

Look, my eyes are dry, the gift was yours to  
 bor-row. It's as if we al-ways knew,  
 But I won't for-get. What I did for love, What I did for

Chords: Dm7, Fm6, G7sus, C6, G/B, Am7, Am7-5, D7, Dm7-5, Fm6/G

**MACQUARIE  
 MUSICAL  
 SOCIETY**

# PITCHING GUIDE FOR 2012

love. Gone. love is nev-er  
 gone. As we tra-vel on,

Chords: G7-9, E7, Am7, F13-9, E7-9, E7, Am7, F#m7-5, B7, Em7

By Lauren Farquhar - [artistic.director@macms.org](mailto:artistic.director@macms.org)

## Introduction

The MACMS executive is very excited for this year's batch of shows and cannot wait for the pitching to begin. Putting on a show for our society is a lot of hard work, and requires a lot of talent and enthusiasm from its production teams.

This handbook is to assist any budding production teams in their road to pitching a show. I have a very strong vision in regards to the tone and range of shows that we as a society produce this year, and this should help directors and producers understand what I'm looking for. I feel that as a society we should use 2012 as a year to display our range and caliber of talent and professionalism in our shows, and I believe that opening our minds to a wider variety of shows (such as older Golden Age musicals) will help us achieve this. But more on that later.

This year we expect strongly detailed and well-thought out pitches; your pitch should represent every facet of your intended show strongly enough that another director could use it as a guide. I need to see strong clear visions, a rationale for why your show would benefit our society, designs for costumes, set, lighting, a well-planned budget, and a strong team.

I see this year as a great opportunity to further ourselves as a society and make our name resonate with words like "professionalism". I am beyond excited for the pitches I'll receive and I'm hoping that this is our best year yet.

Lauren Farquhar  
Artistic Director, 2012

## General Information

Pitching a show can be intimidating, especially to people with less experience on production teams and executives. However, I hope this doesn't scare anyone away; this year I want the competition for spots to be fierce, I won't be giving a spot to a team who only seems half-interested. So I have some tips on pitching a show:

- ∞ Read the constitution. Read it back to front. Understand what we, MACMS, as a society are after for the year. Talk to executive members if you don't understand anything. Then reread this pitching guide 😊
- ∞ Ask others for their opinions! I'm not saying bandy around your artistic vision all over facebook, but if there's a friend, who has directed a successful show before, see what they think. Or get a friend to help with the budgeting if you are feeling unsure. Constructive criticism can only do you well.
- ∞ Assess your commitments for the time period of the show. Double check for university assessments, work, family functions, overseas trips, and see if it is possible for you to commit the time and effort that a show needs. One thing I have learnt through experience is do not become involved in any other shows if you are on a production team. Not only does your commitment become split but a producer on the brink of exhaustion is not something our society encourages.
- ∞ Know your show back to front. If I call interviews for those who've pitched, I need you to be able to talk to me about every possible facet of the show.

## Artistic Vision for the Year

My vision for MACMS during 2012 is to grow to a theatrical society that has a high standard of professionalism and polish in every show we produce. Additionally, I ideally see it as becoming balanced in the range of shows that we produce, inserting more classic musical theatre material into our already quirky catalogue of shows. I also would like to cultivate production teams with a strong unity between each element of musical theatre, accompanied by an attention to detail. I'd like to encourage production teams to consider our strengths as a society when pitching certain shows. I feel that it is these aspects that would strengthen MACMS as a theatrical society and ensure 2012 is our best season of shows so far.

### **Show Type:**

For MACMS I see the coming year as an opportunity to explore our range as a society. This is specifically in regards to the diversity of our creativity, talent and the shows we choose to pitch. Being a society mostly composed of undergraduate university students, a lot of budding production teams look to shows that are known as particularly edgy or innovative. However, I feel that the society needs to embrace more traditional areas of musical theatre. In order to make our more edgy shows stand out, I feel we need to involve more classic, or even golden age era musicals into our pitches. Shows such as *Anything Goes*, *Bye Bye Birdie* or *Oklahoma*.

However, the suggestion that budding production teams look to older, classic shows is not an encouragement to play it safe with directorial concepts. If MACMS can produce an original and

creative version of *Gypsy* then our audience will remember it. We've had a lot of strong directors with unique concepts over the past year; if we can combine that out-of-the-box style of thinking to some classic shows I think the society itself will be all the better for it. However, (as many Artistic Directors have said previously) unique concepts need not turn the play inside out, nor change the context for no reason. If someone pitches *Anything Goes* set in space, there needs to be a **really** good reason. Strong concepts should keep the original intention and integrity of the show, but add new ideas to it.

Essentially, I want to encourage all of the budding directors and producers in our society to think beyond the most recent or edgy show and open your consideration to some older classics. Read up on what were the hit shows of any era and consider how you may want to adapt them for our society.

(Of course if you are desperate to pitch something contemporary like *Avenue Q* and you're sure this is a genius move, then pitch away. I love shows from any era, I just think we need to broaden our horizons!)

### **Let's Play to our Strengths!**

Playing to our strengths is something in particular I would want to strongly emphasize for our 2012 season. Anyone who is considering pitching should look to recent shows and the most active members and assess what talent our society is currently nurturing. We can always hope that new members will audition and wow us with their multiple talents, but I don't think we should rely on that. I do not advocate pre-casting, but I do advocate thinking about what we as a society can reasonably achieve. I do not want to produce a show where the cast is struggling with the material; if a

cast is only just hitting the notes or steps required of them in a certain show, then the show itself is not going to achieve a professional sheen.

This is what is most important to me in regards to MACMS for 2012: whatever shows we do produce, I want them to have the highest quality of professionalism possible. We may be an amateur society, but the little details that give a show that extra polish means the difference between a good show and an amazing (and memorable) production. This is what I want our production teams to consider when pitching shows: not if it's possible to put it on, but if it's possible to make it the best musical production we've ever produced. I want teams to aim high with the level of professionalism and talent in their pitches.

This is going to be my favourite word this year:

## **PROFESSIONALISM**

This is why it is particularly important to consider the talent we have access to in our active members. Consider recent shows and our most active members and try assessing what talents we are strongest in. There is no point pitching a show that we do not have the talent for.

### **So what does all of this waffle mean???**

It means I want people to stop pitching shows because they think it would be fun or it's their favourite show. I want them to stop and consider how it will suit our society, in regards to what we can achieve with this show and how different or similar it is to

previous shows of this year. My favourite show is *The Phantom of the Opera*, but I will never pitch it to our society (unless we gain ten operatic singers, some out-of-work professional set designers and a new theatre).

Now this doesn't mean don't pitch your favourite show, it simply means consider how it will work for us and our active members. If there is a problem with a part of a show you're dying to pitch, such as a traditionally difficult set, don't just write it off; think about how you can get around this, rethink how we can do it, talk to some people with experience in those fields.

It also means I think a lot of pitch writers should broaden their horizons when it comes to musical theatre; investigate an era of musical theatre you don't know much about. I find that when I do that I find some shows that are utter gold. This year it's all about showing off our range, talent and professional qualities as a society.

## Production team roles breakdown

So the first thing I look to when I receive a pitch is the production team. The production team determines everything about a show and therefore whether it is a success or not.

What we at MACMS are looking for are production teams that are cohesive and understand how their roles will create their show. I'm looking for unity within these teams and a strong sense of communication between them, especially in regards to directorial vision. But to achieve that you have to know exactly what encompasses each production team member's roles:

### **Producer:**

Producer is one of the most difficult and heavy roles you can take on in MACMS so I'm looking for organized and dedicated people. They carry a great amount of responsibility and are in charge of all elements of the production; they are the ones who make sure the show is running smoothly in every way. I want all of our producers this year to be prepared to work hard and be extremely organized.

### **Director:**

I see the role of Director as the artistic juggernaut of any show; they set the tone and vision for the show and are ultimately in charge of casting and all artistic facets of the show. A strong vision from a strong Director and paired with an organized producer will result in a fantastic show.

## **Musical Director:**

The musical director works in conjunction with the Director on all of the musical aspects of a show, and is required to remain in the pit with the band. They are responsible for organizing band rehearsals, recruiting musicians, teaching and perfecting songs with the cast, and running sitzprobes. This is such an important role that becomes neglected very easily, especially with directors with less experience with music. This year I'm looking to extremely organized and talented MDs who will have a strong idea of how they will pull off the musical requirements of the show, whether it's some complicated four part harmonies or a 15 piece orchestra.

These three roles are compulsory roles that have to be included in your original pitch. These are the heads of any production team. Following now are some production team members that aren't compulsory, but are often a great idea to consider!

## **Vocal Director**

This will be the MD's ultimate help in any vocal heavy show; often if a score is more difficult or the show large scale or lengthy, the MD will benefit from finding a Vocal Director, who can then take on all of the singing of the show. In the past year we have had some brilliant Vocal Directors and I'm looking forward to the same level of talent and dedication. This member must know all of the songs, each part of the show, and must be able to teach and sing harmonies.

## **Technical Director**

An impressive pitch is one that has already considered lighting and started on lighting plans. MACMS is home to some talented techies who can help directors understand what is and isn't possible in our little theatre.

## **Choreographer**

In any dance-heavy show, a choreographer is a great decision over the director taking that on as well. Look to choose an experienced dancer who understands theatrical choreography. What I really want to see from choreographers this year is a strong communication between them and the director and set designers. Often what lets down a show is when the dancing jars with the vision or even with the set design of the show. I want to see a consistency of vision throughout every component of each show, and this includes choreography. So that means the director needs to attend dance rehearsals, and communicate strongly to the choreographer what they want from them. I feel that this is something we can really improve on this year.

## **Costume Designer**

Whether your show is set in Ancient Greece or a high school in space you need to consider the costuming. With larger scale shows especially, Costume designers become essential. I would like to see a closer attention to detail and an importance placed on costuming this year, as it adds a finesse of professionalism to any show. Costume vision and ideas must be included in pitches; if you cannot draw, don't feel downhearted, but make sure you include photographs of what you will dress your characters in.

## **Hair stylist and Makeup Artist**

While this is a role not often appointed, I want to emphasize that in larger shows it is a great idea to consider. Not every cast member can do their own hair or makeup, as illustrated in many previous shows where the duty of doing 1920s hair on ten girls or the makeup of male leads gets lumped on a cast member sometime during production week. From these experiences I feel that shows could only benefit from having a properly appointed hair stylist and/or makeup artist, who can talk over their plans with both the director and costume designer. Just like costuming, having era correct hair or properly applied stage makeup can increase your shows polish and perfection.

## **Stage Manager**

This is an often neglected role, however one that can make the goings on of backstage far less diabolical. The stage manager organizes props, set changes, quick costume changes, cues, and keeps the cast quiet backstage. Often a director or producer will want to watch the show each night in order to gauge how it is going, so I'm asking budding production teams to consider appointing a stage manager.

Essentially I don't want a small spot production with all of these roles running around like a headless chicken, but I would like more consideration from Directors and Producers of how much they themselves can take on when pitching a show. Delegation to one of these roles can mean better organization and ideas for a show.

Production teams this year really need to collaborate strongly and work together professionally in order to achieve the standard of theatre MACMS is aiming for.

Remember, if you're stuck finding a member of a production team, send the exec or myself an email and let us know who you're looking for and what style of show. We have a lot of talented members who have wowed us previously with their music direction or brilliant costume design so we should be able to help you out 😊 [artistic.director@macms.com](mailto:artistic.director@macms.com)

## Spots

We have five spots for shows every year, two small shows and three large shows<sup>1</sup>. Each spot has a set place in the year and often a guide about what types of shows we can produce;

**O-Week Show:** This spot performs four times during the first week of university of the year. What I'm looking for this year is a small, minimal budgeted show that showcases a range of our talents (such as singing AND dancing). This is typically the spot where we attempt to reel in new members so look to go for an eye-catching name, something that will appeal to our main demographic of 19 – 25 year olds. Look to song-cycles or even design your own cabaret show!

**First Spot:** It traditionally runs for two weeks during the beginning of May. This year I want something classic that we can impress audiences with (while reeling in new members to audition). Consider shows with spectacle, comedy or dance in them. This show should start our year with a bang.

**Small Spot:** Like the O-Week show this has a smaller budget and runs just for a week, close to the end of may/beginning of June. Smaller cast size, budget but I want a big impact. Last year's Small spot wowed audiences every night and I want to maintain the standard it set.

**Second Spot:** This one is a mid-sized cast and budget, often the opportunity to experiment with an edgier show. It runs at the beginning of second semester and I want it to strongly contrast whatever ran for first spot.

---

<sup>1</sup> This may be subject to change due to constraints in venue this year. Look to my emails for more details

**Third Spot:** This is our final show for the year, and it needs to be big. I want big ideas in this, something really strong to finish our year with. Consider shows with a distinctive style or era, something eye-catching and hopefully unexpected!

## Rehearsals

With every pitch I would love a proposed rehearsal schedule: obviously, without cast members availabilities it would only be a draft, but I want to know when you plan to achieve what goals. I want this organization in my production teams from the get-go: set dates for when certain songs, dances, scenes should be finished, schedule sitzprobe early (I'm hoping at least one month before Bump In).

I'd also like to see an effort in pre-bump-in preparations; schedule days for cast and crew to do some painting of small set pieces or props, start collating everything you need ahead of bump in. I feel like this sort of organization will help production teams get the best out of important times such as Bump In or Production Week.

So set out a list of dates of what you expect to have achieved by when. This, for one, will demonstrate some superb organizational skills, as well as give the executive and I a guide for your show. This means we will be able to keep track of a shows progress better and address it early on if there seems to be any hiccups impeding your process.

I will be making it to as many rehearsals as possible with each show, to keep track on what is going on as well as provide another set of eyes and ears for a director. Rehearsals are extremely important and this year I want them to be as well organized and smooth as possible.

## Budget

The budget is one of the most important things about your pitch. If there is something iffy concerning your budget or if you clearly haven't thought it through, there is no way the Treasurer of MACMS (treasurer@macms.org) will support the show. So I advise everyone who plans on pitching; ask myself or the President, Lauren Oxenham, to look into show rights (president@macms.org), research your set (and discuss with our lovely Technical Advisor, Roberta, technical.advisor@macms.org, what pieces of set and props MACMS already owns, because that will leave you more money for exciting things such as costumes), price your costumes, and rationalize anything a little more expensive and left-field that may be in your budget. I want some clear thought about how the show will look and what finances we have to achieve that; if you use your entire budget on costumes, then what on earth will happen in regards to set? And vice-versa?

With a good, well-researched, and well-balanced budget your pitch will be ten-times better for it.

## Research

On the subject of research, I would like to see a high level of research and knowledge about your pitch. If you're able to see a production of it, find footage of it, images of previous sets and costumes, listen to different cast recordings, this is all going to make your knowledge and pitch stronger. If it's set in a certain period of history I want there to be significant research about that period. If

there's an emphasis on dance in the show, and the director isn't well-versed in dance, then I'd like them to do a bit of research into that dance style so they're able to voice what they want. The problem sometimes is directors know how they want the show to look and sound but they don't have the technical terminology to voice that vision. I would like to put an end to that this year and have directors try to know as much as they possibly can about every facet of the show. This also makes everyone else's jobs much easier, rather trying to decipher orders from the director, such as the concept of moody lighting (does that mean dull? Does that mean blue? Who knows!).

## Set

I would like some innovative thought this year with every show's use of space. The Lighthouse theatre is a great space for an amateur theatre company as it mostly a blank canvas for the director to play with. Unlike a raised stage or a smaller theatre, we are able to adjust our space quite easily, and some of the sets achieved in the past year demonstrates what this space is capable of. If someone is considering a show that would suit the society, but the set is traditionally too complex (such as the giant element of *Into the Woods*), I would rather they first consider how they could stage these shows effectively, and how they would need to change the set (rather than ruling these shows out completely). When it comes to examples for innovative set ideas, I think of the musical production of *Titanic* by Stone and Yeston, particularly the 2006 Sydney production. A theatrical production of the sinking of the Titanic always sounds impossible; however, this production used very

minimalistic and unique set designs to make it work. 2D sheets of timbre, painted white and black, along with railings, were used to create the sides of the ship, and were lowered from the rigging.

Along with this, most of the props, chairs, windows, tables, were lowered from the rigging too. They were then tilted further and further as the sinking progressed. To distract the eye from the rather plain minimal look of the ship set itself, the costumes and smaller props were completely period appropriate, down to the finest detail.

Now while our amateur society cannot afford the sort of set design this production had, I want budding directors to take the inventiveness from this production and channel that into their pitches. Set doesn't have to be realistic; you can use key props and a scrim if your pitch makes it work.

So in all pitches I would like a constant consideration of the possibilities of set and the space that we have. And a strong consideration of how set will affect the show itself. If the show is *West Side Story* and has a lot of dancing, then do not have a large permanent set piece, such as Doc's shop, in the middle of the stage. Or if it does, then choreograph in consideration of this set restriction. I want the directors and choreographers working together more than they have previously. If the show has dancing it needs to be choreographed accordantly with the concept, and appropriate set in mind.

Another consideration I would like from directors is the position of the band in regards to the set. So often the band is plonked anywhere on the stage at the last minute, with band members left blinking in the stage lights. If the band is backstage,

the director should consider organizing a stage manager for cues. If the band is onstage I want there to be a reason for it; they need to be a part of the show and the set somehow, rather than shoved to the side. Furthermore, if they are to be onstage, they need to be told of any specific ways they need to act. Being onstage means that they are a part of the performance itself, and something as simple as getting the band members to wear more period appropriate attire for the shows era means the show will seem much more slick. The last thing I want is a production of *Oklahoma* with the keyboard player in skinny jeans.

Any concerns or queries, email  
technical.advisor@macms.org

## Publicity:

Our publicity officer (publicity@macms.org) is going to be far more involved with shows marketing campaigns than ever before, and every director and producer needs to understand that they will be collaborating with her in this regard. However, this doesn't mean leave the legwork to her; I would love to see some poster designs, show logo designs and ideas for using the style and theme of your show to publicise it in particular way (a great example would be a zombie flashmob for a zombie themed show, as this style of publicity always garners more attention than endless facebook spam).

Collaborate with a friend who's good at graphics and see what designs you can pop into your pitch. The more ideas you have, the more prepared and ready your pitch is.

## So Pitch Away!

I hope this guide has helped all the budding directors and producers perfect their pitches. Here's a final checklist of what you should include:

- ✓ Production Team Outline
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Show synopsis and song list
- ✓ Vision Statement and Rationale
- ✓ Budget
- ✓ Proposed Rehearsal Schedule
- ✓ Set Design Drafts
- ✓ Costume Outline
- ✓ Lighting Design
- ✓ Publicity Ideas
- ✓ Any Research Documents that Support your Vision
- ✓ Contact List

Make sure you convert your pitch to a PDF document. You will receive a confirmation that I have received it in one piece (If you do not receive any confirmation make immediate contact with either myself or the executive). You will be notified of an interview time and place, and beyond that we will inform you as soon as possible.

Look out for my emails announcing pitching open! I look forward to reading them all 😊

Lauren Farquhar  
Artistic Director, 2012