

Form in Relation to Content

Is there a reason for these characters to be online?

Adaptations

In terms of adapting a show for an online platform, older shows are typically easier to adapt due to their use of more universal themes. The process of adapting the show is also easier due to the fact that many older shows are in the public domain and producers and directors do not have to negotiate with the author about changes that are being made. For a show to be in public domain, the copyright must have expired and the requirements for an expired copyright vary by country. In the United States, any work published before 1925 is considered to be in the public domain. Many countries have an amount of time that must pass after the author's death before their work enters the public domain. Typically, it is 70 years and Mexico has the longest time period of 100 years. More modern shows tend to work well on online platforms without much adaptation because they already acknowledge the presence of the internet in some form and tend to have more modern themes.

Choices for Platforms (Non-Exhaustive List)

- In-Person Performance with Safety Precautions & Social Distancing
- Online Streamed Performance Available Once
- Online Streamed Performance Available for a Specified Amount of Time After Premiere
- Audio-Only Performance/Podcast
- Virtual/Augmented Reality
- Interactive Performance

Which comes First? Platform or Content?

When planning a theatre season during these times, it is important to consider which platform you want to use. Whether or not you choose to consider the platform before the show's content can determine the rest of the production's producing process. Choosing a platform first will give a company more options when it comes to what shows will work for that medium. Choosing a show first can limit your options since not every platform will work for every show, but it is not impossible if the company is dead set on one specific show. Another thing to consider is what resources are available because that can also limit platform options and maybe push the choice of a platform before the choice of the content.

Examples of Platform and Content Working Together

A Killer Party: A Murder Mystery Musical

[A Killer Party: A Murder Mystery Musical](#) is an upcoming online musical starring several well-known Broadway actors and actresses. It has yet to premiere, with the first set of episodes being released on August 5th, 2020. The following episodes will be available on August 12th and August 19th. The synopsis of this new musical is below.

When Varthur McArthur, the artistic director of a failing theater in Duluth, invites his troupe of disgruntled actors and collaborators to the first read of an “immersive murder mystery dinner party,” no one knew that he would be the victim. Or did they? Enter eager, determined, and untested Detective Justine Case. After sequestering the guests into separate rooms (because, you know, social-distancing), she gets down to finding out whodunnit, uncovering secret affairs, life-long grudges, backstage drama, and a lot of musical theater song and dance. Sifting through lies and red herrings and a truly baffling murder mystery script left by the deceased, Case vows to find the truth and secure her future as a great detective.

This musical in particular works well because the characters are all separated into different rooms for interrogation after the murder is discovered. This will account for any different backgrounds for the actors. Also, due to the fact that major Broadway stars are taking part in this new musical, the producers have the budget to send items to actors and they will have more consistency between scenes than if a smaller company were to be producing it.

The Seagull

[The Seagull](#) is an adaptation of Chekhov's 1895 play *The Seagull* produced by the Auckland Theatre Company. It premiered beginning in May and was released in four 30 minute episodes. After a certain amount of time, the episodes are no longer available. The synopsis for the show from Auckland Theatre Company's website is listed below.

Chekhov's famous characters are reimagined with a Kiwi twist and congregate over Zoom. In a direct commentary of our world in lockdown, the characters are still searching for meaning in their lives while battling love, jealousy, dissatisfaction, dreams, hopes and plans - not to mention malfunctioning video calls! This drama all plays out in self-isolation and over virtual interactions with each other.

The adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull* worked exceptionally well because of how they integrated the world's current situation into the plot line. Everyone was set in their own homes and the show itself was set within quarantine. As the episodes went on and the real life quarantine restrictions were lessened, the characters were outside and interacting with each other more just as if it were in real life. There were moments where it was obvious where the original text was put in, but overall everything made sense in this universe as to why people were talking over Zoom.

Arlington

[Arlington](#) is an online production centered around surveillance of each other. It is streamed at certain times and unavailable when it is not streaming. The next scheduled stream of the Arlington performance is Saturday August 1st, 2020 at 3 PM EDT. The synopsis available on the official Twitch account is below.

Arlington is about a world scarily similar to our own - one wracked with isolation and confusion, set in a minimalist, dystopian future. This project came out of a hunger to create and experiment with the meaning of theatrical normality in these remarkable times.

Arlington had a unique take on the online platform for theatre in that there were multiple camera angles and live performance was intertwined with prerecorded material. The show centers around surveillance and having the show performed online worked perfectly with the show's content. The directors and producers of Arlington also took technology into account when it came to casting. They considered what technology each actor had as well as the living areas that the actor was in since they would not be able to meet in a shared space.