

Smartphone Theatre Production & Performance Tips

Hello Smartphone Theatre family!

Our first production, Gena Acosta's AIR BORN, launched Smartphone Theatre on March 27th 2020 and our audience has been growing ever since. The intention behind SPT is to keep our creative community connected and creating during this time where live venues have been shuttered. The silver lining in this recent pivot is that our works have found audiences all over the globe who continue to tune in every Friday at 5p. With that in mind our shows have become much more sophisticated and polished. Below are a handful of guidelines that will add to your already brilliant creativity.

OVERALL

1. Smartphone Theatre is an online platform that hosts weekly productions of original short plays (20+ mins.) or full length plays with two acts presented over two separate weeks. What we present is a hybrid between live TV and theatre. Although our actors are "on book," these should not be considered readings, they are very scaled down single camera productions currently presented via Zoom.
2. Computers. As we are on a computer-based platform, it is imperative that you have a computer that has enough oomph to handle this kind of communication. That means that you must have a somewhat current processor, camera and microphone, without any one of the three it will become impossible for you to participate. Here are the recommended specs per Zoom: [LINK](#).
3. Internet. As with the above, you must have a solid internet connection. That means an effective modem that will allow a clear picture and clear sound. Many of today's web service providers (Spectrum, etc.) will upgrade your modem for free, all you have to do is call their office.

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4. Wifi v. Ethernet. Ethernet wins. This is not mandatory but always helpful. If you have the option, hardline your computer directly to your modem.
5. Tech Rehearsal occurs on the Thursday before the Friday performance. Consider this day a combo Tech/Dress Rehearsal. We do not build cues on the day of the show.
6. Rehearsals. To be arranged with the director.
7. Smartphone Theatre will host the last 2 (or more) rehearsals allowing the director to focus on directing. This also provides an opportunity for me to offer suggestions that will help make this production the best it can possibly be.
8. The playwright needs to provide a brief description of the story (2 to 3 lines) which is used for marketing. This should be delivered by the Monday before the production.
9. On Friday evenings each show is presented to our audience through our private Zoom stage and is live streamed on Facebook to the public.
10. All productions are archived indefinitely on Smartphone's YouTube site and website. They typically become live by the immediate Sunday after the Friday production.
11. Be sure to visit: www.SmartphoneTheatre.com to become acquainted with the platform. I also encourage you to watch previous productions which can be found under the "Episode" tab.

PRODUCTION

1. Playwrights and Directors. Rehearsals are run very much like in the theatre or on set with directors setting the agenda.
2. It is encouraged to have a playwright and a director, not a playwright/director. Yes, there are occasional exceptions but teamwork is preferred. Playwright/Actor is welcomed.
3. Directors. It falls on your shoulders to make sure that your cast has capable computers, wifi, mikes and lighting. Technology beyond our control can fail during these readings, but we do our outmost to keep tech in our favor.

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4. Screen Management. This is simply where to place your script and Zoom windows on your screen. It's best to split your screen vertically with both windows as high on your own personal screen and close to the camera as possible.
5. Script. It is highly encouraged to use a .pdf and not a paper script. You will learn how to mark up your .pdf script in rehearsal if you don't know how already. Do not read your script off of your email, it must be downloaded to your hard drive.
6. It is encouraged to use a .pdf over other programs such as Word or Pages in order to keep the page count consistent with the rest of your team.
7. I will go over certain Zoom settings in rehearsal that will help optimize the performance.
8. Friday production's Zoom link is delivered on Friday morning.
9. Friday productions go live in front of an audience at 5p (Pacific Time). Call time is traditionally at 4:15p.
10. Play submission. If you have a play that you would like considered, our guidelines suggest works that read between 20 and 45 minutes. Comedies are favored. No stories where Covid and death are crucial to the main narrative. It is suggested that playwrights create a "Zoom Draft" free of stage directions and where movement is reduced to fit the format. Large scene changes are challenging as are car chases. ;)

CAST

1. Cues. It is so important to pick up your cues. Zoom has a natural lag time which makes pauses overly dramatic. Think of this as a "Radio Show," if you don't need to rely on a visual cue, don't.
2. Backgrounds. No Virtual Backgrounds. Your physical background should be uncluttered and fit your story. Depth works best which means the farther the computer lens is from the background the better. Darker backgrounds are recommended over brighter ones as long as you have the appropriate lighting. White walls work in a pinch.

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3. Lighting. Two lights in front from 45 degree angles is a general suggestion however there are options. Ring lights seem very popular. Whatever you use make sure you are lit from the front or sides and that there are no unshaded windows behind you causing a blinding backlight.
4. Think of Smartphone Theatre as a single-camera live TV production where the camera doesn't move. Cast is encouraged to move around the camera however they feel appropriate to best serve the story.
5. If there are props cast should create a personal space around their computer to stage their props that are out of view. We often pass things "through the computer." It looks great and works as long as we have the right screen direction, etc. More to be discussed in person.
6. Zoom settings will be discussed at rehearsal.
7. Cast Headshots and bios should be emailed to [**todd@smartphonetheatre.com**](mailto:todd@smartphonetheatre.com) by Monday in order to be circulated on the invite and on the website.
8. Eye-lines. We'll talk.

The above is a broad overview of Smartphone Theatre, many more specifics will be covered in rehearsal but this will absolutely give you a wonderful place to begin.

Any additional questions whatsoever please shoot me a note any time of day or night:
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Thanks all!

Todd

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