

Prompt Copy anyone?

Liz Burton-King answers some frequent questions....

Q: Who owns it?

A: The Management.

Q: Is there any payment for preparing it?

A: No, it's part of the job description.

Q: Does it HAVE to be handed in to the producer at the end of a run?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there a payment for handing it over?

A: To the best of my knowledge, the only time you get paid for handing over a prompt copy is when it's passed to another producer for a tour/ West End run. The last time I got a payment like that, it was £50. *Virginia Wilde from Equity adds that in her opinion the producer is not even obliged to make a payment when handing the prompt copy over to a third party as the copyright is owned by the producer. However, there is a clause in the West End Agreement stating that if an SM team member undertakes any services related to the production in which they are engaged for a third party, a separately negotiated fee shall be paid. This may have given rise to the practice of making a small payment to the original creator of the prompt copy in such or similar cases. Alan Wallace also adds: It is important to emphasise the difference between handing it back at the end of the run and preparing a separate copy for use in another production. Handing it back is simply the last duty and involves no payment, while making a copy for the manager's benefit does entitle the DSM to payment but not to any share in the copyright or to any payment arising from its subsequent use in either another production or an 'acting edition'.*

Q: Can it be used by the producer whenever or wherever they like without further notification of the DSM?

A: Yes.

Q: Can the DSM use it or a copy on other productions (even if only as an aide-memoire)?

A: No, because it's copyrighted to the producer. *Barbara Eifler adds: As the producer owns the copyright, he/she has to be asked for permission for the prompt copy to be used (and could charge a fee), but it is not inconceivable they might agree to lend it, for instance for teaching purposes or allow single pages being used to illustrate a point in a book or an article.*

Alan Wallace adds another point: any marks in the prompt copy must be legible to anyone who may be required to read them. It really isn't feasible to sketch every move; 'up', 'down', 'left', 'right' and 'centre' can be indicated by their initials in capitals and these, with X for 'cross', T for 'table', Ch for 'chair' and suchlike should reduce the scribble factor to a minimum and keep the data exchangeable. Of course, these remarks do not take into account the computer revolution, but I am sure there are still rehearsal situations where electronics don't get much of a look-in.

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