

**University of Theatre and Film Arts Budapest,
Doctoral School**

MASTER'S TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRODUCERS

Based on the producing experiences of Jupiter's Moon

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Theses

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The idea of my paper was to develop a master's program (MA) concept for film producers. The national film industry has been lacking a specific producer training program in higher education for a long time. The establishment of master training is therefore not only an opportunity, but also a responsibility of film professionals. My goal has been to establish the foundations of a future producer training program, to define a possible training concept by examining the definition of the film producers' profession, and to progress to being able to ask the right questions, as well as defining the objective of the training program, and planning the curriculum structure.

I have written the concept based on three sources: The examination of the existing practice of other higher education institutions, using my own educational experiences – which I have gained as an associate lecturer at the University of Theatre and Film Art during the past three years – and examining the conclusions drawn from

the producer's work related to the film titled Jupiter's Moon from an educational point of view.

The paper does not seek academic truths. Such truths do not exist either in the field of education or in the discipline to be taught. My approach is admittedly personal. I have tried to develop the concept of a producer training program which trains producers who, in my opinion, are needed by the profession.

The approach to producer training is based on the definition of the producers' work. Producers are experts who shape the film production process from nurturing the idea to marketing the film, define the underlying system of finances, establish and control funding, and help the work of the creative artist with creative decisions. During this process, they establish the contractual and staffing background of the development, budgeting, financing, shooting, follow-up tasks, and marketing stages, and coordinate the elements of the complete production process. They are responsible for the evolution of the script into the most ideal form possible, for ensuring

reasonable and available financing, and to ensure optimal conditions for its creation, keeping an eye on the original goal and purpose of the script and the creative artists up to the end of the process, as well as the economic context of the film created. They coordinate the financing process with actual production, and establish the environment in which work is done by signing contracts. They assemble the ideal staff and creative team for the project, and then control their work and manage their contracts. They set the date of the film's premier, prepare for marketing the film, create the related materials, and participate in campaign planning.

Producer training does not currently exist according to the professional complexity described above. The audiovisual industry can evolve with the participation of experts in the case of whom content development, business sense, creativity, and strategic management go hand in hand. It is important to establish an MA training which provides the profession with producers as opposed to production managers. This approach treats producers

as so-called creative entrepreneurs, experts of a specific business field, who also define, produce, and create the creative products of this field.

The producers' profession cannot be imagined without knowledge of other professions involved in the creation of films as well as constant responsibility for other film related professions. Also, it cannot be imagined without an analytic knowledge of the changing playing field. In order to avoid producers being burdened by persistent and multiple responsibilities, we need to simplify the attitude of producer students into a single statement: the producers' responsibility is primarily related to the creative artist and the deliverable. All other responsibilities can only be interpreted in the light of this. Financial responsibility can only have a meaning in the context of protecting the deliverable. Even in the case of producers responsible for non-artistic films, the ideal form of creation is the only factor that will be rewarded by the market.

In light of this, it is the objective of this training to train experts that are able to differentiate between valid and invalid concepts, to recognise talented and capable creative artists, can assume responsibility on the long term for creative artists, for financial and legal commitments, as well as their professional partners.

The first three chapters of the paper examine the background of developing the master training program and determines the justification behind a producer master program in film production. In addition, it discusses the definition of the producer profession.

The profession has undergone a transformation since the fall of communism. National studios have been replaced by independent studios, and art film found itself in a situation where its products had to compete on an already existing film market. Therefore, the need for the producer profession increased, and an increasing number of former production managers started supervising the process as leaders of production companies. However, over time, it became clear that being a producer is a

separate profession, which requires different knowledge, as well as professionals with a different character and different competences.

As for the competences, I have tried to provide an overview of a complex training programme. It has been important for me to depict the producers' work in its entirety, and to examine the necessary knowledge from this point of view. As the producers' work assumes business, financial, technical, film industry, and most importantly, content related considerations, the creation of the master's training requires an extremely colourful pool of professors, as well as accurate preparations. To me, the purpose of the master's training is to convey this complex knowledge with attention to all fields involved, as well as to provide an opportunity for eligible students. When creating the master's training, I think it is extremely important for the professors to continuously monitor the courses on offer as well as the curricular structure during the first three years so that practice can overwrite theory, and the concept can be adapted to real needs.

In the case of the producers' MA, I think it is important for students with different academic backgrounds to attend, such as economists, sociologists, and lawyers. This can ensure the creation of a diverse team of students with varied input knowledge.

Currently, my idea is to hold the training in the Hungarian language, but I find it very important for certain courses to be held in the English language, as well as for the university to ensure continuous international cooperation for its students.

The essence of my paper is comprised of the potential structure of the school year and of the curriculum in Chapter 4, as well as the course descriptions in Chapters 5 and 6. Master training consists of 4 semesters. Each semester contains three different subject types: Mandatory courses, mandatory optional courses and workshops.

Insofar as the structure is concerned, the first semester provides the basics. During this, students that have obtained their BA degree in other areas may catch up

and receive basic art training. Developmental studies may begin as early as in the first semester. The second, third, and fourth semesters contain professional mandatory courses in the basic topics of developmental theory, developmental practice, financing, international movie production, production knowledge, legal knowledge, marketing and sales knowledge, collaborative techniques, as well as cultural and business management.

The aim of the workshop schedule is to organise classes for preparing the test pieces of the semester in groups, during which the students prepare the test pieces of the semester under the supervision of a mentor. The workshop schedule can also include case studies. Optional subjects cover other areas of the diverse motion picture sector, or areas belonging to special genres, from the production of commercials through documentaries to the production of television series. Foreign lecturers are invited for the optional courses.

Students may present their plan for their first feature-length movie at the end of the fourth semester as

part of a so-called *project market* to invited international and national professionals. This provides them with the opportunity of their test pieces being evaluated in a real environment.

The establishment of the producer master training program and the execution of the accreditation procedure require coordinated educational preparation work. The goal of my paper has been to lay down the conceptual foundations of this work in the hope that this master training program provides an answer to a real professional deficiency.