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# How to Start Your Own Theater Company

*By Reginald Nelson*



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With advice and instruction from an experienced actor and theater director, this pragmatic, authoritative guide imparts backstage know-how for wouldbe playhouse practitioners on everything from fundraising and finding a space to selecting plays and navigating legal issues. Chronicling three seasons at Chicago's award-winning Congo Square Theatre, this journey behind the curtain reveals the nitty-gritty details-such as managing rent, parking, and safety issues; determining tax status and calculating budgets; and finding flexible day jobs-that are often overlooked amid the zeal of artistic pursuit. Inspired by Congo Square's own unique inception, the valuable how-to also speaks directly to the many underserved audiences who want to create their own companies, including African American, Asian American, Latino, physically challenged, and GLBT communities. With lists of Equity offices, legal advisers, and important organizations, this complete resource is sure to help ambitious theater lovers establish and maintain their own successful companies.



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About the Author

### **Reginald Nelson**

is the founding board president and former managing director of Congo Square Theatre Company in Chicago. As an actor, he has worked with the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory, and Steppenwolf Theatre Company. **David Schwimmer** is an actor who has appeared in numerous films and TV series—including *30 Rock*, *Band of Brothers*, *Friends*, *Madagascar*, and *Six Days Seven Nights*—and the director of *Run Fatboy Run*. He is a cofounder and an ensemble member of Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago.

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