

- 1 Your script is your calling card. It speaks for you and for your characters. If it doesn't LOOK its best, it might not even get read.
- 2 If it doesn't read well -- it will get put down.
- 3 If the ending isn't satisfying, the person who read it will wonder why it was ever submitted, and you may not ever get another chance with them.
- 4 If there is no specific appeal -- to some group of people -- then how can anyone market it, including yourself.

1) TO DO:

- Send your script in PDF format. Don't send Word docs, Final Draft files, or anything else. PDFs look far more professional, and they can be read anywhere without compatibility issues!
- Let your script speak for itself. If your story requires lots of explanation in your application, a 3-page Author's Note, or more stage directions than you have dialogue, then either (A) your script isn't strong enough or (B) it is strong enough, and you're overthinking things. The audience won't be able to read your application; they're just seeing the show. Make sure your dialogue stands on its own two feet.
- Make sure your writing is easy on the eyes, out of respect for script readers who have to read a dozen scripts in a row. That means not using any crazy fonts or colors, making sure it's formatted uniformly and is free of grammatical mistakes. (HINT: A lot of people think their script has no grammatical mistakes, but it really does. Have a grammar-nerd friend proofread it for you!) I spend a lot of my time editing the careless mistakes of a good author, but a sloppy typist. If I cannot get through a script for its spelling and formatting errors -- I stop reading! Spelling matters! (Believe it or not -- I have had many of these types of submissions. I open the document, scan through it and -- toss it!)
- Related to the last point: if your characters speak in a specific dialect, it's cool to write out some of the basic figures of speech of that dialect, but don't write out the accent phonetically in every single line of dialogue. It becomes impossible to read! Just say in the character description what type of accent that person should have.

2, 3) About the story and characters:

- It's straight out of your fifth grade English class: every story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It seems simple, but the deeper question is: why did you decide to begin and end the story when you did? Why did your first scene incite this story, and how does your last scene make the story feel complete? There's nothing better than an ending that makes you have a real "aha" moment.
- ***Don't say things in ten words when you can say them in two.*** (My biggest pet peeve -- overwriting!) (There are some 40-page scripts that I could pare down to 10-page scripts and not lose anything important. [Well, that may be a little over-exaggerated, but you get the idea.])
- Put yourself in someone else's body when reading your script or watching rehearsal. When you're watching a run through, pretend your mom (or your best friend, or your 8th grade English teacher, or your mentor) is sitting next to you. What would she be thinking? How would he be reacting? Is there anything that makes you cringe at the thought of them watching it? Edit that before you submit your script to a stranger!
- Make sure your story is inherently theatrical. We say it about scripts all the time: This story is great, but it reads more like a TV show or an indie film. Why does your story need to be told onstage, specifically? Stephen Sondheim sums it up best in one of his cardinal rules: Content Dictates Form.

The content of your show — the story, the characters, the style — must dictate that the form of theater is the absolute best way to display this content or tell this story. You can see the results of this advice bearing fruit on Broadway right now. Look at the silliness of the SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS cartoons on TV. Yes, they're fun, but they are short little vignettes for children's attention spans. The Producers/Writers/Directors were very smart with this one -- they created a "THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE." The same can be said of the new focus of ANASTASIA, and many other successful stories adapted from the screen. The shows that do NOT work are the ones that stayed too cinematic in structure.

- Similarly, make sure there's a reason for any audience member to care about your characters. "Of course an audience cares about my characters, because how could you possibly not care about [insert description of your character: a woman with a deadly disease, a character discovering its sexuality, a baker who accidentally poisons his hometown with a disastrous new cinnamon bun recipe]?" People don't care about characters just because of what category they fit into. They. Just. Care. (At least they want to.) I have walked out of performances where I was not engaged emotionally. It is a waste of my time. (Except for certain types of theatre companies whose job it is to stimulate us intellectually and make us think and not feel. But still, that can be theatrically antithetical.)

4) WHOM TO SUBMIT TO:

- Well, the first thing you need to determine is who is your audience? What people will come to see this show? Men, women, children, teens, wealthy, middle-class, gay, straight, the business person, the artist only, mothers, daughters, fathers, sons -- break it down. It not only sharpens your marketing, it sharpens the focus of your play.
- I hear you thinking, "But if I zero in on that tiny little market, what are my chances at reaching a broader market?" A script will always reach someone. Focus on the largest group of 'someones' and the little things will fall into place.
- Then find theatre groups, festivals, competitions that market to the same audience.
- If you say that your script appeals to EVERYONE, you will never sell it, even though that statement will be somewhat true. Every play has a market. I would not market a play like "LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT" to a community or professional theatre that produces mostly comedies and musicals. It's a waste of expectations, let alone time -- yours and the person who reads what you submit.
- Why did you write the play? What did you want it to say? And to whom?
- These questions, once answered, will help you focus the target market for your show.
- This lets producers, agents and other industry professionals know that you have done your homework.

by **C. Michael Perry**

(with ideas by *Danielle DiMatteo* as submitted on The Producers Perspective BLOG) (She said things so well that I used her words, even though I think along many parallel lines, then I added other areas of submission -- because I read a lot of scripts.)

May be used for classroom/educational purposes