

Working with Theatres: A Guide for Playwrights

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About This Resource Guide

This Guide was created by Playwrights Guild of Canada (PGC) to offer members advice, experiences, and best practices on playwrights' interactions with theatre companies, all collected in one place. It is both an assessment of how playwrights are represented in the greater theatrical community, as well as a handbook offering various methods of career development.

The Guide discusses the various pathways to getting plays produced in Canada, and offers tips on how to navigate submissions, identify developmental opportunities, and nurture creative relationships. The Guide also acts as a hub for all the other resources that PGC offers to members on our website, directing you to important organizations' websites, contract guidelines, articles, and listings. This structure allows the information to remain current, as the main body of the Guide will not need to be updated as often as the individual resources listed on our website. Throughout the guide, there are links highlighted in blue that lead to specific resources on PGC's website. **To view these links, you must be signed into your PGC member's account.** If you do not know your username and password, please contact us.

A great deal of research went into the creation of the guide. We conducted an extensive survey of our members that assessed their relationships and interactions with Canadian theatres. We also conducted a series of interviews with artistic directors, literary managers, and dramaturgs at a variety of theatre companies stretching from St John's to Vancouver in late 2012 and early 2013. We would like to thank our committee members (Alicia Payne, Simon Johnston, and David Sealy) who offered feedback and support throughout the process.

The Guide is meant to be a starting point for members to conduct research, to gain advice, or to explore opportunities. As always we encourage feedback and responses to our work. We are always seeking to better tailor our resources to the needs of playwrights. The office is always open for questions. Call us, write us, email us. We are happy to help you in any way we can.

Alexander Kentris – Researcher

Preface

By Ken Cameron

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It's really frustrating.

You've got a fantastic idea for a play. A surprising and inventive plot. Genuinely unique characterizations. You highlight a burning issue, which is finally creeping into the zeitgeist.

But you can't even get a theatre to read the first page.

As this new Guide from Playwrights Guild of Canada makes achingly clear, you are not alone. Almost sixty percent of the members surveyed for this Guide had sent a submission to a theatre but received no response of any kind. If this is you (and it most likely is) you are keeping good company with a legion of your peers.

And that's part of the problem: there are more playwrights with startlingly good scripts than there are theatres with the resources and space to produce them.

So, if you want to give your play the chance to become that all-Canadian hit, then where do you start?

Start with WHY.

Imagine I'm an Artistic Director (I was once, so it shouldn't be too hard). Picture my office. It's a crowded cubbyhole in a perpetually under-funded theatre. It might be a small independent theatre or it might be a large regional, but it's a theatre in Canada, so it's underfunded.

Ticket sales have been dropping through the floor over the past decade, so I cut another few staff members and the survivors have to do two or three jobs each. Most of them are devoted to putting on the three, four or five plays that my provincial granting body considers a minimum requirement to sustain our funding. Whomever we can spare is working the phones to sell subscriptions, sponsorships or individual tickets.

We're barely getting by. No one is thinking of the future.

On the corner of my desk – between the telephone and the vintage Mac – stands a tower of unread manuscripts. These represent the future to me. And the size of the pile makes me uneasy.

I know without looking that about a third of these manuscripts are inappropriate to my mandate. I don't do TYA plays anymore because the local school board can't afford to bus children to my theatre. I know another third are from another part of the country. I made it very clear on my website that our new-play mandate is focused on playwrights who live in this region. And another third of the plays will just suck.

Is it any wonder you haven't received a reply to the script you submitted in September when my season was just getting underway?

I'd been hoping for a summer intern who could plough through this pile for me, but I've just read in the paper that the provincial government cut the funding for that too.

So when the phone rings and it's a playwright who wants to come down to my office and tell me about her script in person over coffee to see if it's a good fit ... I tell her I take cream and two sugars and that I'm free on Friday afternoon.

I know this playwright. Kind of. She has been to every one of my opening nights for the past two seasons, except for that time her little girl had chicken pox. I know all this because she always writes me a short postcard after each opening, telling me what she appreciated about the show. This season she has worked up the courage to hang around the lobby and introduce herself after the show.

She doesn't need to be so shy. I remember her from two years ago when we used lottery money to start a Playwrights Circle. I wasn't running the Circle myself, but I attended the Playwrights Cabaret that marked the end of the series. I thought her piece was a little too didactic, but I liked the authentic voice she found for the characters. I told her so.

When she arrives (and remembers the cream and two sugars) I've dug her original submission out my tower of manuscripts and skimmed the first few scenes. She sees it on my table and goes pale, insisting I throw it away because it has been substantially rewritten. She spent a few weeks at a playwrights colony working with a playwright-dramaturg I know and respect, who forced her to go back to the drawing board and rethink the whole thing. I make a mental note to email my pal and get a reference for her and her play.

It turns out the thing has already been produced as a one-act, by a small theatre festival in another city that focuses on emerging playwrights. On the one hand that makes me sit up and take notice because some of the kinks might have been worked out. But, on the other hand, it bugs me a little bit because even though I rarely produce new scripts I am convinced, rightly or wrongly, that if I

ever do produce one, there is extra prestige in a premiere and I want to be the one to develop and dramaturge any new finds.

But just as my eyes are about to glaze over and my mind is preparing to move on to other things, she hits me with it.

She starts with WHY.

She tells me exactly why this play fits my mandate. She tells me why it is economically feasible to produce. She tells me why she was moved to write it in the first place. She tells me why she struggled so long with the subject matter. She tells me why the Playwrights Colony was a necessary step in the play's development. She tells me why the play connected so strongly with an audience in its first incarnation. She tells me why the professional director and cast from the first production found it to be a unique challenge and why that's a good thing. She concludes by reiterating the top five reasons why I should do it. I'm blown away and I promise to read it that weekend.

I'm still not going to produce it.

But I'm writing an email right now telling her that I've given the script to a buddy of mine who runs a small indie theatre in an old warehouse. He used to be my Artistic Associate so I know his taste.

Because I don't want this play. I want her next play.

The example I've just cited is fictional, but the challenges faced by an Artistic Director are very real and the practical strategies used by the playwright to overcome those obstacles are all reflected in the guide you are about to read.

This guide will tell you WHERE to look for more information.

It will tell you WHAT theatres are looking for in their submissions.

It will tell you HOW you can find resources to develop your work.

But the last step is up to you.

Only you can tell them WHY you belong together.

Introduction: “Entry Points”

“Entry points” mean any way that a playwright can become involved with a theatre company. Possible pathways are many and varied, for example, an informal conversation with a literary manager, a submission letter, or winning a playwriting contest. This initial interaction can then develop into a creative relationship, development opportunities, or a full production. **We specifically examine ways in which playwrights can get themselves or their work noticed by the theatre community.** We believe that this conversation is especially important in the ever-changing Canadian theatre ecology. Theatre is not being created exactly the same way it was ten or twenty years ago, and taking note of the changes can help Canadian playwrights understand and improve their position in the shifting environment.

The major questions we asked in our research were:

- How do Canadian theatres find new plays to produce?
- Are they interested in the development and production of old and new Canadian plays?
- And finally, what are the ways in which Canadian playwrights can find a place for their work at theatres across the country?

Playwrights often hold a somewhat peripheral place within theatre companies. They tend not to be regular employees at theatres, and though many companies have strong relationships with playwrights, they are mostly involved only when a specific project is being produced. A common stereotypical image of a playwright is of them sitting alone with a computer in their apartment, but in reality, playwriting, along with all other aspects of theatre, requires a great deal of collaboration with other theatre artists to make it work. **How can relationships between playwrights and Canadian theatres be crafted so that playwrights receive what we need to keep creating, developing and staging our work, in collaboration with those theatres and others, worldwide?**

Submissions

One of the focal points of the survey sent out to members asked about their experiences submitting to Canadian theatres over the past five years. We asked how often they had submitted, how long it took to receive a response, and what sort of positive feedback or opportunities they may have received.

- **88%** of the members who responded to the survey, whether they were established or emerging playwrights, **had made a submission in the past five years** to a theatre company, be it a letter of inquiry, a project proposal, or a full script. This remains the most common way that playwrights disseminate their work to theatres.
- There were specific theatre companies and artistic directors singled out as those from whom one can always expect a prompt response. However, on the whole, **response times were long, usually over three months**, or a response never came at all. **57%** of the members surveyed had sent a submission to which they **never received a response**.
- Of those members who had received positive responses from submissions, only about **30%** said their submissions led to a **developmental workshop, reading, or production**. The most common form of development received were dramaturgical discussions or meetings with an artistic director or dramaturg.
- Another common remark from the survey was that playwrights feel “in the dark” about the internal workings of theatre companies and how they read and respond to submissions.

The truth seems to be that theatres are relying less and less on submissions as a means of discovering new plays and are moving towards other methods. This is especially true of unsolicited submissions, where the rate of positive responses, especially production, is extremely low. However, plays are still produced from submissions, and playwrights still create lasting relationships with theatres this way; it is just becoming less common. **The key is to know how best to approach the submission process, to understand what a specific company’s stance is on submissions, and to adjust your expectations accordingly.**

Unsolicited Submissions

Unsolicited submissions are a common “entry point” for emerging and beginning career playwrights, as they do not have the contacts or connections to get their work noticed as easily. However, they are still important for all playwrights, as staff at theatres changes often, and any theatre you have never made contact with is unsolicited.

Follow the Rules

Submission Policies

One of the most important things to know when submitting a script to a theatre company is what their policy is on receiving submissions from playwrights. Many theatres list specifically on their websites whether they accept unsolicited submissions. Other great places to find this information include the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres’ [\(PACT\) Theatre Listing](#) and our new [Theatre Submission Listing](#), which can be found in the Members’ Lounge on PGC’s website. Many of these companies may also list specific requirements when submitting to their companies. **Follow these directions!** Nothing will make you look less professional than not following the simple directions of a theatre’s submission policy. Some companies do not want full scripts sent to them, while other companies do not receive electronic submissions. Respecting these guidelines will only help your chances of getting a positive response, so it is in your best interest to do the research.

Gatekeepers

Another piece of useful information that can be found on a particular theatre’s website, or in the PACT listing, is to know who reads and responds to submissions. **We will refer to these people as gatekeepers, as they are the first point of contact for playwrights.** At most smaller and mid-sized companies in Canada, submissions are mostly addressed to and reviewed by the artistic director. But some of the larger companies have literary managers, associate artistic directors, or dramaturgs who act as gatekeepers. Though it may seem more attractive to go straight for the artistic director whenever you can, these other artistic staff have more time to devote to meeting new playwrights, reviewing submissions, and offering you their help. In any case, busy artistic directors often delegate script reading to other staff members.

Types of Submissions

Letter of Inquiry

- This is the simplest formal contact a playwright makes with a theatre. The correspondence can take the form of an email or a typewritten letter. This is often the best route to take if you have no prior connection with a theatre company, and especially if they have no submission policy on their website.
- The purpose of the letter is to **introduce yourself** to the company. Discuss why you are contacting them and tell them a little bit about your career and development as a playwright. Be sure to ask for something specific in this introduction, for example, ask whether the company is looking for new scripts and would be willing to read yours, or whether it would be possible to meet with the artistic director.
- Remember that this is your first contact with this company, so keep the interaction **short and professional**, leaving them interested in speaking with you more.

Project Proposal

- A proposal of a project is the next step up from a letter of inquiry. **You are not only pitching yourself to the company, but also a specific project you think they may be interested in.** As theatres' resources for reading submissions dwindle, project proposals and an accompanying script sample are a popular way for theatres to examine submissions without having to read an entire play.
- A proposal may include any or all of the following: a resume of your past work as a playwright, a brief development history of the project, a synopsis of the play, an artistic statement, or a brief script sample. This provides an in depth introduction of your work as an artist to a theatre company. If the theatre is interested in your work they will contact you and ask for more information.

Full Script

- Many theatres still accept full script submissions. Response times on these types of submissions can be quite long, and scripts may be placed into a pile and not read for several months. Although theatres handle full script submissions differently, PGC believes that theatres should respond promptly to confirm that submissions have been received. PGC also believes that further notification should be sent out once the script has been read.

- Some theatres only request full script submissions after they have read a proposal and have shown interest. It may include: a resume, developmental history, an artist's statement, or a synopsis, along with a full draft of a play.
- Many theatre companies who accept full script submissions are moving towards accepting electronic submissions, but many still require you to send a hard copy of your play.

For templates and examples of how to best format script samples, letters of inquiry, and playwrights' resumes, please see Examples of [Professional Documents](#) on PGC's website. These templates are only one recommended way to organize documents. Even with script formatting there is no standardized system in Canada. **The most important things to remember are to keep documents clean, easy to read, and well structured so that the information is presented in a direct and clear manner.**

The DOs and DON'Ts

In our research, we spoke with gatekeepers at twenty Canadian theatres about their preferences regarding submissions. **The best way to know what a theatre wants from a submission is to ask them.** Some theatres list response times, or specific guidelines on their website and some do not. A letter of inquiry is always the best first step.

As to what makes a good submission to theatres, unfortunately the answers were all over the map. Some are more interested in seeing a script in the early stages of the process. These responses often came from developmental theatre companies, where they want to be able to have a hand in bringing the piece to fruition. Other theatres were only interested in stage ready scripts. Most believed that for emerging and early career playwrights, more "finished" scripts worked best.

- **DO** keep your submission short, to the point, and easy to read.
- **DO** send along a SASE if you want to have your script returned. Some theatres prefer to keep the scripts for the future, but either way send a SASE if you would like it returned. Some playwrights also include a return postcard so that theatres can confirm that they have received your submission.
- **DON'T** expect to hear back from any theatre immediately. Many do not have the time or staff to review submissions as thoroughly as they would like. Some larger companies may also have literary managers or hire freelance readers to help look through submissions, but these options are

not available to most companies and the funding for these personnel is dwindling.

- **DO** send a polite follow up letter or email if it has been several months and you have not received any response. This is just an added push to remind the theatre about your submission.
- **DON'T** pester gatekeepers by going into their office, making phone calls, or sending too many follow up letters in order to hurry the process along. They will get to your submission when they can.
- **DO** check a theatre's website or the PACT listing to see the best time to submit to a theatre. Most theatres accept submissions year round. As a general rule, however, most gatekeepers have more time and energy to read submissions in the summer months when their seasons are not running. Obviously, the opposite is true of summer festivals.
- **DO** your best at presenting your successes and accomplishments. What kind of recognition have you received in the past? What makes your work unique and interesting?
- **DON'T** overload your submission with too many supporting documents. Only include reviews, video samples, or letters of reference if you believe that add something to your submission, and believe the theatre would be interested in reading them.

The Importance of Research

One of the first things that gatekeepers look for in submissions is whether or not the playwright has done their research. It is vital to know as much about a theatre company as you can before you submit your work to them. **The aim is not to simply use a submission as an anonymous introduction, but as a chance to make a personal connection with a theatre.** Some questions to keep in mind during your research:

- What is the company's mandate?
- What kind of work have they produced in the past five years? Do they mostly produce plays from a specific genre (comedy, musical theatre, etc), or with a specific theme, setting or time period in mind?
- What playwrights have they produced in the past? What stage of their career were these playwrights in? Where were these playwrights from? Were they local, national or international?

- How many actors are usually in their plays? Who has directed their plays in the past?
- Does the company develop new scripts for production? Do they premiere new work?

It is tempting for a playwright to send out a new script to every theatre in Canada and see who shows interest. However, you are more likely to get a better response if **you tailor your submissions to specific theatres that you have a strong connection with** and think would be genuinely interested in your project. Many gatekeepers we spoke with were interested in why playwrights wanted to submit to their specific theatre. What did that playwright connect to in their company’s mandate, or programming, or when viewing one of their productions?

After researching companies around the country, contact any company that you think would be a perfect match for you artistically. However, a response for development or production may be affected by a company’s ability to budget for travel expenses for an out of town playwright.

Researching specific theatre companies gives you a better understanding of the resources and support that they can provide you. Some playwrights are interested in creating work collaboratively with constant feedback from other artists and would be most suited to working with a developmental theatre company. Whereas other playwrights wish to create work that deals with specific issues or groups of people, and are therefore looking for theatres that support and share these artistic goals. Know what a theatre has to offer you and what you want from them.

What Happens Now?

Another key to being successful with unsolicited submissions is to be able to adjust your expectations: **be realistic.** Try not to be discouraged if you send your play to twenty theatres across Canada and no one wants to produce it. This does not mean your work will not be produced. Playwrights just have to be persistent and find other theatres to contact. Keep at it – and keep writing.

Keep in mind that just because you have sent out a submission does not mean your part is over. There are many other “entry points” for playwrights and much more that you can do for yourself and your play.

Although some theatres may respond to your submission with a written evaluation of your play, most will not. Think about it – if a theatre is not interested in developing or producing your play, why expect a critique of it? If they do send such an evaluation it is reasonable to ask them whether they want to see another draft of the script, or are merely offering unsolicited advice. What is their level of interest?

Also keep in mind that unsolicited submissions can lead to other opportunities that may not be apparent right away. The theatre may be intrigued by your work and offer you developmental resources, or may have you on its radar of playwrights to watch out for. Do not underestimate the openings that you are creating by sending along a submission to a company and making that first contact.

Solicited Submissions

Solicited submissions occur when there is already **an established professional relationship between playwright and theatre**. The theatre company may have requested a new script from the playwright, having produced their work in the past. The playwright may send along a new draft to a theatre where they have participated in a development program, or have a lasting creative relationship with a member of the artistic staff.

Solicited submissions can also be made on recommendation of a third party that is familiar with the company, such as an agent, or other theatre artist. On average, solicited submissions have greater chances of receiving a positive responses from theatres, including development or production. The playwrights we spoke with who had the most success with submissions have longstanding relationships with specific theatre companies or had their work recommended by a third party.

Nonetheless, many of the rules that apply to unsolicited submissions should still be heeded. Knowing the company and doing your research are still very important, and response times can still be long. Remember that the theatre will be interested in your play and your work only if it is a good fit with the company and they see the possibility for a future with this production and with the playwright.

By the way, once a theatre has been intrigued by an unsolicited submission, excerpt, or letter of inquiry, and asks to see a full script, your play has moved from “unsolicited” to “solicited”. Congratulations! This is an important step.

Alternative Entry Points

Most theatre companies in Canada still accept and encourage submissions from playwrights, but most current artistic directors admit that they rarely produce plays they discover in this way. **In the current theatre ecology, playwrights must seek out alternative pathways to get noticed. Playwrights cannot focus solely on playwriting in order to build a career.** More than ever, they must also focus on promoting and marketing their work.

Almost all of the gatekeepers at Canadian theatres we spoke with communicate with other directors and theatre staff around the country to discuss, discover, and trade opinions on new plays and playwrights. They keep an eye on what plays are doing well at festivals, and what plays are winning awards and contests. This type of acclaim for a play or a playwright can help focus the attention of theatre companies and artistic directors, and increase the playwright's chances of gaining a creative relationship, development opportunities, or production.

Competitions and Grants

One of the best ways to overcome the obstacle of having your work recognized by theatres is to send them a play that has already been singled out and critically lauded by the theatre community. **Competitions and awards are a great way to add support to your play and to receive attention from theatres.** Although none of these can guarantee you a production, anything that helps get your play off the “slush pile” and into the hands of an interested artistic director is worth pursuing. A continually updated [Listings of Grants, Awards and Competitions](#) can be found on PGC’s website in the Members Lounge.

Competitions

There are a wide variety of contests and awards available to playwrights in Canada. Award and competition deadlines are sent out on a monthly basis in CanScene, PGC’s member newsletter.

Basics

- Many playwriting competitions are administrated by an institution or a theatre company, and a **jury of professional theatre artists selects recipients.**
- Most competitions require you to pay an **entrance or reading fee***, along with filling out an application form.
- Some awards require a **third party nomination** to submit a play or playwright, rather than having an application process.

Benefits

- Simply submitting a play to a competition allows your work to be read by major theatre professionals or artistic staff at a theatre company, allowing for some exposure.
- Recipients often receive **monetary rewards, dramaturgical support, reading opportunities, or the chance to be published.**

- Recipients may receive **great publicity and recognition** around the country.

Tips

- Have you included the correct number of script copies? Are the pages numbered?
- Are the submissions read blind (meaning they are read anonymously, so no names or identifiers on the pages of the script)?
- Have you included all required support material, including bios, artist statement, or a synopsis?
- Does the project meet the specific project requirements (i.e. running time, history of production, specific themes, or genre, etc)?

***We recommend our members carefully consider whether to submit to a contest that has a fee.** While we don't tell members to avoid contests that insist on entry fees outright, we do recommend that playwrights research how their entry fee will be used and weigh this information accordingly. Reputable contests that have entry fees will be very open about where the money submitted by playwrights go (usually to compensate the jury made up of theatre professionals). Disreputable or questionable contests may request high entry fees, no cash prize, and no indication of who sat on past juries.

Grants

Applying for grants is extremely important for playwrights in order to gain funding to develop new work independently from theatre companies. A continually updated list of available grants for Canadian playwrights can be found on PGC's website, under Member Resources. Most grants available fall into these major categories: Development, Projects, Residencies, Training, and Third Party Recommenders.

Development Grants allow playwrights time to develop work at any stage in development. This can include researching, writing or rewriting a draft of a play.

Project Grants are tied to a specific project, either in the form of a reading or production. They can be applied for by a playwright, or by a producing company, which the playwright works in conjunction with.

Residency Grants allow playwrights to work in tandem with a theatre company, university or other institution on a specific project for a specified amount of time. The money is given directly to the playwright, but the residency gives the playwright support and a temporary home for their work. Residencies usually involve a joint application from the institution and playwright.

Training Grants give playwrights funding in order to further their skills through a form education in playwriting or through professional development courses or programs.

Third Party Recommender Grants are a special type of grant available in certain provinces. Playwrights are provided with funding from a granting body, but a third party, usually a theatre company, chooses the successful applicants. Successful applicants develop their work independently of the institution or theatre company. There is no formal agreement or residency attached to this type of grant, and this should not be viewed as a commission. However, many gatekeepers use third party recommender grants as an alternative way to discover new work.

Basics

- Grants have **very specific application processes**. Read the application form and requirements carefully. Refer to the specific granting body's website for details.
- **Be prepared to write.** Grant applications have a lot of sections. You may be required to include any or all of the following: a development history of the project, a description or synopsis, resumes or biographies of involved artists, a full script or script sample, a proposed budget, and audio/visual materials.
- Successful grant applicants are usually chosen by a jury **of professional theatre artists**.
- Most grants require you to **write a final report** about the outcome of the project and how you utilized the grant money.

Benefits

- Grants allow playwrights the **time and freedom to develop a project**, without worrying about external influences or financial pressures.
- They can offer playwrights a **much-needed opportunity for development or production** independent of a theatre company.
- Grants offer plays and playwrights **a level of distinction and acclaim** that can help make the work stand out to other artists and theatre companies.

Tips

- If you have any questions or need clarification, call the granting bodies to discuss your application. **The grant officers are there to help applicants.**
- **Double check your application form.** Make sure that all supporting material and all parts of the application are included.
- **Keep your writing clear, concise, and well structured.** Remember that the jury reading your application has many more to read.
- Be clear about **why this work is important to you** and your development as an artist, but also how you think it will **impact the audience or community** you are trying to speak to.
- Jurors are more interested in works that are **both financially and artistically viable** and like to know that applicants have thought about what will happen if they do not receive funding.

Festivals and Producing

Playwrights, like artists in any other field, must have the chance to practice and hone their skills. **An integral part of theatre practice is the chance to share work with the public through production.** Unfortunately, many professional companies find the risk of producing the work of relatively unknown and untried playwrights too great.

In order to satisfy the need to work with other theatre professionals and to gain the experience that comes with production (writing, rewriting, rehearsal, more rewriting, opening night), playwrights have other avenues open to them to gain this experience. These include presenting work at theatre festivals, producing your own work, and working with independent theatres. Presenting work in any of these three ways has become essential for playwrights as a platform to get their work seen, heard, and produced. **It is perhaps the most important alternative entry point into the theatres.**

Many gatekeepers we spoke with in our research mentioned how important it was for them to see a play “on its feet” to really get a sense of its worth. Reading a play on the page is one thing, but seeing it on stage is quite another. **Doing an independent or festival production of a play can be the best submission package that you can offer your work.** This is a great opportunity to invite artistic directors, literary managers, dramaturgs, actors, directors, and other theatre artists to your production. **Send a postcard to theatres and invite them to see your show.** Offer them complimentary tickets. If this is your first contact,

make sure you introduce yourself and your work briefly to them. For many of them, it is part of the job to see work at shows and festivals in the area.

Theatre Festivals

Theatre festivals such as Fringe Festivals and other submission-based theatre festivals around the country are another way that playwrights can gain experience and have their plays produced. **Festivals can also be fertile ground for emerging and established artists to take artistic risks and create theatre independently of the major companies.** Most of the gatekeepers at theatre companies across Canada attend these festivals and pay close attention to the plays presented every year. For a continually updated listing of Canadian theatre festivals, please refer to PGC's [Theatre Submission Listing](#) in the Members' Lounge on our website.

Fringe Festivals – Participants in these festivals are chosen at random by lottery, or on a first come, first serve basis. Successful participants pay an entry fee that includes a variety of resources including a venue, technical staff, festival marketing, and front of house staff. Individual companies are responsible for finding artists, rehearsal space, and creating and executing design elements. For more information on Fringe Festivals, including a listing of all the festivals in Canada, please refer to [The Canadian Associations of Fringe Festivals](#) (CAFF) website.

Submission-Based Festivals – These festivals can be affiliated with a theatre company, or be an independently operated festival. Participants are chosen by application by a jury of professional theatre artists. Applications usually include a full script or script proposal and an artistic statement. Similar to Fringe Festivals, an entrance fee is paid that offers a variety of resources, usually a venue, as well as technical and front of house staff. These festivals are more exclusive, but can offer greater attention and prestige to participating shows.

Benefits and Tips

- **Festivals act as producing partners.** Playwrights presenting their work in this way avoid the pressures of producing completely on their own.
- **Allow you to produce work at a reduced cost.** The entrance fee for most festivals can include a venue, technical equipment, and some advertising, allowing you to cut down your budget.
- **A useful way to gain attention and prestige.** Simply being a part of the festival gives your production some attention, marketing, and a built in audience. The difficulty is getting the audience to come to your show.

- **Most of the box office is given back to the artists.** Though the profit made at festivals can be smaller than from productions at major theatre companies, most of the box office is given directly to the artists. At Fringe Festivals 100% is returned to artists.
- **Allows for artistic freedom.** Fringe Festivals do not intervene into the artistic content of their shows, and even at submission-based theatre festivals, usually the artists make the big decisions.
- **Great opportunities for networking.** A wide variety of artists take part in festivals and they are great places to meet artists from around the country and North America.

Producing Your Own Work

Producing plays on an ad hoc basis is generally called “Self-Produced” theatre. These can take any form that suits the process and can range from the playwright who hires a creative team to produce a one-time play to a group of artists (of which the playwright is one member of this group) who work together on a regular basis. Presenting your work on your own comes with the huge responsibility of producing. Some playwrights find the pressure of balancing the artistic and business sides of the process to be extremely difficult.

Benefits and Tips

- Producing your own work allows for almost **complete creative control and freedom for playwrights**. It offers the chance to take risks and experiment without the intercession of a theatre company.
- Try not to take on the responsibility of too many roles. **Surround yourself with a trustworthy and hardworking team of artists**. It will not only help alleviate the pressures of producing, but also help to create a great show.
- Though there are no standard agreements when working with collaborators on self-productions, PGC recommends **creating signed contracts to clearly define roles and responsibilities, and to minimize problems**.
- Seek out favours! **Ask artists you admire and are interested in to help out**. If the playwright or play is less known, having support from established actors or an established director will make your production more “credible” to the profession and the public.
- For more tips on self-producing, please refer to Maja Ardal’s article [*Getting it Done! How Self-Producing Contributes to the Canadian Theatre Ecology*](#) on PGC’s website.

Independent Theatres and Next Steps

The number of independent producing companies in Canada has been steadily increasing over the years and, thanks to the Internet, there is a greater chance that you can find out about their work, no matter where they are in the country. **Independent producing companies are an alternative to mainstream theatres and they often offer a home for emerging artists to develop their work.**

Independent and festival productions are also important because they can often have a bright future, as major theatres are increasing their number of co-productions and presentations of touring shows. **Theatres are more and more interested in discovering successful and exciting independent theatre to add to their seasons.**

Authors of such productions should be prepared to speak precisely and confidently about their play, its successes, and rely on their established creative relationships to find their work a second or third home. **Be sure you know what you want out of this producing partnership.** Not all shows are meant for a larger production and a bigger budget, be sure the remount is right for your work.

Great opportunities for playwrights looking for a future for their work can be found at **presenter showcases**. At these showcases, productions are performed for an audience of theatre presenters who pick up shows for production at major theatre companies and festivals across Canada. Presenters sometimes book shows in tandem with each other to tour across the country. The showcases are also great chances for networking with producers and artistic directors.

Creative Relationships

Three important pathways for the discovery of new plays and playwrights kept coming up in our discussions with gatekeepers at theatres: incoming submissions, discussions with other artistic directors and theatres, and from playwrights with whom they have existing creative ties. We have discussed how best to present work when making a submission. **However, the last two pathways show that it is equally, if not more important, to establish healthy creative relationships.** Maintaining strong connections with theatre companies, directors, actors and other theatre artists expands the opportunities available to a playwright and offers more chances for development and production.

In the current theatrical climate, playwrights are required to be their own producers and marketers. Having the ability to build strong professional ties is an essential tool. Playwrights must be open to networking, and must explore how best to present themselves and their work in a professional and personable manner.

Theatres as Collaborators

Gatekeepers at Canadian theatres want to meet new playwrights. Though they are often extremely busy, it is a large part of their job to develop these new relationships. However, **the responsibility to further your career lies with you alone**. It takes an artistic sensibility partnered with the ability to communicate your work and your passion to others that most often leads to success. This does not mean that playwrights must be constantly advertising themselves or their work, but it does mean that they must take the initiative to set up meetings, engage with gatekeepers, and openly discuss their work whenever possible. Cultivating these relationships can offer opportunities a regular submission would not provide.

Best Practices

- **Be persistent, professional, and personal in your communication with theatres.** What is distinct, different, or exciting about your work?
- **Be clear about your achievements.** Try not to overstate your experience, or understate your successes.
- **Be specific about what it is that you want from that particular theatre.** Start small. A meeting over coffee, the opportunity to talk in their office, or just the chance to drop off a script or proposal to them in person can lead to greater opportunities.
- **Do your research!** Be prepared to speak about why you have chosen this specific theatre to meet with. Why does your work fit in with their mandate or artistic sensibilities?
- **Be patient in your engagement with theatres.** It takes a lot of time and energy to build these kinds of relationships.
- **Attend shows and events at theatres.** This makes an impression on artistic directors and literary managers. It puts you on the theatre's radar.
- **Take an active role in the wider theatrical community.** Be visible at major events and take part in advocacy groups and meetings, such as PGC, Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America (LMDA), and Professional Association of Canada Theatres (PACT).
- **Be open to meeting with all kinds of theatre staff.** Playwrights gravitate towards meeting with artistic directors, but literary managers, new play development staff, and dramaturgs can be extremely helpful and offer their time and support.

- **Develop strong relationships with directors, actors, designers, and other theatre artists.** These supporters from within the theatre community can help you by being great advocates and disseminators of your work.

Dramaturgs

Dramaturgs can be an important part of the writing process for a playwright and they can also be strong advocates and ambassadors for a playwright's work within the theatre community. The decision to work with a dramaturg is one of personal preference; some playwrights refuse to work without one, while other playwrights would rather work independently. More information about finding a dramaturg, their role in the creative process, and examples of rates of pay can be found at the [Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America](#) (LMDA) website.

Developmental Dramaturgy

A developmental dramaturg aids a playwright through focused discussion over the course of a play's development process. Developmental dramaturgy allows the playwright to have someone to respond to the work throughout its various stages when there is no audience or outside eye. The best playwright and dramaturg relationships are built upon mutual trust and allow the playwright to move at their own pace. It is important to meet and talk with a dramaturg before the professional relationship begins to ensure compatibility.

Production Dramaturgy

A production dramaturg works on a specific production and is often hired by a theatre company to be a part of the rehearsal process. Dramaturgs can also take on various other roles for a play, including a translator, adaptor, script supervisor, or literary manager. Theatre companies sometimes assign dramaturgs to a specific production and it can be difficult to make these forced relationships work the way they should. Do not be afraid to discuss this with the theatre and speak up if you feel that the relationship is not progressing smoothly.

Playwright Development Centres

A Playwright Development Centre (PDC) is a non-producing organization that supports the development of Canadian plays and playwrights through a variety of services and resources. Though the structure and services of each of the PDCs across the country differ, most of them offer services and resources to members based on a reasonable yearly membership fee.

Services offered by these organizations can be sorted into three main categories: play development, playwright development, and showcase opportunities.

- **Play Development**

The mainstay of all of Canada's PDCs is play development and they offer a wide variety of aid to playwrights, including regular dramaturgical feedback, opportunity for script development workshops, readings and residencies, and the opportunities to connect with other playwrights through groups, colonies, and meetings.

- **Playwright Development**

Many PDCs also offer professional development workshops that are aimed to further a playwright's career, such as conferences and the opportunity to network with other playwrights and theatre artists.

- **Showcase Opportunities**

Some PDCs also offer the chance to have a playwright's work showcased through readings, workshops, or through cross country exchanges with theatre companies and other PDCs.

PDCs work independently of theatres for the benefit of playwrights in their communities, making them an important part in the development of Canadian Theatre. The focus at PDCs is on helping playwrights get the support and development they need to progress their work to the next stage. PDCs can also advocate a playwright's work by connecting a member playwright to a theatre. They can be a valuable third party recommender and avid supporter of a playwright's work.

Most PDCs are members of [The Playwright Development Centres of Canada](#) (PDDC), a network of PDCs from across the country that share ideas and resources in order to advocate for its members and the playwrights they serve. Current member organizations can be found across the country. For a full listing of member organizations with corresponding links to their websites, please visit PGC's page on [Playwright Development Centres](#).

Agents

As tempting as it is to work with an agent, it is not the norm in Canada. **There are only a small number of agents and agencies in Canada that represent playwrights.** However, many playwrights make agents an integral part of their teams.

Literary Agents advocate on behalf of their clients. They submit plays and production material to theatres and can negotiate difficult business terms with theatres on their clients' behalf. While PGC contracts are designed to allow playwrights to negotiate with theatres on their own, many playwrights prefer that an agent take care of these business negotiations so they can focus on the artistic relationship with a theatre. Experienced agents can speak about you and

your work and can open up many opportunities for a playwright by being able to distribute your work out to a large number of theatres. In fact, many theatre companies in the United States only take submissions through agents.

If you are particularly interested in getting an agent, you can try contacting an agent or an agency and asking what their policy is. If they seem interested, offer them complimentary tickets to your next show. For more information on agents, please refer to Catherine Knight's article [So You Think You Need An Agent?](#), as well as our [Listing of Canadian Talent Agencies](#), both of which can be found on PGC's website.

Playwrights should also remember that PGC handles the administration of amateur rights contracts (primarily for community theatres and schools) for its members and is always willing to review a contract before it gets signed. **PGC negotiates new standardized contracts every three years with PACT on behalf of Canadian playwrights.** In addition, PGC has a growing repertoire of contract guidelines including: Commissioning Guideline, Devised Work Guideline, Musical Theatre Guideline, and Theatre Translation Guideline

For more information about Amateur Performance Rights, please refer to the current [Membership Handbook](#) which can be found on PGC's website in the Members Lounge. For the most recent set of professional contracts and the contract handbook, please visit the [Contracts Section](#) of Member Resources on PGC's website.

Development Opportunities

Some Canadian theatres specialize in new play development and have formalized programs and structures that they use to develop new work. Other theatres develop new work as part of their development programming and provide the necessary resources as they are needed.

Developing a play in a formal structure with a theatre not only offers the benefits of furthering a play towards production, but also allows the playwright to be identified with that company. It creates a sort of temporary home where the playwright may seek support, dramaturgical advice, and other resources. Even when these development opportunities do not eventually lead to production, they can often be a great way to begin a creative relationship with that theatre company.

Feedback and Meetings

The most common form of development that playwrights receive from theatres is correspondence that includes feedback and perhaps dramaturgical sessions. Playwrights should remember that these meetings are not an audition or an

interview. These meetings are an opportunity to allow the theatre to get to know you better and to discover more about the theatre.

Tips

- **Be open with the theatre about yourself and your play.** What stage of development is it at and where do you want to take it?
- **Make sure you go into these meetings with something that you want to accomplish.** Be prepared with questions you would like to have answered or problem areas you want to highlight and seek help with.
- **Do not let the theatre lead you or your play somewhere you do not wish to go.** The bottom line is that this is your play and that you get to make the final decisions about its future.
- **Be interested in finding theatres that are a good artistic match with you and your work who can aid in the development process.** Working with artists with similar visions and sensibilities about your play can lead to more successful and fruitful partnerships.
- **Playwrights are not under any contractual obligations during these meetings.** Remember that these meetings do not guarantee future commitments or contracts for either party.

These informal meetings can lead to a wide variety of opportunities for playwrights, such as an invitation into a formal development program, or a commission from the theatre. They are the first step towards a long-lasting relationship.

Groups, Units, Circles and Colonies

Playwrights' groups, units, and circles all serve similar functions, but under different titles and guises. **These programs bring together a group of playwrights who are individually working on a play to discuss, give feedback, and support each other through the various stages of development.** These groups are often run by a moderator, usually a dramaturg or artistic director, and are most often affiliated or run by a theatre company.

The actual structure and makeup of these groups differs widely from theatre to theatre, and to get a better sense of these programs, please see PGC's [Theatre Submission Listing](#) on our website. Application processes vary, as do the frequency of meetings and resources available to participants. Some of these programs end in a showcase of the playwright's work, often in a series of public or private play readings at the theatre.

Tips

- **Allow yourself to be invigorated by these meetings.** Sharing your work with other playwrights can be an eye opening experience and can truly help develop your play, as can having feedback from a wide variety of other theatre artists.
- **Feedback should remain specific, productive, and focus on what is best for the play.** Some programs may be too focused on a showcase opportunity, offer little individual play development, or be too focused on peer-to-peer dramaturgy. Take what advice and support you want from these groups, and make sure that the development is useful.
- **Use this opportunity to get to know the theatre company.** Groups offer the chance to work with an artistic director, or other moderator, and to learn more about the way the theatre operates and develops work.
- **Be open to future development opportunities.** These groups are often the first step towards other development programs at theatres and can be the beginning of strong relationships.

Colonies

Playwriting colonies are similar gatherings of playwrights all working individually on developing new work, but offer a shorter, more immersive experience. Playwrights are usually chosen by application, and travel to a retreat where they have the basic necessities provided by the colony, including accommodation and meals. This allows playwrights the freedom to write without the pressures and distractions of everyday life in a peaceful and creative community. Colonies are often moderated by a dramaturg, who is on hand to offer support and advice. Though there are still opportunities for networking with other participants, the focus is on individual creation.

Workshops and Readings

The next step in development of most plays after several drafts and dramaturgical sessions is to see the work for the first time on its feet complete with actors and a director. Workshops and readings with actors provide a similar service in that they allow the playwright to hear the work spoken out loud and to see what several new pairs of eyes and ears discover in the text.

Developmental Workshops

Developmental workshops are an immersive exploration of a play where a professional director and actors are given time to rehearse with the playwright in the room, anywhere from several days to several weeks. This gives the

playwright the opportunity to rework and rewrite scenes and to bring in new drafts to be worked on by the group. Workshops may end in a private or public presentation of the play.

Developmental Readings

Play readings require less rehearsal time, and are therefore less expensive. A director and actors are brought together to stage a public or private reading of the play, either roughly staged or performed at music stands. The playwright gets the opportunity to hear the play spoken out loud by professional actors and can develop the work from there.

Showcase Readings

Showcase readings are less for the purposes of play development, and more to create public interest. They allow playwrights to see their work in front of the general public, and receive important, if unprofessional, feedback. These readings can also be a great way for playwrights working independently of theatre companies to disseminate their work out to gatekeepers, theatres, and other theatre artists without the time commitment or costs of self-production.

Tips

- **The decision to have a workshop or reading should be made in tandem by theatre and playwright.** Both parties should feel that the play will gain something through the process.
- **The goals of these sessions should be clear.** Feedback should be given in a way that aids the play and the playwright, not allowing for too many dramaturgical voices in the room or unfiltered feedback from audiences.
- **The playwright should always feel that their voice is being heard** throughout the process and that their personal desires for the workshop or reading are being met.
- Development of work through workshops and readings should be **adapted for the individual needs of the playwright and that specific play.** If the playwright feels that there is not enough to gain from the process, they should not move forward.

Workshops and readings come at a point in development when theatres and playwrights already have an established relationship and a mutual trust has formed. However, deciding upon specific contractual agreements is necessary to make sure that things run smoothly. For more information and examples of

contracts for workshops and readings, please see PGC's [Contract Section](#) in the member resources on our website.

Canada Council Playwrights' Readings Program

As another form of promotion through readings, PGC members also have the opportunity to take part in the Canada Council Playwrights' Readings Program, in which playwrights are given the chance to perform free readings of their work to the general public. This opportunity allows for greater dissemination of your work and offers playwrights the chance to connect with communities across the country. A travel subsidy and honorarium is available through this program. For more information and further details, please refer to our [Membership Handbook](#), available on PGC's website.

Commissions

A commission is a contractual relationship between a theatre and a playwright that causes a new play to be written. In this contract, the playwright is paid a pre-determined fee by the theatre (or third party) for a pre-determined number of drafts of the play and/or the option for a premiere production.

The commissioning of a new play can happen for a number of reasons. Sometimes a theatre seeks out a specific playwright to develop an idea into a play, or a playwright may approach a theatre seeking resources to create a new work. Commissions can take many forms and be determined by many conditions related to individual creators and theatre companies. For more detailed information on commissions, please refer to PGC's [Commissioning Guidelines](#) or the [Contract Section](#), both available on our website. **Remember too that PGC is always available to answer questions about commissions and contracts.**

Commissions are great for playwrights. **They represent a theatre's literal investment in a playwright and his or her play.** They are unfortunately becoming more rare. Only about thirty percent of the playwrights who responded to our members' survey had received a commission in the past five years. Many small and mid-sized companies do not have the funding or resources to commission new works. Commissions often come about after a strong creative relationship has been established with a theatre or when a playwright has received a measure of success. Only a few playwrights in Canada are commissioned for more of their work. Working under a commission from a theatre requires you to be artistically accountable to the company. This does not mean curbing your own artistic vision, but it often means that the theatre will help shape and guide the work that is being created.

Residencies

A playwriting residency affiliates a playwright with a theatre company or other organization for a set amount of time while developing new work. The playwright is paid to become a part of the organization during that time. The requirements and expectations of residencies vary depending on the supporting organization.

Many residencies offer playwrights the opportunity for regular meetings and dramaturgical sessions with directors or dramaturgs. Some include a mentorship role with the resident playwright leading a playwriting unit or circle. Residencies often include, at minimum, a space to work and developmental support in the form of workshops and readings. Whatever the specifics of the residency, residencies offer a mutually beneficial relationship. **The playwright is given a temporary “home” to develop their work and the organization has increased access to the playwright and the work he/she develops during the residency.**

Tips

- **Find a residency that is right for you.** It is the playwright’s responsibility to understand what the goals and expectations are for the work that will be developed during a stay with a theatre and to decide for him or herself whether a specific residency would be useful.
- **Create a written agreement with the theatre that details responsibilities and expectations for both parties.** Due to the individual nature of residencies, there are no specific contract templates available, but if you have any questions about creating an agreement, please contact us.
- **Do your research into residencies and what they offer.** You can find information in PACT’s Theatre Listing, [PGC’s Theatre Submission Listing](#), or on the theatre’s website. Ask other playwrights who have worked with that theatre to offer their advice and experiences as well.
- For more information on how to navigate a successful residency, please refer to Sara Graefe’s article *Making the Most of Your Residency* in the [Membership Handbook](#), available on PGC’s website.

Also, keep in mind that there are other residency opportunities available to playwrights besides working with professional theatres. Members have taken up residency with schools, universities, galleries, hospitals, and public libraries to create work in unique ways.

Different Forms of Theatre

This section of the guide explores considerations to keep in mind when creating and working with different forms of theatre. It especially tries to answer questions about types of theatrical creations from writing for musical theatre and opera, creating work collaboratively, to working with theatre for young audiences. What is different about working in these various forms from creating traditional plays? What processes and interactions with theatres are unique to these genres? What are the best ways for playwrights to gain attention for their work in these genres? These features are also meant as an introduction to playwrights to discover new forms of creation or genres to work in. Also in this section is a feature on working with community theatres.

Collective Creations

A collective creation is a form of theatre where the play is created collaboratively by a group of people. The process can also be called a devised work, and usually involves input from all members of a collective in the development of the piece. Creating work with a group of artists requires special considerations to make sure that everyone's rights are being upheld and that a fair agreement is settled upon. **There are no standard contracts for collective creation, but we recommend creating a detailed agreement between all creators before work begins.** For more information, please refer to PGC's [Devised Work Guideline](#), which can be found in the Members' Lounge on our website.

Though collective creations have been a part of the fabric of Canadian theatre since the beginning, they only account for a small number of the shows produced at Canadian theatres. They are still not that common at mid-sized and larger theatre companies, though some theatres are becoming more interested in developing this kind of work. These opportunities can come about in two ways: An ad hoc group of artists comes together to collaboratively create a piece and looks for a producing partner in a theatre company, or a theatre brings together a group of artists to create a piece. **There are many independent companies around the country that specialize in collective creation and devising work, usually with a core group of artists.** More information about these companies can be found in our [Theatre Submission Listing](#) on PGC's website.

Collective creation can offer playwrights the chance to develop work in fresh and exciting ways. It allows them to collaborate with a diverse group of artists and take on new roles, such as actor, deviser, or director. Creating work in this way can also be a great pathway for emerging artists looking to experiment outside of the major theatre companies and develop their own work.

Community Collaborations

Some collective creations involve a playwright working alongside community members or learners to devise a piece. This type of work is often created in partnership with an agency or organization on a specific issue or topic. The playwright may then act as a facilitator for the piece, or create a play from their conjoined research. These companies and agencies can offer a wide variety of resources and funding to support the work. Special care should be taken when negotiating contracts with these agencies, as they may be unfamiliar with working with theatre artists or playwrights. These opportunities have great potential for growth, however, as these agencies will often use these projects as starting points for awareness projects, utilizing the material in educational packages or documentaries, and creating an interesting mix of play creation and play education.

Musicals and Operas

Playwrights should be aware of the specific considerations that should be taken into account when creating and producing musicals and operas. These genres often require the coming together of many different collaborators. Navigating your way through so many artistic visions can be intimidating. For a detailed look at the process of creating musicals and opera, including entering into contract negotiations, please refer to the [Guidelines for Musicals/Opera Contracts](#) in the Members Lounge on PGC's website.

Things to Keep in Mind

- **Musicals and operas are expensive.** The added cost of musicians, musical directors, orchestrators, and large casts can make musicals and operas much more expensive to produce than shows in other genres.
- **They have a lengthy development process.** New musicals and operas go through an intense series of developmental workshops and readings before they are ready to be produced, and this process is difficult for many theatres to support. This makes it challenging to get new musical theatre and opera out into the community and seen by gatekeepers at theatres.
- **There are noteworthy programs for the development of musicals and opera in Canada.** Some even pair together playwrights, librettists, or lyricists with composers to create work. For a full listing of theatre companies that specialize in and offer developmental opportunities for musicals and operas, please refer to PGC's [Theatre Submission Listing](#) in the Members Lounge on our website.

Many of the major regional theatres we spoke to in our research are very

interested in the production of musical theatre, but getting your musical into these centres can take a lot of work. Musical theatre writers are encouraged to produce their work at smaller theatres and festivals on their own to try and get the attention of the big producing bodies. Also, the community for creating musical theatres and operas is much smaller than for plays, so establishing a good network of creative relationships is **extremely important**. Getting to know the gatekeepers at opera and musical theatre companies can be a great asset to getting their attention and support on projects.

Theatre for Young Audiences

Though the major difference in creating theatre for young audiences (TYA) is the content and the target audience, there are still many specific points to take into consideration when working in the TYA world. PGC has recently released new premiere, stock, and commissioning contracts with TYA companies, which can be found in [Contracts Section](#) of the Member Resources on PGC's website. TYA shows fall into two major categories:

School Shows are created and toured to different schools. They are often short works, between 45 to 55 minutes. They usually feature relatively small casts and limited production elements to allow for ease of transportation. These plays are often specifically written for this purpose and are almost always connected to school curriculum. They often deal with specific educational issues or topics and are targeted towards a specific age group. The target age ranges are: Kindergarten to Grade Three, Grade Four to Six, and Young Adults.

Mainstage Shows presented by a theatre company follow similar guidelines; however, there are fewer restrictions. Casts are often larger, and the plays are often longer. The focus is usually on adaptations of popular books and stories, but also on the creation of original material.

Things to Keep in Mind

- **Knowledge of the genre is important.** Having experience working with children and in the genre were important factors for gatekeepers.
- **Know the company and what kind of work they produce.** Are they a touring company? What is their target audience? If you are unsure, contact the theatre. It's a great way to start a relationship.
- **Many of the plays are created through commissions.** Since the content and educational nature of TYA shows are so specific, most companies commission new plays from playwrights rather than find work through submissions.
- **Tours are more common for TYA shows than in other genres.** Not

only school tours, but to different companies around the country as well.

- **Shows are often remounted.** Most TYA companies continually remount shows from past seasons, especially with school tours. Therefore, the opportunities for a second or third production are often greater with TYA companies.

Residencies in Schools

Writing plays for young audiences also offers playwrights or other artists the opportunity to work closely with youth in school settings. Many TYA companies offer residencies where artists are sent into classrooms to create plays alongside youth, or to lead playmaking workshops. The work created is usually inspired by or developed alongside students, and follows an educational unit or curriculum issue. This can be a great opportunity for playwrights to branch out into diverse playwriting situations.

Community Theatres

Community and amateur groups are a staple across the country and an important part of the artistic community in Canada. Some artists from within the theatre world have a stigma about working with these groups; however, having your plays produced by these companies can have a great range of benefits for a playwright.

- **Great opportunities for development.** The productions can offer playwrights the time, space, and collaboration needed to get a work to the final stages.
- **Working with a diverse group of artists from different backgrounds.** It also offers the opportunity to develop long lasting creative relationships with these artists in the future.
- **A whole new audience that may be unfamiliar with your work.** Community theatres tend to have loyal audiences that derive from the surrounding area.
- **An opportunity to develop yourself as a playwright.** This is especially true for emerging and new career playwrights. Working with community and amateur groups helps playwrights acquire experience within a theatre and learn about the various positions and roles that come together to make a show possible.

For a listing of community theatres in your area and around the country, please see the [Listing of Community Theatres](#) on PGC's website. **Playwrights should also remember that PGC handles the administration of amateur rights**

contracts with community theatres for its members and is always willing to review a contract before it gets signed. For more information, see the [Membership Handbook](#), available on PGC's website in the Members' Lounge.

Theatre Abroad

Theatre is created and produced differently within each country. It is important to understand how a particular country produces theatre and what the playwright's role is within the process. Please check PGC's [International Playwright Organizations Listing](#) to aid you in this research. In addition, PGC lists International opportunities such as competitions, workshops and residencies in CanScene. Archived issues of [CanScene](#) can be found in the Member Resource section.