

*Roadside  
Theater*

Promotion Manual

## PREFACE

Roadside Theater makes its plays from the history and culture of its home in the central Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia. The familiar, rural storytelling/acting style of theater that the company has developed is accessible to all types of people from all walks of life.

For this reason, Roadside believes that its performances offer an opportunity for presenters to develop new audiences for theater in their communities. While this promotion manual was written with the new, rural or small city presenter in mind, it contains many ideas that can also help the experienced urban presenter get out an audience that represents a broad cross-section of the community.

Please call us if you have questions or need more materials.

Roadside Theater  
306 Madison Street  
Whitesburg, KY 41858  
(606) 633-0108

(or)

Box 771  
Norton, VA 24273

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## INTRODUCTION

When Roadside Theater produces its plays at home, it finds that its performances are more meaningful if the audience represents a broad cross-section of the community. The promotional plan outlined in this manual can be adapted by you to reach people in your community from different walks of life, many of which might not usually attend theater. For example:

1. Those unaccustomed to going to theater - This group represents 99% of Roadside's audience around its home. Many people think (with good reason) that theater is an elite social event that has little to do with their daily lives. If you can overcome this perception, these folks will more than likely really enjoy Roadside's storytelling.
2. Senior Citizens - Because many of the stories and songs in Roadside's productions are about the last ninety years, they ring a familiar bell with older people.
3. Rural - Roadside's style and content are drawn from its rural mountain culture and all its storytellers and musicians are from the mountains.
4. Handicapped - The visually impaired can especially enjoy Roadside's storytelling style.
5. Various ethnic/racial groups - Roadside Theater's use of theater as a means to preserve, celebrate, and make new its history and culture and to dispell stereotypes is often of interest to ethnic groups.
6. Other - There may be other special audiences in your community such as those people in mental hospitals, prisons, detention homes, and nursing homes. Roadside includes an outreach activity as part of its residency program to reach these people if they are unable to attend the public performance.

Roadside looks forward to being guests in your community and welcomes opportunities to nurture as well as experience its vitality.

## PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

### POSTERS

You will be supplied with 25-30 posters. If you need more, give us a call and we will supply them. There is space at the bottom of the poster where you can fill in information regarding the performance. You can have this information printed at a professional print shop, or handletter it in.

Posters are most effective when they are put up where the largest number of people will see them - shopping centers, libraries, schools, banks, restaurants, motels, stores, V.F.W.'s, etc.

You might be able to get a local merchant to donate window space where a display of posters, and photos, could be placed. Libraries are often interested in displaying materials as well.

### AD MATS

The ad mat can be used for newspaper advertising. There is available space in the ad for you to put the name of your organization, details of when and where the performance is, and ticket prices and how to buy them. You will need to check with the newspapers as to the final format of the ads (the ad can be reduced or enlarged). Newspaper advertising representatives are very helpful in suggesting ways to make the ads fit your budget and needs.

The ad mat can also be taken to your local printer and made into a flyer. Have the printer enlarge the ad to the desired size, and put in the needed additional information. Flyers are an invaluable advertising tool. They can be distributed by volunteers to places such as shopping centers, bookstores, libraries, schools, banks, restaurants, motels, student unions, local athletic games, or wherever crowds gather. Many bookstores and grocery stores will use them as bag stuffers. You can also have a volunteer appear at local community organization meetings (Lions, Jaycees, Women's Club, etc.) and church meetings, speak briefly about the performance and distribute the flyers.

The flyer can also be used as a self mailer if designed properly (inquire at your local post office for acceptable size and send them to any number of mailing lists - professional list (doctors, lawyers, etc.), local grocery store advertising list, local arts council list, library list, or any list that can be obtained.

## PRESS RELEASES

The three press releases provided have spaces where you fill in specific information about the performance. Copies will need to be made for distribution to your area newspapers, radio and television stations, and area high school and college newspapers. The releases are numbered in the left hand corner. #1 is about Roadside Theater and its home in the Appalachian Mountains. This release can be particularly helpful in providing a context for Roadside's show in your community. It should be in the newspapers at least two weeks before the performance. #2 is about the play and should run at least one week before the performance. #3 is also about the performance and should run the week of the performance. The releases will probably need to be adapted to your particular needs or you may want to write new releases that deal more specifically with your community.

## PRODUCTION PHOTOS

Photos are included in the package. These photos can be used in conjunction with the press releases or articles written about the performance.

## PROGRAM COPY

A sample program, giving information about the production and Roadside Theater, is included in this packet. You can type the name of your organization and the time, date, and performance location on the sample program, and have it duplicated on a photo-copy machine. You may also want to use the back of the program to include information about your organization as well as scheduled upcoming events. If you decide to print programs, take the sample to your printer and have him fill in the additional information. Roadside Theater is required by its funders to include certain information on its programs, so make sure that you include all of the Roadside program copy in your reprinted program.

## RADIO SPOT

If you fill out the enclosed radio spot information form as soon as possible, a reel to reel radio spot will be sent to you under separate cover at least two weeks before the performance date. Roadside (probably like you) is nonprofit so radio stations will play this spot one week prior to the performance date as a public service announcement. It is best to get the tape to the stations a

week in advance of the planned airing date. Many stations will play the spot more frequently if you give them free tickets to give away on the air. Roadside finds that radio advertising is the most effective promotional tool for getting out an audience that usually does not attend theater.

### PROMOTION CALENDAR

The calendar of the promotion plan is supplied to help effectively promote the performance. The calendar can be followed as closely as you like, making changes whenever you feel it necessary for your particular area and situation.

### ORGANIZING YOUR PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

The following is an outline of areas of promotion that must be covered by your publicity campaign. It is assumed that volunteers will be used for many of these areas. Many presenters prefer to set up committees to handle these tasks, while others prefer to assign one person to each area. In either situation, it is important to have a chairperson who is responsible for the overall operation.

#### CHAIRPERSON

This person is responsible for the overall planning of the promotional campaign and should coordinate the activities of the other committees. This person could also be responsible for all expenditures and record keeping.

#### PUBLICITY

This committee or person could be responsible for arranging all the free publicity for the production. This includes getting the press releases out, getting the radio spot on the radio stations, arranging interviews, and speaking at local clubs and functions.

#### ADVERTISING

This committee or person could be responsible for placing all paid advertising in area newspapers.

## PROGRAMS

This committee or person could be responsible for duplicating the performance programs.

## BOX OFFICE

This committee or person could be responsible for setting up a box office system, ordering tickets, running the box office, making cash reports and reporting ticket sales income.

## VOLUNTEER SERVICES

This committee or person could be responsible for putting up posters, distributing flyers, and working on mailings (if using direct mail). This committee might also arrange displays in store windows, libraries, etc..

## NEW AUDIENCE

This committee or person could be responsible for targeting new audiences and developing a promotional plan to reach them. Examples of new audiences might be: senior citizens, the handicapped, rural people, minority groups, high school students, or any group in your community that is not accustomed to the theater or your arts series. You may want to offer group rates or plan an arts outreach program of performances for the institutionalized as part of a Roadside residency.



## EXPLANATION OF THE PROMOTION CALENDAR

### WEEK #4

#### Sunday

If using committees, the members need to meet to discuss responsibilities and set up the promotion campaign. This is a good time to set up future meetings for the committees.

If you decide to use direct mail, then discuss the possibility of obtaining mailing lists from arts councils, libraries, schools, clubs, etc... It might also be worthwhile to see if you can mail your information with one of their mailings ... If you do decide to use direct mail, the mailing should be scheduled so it arrives 8-10 days before tickets go on sale.

You will need to decide on the number and type of tickets you need for the performance. Be sure to include on the tickets the sponsor's name, location of performance, time and date of performance and ticket prices. If you choose to have reserved seating, the seat locations must be printed on the tickets as well. Tickets should be numbered.

If a box office is not available in your performance facility, you will need to create one. If possible, there should be a reservation phone in the box office and a system set up for reserving tickets. If a phone is not available in the box office, perhaps there is someone who is home during the day who will serve as your phone reservation person.

#### Monday

Place your order for tickets today. Perhaps your local printer will know where tickets can be ordered.

If you decide to have posters imprinted, they will need to be taken to your printer today. If you decide to print flyers and programs, they should also be taken to the printer today.

It might be helpful to have your local newspaper editor meet with you to discuss the press releases and photos to be used during the campaign. You may need to adapt, rewrite new releases that deal more specifically with your community.

If you've decided to use direct mail, check on the availability of the mailing lists today and the possibility of enclosing your announcement with someone else's mailing.

Check your contract and technical information sheets to make sure that the performance facility meets the necessary requirements for Roadside's performance. Roadside requires a space with good acoustics in which the company can be close enough to the audience to talk to them directly. Uncovered orchestra pits, gymnasiums, and public school multi-purpose rooms present serious, often unsurmountable, technical problems. If your performance space has one of these problems, talk to Roadside Theater's technical director immediately.

If you are holding the performance in a facility that does not belong to you, make doubly sure that a qualified, cooperative technical representative from that facility will be present at the technical set-up, and that this representative is available to talk to Roadside's technical director over the telephone before the company arrives. Remember, Roadside Theater needs at least 8 hours of set-up time that should end at least 3 hours before the performance.

### Tuesday

If using direct mail, obtain the mailing lists today. If you intend to direct mail the flyers in envelopes enclose a cover letter from a prominent person in the community, telling something about the performance.

Duplicate all press releases you will be sending out.

### Wednesday

Call or go see your local program directors of the radio and TV stations and arrange interviews concerning the performance. Perhaps the chairperson or anyone connected with the performance could be interviewed. You can also arrange a telephone interview with a Roadside Theater member.

Get in touch with your volunteers. Tell them what is expected of them and arrange a place and time for them to work. They can stuff envelopes, put up posters, distribute flyers, etc...

### Thursday

Prepare a list of active groups in your area (Women's Clubs, Jaycees, churches, schools, colleges, Lions, historical societies, bowling leagues, etc.) and send someone to talk and pass out flyers at one of their meetings. Try to get an announcement into their newsletter.

Make a list of other important cultural events (concerts, theater, gospel sings, etc.) and arrange to have people at them to pass out flyers. Try to get the Roadside performance announced from the stage at these events.

Check with our local Post Office on regulations for bulk mailing.

### WEEK #3

#### Sunday

If possible, see if your church will put something in the bulletin about the performance. If you have flyers, perhaps the church will allow you to place them in a meeting hall.

#### Monday

Call your area and local TV, radio and newspapers and invite reviewers to the performance.

If you are using paid advertising, check with papers to see when they need your ad copy.

#### Tuesday

If hand lettering posters, have volunteers begin today.

#### Wednesday

Send out Press Release #1 today.

## Friday

Make sure everything needed for the box office has been arranged for, including cash boxes, phone, personnel, etc...

Call your area and local newspapers to see if they can run a few sentences about tickets going on sale on Monday - perhaps in the "Events" section of the papers.

## WEEK #2

### Tuesday

Have volunteers start putting up posters and distributing flyers. Most places will allow posters and flyers - restaurants, motels, libraries, banks, stores, gas stations, shopping centers, car windshields, etc...

### Wednesday

Send out Press Release #2 today.

### Thursday

Take radio spot and give-away tickets to station.

## WEEK #1

### Monday

Obtain ushers. Decide on their responsibilities. Check your contract and make sure all the details pertaining to the performance facility are taken care of.

### Wednesday

Send out Press Release #3 today

### Thursday

If you find that ticket sales are not as good as planned arrange a phone campaign. Find a place where there are several phones, and get your volunteers together with a list of people you want to call (friends, local groups, club members). Usually the best times to call are between 7:00p.m. and 9:00p.m. and on Saturdays between 9:00a.m. and 12:00 noon.

### Friday

If Roadside is performing a residency activity at a school or club, contact the teacher or club leader to confirm date, time, and nature of activity. Make sure someone from your organization is assigned to accompany Roadside to the activity.

### PERFORMANCE WEEK

1. Check your contract and technical information sheet to see if you have all technical needs covered. If you are having the performance in a space that does not belong to you, make sure that a qualified technical representative from that space will be present throughout the entire technical set-up, and that the representative is aware of Roadside Theater's technical needs.