

THE SECOND BEST GUIDE
how to make indie theatre

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YOU CAN TOTALLY DO THIS!

So, you want to mount a performance of THE SECOND BEST SCHOOL SHOOTING. *You can totally do this!* Making your own art is one of the most powerful and fun and healing endeavors a human being can take on. Whether you have big plans or little plans, this document can serve as a step-by-step guide to help you get there.

BASICS

When we imagine theatre, we often picture a musical on a big stage, but theatre can be made all kinds of ways. Theatre only requires four ingredients:

text / a story
space
performer(s)
audience

If you're considering producing this play, you already have the first ingredient: the text.

TEXT

To get full access to the text of THE SECOND BEST SCHOOL SHOOTING, please reach out to the playwright via email: TheSecondBestSchoolShooting@gmail.com.

The playwright will allow this play to be produced by any high school, college, university, or current student team *at no cost* through, at least, December 2026. Indie productions are most welcome and very likely to be approved as well.

VERSIONS OF THIS PROJECT

This play can be produced in a “professional” manner: in a traditional theatre, with costumes, sets, and memorized actors.

This play can also be produced in a more “workshop” manner: in a non-traditional space, without costumes, without sets, and even with scripts if needed. Artistic expression, not perfection, is the goal.

To decide which kind of production is right for you, here are some questions to consider:

- Why am I/are we doing this project?
- What version of the project meets my/our “why”?
- What version of the project do I/we feel confident taking on?

Whichever path you choose, try to trust yourself and the process. You may come up with a plan and be able to execute it fairly easily. Or, you might try a route then change your mind. You might try a route, love the route, but hit some unforeseen obstacle, forcing you to reroute anyway. All possibilities are completely normal and expected when making indie art. Try to remember every snag in your plan is an opportunity to become even more creative, even more resilient. You got this!

TEAM

This show only requires two people to make it happen. However, there are at least four roles to fill. An actor can certainly produce, act, and direct—though that’s a lot of hats to wear. You will have to decide how big a team is the right size for you.

producer

If you are reading this document, you might be considering producing this piece. Or! Maybe you would like to take on another role, so you are planning to find a producer. Either way, let’s discuss what a producer’s duties might be. There is no exact definition for what a theatre producer does, but this is a list of what a producer might do for your production:

- secure the space
- manage communications among the team
- schedule the show(s)
- schedule the rehearsals
- manage ticketing/seating/reservations
- manage any potential conflict within the artistic team

cast

- this play can be done with two or ten actors, so the producer and/or director will have to decide which version they'd like to do
- once the cast size has been decided, your team can decide how to secure the actors:
direct asks or auditions
- once the cast is decided, their role is simply to act

director

Like a producer, there isn't one definite list of duties for a director. Here are some things a director might do for your production:

- run rehearsals (start/end on time, block the show, offer emotional insight to actors)
- make sure the show is on-track to meet its goals every step of the way
- welcome the audience to the show
- manage post-show activities

other roles

Depending on how "big" you want the project to get, or how much help you have available, you could certainly get assistance from additional roles like: stage manager, house manager, dramaturg, set designer, costume designer, and marketing manager.

SPACE

If you're indie producing this show, you may not have access to a traditional theatre. Or maybe you do! If you do, great. If you don't, here are some other options:

- a black-box theatre (your school or community center may have this)
- a room in your local community center or church
- a rented room in a community center or local business
(be creative! you'd be surprised what kind of businesses are willing to rent or loan their space in off-hours, especially if you have a personal connection)
- an unconventional space, like a dorm room
- an outdoor space, like a park or even someone's backyard/garage

No matter where you pick, some things you will have to do:

- be sure you can “reserve” the space — contact someone with authority over the space to make sure it can be “yours” for your show(s), this may require you to find a “contact person” online and reach out to them, or you may have to ask around to get advice from people familiar with the space (you may have to make some cold calls) OR you may just have to ask your aunt/roommate etc.
- make sure the space is safe for artists and audiences
- assess how much seating is available—and add more if needed
- have a plan to clean and respect the space after every rehearsal/show

*you do not need to rehearse in the same place you will perform the show, though the more time you have there, likely the better

AUDIENCE

ticketing/reservations

It may not be legal for you to operate like a business and “sell” tickets. However, you can probably ask for “suggested donations” if audience donations is financing is part of your budget.

Regardless, you’ll need to create some kind of plan for seat capacity management. Options may include:

- using the space’s reservation system, if they have one
- managing reservations via email
- first come, first served model where people just show up for the show

marketing

How do you get people to your show?

- social media posts
- fliers around the space where the show will be
- fliers near places potential audience members might go
- invite people in person
- invite communities that might be interested
- invite communities you are part of or relevant clubs

BUDGET

This play can ideally be done for zero dollars by securing a free space, avoiding tech properties, and artists working for free. However, if you need to raise funds for any aspects of the show, here are some ideas about managing budget.

- before you begin spending money, first decide how much you can reasonably spend
- consider all the elements that you may or may not need and how much they will cost
- sort out a total budget and make a plan for getting those funds
- if you are able to come up with a reasonable plan to get your projected funds, go for it!
- if you are not able to come up with a reasonable plan to get your projected funds, consider rethinking your plans to do the project for less or after fundraising
- fundraising can mean:
 - self-funding!
 - asking family/friends/supporters for financing
 - organizing a fundraiser like a bake sale, garage sale, etc.
 - setting up an online donation campaign
 - asking local businesses if you can collaborate, for example:
 - a local restaurant might offer snacks
 - a local business might offer financing if they can be an official “supporter” of the show (thanked, in the program or out loud)

EVENT

To present the play, in its simplest form, two actors could read the script, side by side, in a room, to an audience of one person. That would technically be a successful performance of this piece! Beyond that, here are some suggestions to make the project “an event” —

- consider inviting “community partners” to the show, for example:
 - a local volunteer or activist group could attend the show and speak about opportunities with their group afterwards (previously this play has invited community members like March For Our Lives and Sunrise Movement)
 - a local business or entrepreneur
- if the event is small and informal, consider offering light refreshments to build community

- consider having a “talkback” so audience members can share how they feel after watching the show (consider having the director/producer lead some thoughtful questions like: “*what part of the show resonated with you?*” “*after seeing this show, will you think about shootings any differently?*” or “*what do you think can be done to stop school shootings?*”)
- you may wish to capture some kind of memories of the project, if so, consider asking a friend to take pictures (or get a photographer), video recordings are allowed, but *prohibited from distribution*

BREAK A LEG!

Now that you’ve read through this guide, hopefully you feel prepared to make your own indie art! The playwright loves to hear about artists’ process, so please feel free to tag her on social media or send updates via email.

As you head down this road, look out for people/friends/mentors who are supportive and might offer help, maybe even in unexpected situations. Remember: every time we build art, we build community too. Enjoy the journey and break a leg!