

Backstage Center Stage:
A Tech/Design Theater Educator Workshop
Presented by Perpich Center for Arts Education and the Guthrie Theater

Resources for tech/design theater that you should know about

- [Minnesota Educational Theater Association](#) (and Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota): a network of K-12 and college/university theater educators and directors, whose website includes resources for productions, classroom, and links to partner organizations
- [Minnesota Theatre Alliance](#): connects, supports, and advocates for the statewide performing arts community.
- [Technical Tools of the Trade](#): teaches workshops in all aspects of tech/design
- [Minnesota Technical Theatre on a Budget](#) and [Minnesota K-12 Theater Education Collective](#): Resource for for finding props and scenery, MN Tech Theatre group is also a good place to ask for advice or ideas on how to tackle tricky/ expensive problems.
- [Stage Manager's Association](#): Students can join a network of stage managers with experience from fellow students to SMs with decades of experience. Mentoring opportunities are available; students can connect with SMs in other cities and shadow/observe rehearsals and performances. Has an "Ask a Stage Manager" section for tricky performance questions.
- [Controlbooth.com](#): A place to discuss all aspects of video, multimedia, projection, education and show control in theatre and other events.
- [QLab](#): "QLab® 4 combines powerful audio, video, and lighting control in one elegant package"
- [Space Finder](#): connecting renters with spaces, a [resource directory](#)
- Use **parents** as much as you can. They may have skills/supplies/resources you don't know about. They want their students to succeed!
- [Masksound.com](#) can help you pick microphones and where to hide them on actors--lots of blogs on how to choose what works best for you. (Website address???)
- [Shure.com](#) has lots of resources for selecting
- [Elpis Enterprises](#) work with homeless youth and teaches hands-on technical skills
- **Charitable Gambling**: Non-profit organizations that raise funds through charitable gambling have to give a portion of their proceeds to organizations other than their own, so that's a great option if what you're working on is congruent to their mission.
- **Theater in the Round** has very reasonable prices for furniture rental.
- **Maple Lake Costume Shop**: very reasonably priced and a big selection. Costumes entire cast, does alterations for a set price per student! Can help you build if need be.
- [FCC.org](#): check before using microphones at a certain frequencies, some frequencies have been retired/sold to TV stations.
- Many sound supply companies have a **buyback system** for items that need to be retired.
- [High School Theatre Directors and Teachers](#): national group on Facebook
- **Local churches/places of worship**, especially more contemporary ones have a lot of sound knowledge and are usually willing to lend/give away items.
- If you have questions, the Guthrie staff and Perpich Center staff would love to answer questions and make connects. Give both organizations a call!

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Tips and tricks for doing tech/design theater on a shoestring budget!

- [U of M Reuse Center](#): cheap furniture and things
- Facebook Marketplace for simple/ relatively modern furniture. Downside is you will usually need to purchase in cash.
- [ReUse](#): a home improvement outlet open to the public. Shop for quality donated home furnishings, furniture, and building supplies at a fraction of the original cost. All revenue supports Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity's work.
- [Monkey Wrench Productions](#) : Excellent for lighting, buying and consulting. Also sell theatre supplies but not paint.
- Local paint/hardware store: will sometimes give or sell cheap off mix paint or returned paint in exchange for program mention or ad. Saves them \$. Make sure it's still viable paint.
- Paint recycling centers will give you paint that has been dropped off to be recycled for free. Also check here to make sure it is viable. Great for primer coats and light colors.
- Local lumber stores and hardware stores will often just make a donation of lumber or paint. Start with local, they're more likely to just give it to you.
- As much as possible, limit the different TYPES of materials and hardware that you purchase. This will simplify the number of different bits/ tools you need to work with your materials, and simplify your building process and your storage needs. For example, always buy the same type of screw with the same type/ size bit. Try to build most of your scenery with a small variety of different types of lumber rather than specialized lumber for every project. There will always be times that this is not an option, but it will simplify your life!
- Avoid oil based paints- even if they are free. Smelly and difficult to clean, especially for students. Not always an option if you need metallics, but be ready with solvents.
- Most of the time, expensive paint brushes are not necessary. Plenty of cheap chip brushes, a few angled sashes (purdy makes the best) and a few detail brushes will be plenty.
- Impact drivers are worth EVERY PENNY. Especially for students.
- Take advantage of the 11% rebate sale at Menards. You can then get some cash to have on hand for cash-only sales like the Guthrie garage sales.

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Ideas for fundraising for tech/design theater

- **Grants:** [Minnesota State Arts Board](#) and [Regional Arts Councils](#), local Lions Club, Local Rotary Club
- **Simple concessions fundraising:** Ask parents to donate one or two items to be sold (12 packs of soda, box of candy bars.) Sell at your shows to double/ triple the donation value. Bottled water sells like crazy and is inexpensive. Crew kids who are not needed backstage make a great “front of house” crew to sell concessions, handle tickets and programs etc.
- **“Just a Buck”:** during big house shows (musicals, etc) that are well attended with supportive family and that fun for extended periods, just before intermission is over, have your theatre students (eg Thespian officers, drama club members, etc) take colorful childrens’ plastic buckets through the audience collecting a dollar (you usually get more) in a controlled minute--have an emcee let the audience know what the money will be specifically used for (eg a new sound system, buying drama blocks, sending kids to a drama festival, etc) and play music (have the pit band play) to keep it fun, lively, and brief.
- **Sponsorships in your production programs** for specific items in your set design: ‘the Addams family furniture rental available thanks to ... ‘ or ‘the High School Musical flashing banner drop courtesy of ...’ etc.
- **Lobby photo booth:** have two students stationed in front of a backdrop that looks like a scene from the show with hats, masks, and other props so people can take a photo in front of it. Suggested donation of \$1. Take a photo with the camera/phone of whoever is in the photo as well as on a school camera so that the photos can be uploaded to social media as free show promotion. Works well with well-known shows like Wizard of Oz or Cinderella.