

VARIETY SHOW PLANNING CHECKLIST

Your essential guide to staging a successful Variety Theatre performance with tips for staying legally compliant when using music and lyrics.

Key Deadlines:

Performance dates locked in: _____

Venue confirmation: _____

Auditions/casting: _____

Final act list and running order: _____

Programme artwork and print: _____

Tickets and marketing rollout: _____

Tech rehearsal: _____

Dress rehearsal: _____

Licensing confirmations: _____

Final budget approvals: _____

Get Organised Early

- ☐ Pick your performance date(s)
- ☐ Confirm and book your venue (factor in setup time, tech rehearsals, and get-out)
- ☐ Assign key roles (director, MC, tech lead, stage manager, etc.)
- ☐ Draft and share your full production timeline

Tips for building a production timeline:

- Start from your show date and work backwards
- Build in buffer time for delays
- Group tasks: planning/rehearsals/promo/production
- Use one shared calendar or document

Concept & Lineup

- ☐ Confirm the concept or theme
(e.g. family-friendly cabaret, nostalgia night, community showcase)
- ☐ Curate a variety of acts:
Solo songs, duets, choirs, comedy, monologues, dance, sketches
- ☐ Check in with any of your theatre group contacts for hidden talents or performance ideas
- ☐ Collaborate with local performers, choirs, or youth groups
- ☐ Create a balanced running order with varied pacing, including length of time each act has to perform

Tips for creating a balanced running order:

- *Mix up the energy: alternate between upbeat and slower-paced acts to keep the audience engaged.*
- *Vary performance types: include a blend of singing, dance, spoken word, comedy, and instrumental to appeal to different tastes.*
- *Consider act length: avoid back-to-back long performances to maintain pacing and audience attention.*
- *Include something unexpected: a surprise act or an unusual talent can be a real highlight.*

Communication & Coordination

- ☐ Set up a clear comms system (group chat, shared drive, email thread)
- ☐ Plan check-in meetings with key production roles (director, tech lead etc)
- ☐ Plan the first full company meeting well in advance
- ☐ Ensure you keep everyone updated on schedule changes and deadlines.

Music & Lyrics

- ☐ Select songs and arrange medleys, if any (be mindful of copyright requirements)
- ☐ Source any backing tracks and transition music required
- ☐ Purchase or hire sheet music and lyric sheets

If you need to photocopy or distribute additional copies for singers to rehearse, you must:

Hold a PMLL Amateur Group Singing Licence (AGSL), or
Request permission from the publisher, or
Purchase the correct number of copies

Lyrics are protected too! If you're printing or distributing lyric sheets, the same rules apply as sheet music.

Cast & Crew

- ☐ Confirm your performers and supporting crew
- ☐ Assign any solos, harmonies, and group numbers
- ☐ Provide vocal tracks, resources or necessary equipment to support rehearsals
- ☐ Ensure everyone has access to legally sourced materials in the correct keys

Rehearsals & Tech

- ☐ Run rehearsals for each act individually, then group sections
- ☐ Schedule at least one full tech run-through with sound, lights, and transitions
- ☐ Check access to microphones, monitors, and lighting cues

Be open to feedback and keep making tweaks to the show for better flow.

Promotion

- ☐ Use Canva or similar tools to create digital posters and social posts
- ☐ Promote on social media, local Facebook groups, and newsletters
- ☐ Partner with local press and community spaces to widen reach
- ☐ Set up an easy-to-use ticketing system (physical or online)

Licensing:

QR

PMLL Amateur Group Singing Licence (AGSL)

Allows you to photocopy sheet music and lyrics for rehearsals and performances.

QR

PPL PRS Live Performance Licence

Required if music is played in public. Most venues already hold one - check with yours.

QR

Digital Music Licence

If recording or livestreaming the show, extra licences are needed via PRS.

After the Show:

- ☐ Gather feedback from the audience and participants
- ☐ Celebrate your successes and share positive reviews
- ☐ Reflect on what worked and what to improve next time
- ☐ Keep those cast and crew contacts — you never know who'll want to perform again!