

# THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND

**PRO**



**Hello Pros!** It's March Madness!

Here at PRO headquarters, March Madness doesn't have anything to do with the NCAA tournament. (Let's face it, there isn't a lot of crossover between theater fans and basketball fans!)

For us, March Madness is about the march

towards production and the madness that happens along the way. I've produced a bunch of shows in my career, and each time I decide to put another one up, I think, "I've done this before. This will be a breeze."

And it never is. Because every show is different. That's one of the reasons I love the theater, because each show is so unique with its own set of challenges. And with each new show comes something I've never dealt with before

(on *Once On This Island* it was goats and sand!).

But not only do these challenges help create a better show, they also help you grow as an artist and an individual. So as you march towards your goals, remember, the madness is what makes the theater so damn special.

Go get 'em.

Ken

## WRITING FOR PROS

### *You're Not Just a Writer.*

*When you come up with ideas for new plays or musicals, it's important to remember you're not just a writer. You're a theater writer.*

*Read more on page 2.*

## MARKETING FOR PROS

### *The One Question Survey*

*Working with large marketing agencies is quite an education in how the big boys market shows. I am constantly stealing stuff I've learned and bringing it back to our business.*

*Read more on page 3.*

## RAISING MONEY FOR PROS

### *The First Step to Overcoming Objections*

*Someone expresses interest and then asks a ton of questions expressing their concerns. In the sales world (that's what raising money is, right?) these concerns are called objections.*

*Read more on page 4.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, March 22, 2018** | 5:30–7:30 pm ET  
PRO Monthly Mixer - Social Bar and Lounge 2nd floor

**Wednesday, April 4, 2018** | 8–9:30 am ET  
Breakfast with Ken

**Wednesday, April 4, 2018** | 7–9 pm ET  
Producer Pitch Night Session 2

**Saturday, May 19, 2018** | 3–6 pm ET  
Spring Strategy Intensive (*Spots still available!*)



For more information or to sign up for other events, visit [www.theproducerperspective.com](http://www.theproducerperspective.com).

# You're Not Just a Writer.

When you come up with ideas for new plays or musicals, it's important you remember that you're not just a writer. You're a theater writer.

One of the mistakes I see many writers make is thinking that every good idea is a good idea for the theater. Sure, every idea can be made into a theater piece. But that doesn't mean the theater is the most effective medium for the expression of that idea.

That's why, when you come up with an idea, you must ask yourself the simple question, "Why on the stage?" There must be some

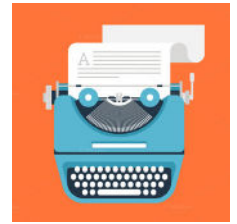
theatrical conceit that makes the stage the best place to express your ideas. If there isn't, then maybe the idea is better off as a book or a movie or even a painting!

These conceits can be as simple as music being the root of the story, like *Phantom of the Opera* (we're watching an opera about an opera) or comically complicated like *Gentlemen's Guide to Love and Murder* which has one actor playing multiple roles and changing costumes faster than Clark Kent turns into Superman.

But you must have at least one compelling

reason that your show must be told on a stage. Because the theater is a complicated art form and a very difficult one to pull off. So, as I like to say, if your idea can be anything else besides a play or a musical, then that's what it should be.

If there's nowhere else it should be but on a stage, then that's when you know you've got something special.



## FEATURED PRO MEMBERS



Sally Rosenberg

### Name(s):

Sally Rosenberg  
and Jill Lesser

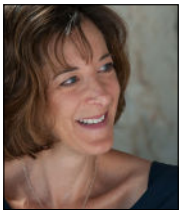
### Where You're From:

Chevy Chase, MD

### PROfession:

Sally: Partner, Deputy General Counsel, McDermott Will & Emery LLP and author of middle grade novel, *Invincible* (Imagination Stage Press 2006).

Jill: President, Women Against Alzheimer's



Jill Lesser

(an advocacy organization), trained lawyer, daughter of a playwright, mother to an aspiring stage actor, turning a lifelong passion for theater into her next professional adventure.

Sally and Jill are forming Ladybug Stages LLC, a theatrical production company.

### What projects are you currently working on?

SR & JL: We are working on *Invincible the Musical*, a stage adaptation of Sally's novel. The family-oriented fantasy adventure features 16-year-old identical twin princesses: Lena who is physically disabled and adventurous and Meg who is able-bodied and riddled with

anxiety. It's a story about challenging limits, facing fears and discovering possibilities. Our creative team is Mark Sonnenblick (music and lyrics), Maggie Herskowitz (book) and director/choreographer, Jeff Whiting. The project began in 2012. At present, we are polishing a full script while working towards a 29 hour reading in 2018.

### Why did you join PRO?

SR & JL: We had determined that we wanted to bring *Invincible* to fruition. Jill discovered the Producer's Perspective Super Conference. We were blown away by the substance of the programming and the talent assembled across the life cycle of a production. We are passionate about realizing *Invincible* on stage and are now bolstered to learn the business of theater as a next full chapter in our lives. The suite of growing online content and evening or weekend office hours/masterminds/conferences make it possible for us to gain a deep, practical and insightful graduate level education around our other responsibilities. Living in the DC area, the ability to listen to PRO's content as we exercise, commute to work or get our nails done is amazing (and a great use of our downtime). Ken's (and his team's) spirit and goodwill are also major influencers. Simply put, it feels good to be

around the welcoming and responsive energy of the Producer's Perspective crew with Ken at the helm. He is substantive, a skilled presenter, generous and supportive. We are constantly remarking how worthwhile are the PRO programs. We are beyond grateful that we are able to partake and also start to build our theater biz network.

### What do you look for in a collaborator, and how do you seek out creative partners?

SR & JL: We seek collaborators who share our passion for a particular project. We seek our partners through our networks, including unexpected ones. We found Mark and our original playwright Charlie Polinger through Charlie's mom, and we found Jeff through one of Sally's legal clients. And then Jeff found us Maggie. So, our creative team proves Ken's adage that you should talk about your project wherever you go!

### What have you found to be the most valuable part of being a PRO member?

SR & JL: On a practical level, the quantity and quality of PRO resources, ever growing, are stunning. On a visceral level, the value is in feeling inspired and empowered on a daily basis. There isn't a day when The Producer's Perspective and Ken Davenport's name isn't in the inbox...and it's all good!

## OVERHEARD IN SHUBERT ALLEY

### Here are the rumors people are whispering about these days...

The highly anticipated Moulin Rouge will open on Broadway in the summer of '19 (meaning it will be eligible in the '19-20 Tony season) at a theater that has been renamed in the last decade or so.

Look for our ticketing companies to start making deals with secondary market sellers (aka brokers). The great standoff may be over.

A certain funny lady could have extended her run in a Broadway show to help get it into the black. But she opted out instead.

Got a rumor? Send 'em to me at [ken@theproducersperspective.com](mailto:ken@theproducersperspective.com).



**“The goal isn’t to live forever, The goal is to create something that will.”**

~Chuck Palahniuk

MARKETING FOR PROS

## The One Question Survey

As part of my gig with Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Really Useful Group, I work closely with a global ad agency called Digitas. In addition to *School of Rock*, Digitas handles Delta Airlines, Under Armour, American Express and some other powerhouse brands.

As you can imagine, working with them is quite an education in how the big boys market shows. And as you can also imagine, I am constantly stealing stuff from those big boys and bringing it back to our business.

Recently, Digitas sent me an email asking me to answer a “one question survey” on their performance. And in this one email, there were three big takeaways that I had to pass on to you.

1. You want people to do something? Make it quick, easy and TELL THEM it’s going to be quick and easy. How could I not take 2 seconds to answer one question? I clicked the link within 30 seconds of getting the email.

2. That one question? They didn’t tell me what it was in the email. And since there was only one question, I couldn’t help but wonder, “Wow, this question must be a special one. What could it be?” I was curious. You want people to act? Make ‘em curious.



3. You want to know what the question is, don’t you? I told you curiosity works! It was this: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend us?” Did you guess it? This question is by far, the most important question you can ask in your surveys. It measures Word of Mouth. And Word of Mouth is what sells everything. And a business, any business, whether it’s ad agency or a musical is only as good as it’s referral engine.

Try the one question survey on your next production. See how you do. I won’t tell Digitas you stole it from them. And I’m sure they stole it from someone anyway.

### Are you following Ken on Facebook?

He posts a new LIVE video every day as part of his new series #EveryDayIsDifferent  
[www.facebook.com/KenDavenport](http://www.facebook.com/KenDavenport)

WHAT KEN’S READING THIS MONTH



### *Creativity, Inc: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration*

by Ed Catmull

Creativity, Inc. is a book for managers who want to lead their employees to new heights, a manual for anyone who strives for originality, and the first-ever, all-access trip into the nerve center of Pixar Animation. It is, at heart, a book about how to build a creative culture—but it is also, as Pixar co-founder and president Ed Catmull writes, “an expression of the ideas that I believe make the best in us possible.”

LAST MONTH AT THE BROADWAY BOX OFFICE

### The February Freeze

This winter has been a peculiar one.

We started off January hotter than ever, and many (me included) wondered if we were breaking the winter curse. But nature and Broadway has a way of balancing itself out, and the last couple of weeks in February were chillier than expected.

All in all, however, it’s still practically balmy compared to last season. Overall grosses were up over 10% this year and attendance was up almost half that as well.

We’ll continue our downward trend into March (which has, surprisingly, one of the worst weeks of the year . . . if not the worst!) until we get to the ices, when spring breaks start to warm up our box offices.

Until then, here’s how last month’s financials looked like on Broadway.

#### FEBRUARY 2017 BROADWAY GROSS

**\$114,497,624.41**

...

#### FEBRUARY 2018 BROADWAY GROSS

**\$126,589,256.99**

Increase/Decrease: +10.56%

...

#### FEBRUARY 2017 BROADWAY ATTENDANCE

**1,027,441**

...

#### FEBRUARY 2018 BROADWAY ATTENDANCE

**1,071,764**

Increase/Decrease: +4.31%

...

*Get the weekly grosses  
by subscribing to my blog.*



# The First Step to Overcoming Objections

Every yes you get (and you will get them) won't be easy. Sure, every once in a while someone will just say, "Where do I sign?" and throw some money in your show. But I've raised money from thousands of investors, and I can count those experiences on one hand.

What usually happens is that someone expresses interest—and then asks a ton of questions expressing their concerns.

In the sales world (and we all know that's what raising money is, right?) these concerns are called objections.

And to be a successful money-raiser, you're going to have to learn to overcome them. They might be, "You don't have a star," or "Your show is too expensive," or "I'm concerned about the economy!"

I've heard them all.

And you know what the first step to overcoming these objections is?

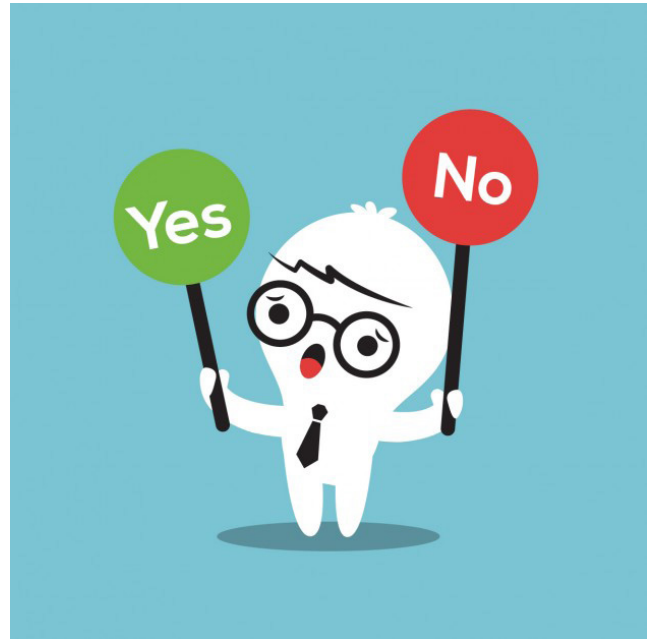
KNOWING WHAT THEY COULD BE!

Before you ask for a dime for your show, do this exercise:

Write out the Top 10 Reasons why an investor would NOT invest in your show. And don't tell me there aren't any! There are. You have to be honest with yourself and your investors. So be objective and make this list.

Did you do it?

Great. Now, once you identify these issues, you can come up with a rebuttal. And when the objection gets raised in the pitch process do this . . . AGREE with the investor (never disagree) and then explain why it doesn't concern you.



You'll get objections. It's part of the process. It's what you do with them that will determine how fast you get to your fundraising goal.

## ON THE PODCAST

The Producer's Perspective Podcast has become a veritable who's who of Broadway insiders. As a member of PRO, you're the first to know who's coming up:

- 3/26 Michael Korie
- 4/9 Warren Leight

## ON THE BLOG

A couple of top read articles on the blog last month:

- What The Theater Crunch Could Mean For The Subsidiary Market.
- How Many Women Do This on Broadway?
- Stats Revealed: Fewer Shows Close This January Than In The Last 10 Years.

Make sure you don't miss a single blog. Subscribe today.

## CONNECT WITH KEN

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- [ken@theproducersperspective.com](mailto:ken@theproducersperspective.com)

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## UPDATES FROM PROS

### Kurt Johns

is looking for co-producers for upcoming productions of the Off-Broadway hit *Churchill the play* starring Ronald Keaton. Portable, self-contained production. Particular interest in LA and DC. Easiest producing gig you'll ever have. Contact [kurt@solochicagotheatre.com](mailto:kurt@solochicagotheatre.com) for more information.

### Diane Uniman's

*Triangle 146* got another official selection of BEST SCREENPLAY at the Beverly Hills Film Festival!

### Amy Drake

has been re-elected to the Board of the International Centre for Women Playwrights, to serve from 2018-2020.

Got a project update? Email me at [ken@theproducersperspective.com](mailto:ken@theproducersperspective.com)