WELLINGTON DISTRICT THEATRE FEDERATION

021 0254 2861
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Wellington, New Zealand

WDTF 24-Hour Play Challenge Rules

Gryphon Theatre, 4-5 September 2026

Objective

The 24-Hour Play Challenge requires teams of between four and six people to create, rehearse and perform a theatrical piece all inside 24 hours. The piece can be of any style and genre; it must be between four and ten minutes long and must be an original creation. It must also contain some compulsory lines of dialogue and prop items which will only be revealed at the start of the 24-hour period. All Wellington District member groups, school/colleges and individual/life members are eligible to enter teams.

Procedure

1. Teams must have sent their details and paid the entry fee of $40 by 7pm on Friday 28th August 2026.
2. Teams should send at least one representative to the Gryphon Theatre for 5.15pm on the evening of Friday 4 th September. A Zoom link will be sent out to those groups which indicated on the entry form that they want to attend this meeting virtually.
3. At 5.30pm the teams will be given the compulsory lines of dialogue and be shown the compulsory props. These will be the same for all teams.
4. Once the compulsory lines and props have been provided teams are free to start work on their play.
5. No team can enter the Gryphon Theatre until 5pm on Saturday 5th September unless it is a team, with Stagecraft's permission, borrowing Stagecraft props/costumes. Any such team should be on-site for no longer than it takes to identify such props/costumes and then leave – rehearsing on the Gryphon stage is not permitted.
6. All teams should be at the Gryphon no later than 5.30pm on Saturday 5th September when instructions for the technical operator must be provided (see below). The Challenge performances will commence at 6pm with the running order selected at random by the Challenge Manager.
7. At the conclusion of a performance the outgoing team must immediately remove all props from the stage and the incoming team set any props onstage as required. Other than the provided and compulsory props, and team props required during an ongoing performance, no personal/team props can be stored in the wings.
8. Supporters (audience members who are not team members) are welcome at an entry fee of $10. They should be at the theatre no later than 5.45pm on Saturday 5th September.

9. A cash/eftpos bar will be open from 5.30pm on Saturday evening. There will be an interval during the performances when the bar will be open; snacks will also be available free of charge during the interval for all team members and supporters.
10. At the conclusion of the evening all teams must assist in tidying the theatre. Any personal/team props must be removed that evening.
11. If any dispute arises over the interpretation of these rules the decision of the Challenge Manager will be binding.

Teams

1. Teams shall consist of no fewer than four and no more than six people. An individual cannot be a member of more than one team.
2. Teams must either be endorsed by a Wellington District Theatre Federation (WDTF) member society/school or contain at least one individual or life WDTF member. WDTF member societies/schools can endorse more than one team.
3. Teams must work on their own without outside advice, input or guidance including from other members of an endorsing society/school. Teams may borrow costumes and/or props from a member society/school (at the discretion of each society) but cannot seek any other support other than transport to/from the theatre.
4. At least four members of each team must appear on stage during the play (or at least three members in the event that a team comprises only four members).
5. Each actor can play more than one character.
6. A youth team requires all team members to be 18 years or under, or in full-time education at a school or college (does not include tertiary institutions). Rule 3 applies equally to youth teams: that is, they must work without outside advice, input or guidance, including from a teacher, other than in transporting such teams to/from the theatre.

The Play

1. Each play entered must be an original creation.
2. The play must be no shorter than four minutes. The maximum length of the play will be advised to teams on Friday 4th September but in any event will be no longer than ten minutes (although it could be slightly shorter).
3. The copyright of each play resides with the creating team. WDTF, however, reserves the right to take photographs and videos during the whole period of the Challenge, including the performances, and to use these for reasonable publicity including posting such photographs on its website and Facebook pages.

Optional Props/Furniture

1. Note: props can be representational rather than exact – the object of the Challenge is to create a play, not a well-dressed set.

2. The following items will be available at the theatre for use if desired: dining table; six chairs; four black cubes. Other Gryphon props and furniture can only be used with the express permission of Stagecraft Theatre and cannot be left in the wings whilst other teams are performing.
3. Teams can bring with them and use additional props, but such props must be brought to and removed from the theatre by the relevant team. Such props cannot be left in the wings whilst other teams are performing.

Compulsory Props

At the pre-meet on Friday evening all teams will be shown three props. All three must be incorporated into the play in a substantive manner. They cannot simply appear as 'set-dressing' but must form an integral part of the action. These props will be the same for all teams and will be selected by the Guest Assessor.

Compulsory Dialogue

At the pre-meet on Friday evening all teams will be given five separate lines of dialogue. These lines will be the same for all teams and will be selected by the Guest Assessor. These must be incorporated into the dialogue of the play. They can be used in any order but must be used exactly as given without any paraphrasing. They can form part of a longer sentence and can be split between two characters.

For example, if one of the supplied lines of dialogue is **"Exit pursued by a bear"** the following is permissible:
Freda, to Duncan: "Well, Duncan, if you don't get your act together at the zoo it's highly likely that you're going to be forced to **exit pursued by a bear** – and a very angry bear at that!"

The following is also permissible:
Freda to Duncan: "If you don't get your act together at the zoo you're going to have to **exit…**"
John, also to Duncan: "**…Pursued by a bear** if you're not careful!"

The following would not be permissible:
Freda, to Duncan: "Well, Duncan, you're going to have to **exit** if you're not careful, **pursued by a bear** at that!"

Music

1. Copyright must be respected. Given the nature of the Challenge WDTF advises that no team attempts to use pre-recorded music unless this is obtained from a copyright-free website. If pre-recorded music is played the team must submit, in advance, clear evidence that the music is from a copyright-free website OR that it is original or out-of-copyright music performed and recorded by the cast during the 24-hour period OR that the relevant permission has been obtained e.g. from APRA.

2. Any team using pre-recorded music must bring its own portable sound-system which must be operated by a team member (either on stage or in the wings). The Gyphon's sound system cannot be used.
3. Music which is out of copyright can be performed live during the play. For example, a team member could sing something from a "Gilbert and Sullivan" opera or play an extract from a work by Beethoven.

Technical

1. The stage will be lit by a standard 'wash' which will be set and the same for all teams. No changes to the wash can be made.
2. A technical operator will be provided by the District. Unless otherwise requested, at the start of each performance the operator will simply turn the houselights down and the stage lights up. This will be reversed at the conclusion of the performance. Teams must provide the technical operator with clear instructions indicating how long the performance lasts, how the performance ends and whether or not this should be marked by a complete black-out (i.e. a pause between stage lights down and house lights up).
3. Teams can request that the stage lights be faded in at the start and end of their performance in which case they must provide the technical operator with clear instructions denoting how long the fade-in should take and when the fade-out should commence and conclude.
4. No technical rehearsal will be possible. Teams cannot supply their own technical operator.

Assessment

A Guest Assessor appointed by the District will watch all performances and make the following awards:

- Most Innovative Use of the Compulsory Dialogue
- Most Innovative Use of the Compulsory Props
- Best Youth Production [provided sufficient youth teams have entered]
- Best Overall Production

In addition the Guest Assessor can award "Magic Moment" certificates.

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WDTF 24-Hour Play Challenge Entry Form

Gryphon Theatre, 4-5 September 2026

Entry Fee: An entry fee of $40 per team should be paid by Internet banking to the following account: Wellington District Theatre Federation 03-0502-0179709-02.

This form must be submitted to the Challenge Manager at festivals@wdtf.org.nz no later than **Friday 28 th August 2026**.

Team Name:
This can simply be the name of the WDTF Member Group or as imaginative as you like!

Youth Team?: Please indicate: **YES** or **NO**
All team members must be school/college students or under 18. (See Teams Rules No.6)

WDTF Group/Member Name:
(See Teams Rules No.2)

Names of Team Members:
Minimum of 4
Maximum of 6

Contact email address:

Contact phone number:

Do you require a Zoom link to attend the Friday meeting virtually? Please indicate: **YES** or **NO**

All teams are reminded of Teams Rules No.3: Teams must work on their own without outside advice, input or guidance including from other members of an endorsing society/school. Teams may borrow costumes and/or props from a member society/school but cannot seek any other support other than transport to/from the theatre.