



HOPE STREET

T H E A T R E

THE HOPE STREET THEATRE
PRESS & MARKETING PACK
UPDATED NOVEMBER 2018

Hope Street Theatre
Marketing and Press Pack

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest and most important aspects of producing a show is press and marketing. So often this is pushed aside and left to the very last minute – whereas the complete opposite should happen.

You need to be thinking about the marketing and press for your production long before you enter the rehearsal room – if you have already started rehearsals, then realistically you are probably too late to really capitalise on potential press coverage and early ticket sales.

This handy little guide – which has been put together by the team at The Hope Street Theatre - is designed to help you pitch and sell your show. If you need any advice or guidance, get in touch with our Press and Marketing Manager, John Roberts:
john@hopestreettheatre.com

We look forward to working with you and helping you make your show a big success!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Rogers', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Nick Rogers Chief Executive

PUBLICITY IMAGES AND POSTER

Creating the right image for your production is paramount, we only have to walk down the street to see 100s of different images flashed in front of us – all with their own unique selling point, colour scheme and message – so it's vital that you create an image which is striking, that can catch the eye and that gives your target audience the right message.

So often new producers will go for the cheapest option in creating these things; they usually result in subpar images, that look messy, ill-thought out and are more likely to turn people away than draw them in. You need to think carefully about what you want to say with your images and poster, what is the show about? What are the themes? Have you left enough negative space in an image to put text when creating a poster (nothing looks worse than text over the main image).

Talk to any marketing professional and they will tell you that one of the keys to a successful publicity campaign is a strong image or design. This will be the 'face' of your show and will 'talk' to your audience by communicating a message or concept relevant to your show. Commissioning a designer or photographer would be a good investment but if you can't afford that try to get help from a talented amateur from your circle of friends. Be careful to avoid using great images which are totally irrelevant to your show. Your image must translate to digital and print. Stick to the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid), the more complex, abstract and busy the image, the more likely it will be ignored.

When you do choose an image, use the same image across the board and focus on continuity. The familiarity of one image, reappearing online, in newspapers and on flyers, helps build recognition of your show.

Make sure all your images are available in both High-Res (Print) and Low Res (online) – for poster images make sure you have the following; Poster Image with no text, Poster Image and just the show title, Poster Image with all details. Make sure they are all easily accessible through a dropbox type outlet.

No poster, or publicity images that has HST branding on or relating to a show at HST should be printed or distributed without our prior agreement and signing off on the material. For sign off, please email john@hopestreettheatre.com. The sign off or approvals process is set out below.

IN HOUSE POSTER DESIGN

If you are unable to design the posters yourself, we can design them in house at a cost of just £42 (inc vat) - please let us know if you would like to use this facility.

GETTING YOUR SHOW ON SALE

Once your show is on sale, you need to ensure that you send the team at TicketQuarter adapts of your artwork for their site, this helps ensure your show is seen on their website, if you fail to provide them with artwork, your show will just be branded with The Hope Street Theatre Logo.

You need to provide the following

- 1) 750 x 422px Adaption (no text in the bottom 222px)
- 2) 1200 x 630px
- 3) 1920 x 354px

These must all be either png or jpeg and ideally should include no text at all.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a potential gold mine for ticket sales, however you have to think carefully about targeting adverts in the correct way – you also need to carefully think about an eye-catching campaign – what do you want to share with your audience? Videos, Images, Sneak Peaks, etc etc. Have you created suitable images to use on Facebook Timelines, Groups, Twitter Profile Headings, Instagram images. Do you have a unique #Hashtag for your show? – this makes searching for likes, posts etc about your show easy to do.

There is a marketing school of thought that states an average person needs to see something at least 3 times in 3 different ways before they will take notice of it – so its important to try and create as many different but linked and coherent images etc as possible.

GETTING YOUR SHOW ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

All the venues social media channels are set up in advance, so if you want your show to appear, then you must send what you want to go live by Sunday (for the next weeks inclusion). We use Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Please include the following hashtag setup on all posts. This enables us to track social media usage etc and help you get the best out of your social media campaign.

#Showname (&) HST

Eg. For Closer the # would be #CloserHST

For Aladdin the # would be #AladdinHST

For Grey the # would be #GreyHST

FACEBOOK EVENTS

Setting up a Facebook event as soon as your show goes on sale is vital, once you have created your event, please invite The Hope Street Theatre to be a co-host with you, we will not set up the event for you personally.

PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are vital for getting the attention of media – both new (Radio, TV, Online) and Print – they should be clear, concise and should ideally not go over one side of A4.

Ideally a press release should follow include the following information: -

- • Head your document "Press Release"
- • If there is an embargo – state details of the embargo.
- • Show Title with any billing and contract information such as "By Arrangement With..."
- • The Hope Street Theatre's name and overall dates (not full listing dates)
- • Date and time of press night if there is one
- • The main text of the release, including synopsis of show and unique selling points. Your copy needs to make editors sit up and take notice. No one can tell you what to write – only you know the unique selling points of your show.
- • Selective press quotes about the show or past company productions (if available)
- • Brief outline of those involved
- • A few quotes from those involved
- • Listings Information – full name and address details of The Hope Street Theatre, how much tickets cost, where to buy them and any age guidance and content warnings.
- • Contact details for press enquiries, include landline, mobile and email address as well as any website details
- • The word "ENDS" should appear at the bottom to indicate that is the end of the document.

The press hate nothing more than superlatives that overblow what a production is about, avoid using terms that may give the wrong impression of the show – one of the biggest overused terms is "Immersive" especially when all you do is walk through an audience for example. They will see through these terms very quickly and if they don't get what you have said on press night – you can guarantee they will call you out on it very quickly.

Sending out press releases can be very easy – BCC'ing a list of 100 press etc, but again be warned, outlets get press releases every day and can tell when someone has put in the effort of sending a personalised email with an attached press release. The BCC may also fall foul of the spam filter. If you want them to make the effort to publicise or attend your event, you must put in the effort and time to send personalised emails – this is by far the best way to gain results. The next important thing is do your homework – make sure you know who you are sending emails to – there is nothing worse than Jane at What's On Stage opening an email saying "Dear Mark, we would love it if Time Out came to review the show" – the only thing this will be certain to see is the trash can!

Press releases should be sent as a PDF but also the text of the press release within the body of the email. DO NOT send large images over email, instead include a Dropbox link where images can be found with a click of a button. Make sure all images are labelled with Show Name, cast who are in the photo and the name of the photographer. It is worth bearing in mind that many listings and review sites have limited resources/staffing so before sending press releases and images, check the FAQ section of the site to see if there are submission guidelines. If you send an image which is 600px wide when the site only uses images that are 500px wide you move the job of resizing that image on to the publication (and decrease the chances that your image will be used, and your production previewed).

Don't pitch the same ideas to the same outlets – have many different ideas, and pitch the most relevant story to the most relevant outlet, it's no good sending a pitch talking about the historical accuracy of a show to The Reviews Hub when that kind of pitch is far better suited to The Telegraph.

And one final thing.... remember to check the spelling and grammar on your press release before pressing send!

LISTINGS

There are many outlets for listing your show, this does take time, however there are subscription-based services that will allow you to input your listings and they will then add it to almost every listings site in the UK for a one off or monthly fee.

As mentioned at the beginning of this mailout – this is only a small but vital list to follow – for more information or advice then please contact John Roberts (Marketing and Press Manager) on john@hopestreettheatre.com

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

We have put together a suggested 16-week timeline (see below) for marketing your production. You can compress or adjust if there are less than 16 weeks until you open.

THE APPROVALS PROCESS

As part of your contract with The Hope Street Theatre we have approval on all artwork and press releases related to the show.

The process is – email draft versions of art work (including posters, flyers, etc) and press releases to john@hopestreettheatre.com. At this point there may need to be some amendments and changes. If (or once) John is happy he will send everything through to our Artistic Director (Sam Donovan) and our Chief Executive (Nick Rogers) for final approval. Final approval should come within 24 hours of John sending everything through.

SUGGESTED MARKETING TIMELINE

TIMELINE	ACTION
16 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare blurb for the show in 150-word (for website and flyers), 100-word (for your own mailouts and social media), 80-word (for other companies' mailouts) and 50-word (for other companies' social media) versions. Have HST sign these off. • Work on the graphic design and have it approved by anyone internally within your company and HST.
15 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue press release announcing show; the embargoed version can be distributed to regional and local press outlets (newspapers, radio, TV, blogs) in advance of officially announcing, so that the press coverage is ready to coincide with the show going on sale. Just be clear what time the embargo finishes.
14 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate HST and ticket provider ready for the show going on sale. Share suggested social media posts and content with HST, with clear instructions what time to action these e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts and images. These can be set-up in advance. The aim is that upon announcing the show, there's a buzz! • A wider social media strategy 'teasing' the announcement can begin; drop hints and clues what is coming to warm up audience interest.
13 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise print distribution plans and order flyers and posters with the printer. • How many flyers/posters will you need for HST? How many will the cast and crew take and share with their networks? How many will you need for display racks at other venues and for exit flyering shows? Who will be delivering this for you?
12 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go on sale! HST should have posters and flyers by now, and you can make a nice visual display at any launch event or party. • Make sure all copy and images are proofread on website and social media and their release is coordinated. All posts should direct users back to the point of sale – usually the HST website – in as few steps as possible. Do not send them to your company's website or other platforms unless tickets can be bought directly there. • Hopefully some press coverage will be released; use Google Alerts to track all mentions of the show, save them all in a Press Archive, and then share them individually over the next few days and weeks to keep interest fresh and the news in circulation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do NOT have an all-out launch on the day and then go completely silent!
11 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't expect huge numbers of sales at this stage – right now you are building interest and creating a narrative around the show. Keep up the online and social media presence and consider encouraging friends of cast/crew to book now by offering an early bird discount for some show(s). • If you can get an early show sold out to this core group, you can use that to motivate a wider audience.
10 Weeks Out	Approach special interest groups who may be affected by the play's themes. Offer them personalised, private discounts or group deals. Perhaps offer a post-show Q&A with cast and creatives or invite a representative to join such an event. Involving these groups can rapidly swell an audience.
9 Weeks Out	Arrange mailout PS slot and social media swaps with local venues/companies if possible. Please check with HST first. Just email local venues/companies asking if they will share news of your show on their mailouts or social media, in return for a reciprocal from HST or yourselves. Make sure you confirm available dates and what limits of copy/image/format HST have before doing this.
8 Weeks Out	Print distribution wave 1; have the first batch of flyers and posters issued to your targeted display racks. These should stay up for 4 – 6 weeks or so.
7 Weeks Out	Assemble cast/creative team biographies and headshots. Share with HST and have them ready to add to your website etc at the same time as the press announce the cast.
6 Weeks Out	Issue press release announcing the cast and creative team. This reminds the press of your show and will hopefully generate some fresh coverage. As before, track all mentions and recycle it on your social media platforms over the next few days.
5 Weeks Out	Begin generating interviews with key creatives e.g. writer, director, cast, designer etc. Have them discuss the play, talk about their role, sum up why it's special in one sentence etc. Share these recordings or posts every couple of days on social media and on YouTube.
4 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsals are probably starting about now. Make sure to share snippets from the room and tease glances at costumes, set, etc. • A rehearsal diary is a good idea!
3 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print distribution wave 2; have the second batch of flyers and posters issued to refresh the initial run. You should also begin exit flyering similar shows/venues now. This should now stretch until at least the penultimate week of the show.

2 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopefully at least one show is sold out, so you can start using this to incentivise others to book. Create a sense of success – but be clear tickets are still available. • If sales are low, consider donating a few free (or very cheap) tickets to local colleges and drama schools – getting in young people to early shows can generate a buzz and strong word-of-mouth.
1 Week Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a short trailer or video from the rehearsal runs or clips, as the show should be in a good state by now. • You could also run a competition for free tickets and a drink at the opening night
Opening Week/Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep all of this up throughout the run!

MORE INFORMATION

Our Press and Marketing Manager, John Roberts, is available to provide more information and guidance on john@hopestreettheatre.com