

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND

PRO

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WELCOME

Hello PROs!

The freeze of February is upon us!

Not only is this just a cold, cold month, but I find that February is when a lot of projects “freeze” as well. Maybe it’s because the excitement of the New Year has waned. Maybe it’s because Valentine’s Day and Presidents’ Day screw with everyone’s schedules. Or maybe it’s because in most places, it’s just so damn cold that no one wants to do anything!

So if you’re working on a project this month, make sure you double down on keeping yourself and your team motivated. Because they’re going to need it.

But if you can make it through the month, the warm sunshine of spring is just around the corner.

(An easy way to keep people on point is to do a quick reading of your show...even if it’s just in your living room. Readings have a way of getting people excited. And after every reading I’ve done, someone always asks, “What’s next?” And then you have an answer to that question!)

Go get ‘em.

Best,

Ken

P.S. Have you joined the private PRO Facebook Group yet? If not, email me at ken@theproducersperspective.com.

P.P.S. I’m planning our next PRO Social for March. Stay tuned!

UPCOMING EVENTS

2/8 @ 7 PM: Monthly Webinar: How to Write A Script in 30 Days

As a member of PRO, you’re automatically registered for the Monthly Webinar! To sign up for other seminars or events, visit www.theproducersperspective.com.

WRITING FOR PROS: HOW A GAME SHOW HELPS ME STRUCTURE A BROADWAY SHOW

The structure of a play or musical is like laying the foundation of a house. If you mess it up, the whole house comes a-crashin' down. It doesn't matter what kind of furniture you have or how big your kitchen is. If there's a crack in the foundation...that sucker won't be around long enough for anyone to even go inside.

That's why developing a sound structure often takes more time than the actual writing. Some writers spend YEARS working on just the outline and what the scenes of a show may be before they start scripting dialogue or songs. (Listen to Ep. 51 of my podcast with Stephen Schwartz to hear how long it took him to get *Wicked* structured right.)



But when you're plotting a show, how do you know which moments in your hero's/protagonist's life to include and which to exclude? What should be a scene and what shouldn't?

When structuring my shows, I take a clue from the old game show, *This Is Your Life*!

Remember that one? There'd be a "guest star" and then people from that person's life who had a major impact on what that "star" became would stand behind a screen and give clues. It was the guest star's job to determine who that person was! A kindergarten teacher who inspired them, their spouse, or even a Broadway Producer (David Merrick appeared on the episode with Carol Channing!)

I play this game with my heroes! As I write, or as I note other people's work, I always ask myself..."Would this character and scene exist in a *This Is Your Life* episode of the main character?" If not, it goes in the trash. That simple.

Plays and musicals have to be super efficient, especially in this "short attention span" society we're living in. Using this game will help you make sure you keep your audience engaged throughout your entire show and ensure your foundation is solid, so that your house stays up for a long, long time.

No matter how pretty the decor may be, or how nice of a kitchen you have...if there's a crack in the foundation, the thing just won't last.

LAST MONTH AT THE BROADWAY BOX OFFICE: WHO SAID JANUARY IS A TOUGH TIME FOR THE THEATRE?

Producers like me spend a lot of December very nervous. Not because we don't know what to get our significant others for the holidays (OK, that too), but because we know that after the big boom of the holidays, sales usually fall off a cliff.

Except this year!

Grosses were up significantly compared to last year. Despite the drop of a couple of long-running shows (*Jersey Boys*, *Matilda*), Broadway overall bucked the trend and sales shot up.

Why?

Well, variable pricing is certainly the primary reason, especially since you see that attendance dropped by a pretty hefty amount. People are valuing the Broadway experience these days more than they ever have before. Now, we just have to work on getting more people to come.



This January's Broadway Gross: \$147,915,053.46
Last Year's January Broadway Gross: \$135,230,414.92
Increase/Decrease: + 9.38%

This January's Broadway Attendance: 1,236,105
Last Year's January Broadway Attendance: 1,295,475
Increase/Decrease: - 4.73%

*You can get the weekly grosses by subscribing to my blog or by getting The Producer's Perspective app! Download it today in the iPhone or Android store!

WHAT IS VARIABLE PRICING?

Variable pricing is a ticketing strategy that involves increasing or decreasing prices for certain seats based on sales trends. While this pricing method is standard for the airline and concert industries, it is relatively newer to Broadway.

MARKETING FOR PROS: WHY PEOPLE ARE GOING TO CUBA

Last year, Barack Obama eased the travel restrictions for Americans to get to Cuba. For the first time in decades, you could take a commercial flight to this mysterious land (JetBlue flights start at \$54 from certain cities!)

What happened as soon as flights were cleared for landing? Business boomed.

Americans rushed to Cuba to see what they had been prevented from seeing for so long. Businesses were created just on the back of this incredible demand.



Why? Was it because Cuba had some secret Fountain of Youth? Were the streets paved with diamonds? Was it about the cigars?

Nope.

It was because it was “new.” All of a sudden there was a new travel opportunity available, and that is always attractive to people who like to travel.

A “new” opportunity, something that hasn’t been seen before, is always attractive to consumers, whether that’s a country, a newly designed t-shirt from a fashion company, or yeah, a musical (*Hamilton*, *Avenue Q*, *Book of Mormon*...all Tony Award-winners that were like the “Cuba” of musicals...new experiences for Broadway theatregoers.)

In your marketing, it’s important that you get across how your show is “new”...even if it’s not.



UPDATES FROM PROS

Here is what your fellow PROs are up to:

- Charles Yurick and Nancy Paris have a reading of their musical *Radio930* on Feb. 23rd! Visit www.Radio930.com for more info.
- James Sherman is currently reviving his play, *The God of Issac*, for a summer opening in Chicago.
- Ken Davenport (that’s me!) announced that he’ll be producing *Groundhog Day* and *The Play That Goes Wrong* this spring!

Got a project update?

Let me know at ken@theproducersperspective.com.

THIS MONTH ON THE PODCAST

Since I started The Producer’s Perspective Podcast last year, the guest list has been a veritable who’s who of Broadway insiders. As a member of PRO, you’re the first to know who I have coming up:

- Neil Pepe - Artistic Director of Atlantic Theater Co.
- Derek McLane - Tony and Emmy Award-Winning Set Designer
- Matthew Sklar - Tony and Emmy Nominated Composer
- Kathleen Marshall - Tony Award-Winning Director/Choreographer



PRO QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The shows that change the world do it because they offer something you haven’t seen before.”

– Jordan Roth

RAISING MONEY FOR PROS: HOW WE INCREASED CONVERSIONS ON A RECENT RAISE

Raising money is sales, like it or not. And the key to sales is about the conversion or the close, or to put it in simple terms, getting the cash out of your investor's hands and into *your* hands.

Obviously, there are many reasons that can get in the way of this final and important step (just like there are many things that can get in the way of someone buying a car or a house). I've had a number of things prevent an investor from writing the check, even though they had committed to doing so. I'm talking things like...“I'm pregnant,” or “The stock market just went down,” or “The stock market just went up,” and one of my favorites, “My spouse won't let me.”

All of these are valid reasons to not invest, and there may be nothing you can do about them...which is why it's important that you make everything you can control about the final process as simple and easy as possible.

For example, in recent raises, I've noticed that I had a huge drop off of investors after they received the paperwork and were faced with filling it out! If you haven't seen investment paperwork, it can be incredibly daunting. It's pages and pages of legalese, and some scary talk about how risky an investment in the theatre is. So, many people just don't want to read it or print it out, etc. It's just easier to NOT invest.

In my two most recent raises, for *Groundhog Day* and *The Play That Goes Wrong*, we started using an e-signing



service (RightSignature, in this case), so my investors can read the paperwork on their computers, sign the docs with a couple of clicks, and boom, they are done.

It saves them time, and speeds up the process of us getting the check. And yep, we experienced much less drop-off in these raises as a result!

You can't control everything during your raise/sales process. That's why it's even more important to make what you can control as efficient and as simple as possible. Make your investor's job easier, and your job will be easier too.

OVERHEARD IN SHUBERT ALLEY

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

- We hear that the Jimmy Buffet musical, *Escape to Margaritaville*, already has a Broadway opening planned for next winter at a Nederlander theater to be announced. Which one will depend on which shows go down first.
- We hear that a Broadway revival of *Carousel* is set for next season...with Joshua Henry singing the “Soliloquy”. (He'll kill it!)
- We also hear that my production of *Once on This Island* will storm in next season as well! :)

Got a rumor? Send 'em to me at ken@theproducersperspective.com.



ON THE BLOG

Just in case you missed it, here were the top read articles on the blog last month:

- Why I'm Producing *Groundhog Day* and *The Play That Goes Wrong* on Broadway
- This Kills More Shows Than Anything
- The Post Office Does It. Why Can't We?

Make sure you don't miss a single blog. Subscribe today or download the iPhone or Android app.

HAPPY OPENING TO *SUNSET BOULEVARD*
STARRING GLENN CLOSE! The revival will only play Broadway for a strictly limited engagement, so catch it while you can.

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ken@theproducersperspective.com