

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

A BROADWAY PRODUCER'S OPINION ON EVERYTHING BROADWAY AND BEYOND



Whew! What a month!
I'm going to admit it. I'm writing this welcome late. It was due three days ago. Luckily, I'm the boss, so Summer can't yell at me too much.

The reason things are a bit behind here is that in December, we opened *Once on this Island* (to some fantastic reviews and some fantastic box office business), and we did a reading of *Gettin' The Band Back Together*.

So things are a bit busy.

But we got it all done. Including this "Welcome."

(And honestly, my deadline for the newsletter is always one week earlier than it needs to be to account for any unforeseen emergencies - I call this the "snooze" method. I set my alarm clock for 15 minutes before I need to get up, just in case I snooze through it.)

You know, now that I think about it, it was almost two years ago to the day that Michael Arden and I talked about doing a revival of *Once on this Island*. I remember the moment exactly. And if there were a film of it, we would just seem like two musical theater fans raving about how much we loved the show.

But then we figured out the steps we needed to

take to make those thoughts a reality. And two years later . . . poof! It happened.

I tell you that to let you all know that your ideas, your passion, CAN happen. You just gotta put one foot in front of the other smartly and with a strong intention. And you'll get there. Maybe it'll take you two years, or ten years, or maybe only one. But you will get there. How do I know? Because I AM one of you. And what I can do, you can do too.

So go get 'em.



Ken

WRITING FOR PROS

Why a Play is Like a College Paper

When writing a new piece, I channel my inner college student and make sure everything in my play relates to this...

Read more on page 2.

MARKETING FOR PROS

Does Your "House" Need to be Remodeled?

You don't want your site to feel like yesterday's website. Because your show is tomorrow's show, right?

Read more on page 3.

RAISING MONEY FOR PROS

What Happens If My First Show is a Flop?

The first "anything" always seems to have higher pressure. So what happens if your first producing venture doesn't work?

Read more on page 4.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, January 22, 2018 | 7 pm ET
PRO Office Hours

Thursday, January 25, 2018 | 5 pm ET
PRO Monthly Mixer - Social Bar and Lounge (Pub Room)

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

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE
SUPER CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 10 & 11, 2018

Why a Play is Like a College Paper

I just finished my yearly reading of *The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri, a classic textbook about playwriting written in 1946. While some of it is outdated and written in a hard-to-follow format, the heart of the book contains lessons on the most important fundamentals of writing for the stage.

My favorite section discusses how every play should have a “premise” that the playwright establishes to set out the theme of the piece. I’ve always thought of the premise a little differently, so when I’m writing a new piece, I channel my inner college student and come up with a THESIS.

A *thesis* is a statement the author of a paper sets out to prove by the end of the document.

All plays should have one, and the playwright should prove it by the end of the play.

For example, the thesis to my musical *Somewhere in Time* was: “True love transcends time.” My new musical *Gettin’ The Band Back Together* has one as well: “True success is about doing what you love with the people you love and the people who love you.” Maybe the audience doesn’t believe that at the beginning. But they better by the end or I haven’t done my job.

Once I establish my thesis, I have a through line theme that has to pull through the entire piece. Every character, scene, and line of dialogue has to somehow relate to proving my thesis. If it doesn’t? It gets cut.



Just like a college paper!

Your challenge this month is to come up with the thesis for your piece. If you’re writing in Microsoft Word or Final Draft, put your thesis in your header so it’s on every page.

Without one, your show will drift, and so will your audience’s attention. But prove your thesis, and you’ll end up with an “A” from the critics and the crowds.

FEATURED PRO MEMBER



Name:
Doug DeVita

Where You’re From:
New York, NY

PROfession: Playwright

What projects are you currently working on?

DD: I’m always juggling at least 3 scripts in various stages of development. Right now I’m almost done with a revision of my play *Phillie’s Trilogy* (formerly known as *The Phillie Trilogy*), close to finishing a draft of *Complicity*, a political/historical drama based on a true crime that rocked Paris in 1847, and I’m about to start work on a new script focusing on how LaGuardia’s “morality laws” in the 1930s ruined the career of early 20th century female impersonator Jules Eltinge. I was asked to write this by and for David Sabella (Mary Sunshine in the revival of *Chicago* on Broadway), who starred in *The Phillie Trilogy* last summer at the Fresh Fruit Festival. But my biggest project is working on raising the funds to move three of my already produced scripts, including *Phillie...* to runs in

either commercial or not-for-profit venues in the next year or so.

Why did you join PRO?

DD: I’m quite shy, and left to my own devices I’ll sit in a dark room by myself and write all day. I joined PRO for two reasons: force myself to get out and meet people and take my writing career into my own hands

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

DD: My first three plays were written with a co-writer, and the most important thing I learned to look for in future collaborators is a sense of mutual trust. Without trust, it doesn’t matter how good the final product is because the process is tainted, and if productions of those scripts come about, well, when the collaborators don’t trust each other it becomes an unnecessarily stressful time for all concerned. It’s better to leave the drama on the page, right?

As far as working with directors, it’s not only trust, but—like any playwright—I want to feel that my work is a priority for

him or her. I test people out on readings to see how they treat the actors, me, and most importantly, the script. I’m currently working with one director who has made me his priority (at least when we’re working on one of my shows), and I met him through one of the writer’s groups to which I belong, which is an excellent way to meet potential collaborators. And since he has won awards for the direction of two my shows (we’re still waiting to hear if we’ve won anything for *Phillie...*), I think it’s safe to say our working relationship is terrific.

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

DD: The sense of responsibility it’s given me. No one is fooling around here, we’re all pros, so it’s either put up or shut up. It’s a structure I need, because otherwise I would, as I stated earlier, be far too willing to stay at home in the dark, writing and dreaming quietly. It’s much better to dream out loud in a room full of like minded dreamers, sharing our successes, failures, and everything in between. Don’t you think?

OVERHEARD IN SHUBERT ALLEY

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

Will the recently released movie *The Greatest Showman* become a musical? That’s the early word on the street.

The Donna Summer musical is coming to Broadway earlier than expected. Why? Partly because the creative team, which was also behind *Jersey Boys*, has another bio-musical that could come in the following year! Can’t compete against yourself!

Alec Baldwin is prepping a Donald Trump one man show for Broadway. “Gonna be huuuuuuuge!”

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

PRO QUOTE OF THE MONTH



“Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.”

~Henry David Thoreau

MARKETING FOR PROS

Does Your “House” Need to be Remodeled?

If you own a house or an apartment for a good chunk of time, then you know that at some point it’s going to need to be renovated.

Whether that’s to update technology with a new TV system, upgrade with a new coat of paint or carpet, or add a whole new room, you’re going to want to make some changes.

It keeps your place modern, attractive to guests, and comfortable for you to live in.

You know what else needs to be remodeled every so often?

Your website.

Technology changes fast. Web aesthetics change fast. And since a show’s primary marketing tool is its website, it’s essential that your website be modern, attractive to guests, and comfortable for you to update. :-)

We’ve all been to websites that in a nano-second you can tell have been built years ago, on older technology. What do you think of them when you see them?

That’s what I thought.



You don’t want your site to feel like yesterday’s website. Because your show is tomorrow’s show, right?

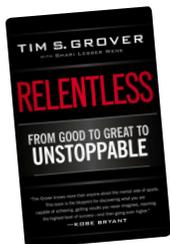
Getting a website is an essential part of developing a show for production. But keeping it up to date is almost just as important.

(Need a web designer? Email me at ken@theproducersperspective.com and we’ll give you a recommendation of some designers who will build or remodel your site for a reasonable price - with a discount for Pro members! And don’t forget to watch the webinar on Websites in the archives!)

Are you following Ken on Instagram?

He posts a new inspirational quote on his whiteboard every morning!
Follow him @kendavenportway

WHAT KEN’S READING THIS MONTH



Relentless
by Tim Grover

Direct, blunt, and brutally honest, Grover breaks down what it takes to be unstoppable: you keep going when everyone else is giving up, you thrive under pressure, you never let your emotions make you weak. Relentless shows you how to trust your instincts and get in the Zone; how to control and adapt to any situation. Grover gives you the same advice he gives his world-class clients and shows you that anything is possible.

LAST MONTH AT THE BROADWAY BOX OFFICE

What a Difference a Year Makes!

This past December broke a few records on Broadway. We had our biggest one week tally ever, raking in over \$50mm in the week between Christmas and New Year’s. And *Hamilton* alone broke yet another record when it did \$3.8mm in a week. That’s over 7.5% of the TOTAL Broadway gross!

This huge take from the big hits on Broadway like *Hamilton*, *Hello Dolly* and *Springsteen on Broadway* helped us beat last year’s December by almost 10%.

However, the downside is that we slipped in attendance almost 7%.

These grosses going up and attendance going down has been something we’ve seen over the last few years as the big hits have mastered premium pricing, but it’s even more evident in months like December, when there is such a demand for our limited inventory.

We’re doing a masterful job at getting folks to pay premium prices for the big hits. Now we just have to get more to come to pay the average price. Seems easy, right? If it was, these numbers would look different.

**DECEMBER 2016
BROADWAY GROSS**
\$142,023,304.20

...

**DECEMBER 2017
BROADWAY GROSS**
\$155,769,996.95

Increase/Decrease: +9.69%

...

**DECEMBER 2016
BROADWAY ATTENDANCE**
1,141,900

...

**DECEMBER 2017
BROADWAY ATTENDANCE**
1,072,983

Increase/Decrease: -6.85%

...

Get the weekly grosses
by subscribing to my blog.

What Happens If My First Show is a Flop?



I was recently asked a question by a Lead Pro Coaching Client: “What happens if my first show right out of the box is a flop?”

I’ve gotten this question a few times before, and frankly I remember asking it to myself.

The first “anything” always seems to have more pressure, higher stakes and oodles of anxiety (shoot, I made a show about one of those firsts: *My First Time*).

So what happens if your first producing venture doesn’t work? Does that mean

you’re dead in the H20? Does that mean you hang your head and go back to WhereverYou’reFrom, USA to work at the local bank (if it hasn’t gone under)?

You can, I guess. Or you can do what I do.

Whenever I feel nervous about failing with a show, I play a game called “FIND THE FLOP!”.

Wanna play? You can’t win an iPhone with this game, but you can win some confidence and perspective.

Here’s how to play:

Go to ibdb.com.

Search for any producer that you admire and respect.

Scroll down and look at the beginning of their career . . . and FIND THE FLOP!

Then scroll UP and look at what they’ve done since then.

And then ask yourself the same question that got you to this game and you have your answer! By the way, this game works great for every industry—even Lincoln, Gates, Truman and Disney had flops.

One of the hardest things about being

a theater producer ain’t union deals or authors agreements, or even the *New York Times*. The hardest part about being a producer—or any business owner—is that we hire ourselves. So if we fail, we’ve got to get up and do it again, because no one is going to do it for us. If we don’t hire ourselves, then we don’t work. And we have to find something else to do. Or we don’t eat. Period.

How do I stay motivated to hire myself? (Can you smell a sports story coming? Here goes . . .)

Baseball players strike out all the time. And even if they “backwards K” three times in a row, if the team cycles through the lineup, they have no choice but to step back up to the plate again. It’s how the game is played.

So teach yourself that you have no choice. You’re a producer. It’s what you do. If you had a choice you’d be doing something else. You don’t. So call me “Coach” if you want, but I’m not pulling you from the game. You’re staying in, flops or not.

And have confidence that if you take enough swings, sooner or later you’re gonna hit one out of the park—maybe even the next *Hamilton*. ;)

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:

- 1/22 Sheryl Kaller
- 2/12 Danny Burstein

ON THE BLOG

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

- WARNING to all underlying rights holders: Look at our history.
- My Top 5 Broadway Moments of 2017
- We’ve got lots of Stars, so why not a Broadway All-Stars?

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

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UPDATES FROM PROS

Kurt Johns

is working on getting his production of *Churchill* produced around the country and in London.

Carrie Bodell

recently had a read through of her show *Produce, The Musical* and is currently working on rewrites.

Elizabeth Appell’s

play *Sqawwk! the Musical* just got accepted into the Theatre Accelerator program.

Got a project update? Email me at ken@theproducersperspective.com