

So You're A Choreographer Who's Been Offered a Contract...

A Checklist

Hello fellow Equity members! If you work as a choreographer, this guide is for you!

This handy checklist will help you keep track of what you need to know whenever a gig comes your way. Checklists for Directors, Fight Directors, and Intimacy Directors can be found [here](#).

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Know Your Agreement

Every artist should know their agreement, but as a choreographer, working in a leadership position, it's especially important for you to be informed. Most agreements contain sections specific to choreographers on an Equity contract – citing all your rights and responsibilities.

Access the Canadian Theatre Agreement and search for the word “choreographer” [here](#).

View all Equity's theatre agreements and engagement policies [here](#).

Did you know that the theatre should consult with the choreographer to determine if a dance captain is required? Or that you can negotiate more than just your fees – such as your billing (including size and position in ads) and choreographer's royalty in the case of an extension or revival? Or that a theatre should consult with you on any changes to the choreography after opening – but you have only 48 hours to respond to a request before they're allowed to make alterations without penalty?

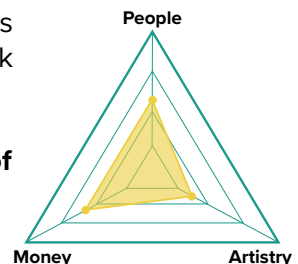
That's why it's best practice to review the sections of the agreements that apply to you every time you're offered a contract. Know your rights and responsibilities!

Initial Conversations

It's great to be asked if you're interested and available, but you also need to make an informed decision as to whether or not you say yes to a project.

As soon as you can, after an engager has asked about your interest and availability, ask to read the script.

- ☐ **How does it score in your triangle of people/money/artistry?**



Consider...

- ☐ **What are the dates of the gig from auditions to opening?**
- ☐ **What are the key hard deadlines?**
- ☐ **What is the scope/size of the show? Are there understudies and swings? Will you have an assistant/ associate choreographer and/or dance captain? Does the show need one?**
- ☐ **Can you meet with the director to make sure you share a similar vision for the work?**
- ☐ **Do you have the right skill set to choreograph the required style(s)? Have you thoughtfully considered if there is any cultural appropriation – if/how the required style(s) intersect with your identity?**
- ☐ **Does the production/theatre's values resonate with you and your own values?**

If it's not for you, politely decline. Still interested...?

Info Gathering

Casting

- ☐ **Will you be involved in the casting process? And if so, will you have casting approval?**
- ☐ **Will there be a dance call as part of the casting process, requiring you to teach a combination? And if not, should there be a dance call?**
- ☐ **Has anyone already been cast?**
- ☐ **What are the deadlines and parameters for cross-casting or roles “[Cast by Consent](#)”?**

Schedule

- ☐ Can you get a production schedule including tech (as per collective agreements) as soon as it becomes available?
- ☐ How much rehearsal time is there? How much will be allotted for choreography? Is that realistic?
- ☐ Is there more than one rehearsal hall to maximize rehearsal time?
- ☐ Is there any dedicated onstage spacing time without tech?
- ☐ How much time for tech, previews, notes, and so on?
- ☐ Are there previews? Is there dedicated choreography rehearsal time between preview(s) and opening? If so, who in the cast will be available?
- ☐ Don't forget: Production meetings and all major key dates should go in your calendar!

Choreographic Expectations & Requirements

- ☐ What exactly will be choreographed? A two-minute number with only two actors or ten production numbers? An isolated, stylized moment or an entire movement score? A curtain call involving choreography for the whole company?
- ☐ Are there any assumptions or requirements about the style of the show? Contemporary vs. period? Experimental vs. traditional? Do you need to do extra training to meet the style demands?

Design

- ☐ **What is the theatre configuration? For example, is it in the round?**
- ☐ **Are there design or venue elements that may require safety considerations? Is the floor surface sticky or slippery? (Remembering the dance floor in the rehearsal hall could be very different from the performance deck...). Is there any type of aerial work?**
- ☐ **What are the design components that will affect the choreography? Stairs? Revolves? Hanging set pieces?**
- ☐ **How might the music components affect the choreography? For example, will the band be onstage? What about mic placement for choreography?**
- ☐ **Are there rehearsal costume pieces available to work with? Skirts? Corsets? Show shoes? Other costume considerations? When will they be available?**

Assistant/Associate Choreographer, Dance Captain, Understudies & Swings

- ☐ **Have you met with the assistant/associate choreographer and/or dance captain to clearly determine everyone's responsibilities for the show?**
- ☐ **Do you need to alter your choreography to accommodate an understudy or swing's possible role assignments?**
- ☐ **Are you available if the theatre requests additional services to work with understudies or swings after the opening?**

You Get the Offer

- ☐ **What is the offer?**
(eg. fees, travel, accommodation, per diem, non-monetary benefits)
- ☐ **What is the payment schedule?**
- ☐ **When will you receive the contract?**
- ☐ **Confirm dates, location, schedule** (ie. days, hours, tech)
- ☐ **What Equity agreement is the contract being offered under?** (we have many)
- ☐ **Review relevant sections of that agreement!**

Now Negotiate

Your right to negotiate above the minimums is a core privilege of Equity membership! Get creative!

Did you know you can bargain for:

- Increased fees (consider your expertise or specialization; scope of project; repeated engagements; out of town gig; other offers; profile of show, or just ask for more...)
- Better accommodations
- Higher per diem
- Billing and credit
- Access to show reports
- Is there a budget for pre-production research, studio rental, and/or taking classes in a specific discipline/style that relates to the show?
- Is there budget for an assistant?
- Access/inclusion needs, including but not limited to:
 - On-site childcare, nursing room, babysitter \$
 - Provision for family to accompany you

- Non-stairs route to workplace, specialized copy of script, non-gendered bathroom
- Lunch delivered even if you pay
- Allergies, health/wellness considerations
- Religious/cultural needs (fasting, prayer, dates of respite)
- Other benefits:
 - ◆ Private workspace on site, access to computer, printing, phone service
 - ◆ Car service, cab chits, parking, bus pass, bicycle
 - ◆ More comps

You've Said Yes, Now Find Out More

Script

- ☐ **Get the version of the script that the theatre is producing, ASAP.**

Health & Safety

Equity's collective agreements and engagement policies all include language that address health and safety in the workplace. Each province and territory will also have its own occupational health and safety legislation that protects all workers. Fundamentally, every worker across Canada is entitled to the Three Rights of Workers. They are the:

- Right to **KNOW** what hazards are present in the workplace.
- Right to **PARTICIPATE** in keeping your workplace healthy and safe.
- Right to **REFUSE** work that you believe to be dangerous to yourself or your co-workers.

Beyond these provisions, there may be more specific questions to ask...

- ☐ **Are there additional health and safety protocols during rehearsals, tech, and previews?**
(eg. masks, COVID testing, etc.)

Respectful Workplace

Everyone collaborating on the project is responsible for creating and maintaining a respectful workplace: the theatre/engager, Equity, and the artists. As someone in a leadership position, you have an additional responsibility to set the tone for a respectful collaboration.

Before you begin rehearsals, reread Equity's [Member Guide to Respectful Workplaces](#) as well as the [Member Guide to Creating A Community Agreement](#) so you can do your part to lead a great creative space.

Additionally, it's important to know...

- ☐ **What is the engager's anti-harassment policy (required under Equity's agreements)?**
- ☐ **Who is the engager's contact person for reporting concerns of inappropriate behaviour?**
- ☐ **Are Equity's Not in OUR Space! materials easily accessible for everyone on the project?**

Finally... Have a Great Show!

This document was prepared by the Directors, Choreographers, Fight Directors, and Intimacy Directors Committee of Equity. Join us!

Equity members and staff collaborated to create this guide. It's based on experiences we've all had. Let us know if you find it helpful – or if we've missed anything. We appreciate and welcome corrections and additions. As our industry keeps changing, we will keep updating. You can let us know your thoughts by emailing communications@caea.com.

We want this guide to be for all of us – by all of us.

