Production Checklist – Constructed for the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company
David Benedict – 2015-04-09

Ultimately, the Producer's job is to "produce" the show. This includes all aspects of assembling the project from beginning to end. If there is some doubt as to whose responsibility a certain task is, then it is the Producer's. The list here is to help new Producers understand everything that goes into a production, whether it be live or studio. Distinctions will be made under each section. *The first three steps can be done in any order, but all three must be done before any further action can be taken on any project for it to be an ARTC project.*

Approve the Project
Before beginning any project, it must be approved by the current Vice President, who also serves as Executive Producer for the company. The Executive Producer's direct involvement in the project can be negotiated at the time of approval and can range from no involvement whatsoever to co-producer status.

Remember, the Vice President can only approve your ability to request resources from other parts of the company. Any monetary needs (studio space, venue rental, marketing materials, etc.) must be approved by the Executive Committee.

Select Scripts
Scripts should be chosen based on what the Producer is trying to achieve, whether someone else is already producing it, the needs of the company's catalog, the expectations of the audience, and the technical abilities of the company, more or less in that order.

If the script is being adapted from another medium then the adaptation should be completed before further steps are taken if at all possible. Original scripts can also be commissioned from our in-house writers or from writers outside the company. Workshopping a script (whether original or adapted) is fine, but the final completed version should be in hand well before recording or performance time. If you are assembling a show using multiple scripts, you should decide now how to bridge them together and begin writing that material if necessary.

Secure Permission
Permission should be secured from the writer(s) before the Producer proceeds any further. Up to now (2015) this process has been pretty informal within the ranks of the company, but this may (and should) change as time goes on. If you are choosing an adaptation, you must make sure that the source material is either in the public domain or that we have secured permission to adapt it.

> **Studio distinction:**
> Contracts should be used if at all possible. Contracts are a written record of permission to use the talents of everyone involved in the project.
> **Live show distinction:**
> Up to now (2015) contracts have not been used for live performances and we have been relying on verbal consent from writers and actors. This may not always be the case. It is possible that some kind of blanket agreement may become necessary within the membership, but that will be discussed at a later time.

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Book Studio Time/Choose Venue
You must have a distribution channel for your show, whether it is to be sold on CD, given away via Podcast, or performed live.

> **Live show distinction:**
> Live venues must be chosen carefully. Things to be considered are: acoustic properties of the room, stage size, electrical issues, appropriateness (is it likely to attract our target audience), marketing (how difficult will it be to get word to our target audience), cost (do we have to pay anything for the space? Are we getting paid for the show?), time of the show, and location. For a live show, this step should actually take place before selecting scripts.
>
> ARTC is extremely portable, but this fact should not be abused. The equipment is heavy and not every space is suitable.
>
> **Studio distinction:**
> Currently (2015) we have the following options for studio space in order of preference:
> - *ARTC Studio* – Owned and operated by ARTC, currently (2015) housed in a sub-lease agreement with Terminus Media. The studio may be booked through David Benedict (ARTC), Bill Ritch (ARTC), and Mark Stancil (Terminus Media) and a calendar is maintained to keep track of availability. For access to that calendar, see David.
> - *Audio Craft* – Owned and operated by Henry Howard. Henry has traditionally donated the use of the studio to ARTC and therefore booking is done around his personal and professional schedule. The studio has enough room for 1-4 people in close proximity with each other.
> - *Bruce Bennett Studio* – Owned and operated by Bruce Bennett. This space is ideal for music recording if acoustic instruments are being used. Fees for use are negotiable depending on the project and the amount of time needed in the space.
> - *Ritch/Wilbanks Arts Center* – Owned and operated by Bill Ritch. This is not a studio in the strictest sense, but can be used for recording in a pinch.

Assemble Cast and Crew
Once the above steps have been completed, the Producer's first task is to appoint a Director and a Sound Designer. All three can be the same person if that is the Producer's wish, or any combination thereof.

The Director is responsible for filling the roles in the cast, scheduling rehearsals, and coaching the actors. The Sound Designer is responsible for the overall sound of the production, assembling sound effects (whether acquired from a sound effects library or recorded in-house as Foley), and either appointing a Mixer or acting as the Mixer themselves. When going into the studio it is essential that a Recording Engineer be brought on and they should be treated just like a lead actor for scheduling purposes, as they will be needed for every scene. A Script Supervisor is also very helpful to ensure that the actors are saying the right words, especially in the studio. If these roles are filled by different people, then the Producer has final say over all matters, but should work closely with his or her appointed Director and Sound Designer to ensure that everyone is in agreement.

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The Producer's direct involvement in the day-to-day process of the production can range from no involvement (complete trust in the appointed Director and Sound Designer) to co-director or co-sound designer. At least one Musician should also be brought on board at this point, as well as a Foley lead.

Rehearse
Once the cast and crew have been selected, rehearse the script.

Live show distinction:
For live shows, the Producer should bear in mind that you only get one take and should rehearse the actors and crew appropriately. Be sure to know all the details about the show as early as possible (date, time, location, etc) so as to accurately set the production calendar and schedule sufficient rehearsal time. As we move forward, we may have more than one project in development at a time. It will be up to the Producer and the Director to work with the other Producers and Directors to prevent double-booking and other problems.

Studio distinction:
For studio productions the Producer and Director will be allowed the luxury of additional takes. However, this is not a license to skimp on rehearsal. Time is very valuable whether the studio is being donated or if the company is paying for it.

Rehearsals may be structured differently for studio productions in that you may choose to run scenes between characters and then different scenes with different characters rather than the whole show in one sitting.

The Mixer can always stitch the scenes back together in post production, however there tends to be better energy when the actors can play off of one another. Studio work should adhere to the highest quality we can achieve and it all begins with the acting. Bear that in mind when scheduling rehearsals or when deciding whether to do another take. Safety takes are always a good idea – all it takes is one technical glitch to ruin a whole take and have to drag everyone back into the booth!

Record/Perform
Have a good show!

Live show distinction:
The Producer should work with the technical staff and the venue to determine when we will be given access to the stage and begin setting up fairly early in the day. Arrangements should be made for finding volunteers to help pack the van, get to the venue early, help set up, and then help break down and unload the van afterwards. Other things to consider are whether you want to have an introduction, bridging, and/or credits. The Producer will also dictate the dress code to the cast. We have not (as of 2015) determined a standard dress code for every show, so it will be up to each individual Producer to set it themselves.

Studio distinction:
If you have rehearsed properly, this process should go fairly smoothly. If possible, schedule actors to arrive at the studio according to the scenes they are in to prevent people from having to sit around and wait all day. Also be sure to schedule time to record Foley as it will speed up the mixing process if you don't have to go back into the studio later.

Post-production
After the performance/recording session, the recorded tracks must be processed.

Live show distinction:
The show should have been recorded using either the Alesis recorder, the Tascam or ZOOM SD recorders, on a laptop, or some combination of the above. Either the Producer or one of the members of the technical staff should go through the recording and fix any errors that are repairable. Examples of this include volume levels, removal of lengthy pauses (especially between scenes), and some plosives if possible.

The show may be used in a Podcast (if the authors and actors have given permission). If it is eligible to be rebroadcast then it should be entered into the Podcasting spreadsheet/database so the Podcasting producers will know it is available.

At the very least, an archive copy should be made with the option of distributing to the cast. Make sure the cast understands the distribution arrangement we may or may not have with this disc. Some shows may be free to copy while others are not.

Studio distinction:
Post production is obviously a much more complicated affair when dealing with studio tracks. Great care should be exercised to maintain high standards of quality while also keeping to a reasonable schedule.

The Sound Designer and Mixer should work together to get sound effects gathered or recorded, vocal filters applied properly, and monitor the pacing of the piece. They should also work with the Musician(s) to get any transitional or incidental music mixed properly.

It is then the Producer's responsibility to arrange for duplication if appropriate, either through glass-mastering or CD-R replication, depending on the scope of the project and whether it is intended to be a permanent addition to the company's catalog. Some titles may only be available in a digital format and do not need duplication.

Archiving
Following either a Live show or a Studio production, all materials should be archived in case of future need.

Live show distinction:

At a minimum, all recorded sound effects used in the show should be archived in a set, easily-accessible location. If another Producer wishes to put on the same show next year or 5 years from now, they should not have to go through all the work of locating and auditioning recorded sound effects unless they disagree with the selection the previous producer made. If the Alesis was used for recording the show then the tracks should be preserved if possible. In some cases the files will have to be compressed before they will be easily stored. FLAC is a lossless compression that is recognized by many audio DAWs and is highly convenient, but Monkey's Audio is acceptable as well. Be sure to put the Monkey's Audio program on the archival disk as well, just in case.

Studio distinction:

All materials relating to the production should be saved, including trials, experiments, project files, and unused tracks. A future Producer should be able to reconstruct the entire project at any point in the future in the event of the need for remastering, remixing, or any other reason. This is especially important for all voice tracks.

Treatment of Masters

The master copy of any finished production is the final copy that is suitable for distribution. Due to the varying nature of our distribution agreements with various other companies, it is desireable to have the final version available in several different formats. These include wav (single file as well as individual wav files for each chapter), FLAC (for each chapter), mp3 (320 kbps, for each chapter). This archive should also include cover files (PSD, PDF, and TIF), liner notes (PDF), and Digital cover (PNG).

Conclusion

The above steps are hopefully a good set of guidelines for what is expected of a Producer. Anything listed above that is mentioned as being "the Producer's responsibility" can be delegated to another person, but the Producer remains responsible for making sure it is done correctly, with an eye to quality and professionalism, and in a timely fashion.

Beginning in late 2014 ARTC began to make use of our own studio facility, which has allowed us to have more than one show in production at a time. It is important to not overuse specific individuals, particularly the technical staff and Directors.

First time Producers should feel encouraged, but not required, to enlist people who have produced shows before as either a co-producer or an advisor.

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Bulleted Checklist

- Approval of Project
- Select Scripts
    - Appropriate to Venue
    - Bridging needed?
- Secure Permission
    - Contracts
- Select Venue/Book Studio Time
    - Live shows
        - Acoustic properties
        - Electrical needs
        - Stage size
        - Cost
        - Marketing considerations
    - Studios available
        - ARTC Studio
        - Audio Craft
        - Bruce Bennett Studio (music only)
        - Bill's Basement
- Assemble Cast and Crew
    - Live shows
        - Cast
        - Director
        - Tech lead
        - Foley lead
        - Musician
        - Sound designer
        - Floor manager
    - Studio shows
        - Recording engineer
        - All of the above
- Rehearse
- Record/Perform
    - Studio shows
        - Scheduling of scenes
        - Maximize efficient use of actors' and tech's time
- Post-Production
- Archiving