

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF THE PERFORMING ARTS



What are the performing arts? The term “performing arts” refers to forms of art in which artists use their voices, bodies, or inanimate objects to convey artistic expression. The performing arts include a range of disciplines which are performed in front of a live audience. Performing arts may include dance, music, opera, theater and musical theater, magic, illusion, mime, spoken word, puppetry, and even circus arts. Talent showcases highlighting these performing arts are not only fun, but innovative, giving young people the opportunity to express themselves using their own unique talents. Many shows and showcases are held every year because they are enjoyable, involve the community, and give young people a chance to show off their special skills. Showcases are particularly inviting because these events give young people of all ages a chance to participate, either on stage or behind the scenes.

Here we have collected information to help you make your performing arts showcase a reality. Inside this guide you will find:

- Why a Showcase?
- Getting Started
- Creative Acts to Include
- Holding Auditions
- Advertising Your Showcase
- Before the Show
- Running the Show
- Turning Your Showcase Into a Fundraiser
- Participants’ Guide for Open Auditions and the Showcase

Why a Showcase?

For schools and communities, there is nothing more fun or memorable than to see talented individuals celebrated front-and-center!

For the participants, involvement in a showcase gives them recognition for non-academic talents in an avenue that encourages self-expression. It also provides character-building lessons during try-outs, practice, and performances. Depending on the structure of the event, production teams made up of young people may also have the opportunity to showcase their staging, sound, and lighting skills. It’s a wonderful teambuilding experience for all.

For parents, community members, and club members, a talent showcase is a fun opportunity to partner with fine arts and performing arts educators, administrators, and other parents. A showcase also allows for the opportunity to raise money by selling tickets, t-shirts, concessions, etc.

Getting Started

Here are some tips that will help you organize the event.

1. Choose the type of showcase you would like to sponsor. Decide if you would like an exhibition, a contest, or a fundraising show. Decide on the kind of performances you would like to include and if there will be a competition involved.
2. Organize a committee of club members, students, parents, local business owners, and teachers. The committee is responsible for overseeing the planning, promotion, and implementation of the show. Be sure to appoint a Chair for this committee.
3. Choose the date. Plan your event around other major events in your community. Your showcase will be made up of students, so be careful not to pick dates around exams or school-wide testing! Reserve a space to hold the show, notify the administrators of the location, and get the event placed on the calendar.
4. Choose the venue. Think about the size of the showcase. You need to be able to accommodate the size of your audience. If the showcase is small and the performers require minimal technical assistance, then a small meeting hall will be appropriate. Larger halls and auditoriums require more advanced technical set-ups with PA systems.
 - Find a local school or theater to host the event. The rental fees could possibly be waived.
 - Remember the audience. Depending on the venue you choose, you will need to provide adequate seating.
5. If your show is a competition, decide on the awards for the winners. Make a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place with tiered awards. Consider awarding a winner for each performance category.
6. Create judging criteria if your event is a competition. If you have judges, create categories and a point system. For example, 20 points for originality, 20 points for costumes, etc. Create penalties for exceeding time limits to keep the competition fair.
7. Create a budget. The budget is the lifeline of your showcase. You will need to host your event at a venue, advertise, and buy supplies. Determine the size of your show and how large the budget should be to make it successful.
 - Find sponsors to help raise money to host the show and provide awards.
 - Application fees and ticket sales will help supplement the budget.
 - Set a spending limit for each show category, such as advertising and rental fees.
8. Recruit willing performers from your community that excel in the various areas of the performing arts. There will be no show without performers to celebrate the arts! Seek advice and input from your local arts community, as well as the arts educators at your local schools. Plan for a well-rounded program that includes a variety of disciplines.
9. Recruit non-performers to help. Keep a list of people who want to participate but not perform, along with their particular skills and interests. This list should include club members as well as community volunteers. You will need stagehands and a stage manager, sound, and light operators, and judges (if the event is competitive).
 - It is important to think about every aspect of the showcase. You will need people to set-up, run the show, attend to the audience, and clean up.
10. Publicize your event. Make posters and other promotional materials to distribute and display.
11. Schedule auditions. Auditions encourage participants to prepare their routine and allow the organizer to screen for potential problems or inappropriate acts. Limit acts to 2 or 3 minutes.

Creative Acts to Include

Ideas for performances include dance, music, opera, theater and musical theater, magic, illusion, mime, spoken word, and puppetry, performed by individuals or groups.

Also consider the addition of ethnic performances as an option in your showcase. Some young people may want to share music, dance, and traditions related to their native heritage.

The arts teachers at the schools in your community will be an excellent resource to help you formulate the performance areas to include in your showcase. The information they can provide will be invaluable in making your event a tremendous success.

Holding Auditions

1. Create an application for participants. Applications keep records of the participants as well as set parameters and legal agreements. This helps you organize participants according to the show's categories and keep track of their technical needs. Indicate anything this is unacceptable for your show. For example, if you do not want nudity or pyrotechnics, stipulate that on the application.
 - Make sure participants under the age of 18 get the signatures of their legal guardians to participate.
 - List the categories of the talent show so that the participants can check if their performance is appropriate.
 - Charge an application fee to create a larger reward and to help with the costs of running the show.
 - Indicate when the prizes will be disbursed.
2. Advertise your auditions. Make flyers that list the time, date, and place for the auditions. Indicate the age range, type of performances, and awards, if applicable. Let participants know how and where to apply.
 - Be sure to list the application fee, if one is being charged.
 - Specify if participants will need to be dressed in their stage apparel for the auditions.
 - Provide relevant contact information in case there are questions.
3. Find a location to hold the auditions. Book a spot where everyone can perform their act at full volume with plenty of space. Choose a time that works well for both the judges and performers. For example, if the judges work during the day or the performers go to school, hold the auditions on a weeknight or on the weekend.
 - Any off-site hall, dance studio, or gym makes a great spot to hold auditions.
 - Do not use someone's home. You will not be able to accommodate the number of performers auditioning, and you will be bringing in strangers. If anything goes wrong, the owner of the home can be held liable.
 - Make sure the performers have a space where they can wait and practice before their audition.
4. Have participants sign in when they arrive. Have a check-in sheet. This will help you keep track of how many people are auditioning and allow you to schedule their audition times.
5. Create a schedule. This schedule will be based on how many people have arrived and signed in. Let the performers know when they will be auditioning so they can leave and come back if necessary.
6. Limit the audition time. This gives everyone an equal amount of time. This will also keep the schedule on track. Use light or sound to let the participant know when their time is up.

Advertising Your Showcase

You need to get the word out so you have an audience! Advertise well in advance for your show so that people can make plans to attend.

1. Make fliers to let people know the time, date, and location of the show. Be sure to list the type of performers you will have to create excitement. Include sponsorships on any publicity that is distributed. Hand out the information about your showcase to everyone you know.

- If you know someone who is great at graphic design, then recruit them! This can be a very cost-effective way to make professionally designed flyers.
 - Place flyers at local schools, coffee shops, convenience stores, etc. to attract an audience.
 - Ask your local newspapers, churches, school newsletters, and websites to run free announcements about your showcase.
 - If you are selling tickets, advertise where they can be purchased. If you are selling tickets ahead of time or online, be sure to include that information.
2. Use the internet. Never underestimate the importance of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Send reminders about the date, time, and location. Highlight the performers to create excitement.
 - Find a local community member who would be willing to build a website for your show that provides all the details for the event. If funding is available, consider hiring someone for this purpose.
 3. Use word of mouth. Tell everyone you know and encourage them to do the same. Spread the word to friends, parents, and community members at every given opportunity. The more excitement you show, the more likely they are to tell others about your showcase. This is one of the very best, and cost-effective, ways to advertise your showcase.

Before the Show

Prepare for the show. Many of the acts will require music. Create a digital master mix or CD with all of the music, presented in order, according to how performers will appear on the stage. Then create several more copies, just in case the master is misplaced.

Decorate the stage, set up the lights, and check the sound system.

Run at least one dress rehearsal and tech rehearsal. Everyone should go through their acts quickly and in the correct order, so that the stage hands know when they need to move a microphone, plug in a spot light, or cue a CD. The bigger the show, the more important the technical aspects become.

It's all in the details. Be sure to consider each item in advance to insure a great showcase!

- **Master of Ceremonies**—Find an outgoing individual who is willing to announce each act and thank them for their performance.
- **Backstage**—Where will acts wait until it's their turn?
- **Staging**—What equipment is needed for each act. How will it get to where it needs to be?
- **Sound**—Who will start/stop recorded music? Will live music be picked up by the audio system? Who is responsible for sound checks?
- **Lights**—What are the lighting needs? Who is responsible for lighting checks?
- **Timing**—Decide who will keep track of time. Develop a plan for what to do if an act goes over.
- **Performance Order**—Stagger your acts so all the singers, dancers, musicians, and other performers are distributed throughout the show to keep attention levels high.
- **Transitional "Acts"**—Recruit one or more individuals to pepper jokes in-between acts to keep the audience engaged and give stage hands time to setup.
- **"Half-Time" Act**—For variety, consider adding this performance which can be choreographed to include a large number of participants and can involve a skit, a dance, or song related to the show's theme.
- **Food**—How long is rehearsal? Will participants need refreshments? Will concessions be sold during the show?
- **Supervision** – Who will be in charge of making sure everyone is ready when it's their turn?
- **Tickets** – Will patrons need tickets? Will they be sold ahead of time, or at the door, or both?
- **Printed Programs**—Who will write and print the program? Will they be on sale?

- **Grand Finale**—Will all performers be invited back up on stage?
- **Judging and Prizes**—Decide if the event will be a competition. If so, what is the process for quickly scoring results and announcing winners?
- **Appreciation**—Decide how the staff, parents, and participants that helped with the show will be recognized.
- **Set up/Clean up**—Recruit volunteers to both set up and clean up the stage and auditorium.

Running the Show

1. Have everyone arrive early. Make sure everyone arrives at the venue an hour to an hour and a half early. This will allow time to deal with any major issues before the show.
 - Use this time to go over the logistics of the show with your committee and volunteers.
 - Make sure everyone is informed of any last minute changes.
 - Use an emergency phone line. Designate someone's phone for emergency calls. Keep this number separate from the phone number used for general questions about the showcase. This line will be used by performers who are running late or unable to attend.
2. Perform a stage check. Assemble the tech crew to make sure the lights and sound are working. Check with the backstage manager that all the performers have arrived and are backstage preparing for their routine.
 - Have the tech crew check the lights. Make sure there are replacement lights available.
 - Have the tech crew check the sound also. Have replacement cables and back-up equipment in case something does not work.
 - Make sure the performers have everything they need for their acts, such as musical instruments, etc.
3. Set up the ticket booth. Place a small table at the main entrance of your venue. Have two volunteers work the booth. They will collect tickets from people who purchased in advance. They will also sell tickets and give out programs.
 - Have a cash box with plenty of change. Make sure the treasurer keeps track of how much money is in the box before and after the event to be checked against the number of tickets sold.
4. Set up the food booths, if concessions will be a part of your event. Decide in advance on what kinds of food you will be selling. Pre-packaged snacks require far less effort than selling hot food. If you wish to serve hot food, more preparation and clean-up is required.
 - Be sure to comply with local ordinances to avoid being fined. Handle food products safely.
 - Bring disposable utensils, dishes, and food service gloves for safety and ease in serving.
 - Bring cleaning supplies, such as wiping cloths for clean-up.
 - Have a cash box with plenty of change for concessions as well.
5. Start the show. Have the Master of Ceremonies start the show and introduce the performers. Take this time to enjoy the performers, but be ready to handle any questions or situations as they arise.
 - Make sure you have an announcer or M.C. to engage the audience between acts. This will keep the audience involved and give the stagehands time to set up the next act.
6. Clean up. Make sure to clean the venue after the show is over. Use your committee. You want to leave the venue in better shape than when you arrived.
 - Designate teams to clean certain areas. This will make cleaning faster and more organized.

Turning Your Showcase into a Fundraiser

1. Create a program for the event and sell copies.
2. Sell t-shirts, food, glow bracelets, etc., related to the event.
3. Sell advertising for the printed program and Sponsor Banners to be prominently placed near the stage.

4. Sell tickets, either at the door or ahead of time, or both.
5. Sell flowers, ribbons, or other favors for the audience to give performers.
6. Record the performance and sell DVDs—either a high school student, parent, or professional can record and edit the DVD. Be sure to comply with current copyright laws.
7. Sell concessions. Items will vary according to the showcase time and the event facility. Consider popcorn, snow cones, hot dogs or hamburgers, cotton candy, drinks, peanuts, cookies, pretzels, trail mix, fruit, doughnuts, and caramel apples.

Participants' Guide for Open Auditions and the Showcase:

The following guidelines will ensure participants are prepared.

1. As an aspiring participant, think of something that you do well that will fit into the talent showcase. Make sure your act is compliant with the theme and focus of the showcase.
2. Practice as much as you can prior to the audition and the show. Practice in front of family and friends. The more you practice, the better prepared you will be. Ask your audience for feedback, and adjust your performance accordingly. If you have trouble during practice, modify your act so that you are more comfortable.
3. Prepare by selecting your clothes and makeup, then practice a few times in full costume. If you plan to wear a costume, be sure it is allowed for the audition. Don't leave details to the judges' imagination.
4. Sign up and go to the audition with a positive attitude. If you make it, congratulate yourself! If you didn't, ask the judges for feedback so you will know how to prepare for the next opportunity.
5. Participate in all rehearsals.
6. Be professional! If you make a mistake during your performance, just keep going. The audience is less likely to notice a mistake if you act like nothing happened.
7. Pace yourself! Make sure you are moving around the stage a bit, especially if your talent involves singing, and try to make eye contact with people in the audience.
8. Don't want to be on stage? Sign up to help backstage, prepare the set, sell tickets, develop publicity materials, or serve concessions/refreshments!



For more information about
Optimist International Programs,
please visit optimist.org,
e-mail programs@optimist.org
or call us at 800-500-8130