are not good for them as it can be an early finish. Also take into account school holidays and exam times. We would recommend that the play is suitable for aged 8 upwards but younger children can attend with parents. All children must be accompanied by either teachers or parents and control of them will be primarily managed by the teacher/school or parents. Weekend audiences will be mainly adults or family groups.

Whilst the audience will be moving around with the action, it is a controlled movement by onsite stewards and performers. Adequate space for viewing should be planned. Based on previous performances, we know that the audience tends to be very restrained in its' movements and attitudes.

You should ensure that adequate plans are in place for less able-bodied audience members. This can be a specified area set aside in each scene for wheelchairs and designated seating. There could be an area where hearing-impaired people can clearly see the Interpreter. Stewards should also be aware of plans for assisting less able-bodied people.

However, in any pre-publicity, if your terrain is rough and not easily accessible, this should be made very clear in adverts, flyers and posters. It should also be stated when people are buying tickets.

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You can put a disclaimer sentence on programmes or flyers stating that an audience attends at their own risk.

The audience should also be advised in pre-event publicity that the production may be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions and that, due to the nature of the play, you suggest they come prepared for all weathers! It is up to each committee to decide what its cancellation procedure will be, but we suggest you don't cancel unless:

1. The weather is proving to be a danger to the audience -high winds which could mean structural damage to scenery and thus endanger audience members.
2. Heavy rain is making it unsafe for the sound equipment, and the Sound Company advise they are turning it off. In this instance, you can ask the audience whether or not they want to stay and watch the play but without amplification.
3. If you notice that your audience are uncomfortable and some are leaving, then you may want to consider cancelling.

You can delay the start of the production but communicate with your audience at all times.

If you decide to cancel and the performance has been ticketed, i.e. they have paid, the standard practice is that, if you have performed more than 30 minutes of the play, there is no refund. If less, then you can decide to refund all or a percentage of the ticket cost

You can take out Cancellation Insurance on your policy if you want, but it hikes up the premium quite drastically.

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## **NOW I'VE GOT MY COMMITTEE, WHAT NEXT?**

1. Have your first meeting where roles are clearly defined and the structure is set in place.
2. If you haven't already hired a Director, then do so. You do not have to have a professional Director, there are very talented amateur Directors of local groups. However, a professional Director comes in very useful if you don't have a great deal of knowledge or experience with Theatre.
3. Issues that need to be addressed are:
  - Where the play will be performed
  - Dates of the production
  - Cast [community and professionals]
  - Where to rehearse
  - Land issues [what needs clearing and preparation]
  - Set and props
  - Costumes
  - Health and Safety Policy
  - Audience issues [transport, disabled provision etc]
  - Traffic Control
  - First Aid
  - Car Parking
  - Stewarding
  - Toilet facilities for cast and audience
  - Sound
  - Insurance
  - Ticket Sales
  - Catering
  - Website - good to launch one very quickly. Always ensure it has the dates and ticket-booking information, and that it is kept updated]
  - Data Protection [see Appendix]

As you progress, you will need to think about all the above in the order:

- before the play
- during the play
- after the play (storage)]
- debriefing

It is best to create a Matrix with time schedule [see Appendix] which allows you to keep to deadlines and not miss anything.

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## Meetings

Have regular meetings with minutes taken. You can also create a group email list to ensure that everyone receives the correct information. In the Easter play, there is a list for the steering group which means that everyone on the committee sees every production email initiated from within that group. This can be time consuming but it ensures that everyone is kept in the loop. Please note that the Director should be kept informed of everything that is going on.

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## HOW DO I RAISE THE FUNDS NEEDED?

First create a budget that covers:

Wages and Fees (Director, 2 actors, Stage Manager)  
Costumes  
Set  
Props  
Grounds and Car park [if private ground]  
Website  
Sound  
Generators, if required  
Printing, postage and stationery  
PR, Advertising and Photography  
Insurance  
Transport for Schools if required  
Toilets and Portakabins  
Health and Safety  
Secretarial and Admin  
Cast party/catering  
Legal fees, if applicable  
Miscellaneous

There are several ways to raise funds necessary:

1. Applying to Trusts and Funds.

This is time-consuming and isn't always successful – so sometimes a lot of work filling in forms for nothing. However, the best way to go down this route is to see if any of your Committee members have any connections with any Trustees of a Fund who can make a personal application, or lobby them to support when your application comes to the table.

There are CD-Roms of the different Trusts available, and online subscriptions to Trusts (both of which cost money) – again very time-consuming, but can be worth it. Go through and mark suitable funds. There is no point applying to any charity that won't fund "religious projects", but you can apply to youth, educational, theatre funds.

There are some funds in the established church organisations, such as The Church of Scotland. Also, some Councils have Seed Funding to help with start up costs.

If applying to a Trust, it is worth a phone call to find out exactly what format they want for an application, and if there is a specific contact (sometimes they want a pro-forma, sometimes only a letter etc.). It also can be worth taking a member of the trust board out to your site to explain the vision.

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## 2. Churches

One of the most successful ways is to personally contact your local churches and ask to do a 10-minute presentation (you can create or use an existing CD-Rom presentation) and to ask them to consider supporting the project financially both as a church, and as individuals within the church. [See Appendix for Example of Church letter]

## 3. Individuals

These can be people who hear about the project in a church or some other way. Remember to claim Gift Aid if you are a recognised Charity, which can be a huge boost. Also, encourage people to give by Standing Order, which will ensure you have a regular income. You can set up a donation facility on your website too. [See Appendix for Forms]

## Timetable

- 4 months before
  - a. Letters sent to churches (can be from Trustees or Patrons) just outlining the fact that the play is happening, with dates and details, and asking for both financial and volunteering support.
  - b. Decide how received money will be banked. Ensure you have a bank account opened and signatories agreed.
  - c. Ensure you have Gift Aid forms available (and online).
  - d. Create a Newsletter to go out to Churches via email and hard copy
  - e. Promotional leaflet asking for volunteers prepared.
  
- 3 months before
  - a. Promotional leaflets distributed to churches with a letter offering a personal presentation at the church, if required.
  - b. Support-raising letters sent out to Trusts and Individuals for finance.
  - c. Regular Newsletter updates sent out.
  
- 2 months before
  - a. Follow up churches letters to promote the play.
  - b. Ensure you have posters and publicity material for distribution.
  
- 1 month before
  - a. Newsletter updates.
  - b. Keep note of any finances received and acknowledge with Thank-You letters. Decide on how those gifts are being acknowledged (in the programme or on website) and ensure that this is done.

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## **WHAT ABOUT THE LAND AND SETTING?**

If you are producing the play on private land, it makes life much easier! You will still have to apply for an Entertainments Licence from the Council, but you don't need to go through your local council planners etc. for approval on what you do with your land.

You need to do several walkthroughs with your Director to establish where the actual acting areas will be, and ensure you are in agreement. If you are changing the landscape at all, then permission needs to be sought - especially if on public land. You will need permission for:

- changing the landscape if that is possible and required
- erecting any structures ( including market stalls, platforms, etc.)
- erecting the cross(es), as those need to be embedded into the ground with concrete or a metal structure built into the ground.

If the play is to be performed on a private Estate, it is the legal responsibility of the owner to ensure that all possible steps are taken to ensure that the site is safe and that the policy documents are adhered to. Health and Safety at work is considered to be primarily the responsibility of management through a hierarchy of control

If on private land, it can be great if you can have a pond of water available. We have, in the past, had small ponds built that can take fish and a boat!

If you are working with a Council then the following needs to happen:

1. Contact the person who will grant the Licence and meet with them. Outline your proposal and enlist their support (you will need it!). Get advice from them as to how the Council works and the way forward. For example, Edinburgh Council has a system in place that involves a series of meetings called an EPOG (Events Planning and Operations Group). These are the people who can stop or help your production!

2. You will need to apply for a licence and there are forms that you will be given. This varies with each Council but you can either get:

- a street theatre performance, if you are doing it outside in public area (tends to be cheaper than a Theatre licence and this one is good for only one-off performances).
- a street theatre performance again for public but more than one performance.
- a Theatre licence, but ensure it is specified for an open air performance as it is cheaper.

As above, by meeting with this Department, you can help get them on your side and get their advice. There is then a process to go through which may involve a visit from Police and Fire Department to ensure you have covered all aspects. Helpful to give them copies of your Safety policy sections that apply.

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There will be a site visit by the Council member in charge of licensing at some point, and this can happen 30 minutes before your show starts! You don't always get the piece of paper that is the licence but, if you don't, get assurance in writing that you have been granted a licence. If you get the licence in advance, that should be displayed in a public place.

3. This licence application will kick off a whole heap of checks and visits by the Fire Brigade, the Police and the Council

4. Issues that they will want to discuss:

- Health and safety procedures and documentation
- Route plan for audience
- Anticipated crowd numbers
- Toilet facilities
- Clash diary (any other events coinciding)
- Any road closures needed
- Set structures
- Use of buildings owned by Council (check fees required)
- Police notification
- Medical facilities
- Stewarding and security
- Communications onsite
- Licence
- Inspections – electrical, safety, fire, set
- Waste management plan

Biggest piece of advice – get them on your side!

## Legalities needed:

- Entertainment Licence from local Council
- Music Licence to allow you to play recorded music (PPL and PRS licences). Your venue may already have these, so check first.

## Insurance

- Public Liability Insurance
- Employers Liability Insurance
- Ensure sound equipment etc. is insured
- Include information for cancellation to cover fees, contractor fees, advertising etc.
  - **Cancel within 24hrs – 50% fee**
  - **Cancel within 72hrs – 25% fee**
  - **Outside this – no fee.**

This can be negotiable and sometimes dependant upon contractor contracts.

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## **HOW DO I SELL TICKETS?**

There are a number of outlets:

- Online via your website. You can set up a way for people to pay by Visa card online.
- Bring in a Ticket agency. You can use Ticketmaster, The Hub in Edinburgh, local theatre or concert hall box offices. However, these places will charge you for printing tickets and their services. Though we have in the past found it worthwhile! They then sell through phone lines, websites and people buying at their box office.
- Handle ticket sales in your own office. You need to think about printing tickets (can be done through a printing company or in-house).
- Ensure you have a Box Office on the day with facilities to pay, as there will always be “walkups” – people who just turn up.
- You may want to issue complimentary tickets to sponsors, donors, VIPs, Press. The lead actor, understudy and Director usually get an allocation too (but no more than 6 each).
- Other complimentary tickets (comps) are given upon the Producer’s discretion.
- Keep notes of statistics if you can, especially for Schools. Take note of addresses, how many attended, how they booked and dates. Collate statistics and compare each year.

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## **HOW DO I PUBLICISE THE PRODUCTION?**

If you can afford it, hire a PR company to come up with a campaign, or an individual who has Press/Marketing experience. The main benefit of this is that they often have contacts that they have built up over the years. This makes getting colour supplements, or larger articles, easier. However, this role can be done by a volunteer.

You need to create a campaign, which may include:

- Initial press release to local papers stating the dates/location, and requesting cast/volunteers.
- Press releases to monthly publications to see if you can get interest in articles [See Appendix]
- Releases should always have basic information with location, times etc., contact details for more information, quotes from key people.
- You should follow up releases with phone calls to journalists
- Send press releases to Radio stations, local TV stations, Websites [see Appendix for Websites].
- Set up any interviews (usually with Producer/Director/Lead Actor)
- Arrange for a photo call (an opportunity for the press to send their own photographers) and send that out as a separate press release with date, time and location of the call. Allow 30 mins to 1 hour for this. The photographers will often want actors in costume. [See Appendix for Photocall release]
- Contact local churches [See Appendix for some contacts]
- Have Press Packs available for press on the day (with a programme, any other publicity material, cast list, information about the play).
- Great if you can have photos that can be emailed to picture desks. And if you have, always put at the bottom of your release "Images available"
- Meet the press if possible, so that you can answer any questions on the day. However, don't stay with them if they are writing a review!
- Always liaise with the Director and Stage Manager with any requests for filming, interviews or photo calls.
- BE CREATIVE!

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## Timetable

- Basic release for cast 3 months before.
- Releases to periodicals, radio stations, Christian press 3 months before.
- Try to book “op ed” editorials in daily newspapers 1 month before.
- Radio interviews 2 weeks before.
- TV interviews 1 week before.
- Ensure Wesley Owen in Glasgow and Edinburgh have a box of leaflets each and are kept stocked up.
- Have Wesley Owen or local Christian shop, if you have one, sell tickets.
- Contact GOD TV.
- Get personal contacts in churches/schools in cast etc. to advocate and publicise the production.
- Start times to be advertised “be seated by 10.15” – play starts at 10.30 prompt.
- Churches with signage at front may take posters.
- See if we can get the Hub (or wherever you are selling tickets) to advertise in their marketing information – “we sell Life of Jesus tickets”
- Contact bus companies who can advertise to their overseas tourists, also Saga.
- Check cast for their contacts with schools and churches, to be ambassadors and go to the school/church to advertise.

## Advice

- Look for interesting angles to tempt the Press.
- Talk to the cast for any interesting stories they might have.
- If doing a Signed performance, then that is worthy of a press release.
- Arrange any training for interviews, if needed for production staff/actors
- Remember that if someone has done an article, they may want to review the play.
- Check to see if anyone in the cast or crew has any press contacts.
- Ensure that production crew are aware of any articles coming out so that they can pass on information. Also keep copies of all press clippings.

## Printing

You need to include the dates, location, times, great visual images, ticket booking information, contact details, summary of the play, how to get there information (can put on website too) , parking information, catering and clothing (wrap up warm, or bring sun-block – depending on the forecast!)

Different groups have done different things. The Easter play in Edinburgh creates a “how you can be involved” leaflet that is sent to churches primarily and has boxes that volunteers can tick to get involved. This also acts as publicity for the play and must include the dates and locations.

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Dundas has a main flyer and produces 100,000 of them, which are distributed to churches, theatres and public places (through a Distribution company). These are also given to cast production team to distribute.

Posters can be created. If you have access to private land, you can create posters on posts which can go alongside a carriageway (this works very well for Dundas). These can also be displayed in churches and anywhere that will display posters.

You can also do bus advertising. Some places may do it for free for you.

Programmes – usually you estimate 1/3 of an audience will buy a programme.

## Sponsors/VIPs

- Invite Bus Companies/Tour Operators to an open day/lunch
- Have a sponsor's drinks reception/video/pack
- Invite National Theatre of Scotland people and other Theatre personnel
- Ensure your VIPs have all been invited and sent tickets. Programmes should be available if required. Meet VIPs on the day (this can be done by the Producer).

## MARKETING

You should draw up a Marketing Plan that includes:

- EAE, or relevant distribution company. This can be expensive, but gets flyers out to Arts Venues.
- Cultural venues (cinemas, theatres etc.)
- Tourist offices
- Tourist attractions
- Bus Tours, who may take flyers
- Shops
- Community centres
- Sports Centres
- Bus and train stations
- Pubs/hotels/ bed and breakfasts
- Libraries
- Groups (Scouts etc.) and Associations
- Local amateur theatre companies
- Colleges and Educational centres

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## **SCHOOLS**

If you are targeting schools, they will need initial information about the production at least 6 months in advance to allow them to plan a trip. More detailed information and booking details can be sent 4 months in advance. [See Appendix for example letter]

School addresses are easily available on websites, but best to find out if anyone in the cast/committees has any personal contacts, so that you can get information direct to the Head Teacher or relevant teaching staff.

If you have produced the play before, ensure you keep records of schools which have attended and contact them each year with a personal letter. Ask if they will be attending again and detail any changes or developments.

You can run children's competitions to attract interest.

You can try to get transport subsidy to help schools hire a bus (local companies such as Stagecoach may provide free buses also).

It helps the school if you make it as easy possible for them. You can do this by creating a Risk Assessment [see Appendix] and sending that with booking forms.

Check what the curriculum includes and ensure that your letter contains information as to how attending the play will tick those boxes for them.

You could have an open day and invite RE teachers and Drama teachers.

You could also offer workshops for Schools where the Director/Actors could come in before the play and take a Drama Workshop.

Ensure that teachers stay with pupils at all times.

SEE APPENDIX for Educational information and ideas.

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## HOW DO I GET A CAST?

You must liaise with your Director, who will lead the recruiting of the cast. The majority of your cast will be drawn from your local community. The best way to get them is to:

- Contact your local churches and try to recruit via them (by sending posters, doing announcements, doing presentations) [See Appendix for example notice]
- Contact Amateur Dramatic groups (there is a website run by The Scottish Community Drama Association [www.scda.org.uk](http://www.scda.org.uk) which will give addresses of groups in different areas all over Scotland)
- Get articles in your local papers stating that you are looking for actors (put a contact number for people to contact you on as the papers often omit this!)
- Get friends involved
- Once the cast starts coming, encourage them every week to look for potential cast in their own circle of friends. That is how your cast grows fastest!

The professionals involved in the cast are the actor playing Jesus and the understudy who also plays Judas or The Narrator. Both are paid. Your Director should contact local Actors Agencies [see below]. Also contact the main drama Schools – Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama ([www.rsamd.ac.uk](http://www.rsamd.ac.uk)) or Queen Margaret University College ([www.qmuc.ac.uk](http://www.qmuc.ac.uk)). We recommend that they join the cast from the start, especially Jesus. However, you can bring the understudy in 2-3 months into rehearsals as you are paying them a lesser fee.

You should audition for these roles. The audition will be led by the Director with the Producer present. When auditioning, have the actors prepare two speeches – one Classical and one modern. Have them or their agents send a CV with photo

At the audition, have them try out some of the script of the play and try different ways of them saying it if you feel the actor has potential. Don't waste time if you know they are not right from the beginning. If you like a couple of actors, call them for a "recall" audition onsite to see how they use the area. Send them a piece of text from the script to memorise and try that onsite being done in different styles (e.g. with more energy, angry, jovial etc.)

Once you decide on your actor, if they are with an agent, contact the agent direct to confirm details. They will contact the actor. If the actor doesn't have an agent, then contact them direct.

A letter of agreement [see appendix] should be sent with a rehearsal schedule and the terms of employment.

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## **WHAT DO I DO AT REHEARSALS?**

This is for the Director of the play to decide how they will run rehearsals but some tips:

- A rehearsal schedule should be agreed upon and printed ready for first rehearsal so that the cast know what they are committing to [See Appendix for Schedule]
- Get cast details when they first arrive [See Appendix for form]
- Scripts should be agreed upon and copied ready for cast by 3<sup>rd</sup> rehearsal at the latest
- It is a good idea to have the Producer at the first rehearsal to chat to the cast about the ideas for the production and generally enthuse!
- The first few rehearsals are about getting to know the cast, so a lot of introductory and improvisational games are a good idea. However, I recommend that you also do some text work, as the cast get quickly frustrated if not working on the play itself.
- If you are doing the full production, then I tend to break up the reading over a few weeks as it becomes too tedious to try to read it all in one week.
- Doing a reading helps you with casting but remember that a lot of people are not confident with reading and you may have some people who suffer from dyslexia. I always precede a reading with an announcement that they should not be anxious about reading as I don't cast from that. Some people may come up to you privately and tell you about dyslexia, others will simply refuse to read. Don't embarrass them in front of others, simply accept that and have a quiet word after to ask why they don't want to read.
- Always check to see who doesn't want a speaking role at all. I always have a quiet word with them after a rehearsal again to check why. It may just be fear, in which case, it is my job to help them with that. Some gentle persuasion may work, but never force.
- Announce casting and update each week as you progress [See Appendix for basic cast list]
- Do badges with the character name early on in rehearsal so that people know who each person is.
- If you have done the production before, then it is a good idea to allocate new people a buddy (someone who has done the play before and who will keep them right during rehearsals) straight away.
- Find out who is a first-aider at rehearsals and take note.
- Encourage actors to do research (read books, internet, movies). [See Appendix for character notes and basic research]

Co-directors (very useful if you can have one) who can:

- Do warm-ups (including games to break the ice).
- Rehearse children.
- Rehearse finer details of market scene/triumphal entry/trial scene/walk to cross.
- Can choreograph and rehearse fight scene, if trained.

# PASSION PLAYS

- Ensure that animals are “rehearsed” i.e. the actors and animals have had time to rehearse their scenes with sound etc.
- Act as production manager – overseeing practical aspects and being the first point of contact.
- Rehearse on other sites as and when required

## Cast/Rehearsals

- Give out general acting notes that can be useful [see next section].
- If a “surviving this play” note has been done, then that is a great handout. Encourage your actors to write one after the first production which can be used for subsequent productions.
- Rehearsals should comprise of:
  - Welcome to new people (always get them to complete a contact sheet at their first rehearsal which should be collected.) [See Appendix for example]
  - Notices
  - I have always given Birthday cards out or special occasion cards if you know of an occasion. This builds a sense of community.
  - Warm-up games, especially initially as the cast are getting to know each other.
  - Improvisation in the early stages of rehearsal is very useful to help the cast gain confidence in acting. Try out different characters, get used to improvising the more general scenes like the market scene. Improvisation is also a great tool to help the Director cast the play.
  - In Community Theatre, we don’t tend to audition for the roles as that can be quite terrifying. Best to cast from watching people in rehearsal and in the readings.
  - If you have not done the play before, or there are changes, always do a read-through of the play. Simply sit and read through the play. If you are doing the full four-hour version, best to do a read-through in several rehearsals, as it will be too tedious to do it in one go!
  - Scene rehearsals. Up to the Director as to how they split the rehearsals and the way they work. Several methods:
    - You can rehearse a scene, give notes at the end of the scene then rehearse it again.
    - You can rehearse a scene and give notes, stop and start as you are working on it and then rehearse it again.
    - You can rehearse a few scenes, give notes and leave until you next get to that scene.
    - I tend to do a mix of the above, depending on what is needed at the time. It is important that you don’t over-rehearse one scene unless absolutely necessary, as the cast get very bored.

# PASSION PLAYS

- Ensure that you only call those needed for the scenes you are working on and update your cast each week with a reminder or any changes.
- Ensure you have a separate rehearsal for the Cross with the engineer or creator of the cross to ensure that all safety procedures are adhered to. Have all the actors who will be raising and lowering the cross at that rehearsal. Do it first with no-one on the cross, then use the actors. We have a safety procedure that if the actor playing Jesus says “no” at any time (as that word isn’t in the script), then something is wrong and you need to get him down. The sound company should also be made aware of this, as should the stage manager to ensure that all mics are switched off when the cross is being raised or lowered, to allow the issue to be resolved. We always have a spare costume that goes along with the sound company in case they need to go onsite during the performance (it happens more than you think!).
- If you are using vehicles to get around the site with actors or props, then you should have a rehearsal to ensure there are no timing problems with that or issues like blocked routes. Ensure all users of the site are informed so that no routes are blocked.
- If using animals, you should have separate rehearsals for them or at least set aside time to get actors used to them and animals used to actors and sound. N.B. Horses can get spooked by the sound, so it is important that they are taken to the site and hear the music, if applicable, and voices through mics.
- There should be separate children’s rehearsals, or time set aside to rehearse the children. See later section on child protection.
- Do a children’s rota for acting in performance and ensure that it is posted and confirmed each day. Also, ensure that the actor playing Jesus knows who is on each day for performances.
- If you are having any stage fighting, ensure that is rehearsed separately. The more complex the fight, the more the actors should rehearse it. There are professional Fight Directors, but they can be expensive. Most professional actors have done basic stage fighting and can work out a simple routine with those involved. Keep it simple and SAFE!

SEE APPENDIX for detailed acting notes which can be given out to casts

# PASSION PLAYS

## **WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN IN THE CAST?**

Children in the cast play a vital part, but it is recognised that there are many issues surrounding children. You must create a Child Protection Policy and have a named person in charge of Child Protection [See Appendix]

- Give a child protection talk to adults and children alike.
- The main rule is that no adult should ever be left alone with a child.
- Talk children through Jesus' blood makeup; let them see it being done if needed, as they often are a bit scared.
- Have 2 or 3 separate children's rehearsals where you can work with them separately
- Dependant upon your policy, children can come to rehearsals at other times, but we suggest they are either accompanied by their parents or you have a person whose duty is to be in charge of children (like a chaperone) at rehearsals and that person **MUST BE POLICE CHECKED**
- Have a children's rota for acting and announce each morning.
- Children should have separate dressing areas from adults.
- If you are doing the Nativity, have 2 babies on a rota. Get the mother to bring the babies to meet the actors who will be handling them to ensure she is happy with the actors and gives any tips on how her baby likes to be handled. The mother should arrive on set not less than 15 minutes before the play starts each day and be ready to hand her baby to the actor, and then take the baby away after. The baby should always be in a white jumpsuit to ensure they are warm enough. They will be wrapped in white muslin also.

# PASSION PLAYS

## WHAT ABOUT A SET?

The set should be kept simple and safe. If structures are needed to be built, and will have actors using them, then you should have safety certificates (easy enough to have a builder do that). Set decoration doesn't need certificates, but everything should be tested to ensure it is safe and won't endanger the general public or the actors. Try to use your natural surroundings where possible. Any set built, or material used, should be flame-proofed (you can buy spray like Protexit from Lighting Suppliers).

Ensure any set built doesn't obscure the acting from the audience and there are clear sight lines.

If using private land, do a safety check on the grass and general grounds, removing any rubble that might cause trip injuries, filling in any pot holes, killing and clearing any nettles (be aware of vegetation – in one production an audience member pointed out that there were poisonous plants growing in an area used by the cast!)

Wood chip or bark can be put down to minimise slipping problems in areas. Although it isn't a good idea if making a path up a hill, better to cut "steps" into the ground and then cover with bark chippings. Always think about what that area might be like if it rained.

If you are doing a "walking on the water" scene, this can be built with scaffolding built into the base mud/rock and a wooden platform just under the water line. However, that walkway must be cleared away at the end of the run as the wood would rot otherwise, it is also essential for the walkway to be cleared between performances of any moss or algae that may make it slippery.

### Ground preparation

If using portaloos and portakabins, you might want to consider shielding them from public view with hessian coverings between poles. It just makes it look better. This must be done before the Tech Rehearsal. Hessian can be used to cover over any areas that you want hidden, or open windows, doors, hiding actors etc. If using it to screen actors, ensure you double it over as it can be quite see-through.

### Set

We tend to have in the full version:

1. Nativity Scene with an inn, stable, and two pillars (ours are made out of polystyrene) for the Temple. We also have a variety of stalls, manger but not many props.
2. Baptism – water

# PASSION PLAYS

3. Temptation – we built a few platforms into hilly ground to allow actors to stand on them; but they must be safe!
4. Market place – we have a small pier to tie up a boat, market stalls covered with Hessian, material to sell, fruit and veg (no bananas as they didn't have them!), pots, horses, animals. We also create a temple by having 3 pillars again and tree stumps for the priests to sit on, some tables and a small home for Lazarus, a well for Samaria, and (on private land) we have dug a hole, shored up inside to make safe, for a child to be hidden inside. There was a small mound built up over that with a hole in the middle to allow the child to hand up the bread for the Feeding of the 5000 (one of the tricks!)
5. Last Supper – a long table and 13 tree stumps or cushions for disciples to sit at. Goblets and plates for food and drink.
6. Gethsemane – great if you have a natural wooded area. In the past, we have also built a stream and rocks to sit on.
7. Trial by Sanhedrin – no set required.
8. Pilate's Palace – we have created a large platform built out from a hill (this was professionally built to take actors' weight) but you can simply have a throne-type chair.
9. Crucifixion – try for 3 crosses, if you can. If you can only get one, you can still have the thieves conversation, but staged as if they are being arrested by the Soldiers and shouting up at Jesus as they are taken away. Remember that, after the crucifixion, you need to get the actor off and changed VERY fast, so you need a location and helpers to do that. [See Appendix for notes on building the cross]
10. Resurrection – We were very fortunate to have an ice house in Dundas already built into the land, but we have also built a tomb with hay bales and covered it over with a back entrance for Jesus to escape from. We have also used existing statues in public parks.
11. Ascension – nothing required, but great if you can use a place of height for Jesus to disappear.

## Setup

The set should be created or brought out of storage and in place (if on private land) 3 weeks before the first production. If on public land, then it must be put in place the day before and taken down as you finish the scene, or by the end of the day (depending on what security risks you may have)

Safety checks must be completed on all set.

# PASSION PLAYS

## During performance

Safety checks made each day, especially on the Cross, and ensuring there is no damage to platforms that actors may be standing on etc.

## Post performance

All the set must be taken down and stored carefully to ensure that it won't deteriorate or be damaged while in storage. A place that is watertight and dry is essential for storage.

## **WHAT PROPS WILL I NEED?**

Your Stage Manager should read the script thoroughly and, working alongside the Director, decide on props that will be needed. Create a Props List [See Appendix]. Keep it simple. Ask the cast for any items that they might have (baskets etc) but if you are borrowing, keep a note of who gave what, so that it can be returned at the end of the play.

Once a list of props is made, the Stage Manager will co-ordinate getting those props into rehearsal when needed, on site for the performances, and stored or returned when the play is over.

See the Stage Manager section for more detailed notes on Props and setting.

## **WHAT COSTUMES WILL I NEED?**

You need a Costume Designer/Co-ordinator who will be in charge of costumes from the beginning. You may also have a team of costume people who make/maintain the costumes before, during, and after the run. You should at least have a Wardrobe Mistress (could be the Co-ordinator) on site at all performances and present at a few rehearsals before the Dress Rehearsal. The costume Co-ordinator will need to find people who are willing to make costumes. (There are a number of costumes being used by the Dundas and Easter play productions that could be loaned out to help a new play get off the ground.) It is advisable, if the production has a long term plan, to create your own costumes, rather than borrowing or hiring.

Repairing, replacing and washing should be the responsibility of the hirer/borrower if you are hiring out. Costume hire stores don't always expect you to wash costumes but do expect a good state of repair. Loaning out existing costumes should be accompanied by an inventory and agreement to wash and repair.

# PASSION PLAYS

## Setup

The Co-ordinator meets with the Director to establish the vision for costumes and the cast list to determine how many costumes and what look the production will have. It is important to do Costume Research.

If using last year's costumes, then ensure they are in a fit state (no mould etc.) on them and any repairs done.

If hiring any or borrowing costumes, keep a note of what is being borrowed and from where so that accurate returns are made. Can be a costly mistake to lose a costume!

The Co-ordinator is given a budget by the producers and must keep them posted on expenditure.

Each cast member should be measured for their costume [See Appendix for form]

Costumes are then made, bought, borrowed or hired and fitted at different rehearsals and the Director approves each one. You can do this by having a separate rehearsal with a costume line-up where the Designer and Director discuss each costume and any changes needed. When making costumes, make them roomy enough to fit all sizes and have space for warm clothes that the actors may want to wear underneath.

Ensure there are spare costumes available for helpers (horse handlers, sound people) Dark-coloured blankets are useful in case of cold weather.

The final rehearsal before the show is called the Dress Rehearsal and is where all the actors wear full costume as if it were a performance. It is useful if they have worn the costumes for a few rehearsals before, so that any problems can be identified earlier. Last minute changes are made at this rehearsal.

## During

The Wardrobe Mistress is responsible for helping cast get into costume and that any checks are made to ensure no inappropriate jewellery, t-shirts etc. Continuity is important.

It is a good idea if you can have access during the run to a sewing machine on site, as inevitably there are repairs to be done.

Any repairs or washing is done by the Wardrobe Department – checking with the actors.

# PASSION PLAYS

There should be two Resurrection costumes in case one gets lost or ripped/not dry in time. (We wash the white resurrection costume each night and ensure it is dried and back in time for the actor the next day) Be careful of shrinking it though!

The Wardrobe department may be involved in helping with quick changes during the show, e.g. Mary and Jesus.

## Post show

Ensure all costumes are returned to the Wardrobe personnel where they are boxed or bagged up (we suggest you don't use black bags as it is too easy to throw them out by mistake), and labelled for washing (keeping colours together, costumes for dry cleaning, costumes that are not washed etc). You can buy cheap, sturdy bags at dry cleaners or Ikea.

If washing is farmed out to a variety of people, number the labels and make a tear off slip with the label number and contact number of the washer, so you can chase up if needed!

When all costumes are washed and dried, they should be boxed up and stored in a dry environment.

Ensure that hires or loans are returned.

## Armour

Tends to be hired from Hands On [see Contacts] It may be worthwhile having armour made for your production. Needed is:

- 3 Roman Helmets [one with plume for Centurian]
- Breast plate and Backplate for Centurian
- 3 Swords and Scabbards
- 2 leather stripped belts
- 2 Poleaxe spears
- 6 pins for breastplate [keep separate and ensure returned]

# PASSION PLAYS

## **WHAT MAKE-UP WILL I NEED?**

You don't really need make-up; just ensure that actors are dirtied by using mud and dirt simply to take the edge off! Watch they don't go overboard though and not all actors need it!

The main thing that you need is makeup to create the lashes on Jesus' back. This should be done first thing in the morning and takes at least one hour to create (an early call for him!).

The lashes are best created by:

- using plain kitchen roll
- Latex glue
- Barrier cream (can be a simple moisturiser to protect his skin)
- Stage makeup for bruising effect and red lashes
- Stage blood for the fresh blood.

If doing the 3 crosses, then the thieves also need fresh blood and some scarring but not much. The fresh blood is put on their wrists and feet at the time of them going on the crosses

If using a body double for Jesus, when taking him off the cross and onto a stretcher, we usually have one hand loose so the audience see what they think is his arm. It also needs blood on the wrist.

### Jesus lashes:

The actor should be in his loin cloth first and have his radio mic already attached as you put the makeup over the mic lead.

The lash effect is created by:

- applying barrier cream to his back thinly
- tearing strips of around 1" maximum width of kitchen roll and glueing them to his back in random lash effect (don't do too many or the effect is lost)
- very carefully with a sharp pair of scissors (medical ones are best as they have a protective part where you will connect with his skin!), cut a hole in the middle of the strips and tear, so that it looks like skin.
- cream flesh coloured foundation needs that matches the actors skin tone goes all over the back to merge the strips in so they look like flesh
- then, using carmine and deep red/purple, paint on the skin the area you have just exposed in the middle of the strips, so it now looks like torn skin. You can also do some random red stripes.
- powder gently over all to set the makeup

When the actor is before Pilate and is sentenced to be flogged, he takes off his costume offstage and fresh blood is applied from a bottle to the wounds so that it drips down his back and looks like he has just been flogged! Simple and very effective!!! Just time consuming. Our advice – have someone artistic do this, looks much better!

# PASSION PLAYS

## **DO I NEED ANIMALS?**

Animals can be a great addition to the play but have their own issues! Again, if you are on private land, it is easier to bring in animals. Strictly speaking, you should send a letter to the City Vet stating you are doing a play with [specify the animals] and detailing what they will be doing, how they will be cared for and where they go at the end of each performance. Other issues:

- animal rehearsals should be held at least one week beforehand
- horses should be “bomb-trained” which means that they are not distressed by the music etc
- horse handlers need costumes
- ensure that anyone bringing animals knows the correct times to bring them each day for performance and rehearsal
- there should be wipes in the dressing rooms and production cabin for actors and for anyone else handling the animals,
- it is a requirement that all horse riders wear safety hats, so we build the costume helmets around safety hats which were borrowed. If Pilate were to ride a horse, then he would need a Roman helmet, or the actor would have to sign a disclaimer saying he was happy to ride without protection.

Animal Requirements for full play:

Nativity:

- 3 horses [or camels]
- sheep in pen
- 2 pigeons
- can have cows in stable

Baptism – dove in Jesus’ bag to be released

Market:

- sheep/goats in pens
- horses if you want
- pigeons in basket for temple clearance

Trials – horses for Pilate

# PASSION PLAYS

## WHAT ABOUT SOUND?

There are a number of companies who deal specifically with such productions and a number of others who may have experience. It is important to check whether they have done any outdoor performance work and that they have the manpower to work on such a large project.

You should go out to tender [See Appendix for example] to ensure you get the best financial deal. To do this, you need to have a script, an idea of how many radio mics you need (the large scale Dundas production uses 15 mics and has a complex plot for swapping mics between actors), and an idea of how many scenes and where they are to be. It is best to invite each company to do a walkthrough with the sound company to show them your area as the quote can be very dependant upon the area they need to cover with cables and sound points.

The sound control points should also be covered in some way (either by a gazebo or a wooden hut). Depending on how many performances you intend to give, we would recommend wooden huts built to the sound company specification (they need a certain area and a window area). The huts need to be lockable, if staying onsite (this tends to be on private land only, as it is too risky to leave sound equipment overnight in a public place). This adds to your costs. You are responsible for providing security if needed and also for providing the huts or gazebos. Although you might find the sound company has their own wet weather provision. You should ask them to confirm and quote for this at the outset.

The Easter play huts were 8ft x 6ft with door and window at front, and large bench directly under window. Windows should be openable (preferably hinged from top to allow the operator to hear from inside, but still keeping everything dry). The huts will also need CO2 fire extinguishers (one per control point) which the sound company may provide or, may be cheaper if you can get hold of some. Dry powder extinguishers are not appropriate, except for power generators where they are necessary.

### Information that you need to include in your tender letter:

Ensure the operatives can meet with the Director to do a site visit and walkthrough. They may have suggestions with regards to speakers, sound control points etc.

1. Dates of the production and timings of rehearsals beforehand.
2. Mic requirements. We needed 15 radio mics and 2 spare in case of problems. At least one should be flesh coloured for Jesus). You may need fewer than this.
3. Batteries for mics and micropore/elastic to attach mics to actors should be provided by the Sound Company
4. The producing Company will provide huts for sound control points

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5. Overnight security of the equipment is the responsibility of the Sound Company [can be discussed with the Producers]
6. The Sound Company should have insurance for their equipment (See earlier mention of Insurance). The Producers do have Insurance for the play and other equipment. Therefore, a list of the sound equipment should be given to the Producers for their Insurance.
7. The Stage Manager and Director will provide the Sound Company with a mic plot which should be checked by the Sound Company and rehearsed at the Technical Rehearsal (or before).
8. The Producers will provide the Sound Company with a script. The Sound company should attend a rehearsal before the Technical to check out the movement of the actors
9. The Director of the play will be available to do a site visit to help the Sound Company provide an accurate quote to meet requirements for speakers and any changes
10. The Sound Company should provide their own method of communication between themselves (i.e. walkie-talkies). The Producing Company will provide walkie-talkies for their own production staff (Note: this may be part of the quote requested from the Sound Company).
11. The minidisk with the music should have the titles of the music tracks on it to allow double checks to be made. A music cue sheet should be created to ensure all correct [See Appendix].
12. For the Dundas play, we run the Technical rehearsal with actors in two parts. First and longest part is on the Saturday before the show and the second part is on the Sunday.
13. The Sound Company must provide windshields for mics.
14. There should be a Sound Company representative monitoring sound from out front.
15. There will be a costume provided by the Producing Company to allow a sound person to go onstage to fix any problems during the play.
16. The Director, SM and Producers will meet with the Sound Company to talk through timings, cues, music etc.
17. The Sound Company must have the facility to make FOH announcements in case of an emergency.
18. The Sound Company should provide their own fire equipment in case of fires caused by the sound equipment [see previous notes].

Other aspects that need to be covered in discussions:

- Possible requirements for Sound company to apply for licences for use of radio mics in a specific location.
- Find out who gives out mics each day and if they are checked.
- Ensure Jesus' mic is brought to him first thing in the morning (as he needs it fitted before makeup) and remember he is onsite 1½ hours before the production starts.
- Mic plot [See Appendix for example] should be created, usually by the Stage Manager and Director, rehearsed and checked before technical

# PASSION PLAYS

rehearsal. We now type a card and have the actors rehearse with the card first until we iron out any problems. The card is then laminated and attached to each mic pouch.

- Each mic should have a mic pouch which should be made by the costume department and is simply a pouch that can be tied round neck or waist of an actor. It should have a period look and not be too white!
- Cast should be briefed on sound protocol (not walking in front of speakers, wait till music ends etc, use of mics; not speaking out of character while on mic, ensuring mic packs and ribbons are hidden; where to position mic on costume; rustling and wind awareness).
- Ensure sound company have their own walkie-talkies or communication system.
- The production team need walkie-talkies themselves to allow communication between Director, Producer, Head of Stewarding and Stage Manager at all times during the show.
- Put speakers in acting areas where possible so that voices and action are closely linked, to ensure that there aren't "disembodied voices" coming from nowhere. All voices should be coming from where the audience can see the action.
- Ensure the mics for Joseph and Mary at Nativity are kept down until they are in sight with the donkey as this can be a clumsy set up. Any set up or offstage action should have mics switched off (at the sound control point, not by the actors).
- If doing the full version, we suggest that you tech the first half of the play on the Saturday before the show opens and the second half on the Sunday or whatever days are set aside for Tech (instead of doing all on one day).
- The Tech rehearsal is primarily for the Stage Manager and the Sound Company. Everyone else takes second place that day. It is an idea to stop after each scene and make sure everyone is happy with it before proceeding.
- Have windshields for mics – include this in your tender. These are small shields that minimise (they don't stop) the interference you get from the wind. Encourage your actors to be aware that if it is very windy, where possible, they should turn their head away from the direction of the wind (they are not always aware that it is causing problems).
- Have sound person monitoring sound from out front if possible, that way they can adjust the volume
- Have a costume always beside the sound company in case they have to go onsite to change or fix a mic.
- Director, SM and Producers should meet with Sound Company and talk through the music, timings and cues especially if producing the play for the first time.
- There must be facility to make Front of House (FOH) announcements to the audience if the play is going to start late or you need to make an announcement. Ensure sound company are aware of the safety procedure for stopping the show from PA.

# PASSION PLAYS

- One of the most common problems is that the sound company don't have mics up in time to hear the first words of the every sentence. The need to avoid this should be stressed over and over!
- Another of the most common problems is that any music comes on abruptly and ends abruptly. Ensure all music is FADED in and out.
- You can put an echo on God and devils and angel.
- Ensure you have all sound effects, e.g. the flogging on minidisk and ready to go. Test the flogging volume (loud) and the sound of the cock crowing (quiet).

## Setup

The sound Company will need to be onsite (if on a private estate) to dig in cables and set up equipment at least 3 days (if doing the full version) before your Technical Rehearsal to ensure they are ready to start on the Tech. If doing one production in a public place, then they are usually the first there and may need a team of volunteers to help with set-up and moving equipment between scenes. It is not unusual to "leapfrog" sound desks and equipment from one area to another during the play as this will keep your costs down.

Electricity supply sources need to be identified and/or generators for areas that don't have electricity. Be warned though, generators are expensive, and it is essential that they are not noisy (however, the quieter they are, the more expensive they can be).

All cables must be dug into the ground (if on a private estate) or covered by plastic matting if the audience are going to walk over any cables

## During performance

On the day of performance, the sound company should be onsite checking all equipment and ensuring that the sound is working from the outset.

Jesus' mic must be delivered to him first thing.

The actors should be allocated and given their mics by the Sound company, or by a responsible person.

The Sound company are to check in with the Stage Manager when first onsite and go over any issues.

Keep Jesus' mic up when he is on the cross to allow us to hear laboured breathing (only when the cross is fully up). Take it out when he dies.

## Post performance

All mics are collected by Sound Company and checked.

Sound huts are made secure if equipment staying overnight or equipment stowed away if being taken down (struck) every night.

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Sound company representative should attend a post-show briefing just after the show to take any notes from Producer/Director

At the end of the run, the Sound Company should attend a de-briefing, if there is one, and/or give notes as to how to improve for the next time.

So, we have all in place, what do we do for the Show?

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

It is important that you establish onsite space for the Producers, Director, Stage Manager, and Department Heads to liaise. This space should be private if possible and quiet.

A space for props and costumes is also important.

A separate dressing area for the actor playing Jesus should be provided.

The cast should be split into different changing areas, with separate areas for children.

### Your Stage Manager

Having an efficient Stage Manager [SM] is crucial to the smooth running of the play. They are in discussions early on with the Producer, and more specifically the Director. If your budget allows, or you have a volunteer, then that person should be at all rehearsals from the very beginning. If not, then bring them in around 6 weeks beforehand.

- There should be a Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) on the play from the start to take any notes, write moves in the script and to communicate to the SM for sound and others. This could be a volunteer. This person would also be the liaison for any ground staff (or estate staff if on private land) to sort out the smaller props/setting one week beforehand.
- Props should be onsite at least two weeks beforehand so the actors can rehearse.
- There should be 2 reliable props people for the tech and for all performances At least one dedicated props person and can be supplemented by cast members helping.
- SM to create sheet of technical rehearsals, performances and contact telephone numbers to sound company, production team, estate and backstage workers by week 4 before production
- SM to meet with production team, estate workers, safety officer, animal co-ordinator and sound company to check preparations etc by week 3 before production.
- SM to carry out props check with Director and estate workers by week 2 before production.

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- SM does cast lists for checking in each day.
- SM does final check-ins with all departments by week 1 before production.
- There should be a Tech meeting to go over sound and other technical details.
- SM to check with Director before end of lunch in case of any changes.
- Need to ensure that there is always a supply of bin bags, tea, coffee, milk, biscuits, toilet rolls, paper towels in the production area and toilet (at Dundas this is provided by the estate but reminders are always needed).
- Brush needed to clean the cabin during rehearsals.
- Any additional turf being used e.g. on the mound, needs to be on earlier than dress rehearsal to give it time to grow so that it isn't too noticeably different.
- Fires each day are lit by the estate or person in charge of the set/props. Ensure they are put out by the same people or that someone (not an actor) is designated to extinguish them. Remind actors - especially children! - not to go near the fires.
- Ensure that there is a bread order put in or collected each day for the feeding of the 5000. This can be provided by a bakery. You also need one unleavened bread for the Last Supper (you can use a large naan bread).
- Cast/crew meal forms need to be filled in, if there are options, and collected. Try to ensure that the cast are not collecting lunch in costume, it ruins the effect!
- Ensure safety checks have been done each day.
- Preset drinking water for Jesus (check with actor where he wants it).

The SM is required to carry out the following:

## At Setup

Meet with the Director to discuss script and any issues. He walks site with Director and others.

Check Safety Policy and adds/changes anything they might see.

Work with actors on getting them used to mic plot, props and any practical issues they might have.

Double as the prompter in rehearsals (unless there is someone else to do that). Note: we strongly suggest that you state there are no prompts to be provided in a performance.

Keep a list of any equipment/costume/armour etc that has been hired.

## During Performance

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Since they are the first to arrive (along with Sound), the SM and DSM/helpers get the kettle on! Then they set up any props and set required that day and ensure that they follow their checklist.

Check in with the Director/Producers when they are onsite, and with the lead actor to determine what needs to be done or any notes.

Have a well earned cup of coffee before the performance starts!

Attend the cast briefing led by the Director who gives the SM time for their notes to be given to the cast.

When clearance is given by the Director to start the show, the SM is in charge of the production from that moment on. If the Director or Producers have any notes or concerns, they should be written down and given as notes at the end of the show (or the first appropriate time). Under no circumstances should the SM be interrupted during the show unless it is a safety incident!

During the show, and dependant upon how the SM and Sound Company choose to work, the SM will cue the show, i.e. they tell the sound company which mic to bring up and when. SM can also give "Standby cues" ½ page before e.g. "standby mics 12,13, 14" so everyone is ready.

Any set and props that need struck after each scene is done by the DSM.

Some prop issues that need to be considered:

- ensure blood is up at cross (for thieves and Jesus) and Pilate's area (2 sets) early on.
- If doing multiple performances, Jesus' costumes (especially the whites) are given to wardrobe mistress for washing and drying and brought back each morning to actor's dressing room (note – wash bloody costumes separate from whites and low temperature so that they don't shrink)
- Shroud cloths (2) should be folded and put in an easy place to be seen inside the tomb'
- Ensure Cleopas has bread in his bag for Emmaus each day.
- The purple cloth is preset at Pilate's palace and then brought back from either there or cross each day. Also bring back Jesus' robe which is left at Pilate's palace each day.
- Ensure stone is always away from tomb as audience go up and guarded by a steward.
- The crosses are always down as the audience passes, and the central cross raised after that scene so it is up as audience leave.
- All props must be onsite for tech rehearsal.
- Disciples need food to take back from Samaria.
- Set twigs for Mary to gather at nativity

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- Costume mistress to be to help Mary get bump in place for donkey ride.
- Fake baby preset in stall (this is used in place of the real baby when Joseph and Mary have to run – a safety aspect).
- Table for Matthew the tax collector in the market place.
- Cast to dress the market place as they have time to do this.
- Judas needs a pouch for money.
- There needs to be water in the well if you are doing the Samaritan scene.
- Ensure cast know to be careful with props and not break them (crooks and spears especially)
- Jesus needs a bag for dove and also needs bread in his bag at same time.
- Tell actors that props should NEVER be moved
- Lots of fruit and veg/colour on stalls (but warn cast not to eat it all – becomes very expensive!)
- Jesus needs a stick and wood to whittle at Samaritan well.
- There should be bread in the little boy's basket at feeding of 5000.
- Actors are responsible for setting their own water bottles but check to see where the actor playing Jesus wants his bottles set and ensure they are set each day.
- If there is a pin for the cross hinge, it must be safe, clean and greased (not too much)
- There should be ladders for the thieves to get up and down from the crosses.
- Ensure the stretcher is safe to carry an actor.
- Check the grounds for pot holes.
- Ensure the bread is ordered for Feeding of 5000 (if not using a pre-dug hole for this scene, the actors simply always have the bread in their baskets but it is covered until they need it)

## Post Show

Any props are collected and packed away each night or made ready for the next performance.

The SM attends the debrief meeting after each show to go over any notes with the Director/Producers and any action taken

Ensure everything is made secure for the next days' performance.

Ensures the weaponry is stored safely.

Leave the SM script onsite, in case of any accident to the SM, which means the show can still be cued.

After the run, all props are collected and stored safely for the next year.

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Ensure that all portakabins and changing areas/storage areas are clean and any lost property is collected.

Anything that has been hired, e.g. the armour, is returned by the SM or they ensure it has been returned.

## **WHAT ABOUT SAFETY?**

### Setup

A Health and Safety Policy should be written [see Appendix for two different examples]. A very useful guide to read is The Purple Book which is a Government publication available from HMSO about Events Safety Management (Events Safety Guide).

Every organisation should read this guide and then can use the Appendix Policies as a template to create their own Safety Policy (it will be slightly different with each venue).

You must create a Risk Assessment [See the end of Health and Safety Policies] for each area that the public will be in and a generic one for the whole event. Your Licensing Department in the local council can help you with that and it is a good idea to get them to do a walkthrough with you and have them point out any risks that they see. By having them onboard and getting their advice early, you get them on your side and it can sometimes make things go smoothly, since it is their department that ultimately gives you your performing licence.

The council will have a number of forms for booking which kick off their Health and Safety procedures. [See Appendix for some example forms]

Early on, you should prepare a route plan marked with facilities (toilets etc), acting areas, audience areas, and audience flow of movement [See Appendix].

### Stewards

You should recruit a Head Steward (this can be your Health and Safety Co-ordinator). This person is responsible for helping to recruit Stewards, briefing the Stewards and co-ordinating any rotas.

The Safety of the Audience is extremely important and due consideration should be given also to ensuring there are facilities and space for less able-bodied audience members to see the play safely and securely.

It may be that you also have some hearing impaired people in the audience, especially if you are having a signed performance. Due consideration should also be given to them and the Director, Interpreter and Stage Manager should

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work to ensure the best place for the Interpreter is found and for people in the audience to see the play and Interpreter.

A Steward's duties include:

- Making a plan or notes to be sent to the Head Steward for where stewards should NOT be and also any key points that need stewarding attention.
- if doing the longer version, stewards need to stay on set at lunchtime to ensure audience not going onto set and they put any stage fires out.
- ensure the audience are kept back a bit from the tomb entrance.
- At Dundas we let the audience leave the walled garden at the beginning. If they want to leave before the walk to the cross that is also fine. Don't hold the audience back from the action - let them go. This is to alleviate any blockage caused by a thousand people trying to get through one gate!
- when Jesus has passed the first gate [next to sound hut] outside walled garden, the audience can be let out that gate but not before as it will obstruct the play action

During Show:

- Report to Head Steward for duties that day.
- Welcome the audience.
- Help with car parking if required.
- Hand out programmes (can be done by others).
- Guide the audience to the starting areas.
- Guide the audience to the different scenes.
- Ensure the safety of audience is top priority at all times.
- Stop anyone who might try to interrupt the play.
- Help less able-bodied audience members.
- Keep the set safe when not being used, especially in a public place and ensure nobody tries to destroy or take props.

Post Show:

- Ensure audience leave the premises safely.
- Help with tidying up of litter etc.
- Check in with Head Steward if required.

## Traffic Control

If you are in a private estate, then this needs to be taken into consideration and plans put in place for:

- flow of traffic entering the grounds
- where coaches go
- car parking
- flow of traffic leaving the grounds

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If you are providing car parking, then put someone in charge of the car park. It is an idea also to put toilets in the car park (only 2).

If you are in a public space then this doesn't really apply, but your staff, actors and crew will need to know where to park. The Production team need a place close by and easily accessible as there are often last minute dashes! It is an idea to produce car passes, so that you can control who is parking where.

For both cases, you should notify the Police Department about your production dates and discuss any issues. You can ask for Traffic Wardens to help direct traffic (we use this at Dundas).

## First Aid

See the Policy for details, but depending on your size of audience, this dictates what you need for First Aid. You can also be guided by the Council if in a public space. St Andrews provides volunteers but requires a donation. You should take note of any trained (and current) First Aiders in the cast and crew and who can do what. Just because you have a Doctor in the cast doesn't mean you are covered as they are not supposed to intervene.

## Toilets

If you are in a public place, simply know where the nearest facilities are and ensure your stewards know this information to pass onto audience. You can print it in the programme

If in a private area, you may need to hire in portaloos and make sure that they are clearly signed for the audience (one of the Health and Safety requirements is clear signage).

Ensure you have someone to clean them on a regular basis.

## Other Issues:

### Catering

You need to cater for the cast and crew during the performances as it can be a long time without food.

We always make sure that onsite are facilities for hot water, coffee, tea and biscuits for onsite rehearsals. It can be very cold work!

You may want to consider bringing in a catering company to provide lunch facilities for the audience such as burgers or sandwiches. Check the Health and Safety policy for food handling etc.

# PASSION PLAYS

Note, we have found it best over the years not to have catering facilities open before or during the show but only open at lunchtime. Also, check where to site the van as the generator can make a loud noise which can interrupt your production.

At Dundas, we provide the cast with lunch from the caterers and have developed a method whereby the actors put in their orders for the week and their name. The Catering Company prepares lunches in separate packs and delivers to the actors' lunch area each day. (Note: the stage crew collect their own packs just before the play breaks for lunch).

The Easter play has a volunteer catering team who prepare hot soup and rolls with a Mars Bar for energy and that is provided for lunch

Both schemes are provided at no cost to the actors and volunteers. They are giving up a lot of their time and it is the least you can do for them in return!

If on public property, you may find there are already ice cream vans and this needs careful negotiating to have them move out of acting areas if that is their patch! Also to have them switch off their generators during the performance. However, they all have licences that can be revoked by the Council, so don't let them threaten you!

Security Passes [See Appendix]

It is a good idea to have all Production Team issued with passes, the cast don't need passes, but you should have a list of their names. Any cars can also have passes.

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## **SO WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS ON THE DAY?**

Well, for one thing you all need a calm head and Spirit! If everyone knows their own area, responsibilities, and who is in charge, it should all go like clockwork!

The Stage Manager is the person who is overall in charge on the day of performance and reports to the Producer and Director. A timetable [ See Appendix] is a useful thing to adhere to especially if you have a lot of people to oversee. Department heads should all check in with the Stage Manager first thing on the day so they know you are there and can get any last minute notes.

An example of the day:

- Stage Manager and crew arrive onset – GET THE COFFEE ON!!!!
- Sound crew arrive (may have arrived earlier).
- Producer and Director arrive.
- Dept heads report as they arrive to SM .
- Set is checked and dressed with props.
- Actors start arriving and get into costumes.
- Actors preset any costume changes or personal props they need (and water for themselves).
- Box office and programme sellers arrive.
- 30 mins. before the production, Director gathers cast and gives notes.
- Director and SM liaise with Producer to give go-ahead to start.
- Play begins and is run by the SM (do not give notes during the play to anyone, unless safety concern!).
- If there is a lunch break, actors to dressing rooms, rest to Production area. Notes can be given then.
- Play finishes
- Debrief meeting with Producer, Director, SM, Sound and Technical at the end of the play
- Props and costumes reset for next day and stored securely

When the run is finished, all costumes gathered for washing, props and set for storage or return and post production meetings held.

**HAVE A PARTY! REST! THANK GOD! AND....**

**DO IT ALL AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

# PASSION PLAYS

## USEFUL CONTACTS

Producers of past plays:

Charlotte de Klee [Lochiehead Plays]

Sir Jack Stewart Clark [Dundas]

Rev Tom Cuthell [Dundas]

Dr Rachel Wood [Easter Play]

Gill Cook [Easter Play]

Lina Borwick [Glasgow]

Directors:

Suzanne Lofthus

Shona McNeill

Armour – Hands On [Event Management] 79 Loanbank Quadrant, Glasgow,  
G51 3HZ. 0141 440 2005

Stage Managers:

Kelly Butterfield

Safety Officers:

Andrew Mott [Easter]

Cameron Rose [Easter]

Bread Suppliers:

Pillars:

Lighting Suppliers:

Makeup – A&A Hair Studios

Stage Blood contact:

Sound Companies:

Apex Acoustics

The Warehouse

Corus Productions

SKL

Stage Management book by L. Stern

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Angela Benzies

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Norma Henderson

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Kelly Butterfield

Julian Dines

Pauline Hurst

Elaine Palmer

Rachel Wood

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