

A photograph of a stage with a wooden floor. A bright spotlight shines from above, creating a beam of light on the floor. There are other spotlights visible in the background, some of which are blue. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and professional.

DRAMASOC

PROPOSAL GUIDE

WELCOME TO SHOW BUSINESS!

For nearly 100 years, DramaSoc has prided itself on bringing quality and diverse theatre to the University of Canterbury and the wider Christchurch community. Performing arts is an integral part of society, and putting on a full-scale show is a fantastic way to contribute to that.

Once or twice a year, DramaSoc will put out a call for show proposals. A proposal is where any show starts – it gives you an opportunity to suggest a show you're passionate about, and acts as a tool for the exec to get a comprehensive idea of your vision. This enables them to make an informed decision about what DramaSoc's next show will be.

This guide is here to give you an idea of what you should include when proposing a show, and a basic guide to proposing a show specifically for DramaSoc.



The Canterbury Tales, 2017

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PROPOSING A SHOW FOR DRAMASOC

- Does it have a large enough cast for a university group? (8+ is ideal)
- Is it feasible to cast with the typical DramaSoc audition pool? Remember that most DramaSoc auditionees are university students.
- Is it technically complicated? Consider whether you'll be able to put it on with the resources and talent available.
- Has it been put on in Christchurch or the surrounding areas in the last 5 years? This can make it difficult to get rights, so it's important to double check.
- Are the themes and characters interesting enough and appropriate for a primarily university-based demographic? Shows are performed at university, and DramaSoc is a university club so this is very relevant. It must appeal to a wide range of interests as we want as many people through the doors as possible.
- Consider how your proposal will complement the recent productions by DramaSoc. Have we just done a comedy? Try a tragedy. Have we just done Shakespeare? Consider something modern. Have we just done a small-cast show? Maybe it's best to find something with a large cast. The DramaSoc Exec are happy to answer questions about what we have done recently and may be able to help figure out whether your proposal is suitable.

PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL

After proposals close, the DramaSoc exec will ask you to come in for a short interview – just a chat about your proposal. It will last 15 – 30 minutes, and is a chance for you to ask any questions or expand on your ideas, and for the exec to raise concerns or ask you to elaborate on areas they may be confused or concerned about. Once the exec has met with each person behind the proposals received, they will take a vote – or a vote of no confidence – on the plays to make their final decision. Any critique is not personal, as the exec must consider whether the show is appropriate in the context of DramaSoc and if it's likely to do well. The decision made by the exec is final.

PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

This is an outline of the most important things to include in your proposal. If something doesn't make sense, or you'd like advice on a certain area – for example, putting together your budget – feel free to contact the exec and ask for help.

1. Show name

Self-explanatory (we hope!)

2. Synopsis

A basic outline of the plot of the play. One or two paragraphs.

3. Characters

A list of characters in the show. Include the number of leads, and how many male/female characters there are.

4. Director's vision

Tell us about it! A paragraph or more about the vision for the show; what you want to focus on/accomplish. What genre is it, what year will it be set in? It's your show and we want to know what makes you excited about it.

5. Production team

A list of production team members you have on board or interested. Roles that must be filled are:

- ✦ Director
- ✦ Producer
- ✦ Technical director
- ✦ Stage Manager

But don't stop there! We strongly urge you to confirm as many production team members as you can. Other roles that we recommend you fill straightaway are:

- ✦ Marketing Manager
- ✦ Set Designer
- ✦ Costume Designer
- ✦ Technical Assistant

Remember a massive amount of work goes in to making a show, so if you think you need an extra person anywhere, don't hesitate. Don't stress if you don't have everyone just yet – we just need to know that you've had a think about it.

If you are unsure what any of these roles entail, check out our document on How-To-Prod Team, and if you're struggling to find people, try our DramaSoc community Facebook page!

6. Budget

Your budget is quite important, but don't get too caught in the specific details. DramaSoc will adjust budgets for any show so what we need you to do is think about costs that will be specific to your show. Do you want to wow the audience with a particularly amazing and intricate set? Consider where else in your production you might be able to cut costs to afford this extra expenditure. We want to know roughly how you would like to allocate your budget, not necessarily the exact amounts.

7. Tech

A basic idea of what you hope to do around tech: this covers lighting, sound (if necessary), and drapes (extra curtains that can be hired).

8. Draft marketing strategy

The exec will have some experience in marketing a show, but we want to know what you think and hear your ideas.

9. Why?

Why do you think this is a good show for DramaSoc? Tell us why you think it's appropriate, what you think it'll bring to DramaSoc. We want to know why you chose this show.

10. Special requirements

Any unusual set/tech/costume pieces that may be needed for your show.

Got more to say? Consider including:

11. Individual character breakdown

Expand on that list you wrote earlier; tell us about each character, anything you think is important.

12. Set design

Sketch out what you have in mind for set. Be as broad or as specific as you want. If it requires a large set, consider where and how it'll be constructed. Sometimes DramaSoc will have set assets in storage, ask the exec for more details!

13. Costume requirements

Expand on that vision you were telling us about. Write about costume ideas, anything that might be complicated or specific, anything that's necessary.

14. Production timeline

An outline of when you want to get things done, production and rehearsal wise. Often DramaSoc will have a series of room bookings all sorted for you.

15. Flaws Any difficulties you think may arise and how you'd rectify them



The Canterbury Tales, 2017

BUDGET TEMPLATE

The budget is one of the most important parts of your proposal. DramaSoc does have financial reserves, but we still aim to make at least a small profit on every production.

DramaSoc tends to produce similar revenues for all of our major shows, so our overall budget numbers are unlikely to change significantly. Your job as the proposal team is to show us that you have considered all of the expenses and how you would like to distribute your budget. Give us accurate figures wherever you can but don't get too caught up on the details.

The biggest consideration is the cost of rights/royalties. We strongly recommend you contact the rights-holders for your production to (a) ensure that amateur rights are available and would be issued to DramaSoc, and (b) enquire as to the rough amounts they would charge.

If you are unsure where to start, try taking a total budget of \$4000 and break it down into its sub-sections using the template below.

If you have personal connections that would enable you to spend less on your production, let us know! It is always valuable to make new connections.

EXPENSES

- A.** For many shows, performance rights will be one of the biggest expenses. You'll need to contact the company that owns the rights for your show to find out how much it'll cost. You'll need to include rehearsal materials (i.e. script download & photocopy rights). When you're looking into this, remember that DramaSoc traditionally performs 8 shows over 2 weeks. For an original show, however, this cost will be much lower.
- B.** At present, hire of the Jack Mann is free for clubs. Other theatres can be quite expensive, but if you think it'll suit your show better feel free to consider and include that cost.
- C.** Most shows don't require extensive sound gear, but think about what you'd like to accomplish; if you need a voiceover, sound effects, or a live musician for example.
- D.** Good lighting can highlight your show, while bad lighting can be a distraction. Consider what effects you'd like to accomplish, and this will help when considering this. Lighting includes smoke or haze machines. There are companies in Christchurch that you can go to for general quotes; but a medium size show will generally expect to need \$200 - \$600 for lights and associated tech.
- E.** The more complex the set, the more expensive. Think about both hire costs if applicable, and production costs. Recent productions had sets of \$700 to \$1300 (the former using assets from the latter).
- F.** The more authentic you want your props to look, the more expensive. Consider items that can be borrowed or hired to reduce spending.
- G.** When setting your costume budget, think about the size of the cast and amount of characters. Think about hiring & borrowing costumes. Petticoat Lane in Christchurch has a great range.
- H.** Stage makeup is different from regular makeup. If there are special effects required, this will be more expensive.
- I.** Marketing is very important as it's what gets people through the doors. Engaging around university is straightforward, but we want to promote to the wider Christchurch community as well. Consider things like poster printing and Facebook advertisements.
- J.** It is often a good idea to keep several hundred dollars in reserve for unforeseen expenses. The exec will approve a certain amount of overspending before approval is needed for more purchases, so this number will need to be discussed with them directly.

	Rights	A
	Theatre hire (optional)	B
	Sound (if required)	C
	Lighting	D
	Set	E
	Props	F
	Costume	G
	Makeup	H
	Marketing Reserve	I
		J
Total		X

INCOME

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| | K |
| Ticket sales | L |
| Charity funding | M |
| Sponsorship | N |
| Advertisements | O |
| Fundraising | P |
| Cast Levy
Snacks/Drinks | Q |
| Total | Y |
- K.** Ticket sales will be your main source of income for **Income** the show. Multiply your proposed ticket price by how many performances there will be (usually 8), by how many people on average you expect per performance. Be careful about overestimating audience size. It's far better to get more money than you were expecting than the other way around. The current ticket scheme is \$12 for members, \$15 for students and \$17 for general admission. Two recent shows have seen total ticket sales at approximately 201 and 262 people respectively. DW1 holds a maximum of 60 people but on average our shows get 15 – 30 people per night.
- L.** There are several charitable trusts, such as Pub Charities, Eureka Trust, or the Creative Communities Trust, who you can apply to for funding. Applications for funding require a reasonable amount of time and effort to gather all the requisite documents and can be very particular. Some trusts require you don't receive funding from another trust, so do your reading! If you put together a strong application though, there is opportunity for most of your budget to be covered by this.
- M.** Corporate sponsorship may include naming rights of the season, complimentary tickets, free programme advertising, or company logo on all promotional materials, for example. This can be a lot of work and will require a dedicated production team member, but it can be very valuable.
- N.** There's always space in the programme for ads, and is a smaller commitment than full-on sponsorship.
- O.** If you can't get money any other way, you'll need to fundraise. On the plus side, it can be great fun and you'll have your cast to help you.
- P.** A cast levy – typically \$30 – can be set, to pay for cast t-shirts and provide party drinks and snacks.
- Q.** Along with tickets, you can sell drinks and snacks at your front of house station. This can be a great source of income, as people often need a little something to nibble at, and gives audience members an opportunity for refreshment in intermission. Consider getting drinks wholesale – Karma Cola, for example – or buying bags of small packs of chips/chocolate and selling for a small profit.

PROFIT/LOSS

The exec is very unlikely to accept your show if your budget shows that they'll be losing money. On the other hand, you want to put as much money as you reasonably can into making the show a success. Aim for a small profit, and cut spending in other areas if you need to.

Additionally, if you're seeking funding or sponsorship, it's not a good look if you're already expecting a large profit on the show – they'll wonder why you need their money.



And Then There Were None, 2017

OTHER NOTES

WHAT MAKES PROPOSALS STAND OUT (GOOD OR BAD)

There is a lot that goes into selecting a proposal, so telling you what makes a proposal *good* is not so simple as you might like. However, there are a few things to think about to help you make a good impression and improve your chances to get picked

- **Production Team.** Often the people on your production team can make or break a proposal. If your production team is unknown to the exec, tell us more about their relevant experience and why they want to work on this project. If members of the team are inexperienced but still wanting to give it a go, do you have connections with more experienced people that might be able to give you some pointers if you're stuck? Do you have a highly skilled director that would like to take on an assistant director? Let us know!
- **Budget.** We understand that budgeting can be a nightmare, especially if you haven't worked with DramaSoc before. Make sure to proofread your budget and include everything you think you may need AND a reserve. Some proposals have been rejected due to the proposal team not accounting for large amounts of expenditure such as period costuming, set design and building, or just because there clearly hasn't been much thought put into the budget.
- **Casting.** Remember that we are a University club in Christchurch. Productions that require actors to be of significantly older or younger age, or of a particular racial or cultural demographic may be difficult to cast in our audition pools. Similarly, shows that require exclusively (or almost exclusively) men or women will also likely not be suitable. Finally, shows with small casts are less likely to be considered unless recent DramaSoc productions have had larger casts.

IF WE ACCEPT YOUR SHOW

Congratulations!

Now's the time to finalise your production timeline, and precisely what you want for your lighting, sound, set, costume, and props. This work can continue throughout rehearsals, so don't panic! It'll also be time to apply for rights, and get ready to set up audition dates – we can't advertise or announce the show until we have rights confirmed.

The exec will present you with a finalised budget, which you will need to stick to. If for some reason you need to go over, then you'll have to gain exec approval before spending that money.

THANK YOU

Presenting a show is a lot of time, effort, and energy – and we know it can be frustrating! We realise there's a lot of work to be put in to present your show to the DramaSoc exec, and we're really excited about it.

If you need any help or have questions, don't hesitate to contact either Sam Gibson at secretary@dramasoc.org.nz or the general committee members at general@dramasoc.org.nz



The Canterbury Tales, 2017