

A Stage Manager's Guide to Scarborough

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**DON'T
PANIC!**

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Introduction

Intent

I am going to try to pass on some of what I know of how to Stage Manage with the proviso that every manager, once they understand the intent or the necessity of an action, will choose to actually do the job in their own way. I will attempt to be very clear about whether all managers do things a certain way and what is my own personal style. Also, be aware that every show will require a Stage Manager to employ new skills, re-invent her/himself, and take a fresh new look at how things are done. I never said it was easy.

Secondly, I have attempted to, at all times, be clear about how the groups in Scarborough do things. Specific policies, however, are not always included in this document. It would be wise to make it your business to learn the policies yourself, bearing in mind that each of the three groups are different and that all three groups change with the ebb and flow of the personalities which drive them. This is true of theatre, period.

Thirdly, I have attempted to structure this document as a guide that follows the actual process.

Lastly (but not leastly?), I harbour no infatuation that reading this document, and following the exercises within, will make you a Stage Manager. Only you can do that.

Structure

There will be units. Each unit will cover a specific topic. There is no Unit #13.

Because a Stage Manager should be, at least, conversant in all aspects of theatre, I will be covering a lot of basic stagecraft. Learn as much or as little as you want. I am not planning to test. Taking on the job and working it will be test enough.

Follow Up

If you take this course, do the reading, and faithfully attend meetings and workshops, I will notice and will be pleased to act as a resource for you during your first job. You are welcome to send me questions via email or telephone. However, I won't be able to physically come and help you very often.

Remember, once you feel confident about what you are doing as a Stage Manager, please pass it on to someone else....

Unit 1 – Anatomy of a Show

Five Stages in Show Production

Folks, every show is different. For Stage Managers, however, just about every production, at just about every level, goes through the following stages:

- 1) Groundwork
- 2) Pre-Rehearsal Preparation
- 3) Rehearsal Period
- 4) Production Week
- 5) Run

1) Groundwork

This is everything that needs to be done before the Stage Manager starts working. In Community Theatre, a Board committee does play selection months, if not years, before the show actually opens. The rights to the show are negotiated and confirmed. Artistic staff is hired. Auditions are held and the cast chosen (the exception – and there are always exceptions – SMT likes their Stage Managers to help out at auditions). Designers are hired and the design process begins. Production staff (including Stage Management) are interviewed and hired.

A note about Auditions:

If a Stage Manager is required, for whatever reason, to attend auditions, remember that at no time should you be seen to be in a position of judging artistic work. So, I would recommend that you NOT sit at the staff table but off to one side. If you are required to sit at the table, try to choose one END. Also, take no notes. Be warm and welcoming.

Generally, Stage Managers are there to raise a red flag about a performer (if s/he has behaved badly in the past) but that is not the only input you should be willing to offer the artistic staff during casting. Make sure you peruse the candidate's sheets for the following information: 1) Conflicts (anything of a week or longer is too much and needs to be brought up), and 2) Address. If they live too far away a snowstorm is sure to get them...

2) Pre-Rehearsal Preparation

This period covers the week or ten days before first rehearsal. The set design should be complete. The rehearsal hall needs to be prepared and the cast reminded of rehearsals to start. The stage manager prepares. This is a critical time for stage management – so I will get into this later.

3) Rehearsal Period

Meet and Greet (first rehearsal). The show is rehearsed. The set is built. Each department (props, costumes, lighting, SFX, etc.) receives information from Stage Management as it evolves from the rehearsal process. Each department, then, prepares what is necessary to fulfill the director's requirements for the show.

4) Production Week

This is another week or ten days of critical to Stage Management. All the elements in the show come together for the first time. The show physically moves into the theatre and rehearsals become far more intense as the production races against time to be ready for opening night. Great fun.

5) The Run

The Stage Manager takes over the show on Opening Night. The show runs for its three weeks. It will be allowed to grow but should remain in faith, and in truth, the show that you were given on opening night.

What is Stage Management?

Stage Management (usually consisting of a team – especially in a musical) is responsible for organizing the production, identifying and communicating the technical needs of the production, and keeping everything running smoothly, technically, artistically, and with the people in the production as well.

In short, if something is not working as directed, it is the Stage Manager's responsibility to make it work.

A Stage Manager is a great communicator. One way to understand Stage Management is to imagine the neck of an hourglass. Everything passes through the thin point: stage management.

Sounds like a lot of work? It is. But it is also very rewarding when the job is done well.

Job Descriptions - What Does Everyone Else Do?

I am going to list many of the other jobs in theatre, explain, simply, their professional duties, and explain how this has been translated to Community Theatre in Scarborough. This list is by no means comprehensive but it is hopefully enough to understand the theatrical process a bit better.

Accompanist

Hired by the Musical Director, this person is present at all rehearsals and plays the piano (usually) during rehearsals to assist in the staging process.

Audition Accompanist

Plays the piano for auditionees. Often different from the Show Accompanist.

Audition Secretary

Organizes and facilitates auditions.

Artistic Director

An Artistic Director is at the artistic helm of a theatre, deciding its artistic course, what plays it will do, its artistic mission statement and mandate, hires all the artistic and design staff, and is responsible for casting, often casting a whole season before the directors are even hired. In Community Theatre, the use of the term 'Artistic Director' is often a misnomer which means Director. In Scarborough, the function of Artistic Director is performed by the Board.

Assistant Designers

Assist the Designer in any way possible. Usually this means: ordering supplies, doing the scut work, making the coffee.

Assistant Director

Assists the Director in any way possible.

Assistant Stage Manager

Assist the Stage Manager in any way possible. Doing the scut work, making the coffee. In charge of backstage. More on this later.

Board of Directors

A Board of Directors is usually comprised of connected, well-to-do people who use their influence and personal resources to bring donations to a theatre and increase the theatre's public profile. They rarely have anything at all to do with the day-to-day running of the theatre.

In Community Theatre, the Board of Directors is a working board. It performs the functions (through various committees) of Artistic Director (play reading committee, hiring committee, Board staff ratifications), Producer (managing funds), Executive Producer (encouraging donations), Production Manager (organizing and executing each production), Publicity, and General Management (Administration).

Costume Designer

See Designer.

Choreographer

The Choreographer is responsible for creating and teaching all dance in the show.

Designers

Designers are considered part of the artistic process but not part of the artistic staff (except at Stratford). The design staff, in each of their areas, is responsible for the look, sound, feel and execution of the technical aspects of the show. Professionally, a lighting designer is given credit over all others. Design staff include: Lighting, Sound, Set, Costumes, Props, Set Dressing, Special Effects (SFX - fog, explosions, etc.).

Director

The Director is in charge of all artistic decisions in the show, from who is cast to where they stand, to how they move, to what they're wearing, to how it's lit... And on it goes.

Executive Producer

An Executive Producer, professionally, brings in the most money for the production. In community theatre, the Board serves this function. See Producer.

General Manager

A General Manager is in charge of all non-artistic, administrative functions. Accounting, Box Office, Refreshments, Publicity, administrative staff... In Community Theatre, the Board performs this function. In Scarborough, the City is in charge of theatre maintenance and Box Office.

Hiring Committee

A Board committee that hires Artistic Staff.

House Manager

The House Manager is in charge of the audience area of the theatre: the House. The House Manager deals with audience inquiries and problems, makes sure the programs and other written materials are prepared and ready to be given to audience members, opens the House when given it by the Stage Manager. The House Manager will train staff on emergency procedures. The House Manager will, from time-to-time, eject unruly patrons.

Lighting Designer

See Designers

Master Carpenter

Guided by the Design and the Set Designer, the Master Carpenter co-ordinates the Build of the set – and will assist with some significant stage props.

Musical Director

The Musical Director is responsible for all the music in the production: the singing, the orchestra. Though their responsibilities can vary from theatre to theatre, in general, the Musical Director will find and hire the musicians and be a part of the audition process. They, or their accompanist should be at all rehearsals. The Musical Director leads the orchestra during the run of the show.

Operators/Technicians/Runners

Lighting, Sound, SFX, Props all need folks to actually do the work during the runs. These folks set up, check, and then run as necessary in their particular departments.

Play Reading Committee

The Play Reading Committee is a Board committee that reads and proposes the Season (plays that will be produced that year).

Producer

A Producer gets the money. In professional theatre, the Producer (or Executive Producer) is in charge of the production and has final say in everything. The Producer will draw up budgets and assign monies. In Community Theatre, the Board performs this function.

Production Assistants

A Production Assistant is at the entry level in theatre. They work in any department that needs them, doing whatever needs to be done. In Community Theatre, we have no Production Assistants and simply list folks as Volunteers in the area in which they worked.

Production Manager

A Production Manager is responsible for a particular show, ensuring that all necessary staff are hired and that the director has what she/he needs to make the show happen within the limits of budgets assigned by the Producer. In Community Theatre, the Production Manager is called the Producer.

Production Designer

Responsible for the overall look and feel of the show. In Community Theatre, the Director performs that function.

Publicity

In charge of the printed materials for the show: poster, program. Also, publicity is in charge of getting media and creating buzz for the production. These Board performs these functions.

Set Designer

See Designer

Show Accompanist

See Accompanist

Sound Designer

See Designers

Special Effects (or SFX) Designer

See Designer

Stage Director

This is a term borrowed from opera and it means Director (see above). In Opera, the Musical Director is as, or more, important than the Director so the term is a way of reducing the authority of the Director.

Wardrobe

Wardrobe Staff are responsible for the care and maintenance of costumes during the run. In lieu of a wardrobe department, the Assistant Stage Manager becomes responsible for care and maintenance of costumes. In Community Theatre, Volunteers, organized by the Costume Designer, are brought in to serve this function.

Ushers

Folks who show audience to their seats, hand out programs. In Scarborough, all Ushers are volunteers.

Staff Changes During the Production

As the production enters different phases, certain staff members come and go. Once the Director and Designers leave (after Dress Rehearsal), the Stage Manager is the ultimate artistic and technical authority (with discretion to the Musical Director) after the Board and Producer.

The Stage Manager, during the run, is in charge of the production ensuring that what was worked up in rehearsal is what is seen every night on the stage -- allowing for natural growth in performances, of course.

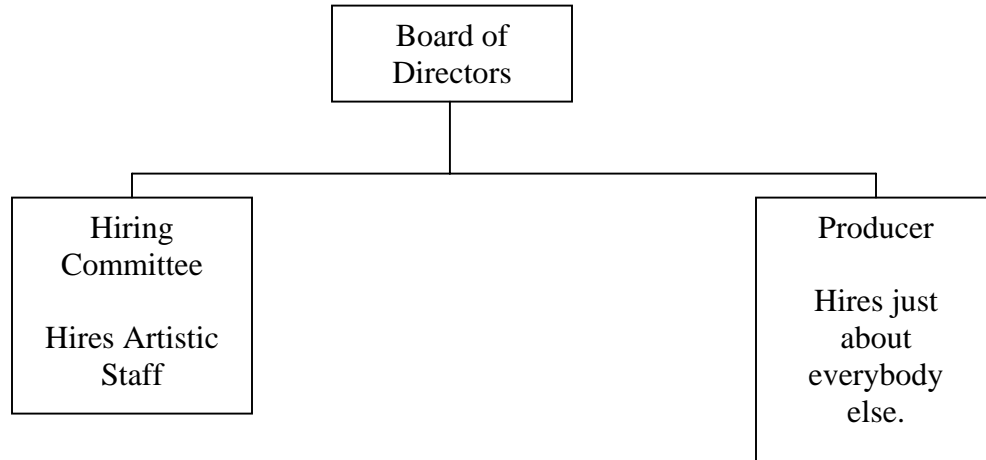
Attached, please find a series of organization charts that will help you understand how responsibilities change. Where there is no music or dance, obviously, ignore those references.

Zoinks....

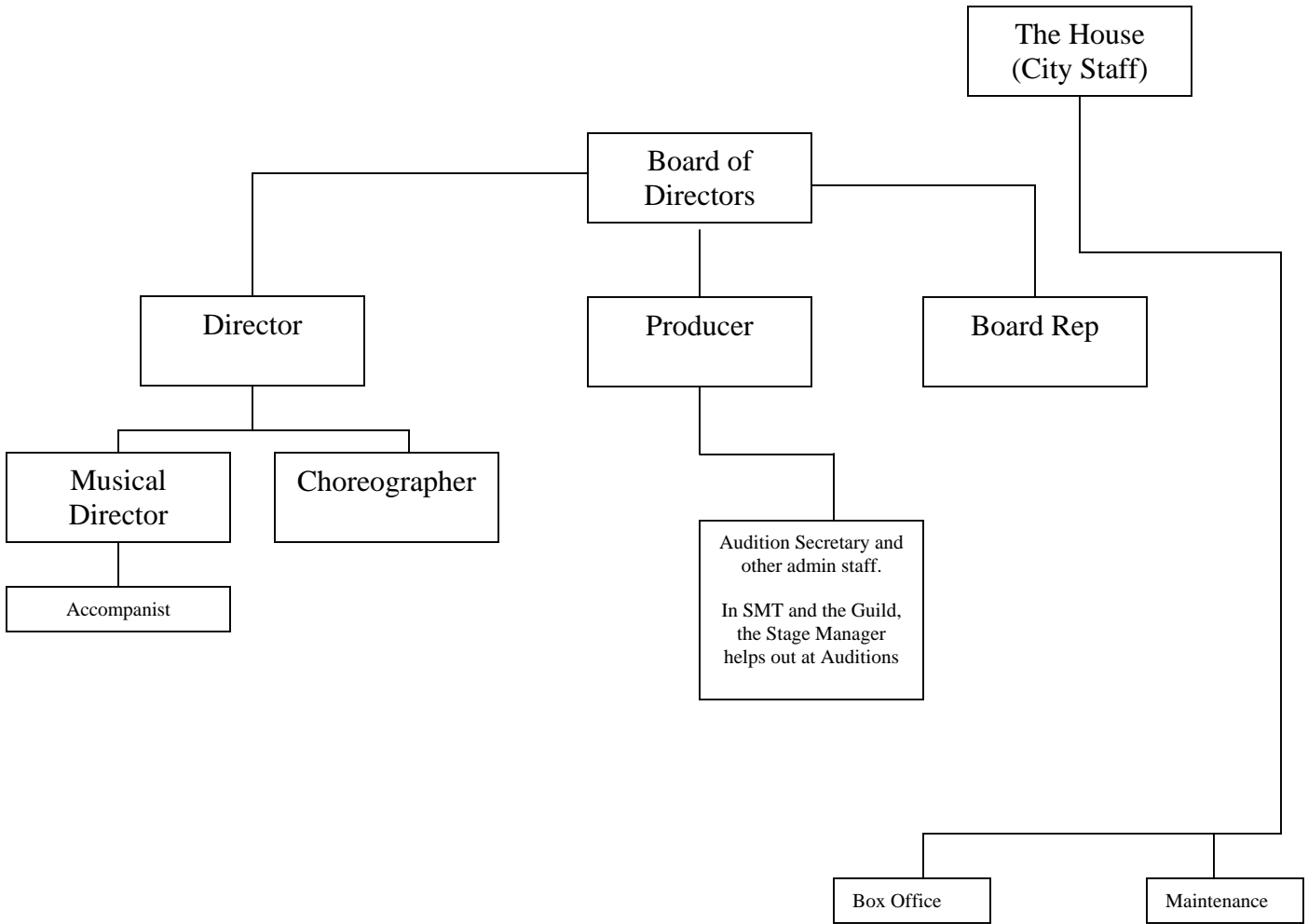
During the whole process, a Stage Manager cannot publicly sit in judgment of the artistic choices being made in the production but, instead, sits in judgment of attempts to change or modify the work without approval from the director(s). So, even if you absolutely hate whatever is happening onstage – and, trust me, sometimes you will – it is your job to reproduce it faithfully every performance. Never let your true opinion be known until the show has closed – and maybe not even then. Even at the bar, you are still the Stage Manager.

Org Charts

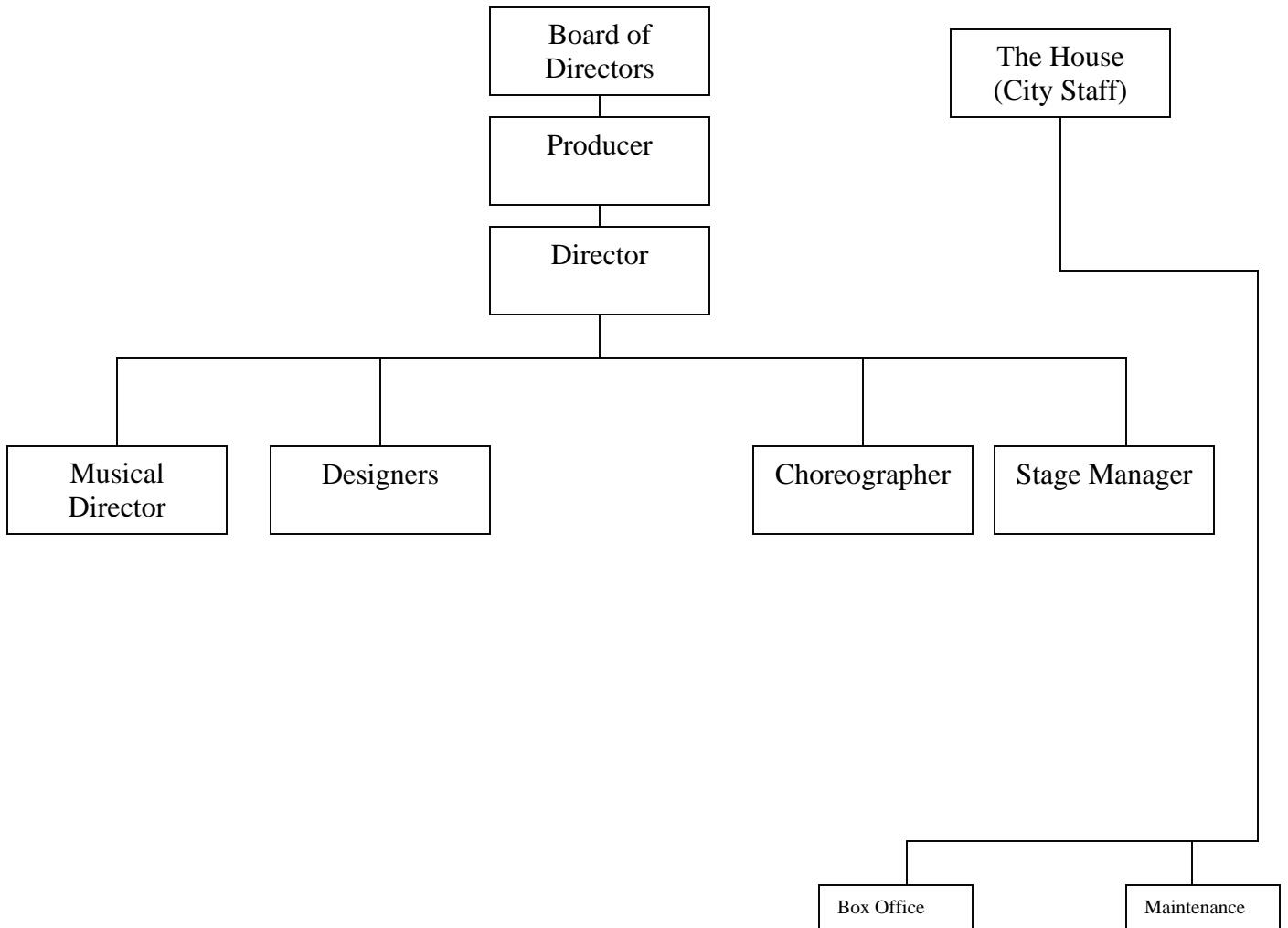
Organization Chart for Staff Hiring



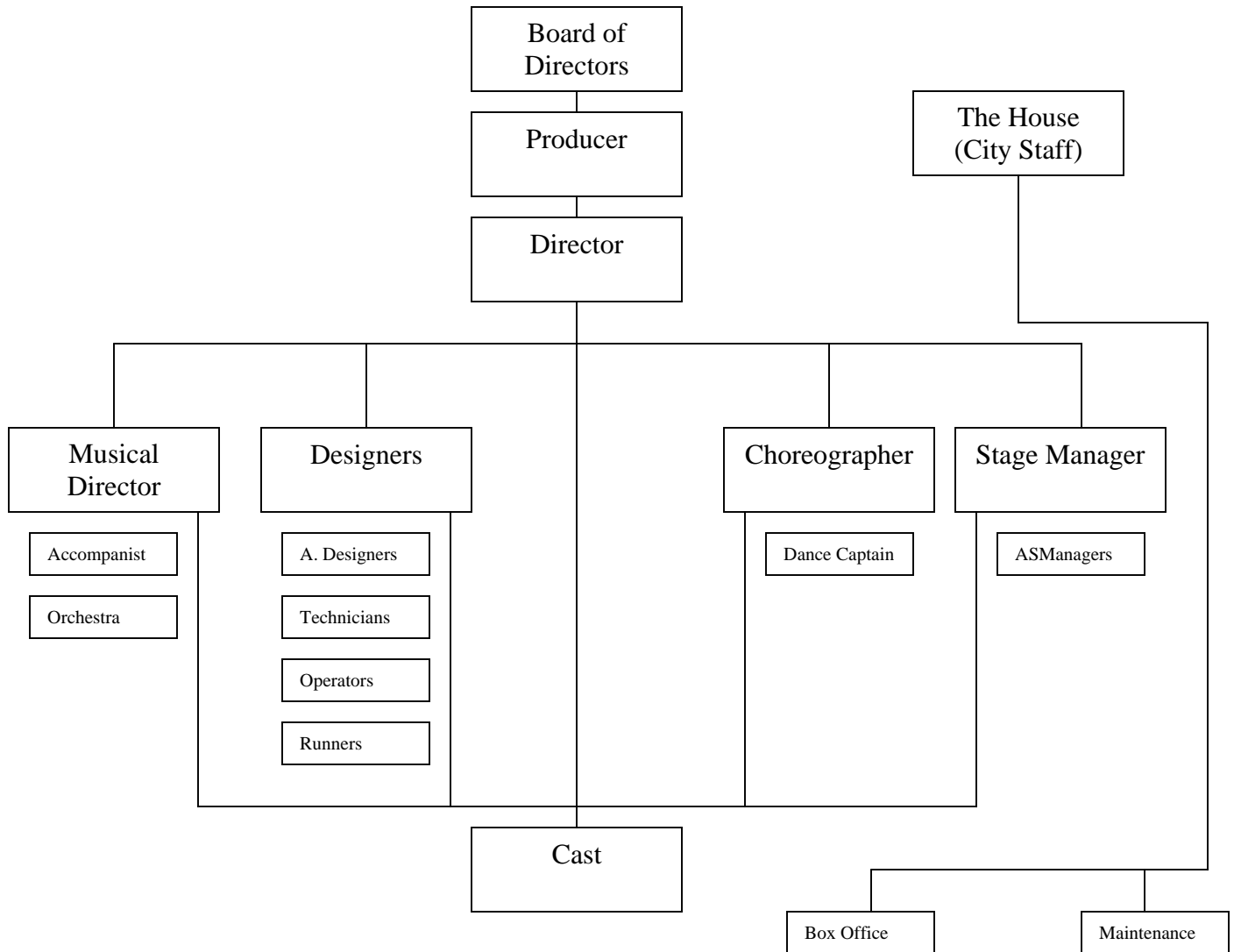
Organization Chart for Auditions



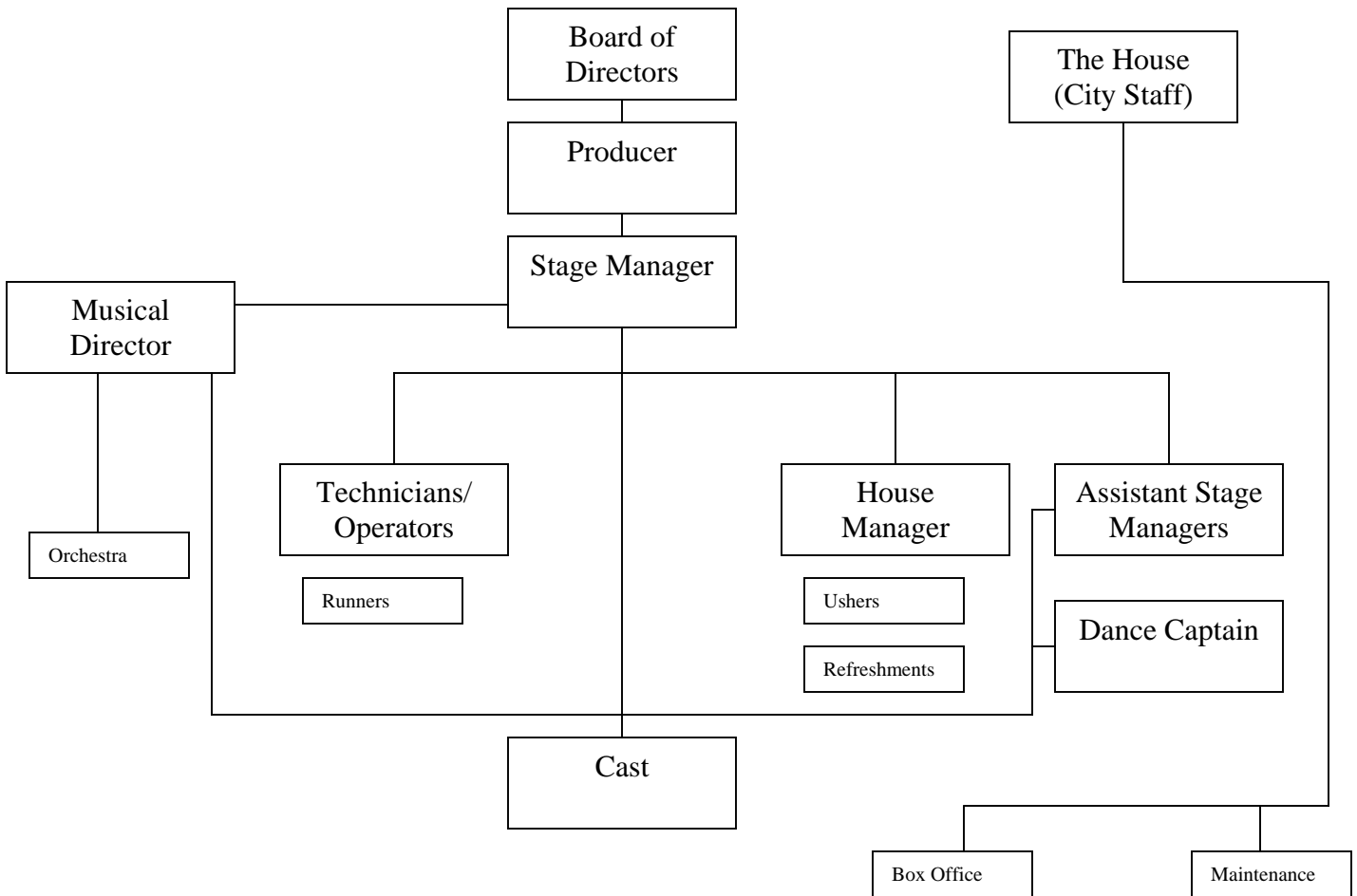
Organization Chart in Design and Prep Phase



Organization Chart Rehearsal Phase including Production Week



Organization Chart During the Run



Zoinks...

The stage-manager must be gifted with uncommon powers if he is to live to a reasonable age. He must be capable of working sixteen to eighteen hours a day for weeks at a time, seeing as little daylight as a pit-pony, listening with polite patience to the complaints of actors about each other's behaviour and the inadequacy of their dressing-rooms, bearing with cheerfulness the blame for every stupid blunder on the part of his subordinates, while maintaining his bodily and mental efficiency upon a diet of sandwiches and cups of coffee - or possibly bottles of stout.

Found in "Backstage" by Philip Godfrey (written in 1933):

Unit 2 – Preparation for Rehearsals 1 – Information Gathering

Five Aims of Stage Management within the Rehearsal Process

As we enter the rehearsal prep phase, it wouldn't hurt to discuss what Stage Managers are trying to achieve during the rehearsal process. As I talk about what I think a Stage Manager should do to prepare for rehearsals or do during rehearsals, bear in mind that you might come up with other solutions that work better for you. Always think along these lines – theatre is all about personal style, and that applies to Stage Managers, too. Whatever you do, however, needs to contribute to a Stage Manager's aims or goals. So no dancing naked on the Production table, please.

Okay, why do we rehearse in the first place? We rehearse a play to prepare ourselves as absolutely as possible for the play's presentation to an audience. With this in mind, Stage Managers have five goals:

- 1) Replicating the Physical Environment of the Stage
- 2) Ensuring the Safety of the Rehearsal Hall
- 3) Efficiency
- 4) Record-keeping
- 5) Reporting

The Physical Environment of the Stage

During the Rehearsal process, one of the Stage Manager's jobs is to replicate as closely as possible the physical space in which the cast will eventually be performing. This will allow a less painful transition onto the stage and facilitate the whole process. The less we have to deal with *for the first time* when we get on stage, the better. Much of your preparation will be fulfilling this function. More as we go....

Safety of the Rehearsal Hall

Secondly, the Stage Manager wants to create a safe environment artistically, emotionally, and physically. Physical safety is self-explanatory – or should be. ☺ Much of what you do to prepare a rehearsal hall and theatre will be about physical safety; however, creating an emotionally and artistically safe environment is a little more difficult.

Re artistic safety: We need to reserve the rehearsal hall as a place in which an actor and a director can make mistakes without fear of judgment or mocking. Integral to the artistic process is the courage to go too far, to take things past a comfortable point so that new layers of performance might be discovered or discarded as the Director wishes. (I hope this doesn't sound like twaddle to you. If it does, let's talk about it.)

It is very important, therefore, that the Stage Manager continue to maintain a neutral position as far as the artistic work is concerned. The Stage Manager might think the Director is warped or an actor merely bad but I suggest, very strongly, that you keep your feelings to yourself.

Also, I would suggest that any threat to this artistic safety should be removed from the hall. So feel free to respectfully admonish or remove (your choice, again whatever makes sense) anyone who is a pain in the, well, donkey. More on this later.

Re the emotional: The Stage Manager is the only member of the production who will not throw a fit, get upset, or get stressed. He or she is the rock. That very strength will contribute to the emotional health of the production.

That strength, too, will be a magnet for those who want to get something off their chest, for those who need a sounding board, or for those who just like to chat. A Stage Manager will listen to all complaints, support all reasonable (don't ask me what's reasonable, that's is up to you) requests, and generally be there emotionally for the cast, crew, and artistic staff. This could be as simple as lending an ear – something like the local bartender.

Some folks enjoy this role. For those of you who don't, presenting a pleasant, professional attitude may be enough. Don't feel like you have to be Dear Abbey.

Loose lips...

Remember that anything you are told in confidence should stay that way if you want folks to trust you in the future. The secrets might seem interesting at first but, after a while, you will have heard it all and, by then, you would still like your reputation to be intact.

Efficiency

In order to maximize the time and effort available to the Artistic Staff and actors during rehearsal, a Stage Manager will keep things running smoothly. That means start on time, call timely breaks, keep the breaks clean, and finish the rehearsal on time. It also means ensuring that everything that might be needed for the rehearsal be available. I will talk about this more during Unit 3 and during rehearsal discussions.

Record Keeping

Actors and Directors aren't perfect. They forget what they did. Questions arise. A Stage Manager will keep the prompt script up-to-date with blocking notes to which all can refer. I'll give you techniques on this later.

Also, and this is a function that is commonly missed in Community Theatre, a Stage Manager will take all production notes in preparation to pass them on. More on this later, also.

Reporting

This is a function that is commonly missed in Community Theatre. A Stage Manager should keep the Producers apprised of how rehearsals (and shows) are running. The Producer should not be called in only as a situation turns into a crisis. Also, at Production Meetings or individually, a Stage Manager should be informing the different departments of changing Production Requirements. More on this later.

Six Basic Sources of Information

Okay, sounds like you have a lot to do, yes? Sounds like you're in a key position, yes? Yes. So, you're going to need a lot of information in order to prepare for the job. The information comes from six basic sources:

1. The Play
2. Production (but most importantly Set) Design
3. The Company
4. The Director
5. The Cast

6. The Schedule

Checklists...

Checklists are key to this job. Make sure you write everything down because, if you don't, you will be tripped up by the forgetting the simplest things. Oh, I could tell you stories. 😊

1. The Play

So, you need to know your material. You need to know your material through and through. The first thing you need to do when preparing to Stage Manage a play is read it. Then, read it again. And then, again. Great. Now, we can start. More on the play later.

2. Production Design

Then, get your hands on the set design. Start asking for the set design early (about a month before rehearsals begin) as most Producers don't understand that the set design needs to be in well before rehearsals begin. If you start bugging them nicely early on, you might get the set design for first rehearsal. More on this later.

You will discuss the show with various people, the Producer, the Director. If the show is being done with an extreme concept, you will need to start beating the bushes for all the other designs to find what you will need to simulate or accommodate in rehearsal.

3. The Company

Every company is different as each is driven by the personalities involved. Consequently, each company has its own rules and regulations, its own style. This means a meeting with your Producer and/or Unit Manager. In every company, small things can trip you up. So, the input from your Producer may affect your approach, how you prepare, even how you run the simplest rehearsal. I would recommend being thoroughly prepared for this meeting with all your questions written down in a checklist so you don't forget anything.

Though this is not a complete list, here are some questions you might ask the Producer and/or Unit Manager:

1. Please give me a tour of your Unit?
2. What is the access code for the rehearsal space? Or may I have my key, please? Are there any other keys I should know about?
3. Is there a fuse box or breaker switch I should know about?
4. What is the first day the space will be free for me to prepare?
5. Who is in charge of the space? Who would I call if there were a problem (toilet backed up, etc)? Who is a back up?
6. Do you keep any first-aid supplies on premises. If so, where are they?
7. Who is responsible to clean the space (washrooms, etc.)?
8. Do you have a copy of the rules for the rehearsal space?
9. What is the standard lock-up procedure for the rehearsal space?
10. What is Stage Management's budget for the show?
11. Am I expected to buy running props (props that are used up during the run – for example, something an actor has to eat or drink)?

12. Where are the fire extinguishers and other safety gear?
13. Where are the brooms and the cleaning gear?
14. I am planning to cover and tape prop tables. I can pull the cover off, if necessary, (board meetings and the like) and put it on again but I really don't want to have to. Which tables should I use? [More on this later.]
15. I might want to run simple sound cues. What equipment is available?
16. I might have rehearsal costumes. What costume rack may I use?
17. I will need access to the props and costumes, if that is appropriate. May I have the keys for these areas?
18. Do I need to sign out props or costumes that are only going to be used inside this unit?
19. Is there any part of the rehearsal space that should be considered off limits?
20. What are the standard days and times for rehearsals? Is there a reason why?
21. Set Designs are critical to my preparations. When can I expect a Set Design?
22. How are you organizing Production Meetings? How frequent will they be?
23. What refreshments, if any, does the company expected to provide for the rehearsing cast, crew, and artistic staff?
24. How safe is the area of town we are in?
25. If the Director's concept is extreme, have a frank discussion about what this means with your Producer. (Ah, well, look: Everyone has to die their hair red and run around in swimming suits...)
26. Is there anything else you should tell me? (Nice wide open question. Let them talk.)

Right and Wrong....

I often get the impression from folks that they think there is One True Way to do things in theatre (and that they know the One True Way). The reality, though, is not the case. Every theatre – even every show, everywhere, does everything just a little bit differently. It's all right, all correct, as long as the show is ready on time. Huh?

It's true. Theatre is one efficient industry – much more efficient than most industries that commonly go past deadlines. Whatever you do, whatever you want to do, at eight o'clock the curtain is going up – or shall I say, the lights are going up. If there's a show and people are entertained, it's all good. So, don't sweat the small stuff. Don't fall into the trap of thinking there is only one proper way to do things. Down that road lies peril – all right, at the very least, your blood pressure is at risk. ☺

Remember: Whatever the Company considers normal is what works for that company. If the Company has been doing this for years and is reasonably successful, then I would only suggest making small changes slowly over time. They are already doing it the "right" way.

During your meeting with the Producer, make sure you write down answers as appropriate. Not only will you get clearer answers (people note that you take notes!), you won't forget a thing.

The Director

Know for whom you are working. Contact and set up a meeting with your Director. Most directors will be 'too busy' but those who do, in fact, have requirements or want things to run smoothly will meet with you. This step does not often happen professionally (professional expectations are clear), but I highly recommend it at the Community Theatre Level. Questions you might ask:

- 1) Could you briefly explain your approach to this show?
- 2) Are you strict about start times?
- 3) Are you strict about concentration levels in the rehearsal?
- 4) Who is welcome in the Rehearsal Hall?
- 5) Is there anything that most Stage Managers do that drives you crazy?
- 6) Is there anything that most Stage Managers don't do that drives you crazy?
- 7) How do you like your coffee?
- 8) May I please have as much schedule ahead of time as possible, at least the first two weeks, please?

Let this person know that you are willing to be flexible and you are going to try to run the rehearsals in a manner that supports the atmosphere the Director wants to create. In lieu of directoral input, however, assume that the rehearsals should run a quiet, focused way, with clean start times, breaks, and endings.

A tip: Try to keep these meetings light and fun. Meet for coffee or a beer. Ask a lot of wide open questions as opposed to those that require a yes or no. Be interested and share funny theatre stories. Half of what you are doing is getting to know the Director personally and creating a personal relationship with him/her. It is hard to find out that you both love the game of bridge or both hate computers or whatnot, when you are working in rehearsal hall. This relationship-building will stand you well.

The Cast

The cast will supply, through their audition sheets, the all-critical conflict information. Make sure that you build a full list of conflicts and know who will be missing when, and why. If there is a severe conflict that was somehow missed, start ringing the bell right away. Make sure you have this list for first rehearsal. More on conflicts later.

Also, from these sheets you will build your contact lists and notes on medical conditions. Keep them around until you do.

The Schedule

Okay you've asked for at least two weeks schedule in advance before you begin. Seems like a basic, eh? But what you can do, then, is lock down actors to commit to being at rehearsals, inform tech staff of the schedule so that they can come in and do what they need to do, and, just generally, sleep better at night.

Bringing up the schedule is important, especially when the group has hired an Equity Director, because Equity people are used to things just rolling along nicely and are not used to the vagaries of Community Theatre. All cast is considered called for the duration of the rehearsals and the schedule is not posted until just before end of call the night before. Equity people do not really

plan ahead, unless they're doing a musical. The average play gets done in a seemingly loose manner, but veteran Directors are watching the time closely.

A new Director, especially if he/she comes out of an Equity performance background, may not really be aware of a scheduling process. So he/she may expect that he/she can call everybody for every rehearsal and that folks should not get the rehearsal schedule until end of the previous rehearsal. For a thousand reasons, this is a dangerous practice in Community Theatre. Encourage your Director to think about scheduling ahead. You'll be glad you did. The Director will agree or not.

If the Director does not agree, let your Producer know.

If your Director agrees, ask for the minimum two weeks of schedule to come in at least a week before first rehearsal. If the schedule does not come in by the deadline you requested, ask your Producer to intervene. A tight schedule is key to Community Theatre success. If you are getting the schedule in stages keep on top of the flow.... ☺

Activities/Homework

I am going to suggest activities that you can do to help support the information in all of the Units. You are not required to do them. If you do and issues arise, let me know.

1. Find a Producer and practice quiz him/her as you might if you neither know the Producer or the Group.
2. Find one of the Unit Managers and do a practice quiz on her/him as if you neither know the Unit nor the Unit Manager.
3. Find a Director and do a practice quiz as if you did not know the Director.

Terms and Sayings 1

Above Upstage or away from the audience. Actors crossing above a prop or piece of set are keeping it between them and the audience.

Act 1) What an actor does. 2) Segments of a performance, usually separated by an interval. So the first part is Act 1, the second Act 2, and so on.

Acting Area The area of the stage setting within which the actor performs. It may include areas off the normal stage. In Scarborough, any part of the house may be used from time to time as Acting Area.

Ad Lib A departure from the script in order to cover an unexpected situation or hide a lapse of memory.

After Piece A brief one act play, usually a nonsense piece, staged after the main performance has concluded. Originated as a comic antidote to the main play in England in the early 18th century. It was designed for people who arrived late due to an early curtain time (because they relied on natural light, many plays started quite early), or pressures of business.

Alternative Stage Alternative stages include outdoor venues, events like murder mystery dinners, stages like Theatre Passe Muraille (which can change completely).

Amphitheatre An outdoor theatrical setting, usually with a large semi-circular seating area sloping down to the stage. Sometimes a very large indoor venue. The amphitheatre was developed by the Romans to provide convenient accommodation for large numbers of spectators at exhibitions of gladiatorial combats and beast hunts. The amphitheatre was one of the earliest examples of reserved ticketing. Tickets noted which arch to enter through, and the section, row,

and seat numbers. They were also big. The amphitheatre at Pompeii, built 80BC sat 20,000, while the Colosseum in Rome, built 29BC by Statilus Tauros, held an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 spectators.

Amplifier An electronic device that amplifies sound signals to a point where they great enough to be heard through a speaker.

Angels Financial backers of a production.

Angel Walk A walkway across the rafters in a building's ceiling.

Antagonist The chief opponent of the protagonist in a drama.

Apron A part of the stage projecting towards or into the auditorium. In proscenium stages, the part of the stage in front of the curtain.

Arc 1) A luminous discharge between two separate carbon ends. 2) Old type of followspot in which the light was generated by a carbon arc discharge. Inefficient and inconvenient because the carbon rod had to be continuously adjusted and replaced, even during performances.

Arena Theatre A theatre in which the audience sits on all sides of an acting area. Originates in Roman times, when the arena was the oval space in a Roman amphitheatre where the combats and other entertainment took place.

Assistant Stage Manager Abbrev. to ASM. According the size of the show, there may be one or more ASM's who assist the Stage Manager with properties and other activities on stage.

At Rise The action occurring on the stage when the curtain opens.

Audience coming in Warning from Stage Management that the House is about to open.

Auditorium The part of the theatre designed to accommodate the audience. Also House. The term sometimes refers to the whole theatre.

Auditorium Lights Also House Lights. Lights that illuminate the audience areas so patrons can find their seats.

Baby Spot A small spotlight under 500 watts.

Back Drop Cloth, usually painted, suspended from the flies at the rear of the stage.

Backing 1) Cloth or solid pieces placed behind doorways and other openings on sets to conceal the stage machinery or building behind. 2) Financial support for a production.

Backstage Any part of the stage not in the acting area during a performance.

Ballad Opera A musical with songs based on popular melodies or tunes e.g. THE BEGGARS OPERA.

Bar Horizontally flown rod (usually metal) from which scenery, lighting, and other equipment is suspended.

Barre The bar running around the wall of a dance rehearsal room used by the dancers to hold on to during some exercises in a dance class.

Barndoor Adjustable doors attached to the front of stage lanterns to control the area of light covered by a particular beam

Baroque Theatre A sumptuous, spectacular form of theatre popular in the 17th and 18th centuries. Noted for its ability to extend beyond the confines of the stage and involving elaborate changeable scenery.

Batten 1) See Bar. 2) Piece of wood attached to, or metal pipe slipped into a sleeve at the bottom of, a flown cloth to straighten it and keep it taut.

Beam Angle The angle of the cone of light emitted from a lantern.

Beginners The actors who need to be in place at the start of an Act.

Bells Electric bell or tone sounded in all front of house areas to warn the audience that the performance is about to begin or resume.

Black Light Ultra Violet light. (UK)

Blackout A total, sometimes sudden, extinguishing of the stage lights, often at the end of a scene or act.

Blocking The process of roughing out the moves to be made by the actors. Also Grouping.

Board Lighting or audio control panel.

Book 1) Noun - Alternative term for the scripts. 2) Noun - The prompt copy. 3) Noun - The part of a musical show conducted in dialogue. 4) Verb - To arrange the services of actors and musicians.

Book Flat Two flats hinged together on the vertical.

Border Flown scenic piece or curtain designed to conceal the upper part of the stage and its machinery or lighting equipment.

Break A Leg Also Break-a. Traditional good luck greeting between cast and crew before a performance.

Breaker See Circuit Breaker.

Breaking Character When actors do or say something which is inconsistent with the character they are portraying.

Breakup See Deckle.

Bridge Walkway above the stage or auditorium used to reach stage equipment. Also, catwalk.

Bring Up To increase the intensity of the lights.

Business Movements or activity used by the actors to reinforce their character.

Bulb See Lamp.

Call 1) A notification of a working session e.g. rehearsal call. 2) A request for an actor to come to the stage as his entrance is imminent, formerly by call boy, now by loudspeaker system in the dressing rooms. 3) An acknowledgment of applause .e.g. Curtain Call.

Call Book The book a Stage Manager follows when calling a show. This book notes all cues or entrances and exits. In Community Theatre and a most levels of Professional theatre except the highest, the Call Book is the same as the Prompt Script.

Cat walk See Bridge.

Centre Line An imaginary line running from the front to the back of the stage through the exact centre of the stage.

Centre Stage The middle of the acting area. Abbrev. CS.

Choreographer Designs and creates the dance elements and arrangements for a show.

Chorus Set of performers who speak, sing and/or dance as a group rather than individually.

Circuit Breaker A type of electrical fuse, which does not use a replaceable piece of fuse wire. Can be reset simply by operating a switch.

Clamp 'G' or 'C' clamps are normally attached to lanterns and are used to fasten them to the lighting bars or battens.

Cheat 1) In performance: An unnatural movement that allows the audience to see more of the actor. 2) A trick to give the audience the impression of something that is not really there.

Come Down When the show 'comes down', the performance is finished.

Concert Pitch The common tuning standard for musical instruments, agreed in 1960, where the note A = 440 Hz (or vibrations per second).

Conflict The struggle between two or more actors leading to a climax.

Control Room See Booth

Corner Plate Triangle of plywood used to reinforce the corners of flats.

Corpse (Verb) To laugh uncontrollably on stage.

Cover 1) A term used particularly in opera for a stand-by or understudy actor. 2) The actions taken by actors when something goes wrong on stage.

Crash Box Box used for creating sound effects.

Crew Loose term covering all those who work on a show backstage.

Cross The movement of an actor across the stage in any direction.

Crossfade Lighting or sound change where some of the channels increase while others decrease.

Crossover The space behind the stage setting or below the stage through which actors can get from one side of the stage to the other out of view of the audience.

Cue The signal usually given by a Stage Manager that initiates a change of any kind during a performance.

Cue Light Box with 2 or more lights, usually red and green, to warn an actor or technician to go to stand-by and then do whatever is required. Ensures greater precision when visibility or audibility is limited.

Cue Sheet A list showing the cues in correct order that they are to be carried out.

Cue-to-cue A technical rehearsal specifically for the technical crew to work fully through the cues, often by skipping parts of the script. Also, Q2Q.

Curtain 1) The drapery which hides the stage from the audience. See House Curtain. 2) The action of the House Curtain coming down at the end of an Act or the play.

Curtain Down See Come Down.

Curtain Line 1) The final line of a scene or act which gives the cue for the curtain to come down. In a tradition dating from Elizabethan times it is considered unlucky to speak the curtain line in rehearsal. 2) The imaginary line across the stage where the curtain falls.

Curtain Raiser Similar to the after piece, developed in France in the late 18th century as a short play to bridge the gap between the beginning of the performance and the arrival of late audience members. Generally the curtain raiser had nothing to do with the main performance.

Curtain Speech Address to the audience by an actor, without the persona of the character the actor is supposed to be portraying.

Curtain Time See Curtain Up.

Curtain Up The beginning of the show. Also Curtain Time.

Cut And Run Term used towards the end of the 18th century when actors cut their lines and left the stage, for one reason or another.

Cut Cloth Vertical scenic piece cut to reveal more scenery behind it.

Cyclorama Also Cyc. A perfectly plain screen with a uniform surface extending around and above the stage to give a feeling of infinite space. It can also be used for the projection of designs and shadows. (From Greek 'Kuklos' = circle and 'Horama' = view). We do not have cycs in Scarborough.

Unit 3 – Preparation for Rehearsals 2

Eight Steps to Preparing for Rehearsals

Once you have all the information you need, there are eight elements you need to consider in order to prepare for rehearsals:

1. The Stage Manager's Bag
2. Play Analysis: Production Elements from the Play
3. The Director's Concept
4. The Set Design and Preparing to Tape the Floor
5. Rehearsal Hall
6. The Schedule
7. The Prompt Book
8. First Rehearsal: Meet and Greet

We will be covering the first four in this Unit.

The Stage Manager's Bag

The Stage Manager's Bag is so important, it almost rates a Unit in and of itself; however, put simply, a Stage Manager's Bag has everything in it you might need. It's a portable office and on-the-fly resource.

So, anything that an actor or director might need to do his/her job is in that bag.

You will, as you go on with Stage Management, build your own list for what needs to be in your Bag. Each Bag is as personal as each Stage Manager. But the following is a sample (and, by no means, complete) list of things that might be found in a Stage Manager's Bag:

Item	Check
1. The Prompt Script	
2. A flashlight. (I recommend you buy a Mini-Maglite. You will thank me.)	
3. A stopwatch (or three). (Get stopwatches that have cords that fit around your neck and that are made for extreme sports. They won't break so quickly.)	
4. A watch (or two).	
5. A Swiss Army knife. Or a cheaper knock-off. You will thank me.	
6. Pencils (lots – the cast will forget their pencils.)	
7. Erasers (lots)	
8. Pens	
9. Coloured Pencils	

10. Rulers (various)	
11. Ruled squares pad of paper	
12. Envelopes	
13. At least two Tape Measures	
14. Seamstress Measuring Tape	
15. Compass	
16. Emergency Sewing Kit (throw out the Safety Pins. Safety Pins aren't safe.)	
17. A universal screwdriver	
18. Needle-nosed pliers	
19. Small wrench set	
20. Tiny screwdriver set (surprisingly helpful)	
21. Various coloured highlighter pens	
22. Various coloured sticky tabs and post it notes	
23. Scissors	
24. Stapler	
25. Paper clips	
26. Indelible Markers, thick and thin, of various colours if possible	
27. Chalk of various colours	
28. Three-hole punch	
29. An extra copy of the script	
30. Tylenol and aspirin (come on, you deserve it)	
31. Tensor Bandage	
32. Hot Packs (that heat up in the micro)	
33. Cold Packs (they go into the closest freezer on prep week)	
34. Full First-Aid Kit	
35. Candies (in case you need a sweet or, okay, more importantly, in case a diabetic does – I prefer hard butterscotch myself – they never seem to go off and most people like them)	
36. Mints (for those intimate scenes)	
37. Throat Lozenges	
38. Cough Lozenges	
39. Throat Spray (go easy on this – an actor using it a lot can do some damage to her throat, but in a pinch, it soothes)	
40. Pepto-Bismol	

41. Alka-Seltzer	
42. An Epi-Pen (I don't know if you can get them, but with the rising amount of folks who are desperately allergic to things, this item seems to make sense to me)	
43. A towel (see Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy)	
44. Spare nylons	
45. Push Pins	
46. Masking Tape	
47. Sticky Tape	
48. Spike Tape	
49. Gaff Tape	
50. Batteries, various (for the Maglite, the watches, etc)	

Oi. And I am sure this is not complete! I used to carry this lot around with me in a gym bag and a briefcase. Some Managers have added a personal computer to their kit (something I highly recommend if you've got one) – so they have that as well.

However, because the development of a Stage Manager's Bag represents something of a significant personal investment, many Managers take the lot home each night. Heesh. Personally, I'd ask for a secure area to lock things up in. Almost every show was able to provide a lock up. Also, one idea, in Community Theatre, might be a communal kit. I don't advise it, though. Too much can go missing...then everyone gets cranky, then....

Zoinks!

Please be aware that all of the medicinal stuff in the bag is there in case someone ASKS for it. Never DISPENSE OR OFFER over-the-counter (or otherwise!) drugs. However, you can let it be known that you have remedies and IF ANYONE COMES AND SPECIFICALLY ASKS FOR SOMETHING, you can hand it over. Remember this! You don't want to be held personally liable for trying to help.

Now listen, you may counter, we are rehearsing at the Unit! Why do I need half this stuff? Fair enough, too. However, I prefer to have my own kit because I know where everything is and I didn't have to waste time searching high and low.

But how much, or how little, of the kit you want to put together for yourself is up to you. If you plan to stage manage a few shows over the next year, build a solid bag.

Before the rehearsals begin, make sure the bag is complete or that you have checked the unit for everything. Before the show closes, make sure the bag is replenished so that you can charge the Company for what was used during the production.

Play Analysis for Production Requirements

Remembering that you are going to try to simulate, as much as possible, the physical space in which the actors will eventually work, the play needs to be analyzed for its inherent production requirements:

1) Sound

During rehearsals you will need to make the noises that are called for in the script by whatever means you deem appropriate. By this I mean door bells, telephone rings, thunder sounds. More on this later. I would recommend that you highlight the cue in a bright colour in the script so you don't miss it in rehearsals.

Professional Managers will then publish a sound list in table format. Most Community Level Managers do not publish technical lists. The job, if ever done at all at the Community Level, is performed by the Director. Choose to do what you wish.

A sound list will look something like the following:

Sound Requirements

Subject to Change

Page	Sound	Notes
1	Doorbell	Old building – buzzer, probably.
3	Telephone rings	1970's era telephone.
Etc	Etc	Etc

Save yourself!

The term **SUBJECT TO CHANGE** must go on absolutely EVERYTHING published by your team, including and ESPECIALLY call schedules.

2) Lighting

During rehearsal, it is wise to call 'Lights Up' or 'Blackout' as required by the script. More on this later. I would recommend that you highlight the requirement in a bright colour in the script so you don't miss it while you are doing ten other things. Again, take the time to make a list of those lighting changes noted in the script as you did the sound.

3) SFX

Fog, explosions, etc. all need to be simulated by stage management. More on this later. I would recommend that you highlight the requirement in a bright colour so you don't miss it. Again, take the time to make a list of those lighting changes noted in the script as you did the sound.

4) Props

Often with the help of a Props Co-ordinator, Stage Managers are expected to produce a full compliment of Rehearsal Props. Rehearsal Props are items that stand in for the real thing. A toy becomes the gun, plastic cups a china tea set. More on this later.

Simply go through the script and list all props that are SPECIFICALLY NOTED in the script or in the STAGE DIRECTIONS. Be aware that if the Director has a completely different concept of the show, some of the Rehearsal Props you list may not be used.

Some scripts come with complete props plots in the back. Make sure you verify that list yourself. Oftentimes there are items on the list that will not appear in your production because of business in the original show is not in your show. So make sure you note on those things in the script.

Again, take the time to make a list of those lighting changes noted in the script as you did the sound.

5) Costumes

If the script calls for a hair band or engagement ring or some such that is specifically part of the action, stick it on your list of Rehearsal Costumes. Again, take the time to make a list of those lighting changes noted in the script as you did the sound.

Ummm....

Remember, you are never stepping on a Director's toes unless you invent something. If you simply analyze the script for production requirements, the Director will thank you.

6) Anything ODD

Some shows will ask for trapeze work. Some shows will require that a person knows how to play piano. Some shows will require that folks appear naked. Some shows ask that a person knows how to roller-skate. Make a note of the ODD things. Make sure that the ODD things are addressed in the first PRODUCTION MEETING or initial notes from the Director. If not, you will need to bring them up at the first Production Meeting as tactfully as possible.

The Director's Concept

The Director's Concept might turn everything on its ear. S/he might want to do the show as if everyone were in the ocean or in Nazi Germany or... When there is an extreme concept, you will need to take a good, long look at all of the designs to make sure that you are prepared.

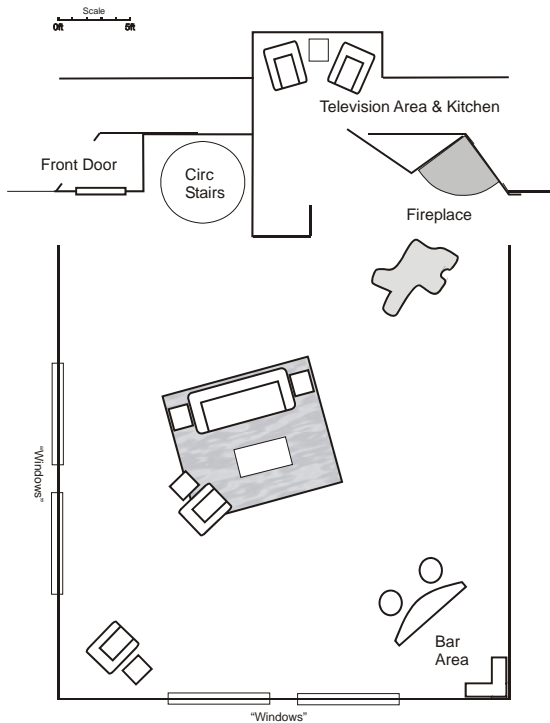
The Set Design and Preparing to Tape the Floor

The set is analyzed by Stage Management to identify the different set pieces that will need to be simulated in rehearsal. Also, Stage Management should develop a Tape Diagram to simulate major set items, like doorways, walls, etc. The Tape Diagram will be used to tape the floor when preparing the Rehearsal Hall.

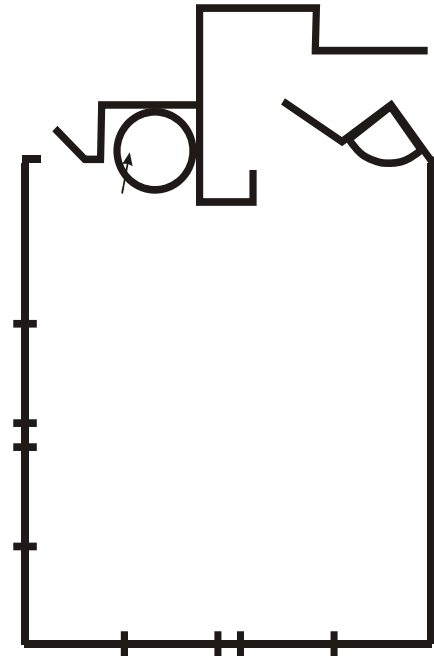
Identifying set pieces should be reasonably easy. If a couch, chair, and table are called for, build your list so that when you are preparing the rehearsal hall, you can find items that will reasonably double for the pieces that actors will be using in the show.

Tape Diagram

When putting together a Tape Diagram, the KISS principle applies (as it does to most Stage Management); so folks, keep it simple. Tape only that which an actor walks into, walks through, or looks through. Also, and possibly in a different colour, you may need to mark the exact dimensions of the stage itself. Here are two floor plans....



Original Plan



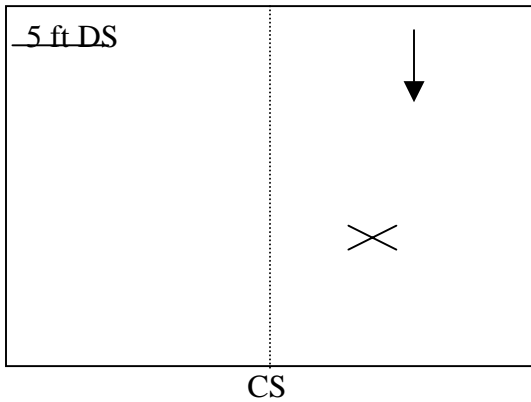
Tape Diagram

Now comes the tricky part. The measuring. Folks, no Stage Manager ever got fired for being off a little on the Tape Diagram – just do your best and let the quarter inches take care of themselves. Please bear in mind that almost no Community Level Stage Managers will produce a Tape Diagram anyway; so don't get too hung up on detail. But using the Scale marker as a guide (the compass comes in handy here), measure out as closely as possible where everything is.

Just in case you don't know...

'Stage Left' (SL) and 'Stage Right' (SR) are from the actor's perspective when that actor is facing the audience (and has his back to the stage wall on a thrust stage). House Left and House Right are from the audience's perspective.

'Up Stage' (US) and 'Down Stage' (DS) are throwback terms that hail from a time when the stage was raked (the back floor level higher than the front of the stage) so audience sitting or standing on flat ground in front could more easily see the action. The directions are, again, from the actor's perspective; so, US is behind the actor, while DS is closer to the audience. On a full thrust stage, like we have in Scarborough, we still use those terms. Assume the actor is standing all the way to the back of the stage before she turns around to look at the audience. She will be said to be standing all the way 'up centre' (UC).



Up-From-Centre

However, you do need to know about a measurement standard in Stage Management.

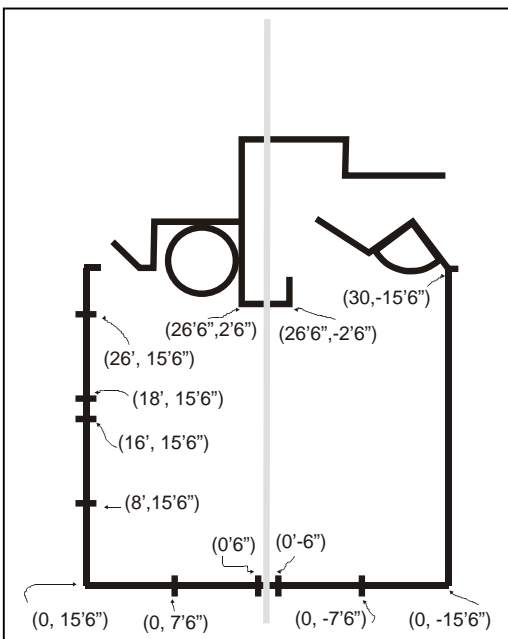
Stage Managers express all measurements in a grid, like a graph. The co-ordinate starting point or 0,0 is all the way down stage centre.

Stage Managers express measurements as ‘up-from-centre’ a distance and, then, go stage left or stage right a distance. Let’s say we want to identify the position of the centre of the ‘X’ on the stage on the left.

A Stage Manager would first determine the CS line. Then, would measure and determine that the ‘X’ was about seven feet up from centre and stage left five feet.

So, going back to our original plan on the previous page, we want to measure points from the plan so that we can mark the measurements on the Tape Diagram. We measure the points at which the direction of the tape changes or at which a new element is introduced.

Once you have done all your measuring, make notes for yourself on your Tape Diagram. Remember, the Tape Diagram does not have to be to scale as long as you write the actual measurements down clearly. Many Managers skip this part and, as the Assistants are doing the taping, they are measuring furiously. I don’t recommend it, but it’s all on how you like to work.



Now, writing the following on a diagram would take up a bunch of room: “Please go up from centre four feet, eight inches and then go stage left eight feet and two inches and then make a mark.” Clearly, we need a short form system. The way that you eventually choose to make notes is up to you, but here is the short form that I use: (UFC FEET’ UFC INCHES”, SR FEET’ SR INCHES”).

So if you saw this on my Tape Diagram... (5’3”, 8’6”) ...it would mean: Go five feet, three inches up from centre and then go stage right eight feet and six inches. I express stage left measurements with a minus sign. So if you saw this on my Tape Diagram...(3’4”, -10’2”)...it would mean: Go three feet and four inches up from centre and then go stage LEFT ten feet and two inches.

It’s just a shorter way of writing things.

All righty. I did a few points on the diagram just by sight and I came up with this Tape Diagram left.

The diagram would be complete if I had measured every point at which the wall turns, where there is an opening or where there is a new architectural detail. I did about a third of them so you could get an idea.

Okay, now you are ready to tape the floor. We'll get to that at Rehearsal Hall Preparation.

What? No Set Design!?!

Surprisingly often, in Community Theatre, there is no set design. The production is flying by the seat of its pants and everybody's having a good time. Should you throw a hissy fit? 'Fraid not. (I know; they're so much fun.) No, in this case, ask for copies of the dimensions of the stage itself and tape that. Keep an eye on the build process and add elements as you can. What? No written plans for the theatre? Now it's time to throw a... No, just telephone the theatre, get permission to access the stage when it is empty, and measure it up yourself (take an Assistant with you). You don't have anything else to do, right?

Activities/Homework

- 1) Get your hands on a set design already used in our theatre. Work up a tape diagram of your own.
- 2) Get a play and analyze one act for technical requirements. If you want to do a common show that we can all do and discuss, I would suggest the show that I am directing: Murder Among Friends. Write up production requirement lists.

Terms and Sayings 2

Dark A theatre that is temporarily or permanently closed to the public.

Dead Props or pieces of set that are no longer required. Actually any piece that is finished.

Deckle Really any Gobo, but more now commonly a Gobo with a random pattern of holes, often used to produce a dappled or softened light on stage. Also Breakup.

Deus ex machina The event or person that saves a situation in the nick of time. (from Latin = god from the machinery - a device by which gods were suspended above the stage in ancient theatre).

Dialogue The lines or words spoken by the cast in a show.

Diffusion Filter Used like a gel but to soften and spread the beam of light rather than to colour it. Also Frost.

Dimmer Electrical device which controls the amount of electricity passed to a lamp and therefore the intensity of the light. Dimmers are normally numbered sequentially, and the numbers shown on the Lighting Design in next to the relevant lanterns. The dimmer is controlled from the Lighting Desk via a low voltage control signal.

Dimmer Rack A set of dimmers in a single case.

Diorama A spectacular 3 dimensional effect was created by a specially painted cloth and carefully focussed lighting. Invented by Louis Daguerre in Paris 1822, the man who is also credited with inventing photography. (From Greek, 'Dia' = through, and 'Horama' = view).

Dipless Crossfade A cross fade where lighting already up in the first state, and which appears in the new state, does not visibly alter.

Discovered At Rise Actors present on stage when the curtain rises or the lights come up.

Dolly A small trolley or truck used to move set or props.

Dome See Follow Spot. (Known as a Dome because often that was where the lantern and its operator were situated, in the dome in the auditorium).

Downstage The part of the stage closest to the audience. Abbrev. D/S.

Dowser Metal plate in a non-dimmable followspot that the operator swings up to cut off the light output to produce a blackout.

Dress See Dress Rehearsal.

Dress Parade Prior to the first stage dress rehearsal the actors put on each of their costumes in sequence so that the director and designer can check the state of preparedness of the wardrobe. Also Costume Parade.

Dress Rehearsal Also known simply as the 'dress', the final rehearsal before the performance. The actors are in costume and all technical problems should have been sorted out.

Dressingroom Area backstage where the cast prepares for the show.

Dresser Crew member who assists actors with costume care and costume changing during the performance.

Dry When cast members forget their lines and cannot continue they are dry'.

Dry Ice Frozen blocks or pellets of carbon dioxide - when placed in hot water melt to produce a mist which, because it is heavier than air, will hang close to the floor.

Duet Song sung by two performers.

Dumb show The precursor to the speechless character of Harlequin. The dumb show was a feature of English Tudor era pageantry.

Edge Up 1) To raise a piece of scenery up-right onto its edge. 2) A mild form of upstaging.

Effects Refers to any sound, lighting, or special effect used in the production.

Electrics All of the electrical equipment. Almost always now abbreviated in writing and speech to 'LX'.

Elevation A working drawing usually drawn accurately and to scale, showing the side view of the set or lighting arrangement.

Elevator Stage Type of mechanical stage with sections that can lowered or raised.

Ensemble Acting Actors working as a group on stage rather than individual characters.

Entrance 1) Place on a set through which the actor may appear. 2) Point in the script at which an actor appears on stage.

Epilogue A speech to the audience by an actor after the formal action of the play is concluded.

Exit 1) The process of leaving the stage. 2) Point in the script at which an actor leaves the stage.

Exterior A setting depicting an outdoor scene.

Fader The control knob or slide that provides the means of controlling the output level of a lantern or amplifier.

Fade Time The time taken to execute a lighting or sound change.

False Proscenium An inner frame which narrows down the opening of the proscenium arch. It may help to hide lanterns or may be required by the design of the show.

False Stage A special stage floor laid a few inches above the real stage, to allow the running of steel cables to pull trucks across the stage.

Feedback High pitched squeal when a microphone picks up acoustically from a speaker to which it is connected..

Fill Light Diffuse lighting used to complement Key Lighting.

Fire Curtain The heavy fire-proof curtain that, in an emergency, is dropped at the front of the stage, effectively sealing the stage from the auditorium and thus slowing the spread of flames.

Flame Retardant Chemical applied to fabric to reduce its ignitability when exposed to fire. In some places regular or periodic flame retardant of stage drapes and sets is law.

Flash Button Also, Bump Switch. A switch on a lighting desk that turns the channel on instantly to full when operated. Some desks have a flash button level master that allows the channel to flashed on to a set level.

Flash Pot A small, strong metal cups from which black powder is exploded as a pyrotechnic effect. The black powder is poured on top of a small detonator, which is then fired from a battery.

Flat A basic unit of scenery, a wooden frame covered with either canvas or plywood, and painted with the required picture.

Floodlights Also Floods. Lights without lenses, which give a general, fixed, spread of light.

Floorcloth A canvas covering for the floor of the stage. The cloth can be painted to resemble some surface, but be easily removed to reveal another cloth, or the stage floor below.

Floor Plan See Ground Plan.

Flown 'Flown scenery' has been attached to the counterweight system and is able to be hoisted into the flies.

Flys 1) The space above the stage in which scenery, lanterns and so on are hung invisible to the audience. 2) The counterweight system.

Fly Floor Also Fly Gallery. A high platform that runs along the side of the stage from which the flying lines are operated.

Fly Man Crew person who operates the flies.

Fly Tower The part of the theatre building above the stage that contains the flies.

Focus Pulling focus - when an actor deliberately tries to draw the audience's attention away from another cast member to themselves.

Focusing 1) Adjusting a lantern to give it a well defined image. 2) The process of adjusting and directing the lanterns prior to the technical rehearsal. Can be 'The Focus'.

Fogger See Smoke Machine.

FOH See Front of House.

Follow On Cue A cue that is executed automatically after the previous one.

Followspot A manually operated spot light with a beam that can be directed to follow an actor around the stage. Also Dome, Limes.

Footlights A batten of lights mounted on the stage floor, generally not used today except for special effects. The earliest English use of footlights was 1672 - but they became popular after their installation at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, in 1758 by the legendary David Garrick,

after whom there have been theatres named in both England and America. Garrick probably used an idea from the French. A rumoured use of footlights was to blind the cast so they could not see the audience, hopefully to reduce nervous tension.

Forestage The area in front of the house curtain in a proscenium arch theatre.

Foul To entangle lanterns or scenery hung in the flies. Any entanglement.

Fourth Wall The imaginary wall that separates the audience from the stage in a proscenium theatre. In Scarborough, we have a Second and a Third wall.

Freeze To stop all action and movement on stage, usually during applause or just before a lighting cue.

Fresnel A type of spot light with a Fresnel lens, which due to a set of concentric circular ribbing on its surface, gives an even field of light with soft edges.

Front of House Abbrev. to FOH. Any part of the theatre that is not the stage.

Front of House Lighting Lights that cover the audience area and are generally off during the show.

Frost A type of Diffusion Filter.

FX Abbrev. for Effects - special lighting and audio effects.

Unit 4 – Preparation for Rehearsals 3

Rehearsal Hall Preparation

Prepping the Rehearsal Hall can be as extensive as you want it to be. Trying to figure out what you will need is difficult as you are literally trying to prepare for any crazy possibility. I have put together a list and an approach but, inevitably, you will decide what your priorities are given the size of the cast and the needs of the show, bearing in mind that most Managers will bust their derrieres to do as much as they can:

1. Reconnaissance
2. Buy Run
3. Cleanliness and Order
4. Production Table
5. Information Centre
6. Information Centre on the Web
7. Taping the Floor
8. Rehearsal Props and Costumes
9. Setting Up the Green Room

Reconnaissance

You will likely get control the Rehearsal Hall with only a few days – or sometimes hours – to spare before Meet and Greet or First Rehearsal. Some of what is suggested here may be physically impossible due to time constraints without careful forethought and planning and, even then, forget it! Do what you can. Prioritize. Some of this Prep can actually be done during the first week of the Rehearsal Period.

Firstly, stop by the Rehearsal Hall while the previous show is running OR about a week before you plan to do your Prep (if you are the first show of the season). Take a good, long, hard look at things. See what is missing or low. Make note of the state of the Hall and think about what you are going to have to do. I cannot necessarily prepare you for all possibilities – you'll have to notice deficiencies and act on them yourself.

If there is something obviously wrong – backed up toilets or sparking wires or no fire extinguisher – contact your Producer or the Contact Person for Unit Maintenance you were given when you met with your Producer.

Avoiding Burnout...

Folks, try to make sure that, if you are working every show, you are only working in a significant capacity every other show. Ask your Assistant(s) to kindly take it a little easy the show prior to the one you plan to Manage as a team. Some Managers do little else but manage one musical a year in Scarborough. Other than that, they might take a chorus role or come in to do Front-of-House a night or two. This is wise.

I was not wise, so many years ago. In Community Theatre, I used to do about five shows a year, two as a Stage Manager, a couple as an Assistant, and then I would do Set Design or paint or some such. This is before I had a child and long before I turned 40. ☺

Most shows, once they strike, will have a party at the Unit. Be prepared for the possibility that the Unit may be left in some disorder – it's doesn't happen often, but it happens. Generally, you will have Sunday to prepare for a Monday start. If you, yourself, are at the party on Saturday night, you are going to be a little cranky and tired on Sunday afternoon. Maybe you should put yourself on the cleaning committee the night before when you are likely feeling no pain. ☺

By the way, it is not uncommon to have a Big Surprise in Rehearsal Hall when you go to check things out. For example, in one show I remember a Board Member's brother was storing stuff in the Hall. There were boxes of personal belongings, and furniture, and...! I cannot tell you what you might have to face. In this case, I would contact the Unit Manager to see if the stuff can be moved. Try to get her/him to have it moved. If not, you will have to move it yourself. Get some help. And remember to keep smiling.

Buy Run

You will have to go on a Buy Run (on top of your Stage Management Bag Buy). For this Buy Run we are thinking about general things that would be helpful for a cast or keep them healthy. I would suggest that you do this Buy a couple of days before you go in to do the Prep. For this Buy:

1. Dixie Cups and Disposable Coffee Cups
Dixie Cups may be an environmental nightmare, but they keep your cast healthy. This is because folks generally do not clean dishes as thoroughly as they should when they're rushing out the door to catch the bus. I cannot recommend disposable (recyclable!) drinking cups more strongly.
2. Kleenex
3. Box of pencils
4. Some pens and highlighters
5. Coffee (if in the budget)
6. Tea (if in the budget)
7. Bottled Water (if in the budget)
8. Toilet Paper
9. Soap
10. Recyclable coffee or drinking cups (sanitation and easy clean up)
11. Small garbage receptacle
12. Kitchen Catchers

The day you go in to Prep the Hall, make sure you have your Assistant(s) with you. This is not only so that you have help, but so that you can teach them what to do. Assistant Stage Managers should come into a show when you do – not as the show moves into the theatre.

Cleanliness and Order

Firstly, the Rehearsal Hall needs to be cleaned. When there is no other staff available, this responsibility falls to Stage Management. So, find out where the mop is.

Now, let's be real. No one is going to eat off the floor. However, you want to reduce the amount of dust and make sure there's nothing really gross around. Professionally a Stage Manager will sweep and mop the floor of a rehearsal hall almost every day. I have no expectation of any

Community Level Stage Manager doing this. None. Unless you have a team of, say, five Assistants with nothing to do.

Let's remind ourselves why we are going to put the Hall in order. We need to provide a safe environment for our cast and Artistic Staff. A tidy space is safer than one cluttered with junk. Also, a clean place holds less dust and, well, germs. We want a healthy, happy cast.

Okay, so with an idea of health and safety in mind, do what needs to be done to make the Hall presentable as far as you are concerned.

Zoinks!

The following phrase: "When there are no other staff available, the responsibility falls to Stage Management" is one that will haunt your darkest dreams. Remember that, at the end of the day, it comes down to you. Make sure you have good Assistants and train them well to help you.

Also, suck up to your Assistants mercilessly. Buy them chocolates. Or beer. Beer is better as it makes them somewhat pliable and open to suggestion. ☺

Production Table

Once the Hall is in order, set up your productions tables. The Production Table is where the artistic staff sits during rehearsal. If you set it up first, then you've given yourself a place to work while you prep the hall.

If there is room, have/find chairs for the following (assuming all of the following are involved in your production):

1. The Director
2. The Stage Manager
3. The Musical Director
4. The Choreographer
5. The Assistant Director
6. The Assistant Stage Manager
7. Producer
8. Producer
9. Any Guest

When the Production Table is full, it will look something like the Spanish Inquisition. Be afraid.

On the Production Table, I would recommend the following:

1. A container with lots of sharpened pencils, some pens, and highlighters
2. A box of Kleenex (two if this is a large table)
3. A jug for water or a bottle of water
4. Stack of Dixie Cups

Make sure that this stuff is accessible by the cast as well as the production and artistic staff.

The Kleenex will be used. You'll be surprised. The sharpened pencils are there for cast and staff who need one – keep an eye on this: the larger the cast the more that will disappear. The water is for those who are rehearsing, not excused from the Hall, but who need a drink. It's a good idea. Make sure there is a small garbage can handy to catch the Dixie Cups.

Information Centre

Allocate one wall area and small table in front of it in the Rehearsal Hall as an Information Centre. Here the cast will find the following information:

1. Production Info
2. Geographical Information
3. Sign Up Sheets

Production Information (the following is not complete)	
Contact List	
Show Flyer and Poster	
Spare Flyers	
Internal ticket sale information	
Any pertinent group policy information	
Rehearsal Schedule (if there is one – of not, publish a calendar with standard rehearsal dates)	
Show Schedule	
Specials, Offers, other Marketing	
Membership Information	
Info on Cleaning Procedures, Lock Up Procedures, etc.	
Information on the Surrounding Geographical Area (both rehearsal hall and theatre)	
Map of surrounding area	
Info on Sisters Restaurant	
Closest Food (including where folks usually go after a show)	
Closest Gas	
Closest Timmies	
TTC Information and Schedules	
Sign up Sheets (you may as well get pro-active)	
Rehearsal Hall Clean up	
Set Construction	

To do this right, you will need to co-ordinate with the Master Carpenter – Draw up a list of days that the Master Carpenter will be working and have folks sign up for them.	
Other Production Help List the other possible jobs available.	
Pot Luck Sign Up (generally move-in day is a potluck for the musicals)	

Looks like a lot of stuff to compile and post, doesn't it? You must be wondering if I've gone a bit mental. However, the purpose of this Information Centre is to **reduce the number of questions you have to field while you are trying to work**. The larger the cast, the more information I suggest you make readily available to everyone. If there are two actors in the cast, maybe you don't have to worry quite so much....

However, I bet you will come up with other great things to post or have available for the cast. So, as usual, I advise you to do what is comfortable for you bearing in mind that the more you prepare, the less you will have to do when time is tight.

Zoinks....

Anytime you are working on alone in the Rehearsal Hall, make sure you lock yourself in – both front and back doors. Before you do, put the key back in the lock box out front; so other sanctioned people can get in.

As a Community Theatre group, however, you should be able to post this information once and, generally, leave it up! So, co-ordinate this with the Unit Manager. Make sure s/he allocates a spot that's not in anyone's way and won't be pulled when the next show comes in. When you come back to do another show a few months later, all you'll only need to do is change the information that's pertinent to your show. This is in theory.

If you folks do set up a 'permanent' Information Centres in your Units, do remember that the information needs to be eye-balled every show as things change in this world much faster than any of us like to believe.

Most Stage Managers, by the way, are chronic labelers. They label boxes and bags and containers and...well, kitchen cupboards. So, over the Contact Sheet you are posting on the wall at the Information Centre, should be a little sign: 'Contact Sheet'. Over the map of the area: 'Map of the Area'. These signs can be neatly hand drawn or done on your computer at home. Why the labels? It is a proven fact that folks have an easier time cataloguing and locating information if it is labeled.

Information Centre on the Web

Technology being a marvelous thing, we now have at our disposal email addresses and free Internet tools such as Groups. Internet Groups are email-based information systems. Each has it's own web page with calendar functions, database functions, the ability to upload pictures etc. etc.

Bearing in mind that this will be more work for you, I highly recommend it.

Mac has free groups and so does Yahoo. I recommend Yahoo because, at present, it costs nothing.

Stage Managers Site

I have set up a resource for Stage Managers in Scarborough at the following address:

<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/scarboroughstagemanagers/>

This will help you learn about Group sites and what they can do but I have also posted the Course Units and I have started building a database as a resource for all the Stage Managers working out in Scarborough. If you are reading this document, feel free to join. It is a moderated list.

Communicating via email does have its disadvantages. Emails don't get through. However, if you back up your emails with an established site, you will find that there will be less confusion. More on this later.

Taping the Floor

Now it's time to tape the floor. You will need some stuff. If you have a Stage Manager's Bag, this stuff will be in there – uh, except for the person to help you, of course. Completely clear the playing space and make sure you have the following:

At least one person to help you	
Spike tape of at least three colours	
Masking Tape	
Two metal tape measures of 50ft each	
Tape Plot (or Set Design) (see previous Unit)	
Stage Dimensions	
Ruler	
Pencils and erasers	
Swiss Army knife	

Where do I get Spike Tape?

Ontario Staging lists it on its website for \$9.00 a role...

<http://www.ontariostaging.com/purchase.asp>

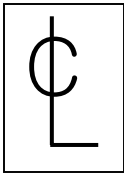
Okay, how exactly does one tape the floor....

Again, as always, let me remind you that you will probably develop your own style, your own method of working. I offer this – a standard professional practice – as a method you can use...

1) First take a look at the space. Is it actually as large as the playing area on stage, or is it not? Most rehearsal halls are chosen because they are large enough, but from time to time, you will have to cope with a hall that is smaller than the final playing space. In the case of a tour, well,...let me know if you're off on a tour. Maybe I'll go with you.

If the space is too small, it is usually too small only by a very little bit – a couple feet or less on one side or the other. It is wise to steal 'out-stage space' (area around the perimeter of the stage) than space from the constructed elements and furniture. So if the space is too short, steal DS space. If the space is too thin, steal a bit each side.

If the space is a little larger than the playable area, take the time, first, to mark out the dimensions of the stage in your first colour of spike tape.



2) Determine the stage centre line. Take out a second colour of spike tape, mark DSC with a line. Just above that line and on the floor with spike tape, put a CL as pictured left. This mark, traditionally, is the Stage Manager's way of marking the Centre Line. Any trained Manager who walks into your rehearsal will know what this means.

3) Then, take one of your tape measures, lie it on the floor, the full length from down stage centre to upstage centre – the full depth of the playable space – and tape it down so it won't move – with masking tape at each end. You will have bisected your playable space. Leave this down for the duration of the taping. Now you will be able to measure your up from centre easily, only moving for your SL and SR marks.

4) Now, it is time to refer to your tape plot. Start one side of the stage or the other. Have your assistant use the other tape measure to measure out the SL and SR measurements. You stay at the table and help her/him eyeball that s/he's lined up well. Using a third colour of spike tape, mark out the architectural features of the set as best you can. Remember, let those half inches take care of themselves.

5) It is wise to mark your exits with arrows noting where they are going to, i.e. to kitchen, or to bedroom.

6) I would refrain from placing or spiking furniture until the Director is involved, unless you have a full set design, including furniture (many Community Level set designers stop at the back wall). Even then, I would suggest placing the furniture, but not spiking until the actors have had a chance to move through the space for at least one rehearsal.

Rehearsal Props and Costumes

Rehearsal Props are a vital job for stage managers, specifically assistant stage managers but, unfortunately an area that tends to be neglected in Community Theatre.

Stage Managers are responsible for organizing rehearsal props. Often they are left to find them. Remember that rehearsal props are not supposed to cost one thin dime, if you can avoid it; so, you need to be creative while scouring the Unit for things that can stand in for other things.

As an aside, in some groups the stage manager is not welcome to go through the props or costumes. In those groups, it is vital to contact whomever is in charge and let them know your rehearsal props and costume needs. Don't worry! You've done your homework! Provide them with your big, fat, juicy list you built while analyzing the script. Sometimes, the Unit Manager or Contact Person suddenly allows you access to the props and costumes. If not, give that person a deadline for coming up with the Rehearsal props – usually a week before first rehearsals begin.

For props, you will need props tables both SL and SR. Make sure you use the tables you were cleared to use. On Prep day, simply bring the tables to a place that is convenient for the cast to

access from either side. FYI, if the show is proppy – farces and musicals often call for more props – you will need more table space.

Don't start putting props on the tables, yet. Leave them in their boxes underneath. More on these tables, later, as we get into Running Rehearsals.

For your costumes, make sure a rack is set up that is easily accessible to the cast. Hang all Rehearsal Costumes on this rack.

Setting up the Green Room

The Green Room and Kitchen areas are important. They, too, need to be cleaned and tidied. Labels can be applied to cupboards to help folks find what they need. A Contact List can be placed by the telephone.

Also, I would suggest making a 'Rehearsal in Progress' sign. This can be placed on the closed door of the rehearsal hall as the rehearsal begins. Little tip: Don't leave it up or people will start to ignore it.

The Schedule

The Schedule needs to be made available to the cast in writing, as soon as it is available.

Great. You're laughing, right? Nothing could be easier. You get the schedule from the Director and you simply have to photocopy it and make it available to the cast on Meet and Greet (First Rehearsal). Finally, something easy. ☺ Sorry, just kidding. This is a critical time in your preparations.

How do we know that the schedule is reasonable and viable? One way is building the Cast Breakdown sheet.

Cast Breakdown Sheet – Who's on When

Before you can properly analyze the schedule, you need to build a Cast Breakdown sheet. For this purpose, you will need to analyze the play, one more time, for French Scenes.

French Scenes are the sub-scenes that are marked by entrances and exits. French Scenes were originally developed as a director's or actor's tool for play analysis. The theory behind French Scenes is that the action on stage changes drastically every time a character comes on or a character leaves.

In order to properly analyze a play for its French Scenes, one reads the work and draws a line with a ruler across the page of the script every time a character makes an entrance or exit. Directors and actors who use this technique, then, go through a further process, but, for a Stage Manager, you are only worried about who is onstage for the French Scene and who is not.

Number these sub-scenes any way you choose, the simpler the better.

I recommend making a Cast Breakdown Chart. Let's say in a totally fictitious play called Jacqui's Play, there are five characters:

1. Able
2. Betty
3. Cain
4. Dorthy
5. Ethel

So, in this fictitious play, in Act 1, Scene 1, we start with a couple on stage. Three pages later a character enters. Four pages later, one exits. Five pages after that three folks enter. How do you easily keep track of this...?

The Cast Breakdown Chart only notes who is on for each sub-scene or French scene. Entrances and exits are not noted on this chart. In the Prompt Script (see next Unit), however, it is important to note who is entering. I recommend, strongly that you do your French Scene marks in your Prompt Script. More on this later.

Whatever script you use, stop every time you note an entrance or exit and make your notes. So your Cast Breakdown Chart of who is actually onstage for any given page of the script is built and could look like the following....

Cast Breakdown Chart

Jacqui's Play

Subject to Change

Act 1

Scene	Sub-scene	Page	Abel	Betty	Cain	Dorothy	Ethel	Notes
1	a	1	x	x				Snogging Scene
1	b	3	x	x		x		Snogging interrupted
1	c	7	x			x		The telephone call
1	d	12	x	x	x	x	x	The guests arrive
1	e							

Under the scene column, you note the Scene number. Under the sub-scene column you will note the sub-scene designation (here, I have used an alphabetical designation). The next column notes the page number where the entrance or exit occurs. The next five columns are character columns. I have placed an 'x' when a character is onstage and left the column blank when the character is not. Finally, I have made notes that are meaningful to me that will remind me of the particular scenelet.

Make sure that you put the term 'Subject to Change' at the top. The director may have a few other ideas on the subject of who is onstage and who is not. However, if you spoke to the director about his/her concept, you will likely already know if s/he is changing the script drastically.

Schedule Analysis

Once you have your Cast Breakdown Sheet, you will be able to take a look at the schedule and see if it makes sense. You are worried about the following kinds of problems.

1. Are there two or three schedules that need putting together? Often, the Director, Musical Director, and Choreographer will close schedule their allotted time. This is great for the show, but some work for you as you need to put it all together for the cast.
2. Who is needed for each rehearsal?
The Director – especially an Equity Director – will expect you to handle the details of

who is called. You have your handy, dandy Cast Breakdown chart, though, so you should have no trouble building call lists.

3. Does the schedule conflict with any of the following: a) a cast member conflict, b) holidays, like Thanksgiving, c) special events in the hall.
4. Are folks called in for a too short period of time?
Is the schedule a little faulty in that it calls some actors in for only a half an hour?
5. Are folks expected to hang about too much? Again, very little you can do about this except be aware of it and chat with your Producer. Certain rehearsals are sacrosanct and require a bunch of waiting around – runs, tech day. These are not an issue.
6. Is there enough time allocated for the rehearsal?
Whatever the show (straight play or musical) it will be difficult for a director to block more than ten pages a night unless they really know what they are doing.
7. Is there at least one run marked before move-in?
If not, there is little you can do about it. You might bring this up to the Producer. But do be aware of it and take a big, deep breath before you go into the theatre on move-in day.
8. Are there pages missing? Just eyeball the schedule to make sure that no sections of the show are missing.

Publish to the Cast

I cannot stress more strongly that the Schedule needs to be published to the cast as soon as possible. Make sure that the cast gets the schedule and a distilled Cast Breakdown sheet that helps them understand when they are called – unless you want to mark their calls every rehearsal.

Even then, I would strongly advise you having a “Next Call” section on your Information Centre where you can detail who is called in for the next few rehearsals.

You will take a few minutes at first rehearsal to discuss these sheets so folks understand them. Be aware, however, that the larger the cast the more likely you are to be misunderstood. Keep it as simple as possible.

Activities/Homework

1. Clean out your Garage. ☺
2. Tape out a floor diagram. Use the tape plot you developed last unit and practice taping out a floor.
3. Analyse a play for French Scenes

Terms and Sayings 3

Gaffer Tape Heavy duty cloth adhesive tape with many uses in the entertainment world.

Gain The difference or increase in audio levels from one point in the circuit to another.

Gas Gas was used as the primary method of lighting both the stage and auditorium from around the 1830s, though it was certainly tried 10 or 15 years before that, until the advent of the electric light later that century.

Ghost 1) Noun - Beam of light which inadvertently leaks from a lantern and falls where it is not wanted. 2) Verb - To allow a small dim light to emit from a follow spot to allow it to be properly lined up before turning the lantern to full. 3) No theatre would be complete without a resident ghost!

Gobo A metal plate with a pattern punched out of it and placed in the gate of a profile spot to produce an image or outline on stage.

Gopher General dogsbody who is sent to 'go for' things for the cast and crew.

Green Room Room adjacent to the stage (i.e. the Green) for the actors to meet and relax. One explanation for 'green' is that in medieval days, when strolling players gave performances on the village green (hence 'Green'), a tent would be set-up for them to change costumes in (hence 'Green Room'). Perhaps the best known Green Room is at Drury Lane Theatre in London, and it is possible that it was once draped or painted in green, and this is the origin. Another possible theory is because of the Green Baize as described above. Green, the colour, is also known to be psychologically soothing.

Grid 1) The arrangement of wooden or metal slats above which are mounted the pulley blocks of the flying system. 2) The system of trusses and bars from which lanterns are hung. (Concert)

Gridded Any flying piece raised as high as possible into the flies.

Ground Plan A scale drawing which shows the exact position of the openings, wall and windows, and other details on in a stage set as seen from above.

Groundrow 1) A row of lanterns on the floor of the stage for lighting the bottom area of a cyclorama or cloth. This is usually masked by a scenic groundrow. 2) Shaped pieces of scenery usually less than a metre high. Also Scenic Groundrow.

Grouping The arrangement of actors in and around the set at a particular time. See Blocking.

Gun Microphone See Shot Gun.

Half hour call. Warning to the company given thirty-five minutes before performance (thirty minutes before beginners).

Hand Prop Any prop handled by an actor.

Hanging Attaching flying pieces to the appropriate bars.

Hard Edged A light beam on stage that has a clearly defined edge or side. Opposite to Soft Edged.

Hiss Background noise on an audio system or tape unit at a high frequency.

Hot Leading/Patching To check lanterns, lamps, and cables during rigging. An extension lead plugged to a known power source is connected to one lantern after another to ensure the lantern is operating correctly before it is are connected to the lighting patch system.

Hot Spot An area on the stage on which the lighting is unintentionally more intense than the other areas.

House 1) The audience. 2) The auditorium.

House Coming In Warning from Stage Management that the audience is about to come in.

House Curtain The main front curtain in a proscenium theatre.

House Manager See Front of House Manager.

House Lights The decorative fixtures that light the auditorium whilst the audience is entering or leaving, usually they are dimmed or switched off during the performance.

In Flying term for bringing down.

Inner Stage A part of the acting area that can be masked off and revealed only during certain scenes.

Intensity The brightness of a light.

Instrument. See Lantern.

Interior A scene set indoors.

Iron Slang for Fire Curtain

Unit 5 – Preparation for Rehearsals 4

The Prompt Script

The Prompt Script is a notebook that so well documents a show, anyone could call it if the Stage Manager falls ill. Let me repeat that. The Prompt Script is a notebook that so well documents a show, anyone could call it if the Stage Manager falls ill.

So, even though I may have convinced you that you are critical to the smooth running of your show, it is just as or even more critical that you are aware that you need to prepare for the possibility that someone might have to replace you. Turn around three times and spit all you like, but build yourself a beautiful book.

A Prompt Script is a Stage Manager's primary reference book on the show – and, therefore, everyone's primary reference book on the show. A Prompt Script can be referred to as a Call Book at all levels but the highest professional level in theatre. In a Community Theatre Show, the two are one. The Prompt Script should not be confused with the slim un-notated volume of the script that can be used for prompting.

Actually, a Stage Management Team should build at least two Books:

1. The Prompt Book or Call Book – the Stage Manager's Book with all the blocking, production, script changes, and technical notes needed to run the show
2. The Running Book – the Assistant Stage Manager's Book – primarily involved with noting entrances and exits, prop pass-offs, and quick changes – all things the ASM will be doing. More on this book later.

In order to build a beautiful Prompt Book, you will need to do the following:

1. A Buy Run
2. Organize the Binder (including photocopying the script for blocking notes)

Buy Run

Okay, here we are back at the procurement stage. You need to do another Buy. I suggest you have the following before you start to build your Book:

Item	Check
Three ring Binder (I recommend a slant D-ring, 2" binder – should hold about 500 sheets)	
Package or two of binder tab dividers	
Lined three-hole punched paper	
Photocopy Paper – 1 ream will do	
Three-hole punch pocket (or two)	
Three-hole punch plastic sleeves (a few?)	
Three-hole punch	
Thin Marker	

Organizing the Binder

You will receive thousands of pieces of information verbally and in writing that you will need to remember, to recall, to reference, or to pass on during the whole process. If you wish to be successful, you will need a very organized way of recording that information to ensure that it either 1) gets where it needs to go or 2) is in easy places for you to access. You need to set up a portable filing system. You do that in the Prompt Script.

I recommend you first label the binder. Laugh all you like. Label the front and the back binder with the show name and the term 'Prompt Script' and your name.

Then pull out your dividers and label as follows:

1. Script
2. Contact
3. Attendance
4. Cast
5. Set
6. Props
7. Costumes
8. Make Up and Hair
9. L/X
10. Sound
11. SFX
12. Production Notes
13. Show Reports
14. Administration
15. Disbursements

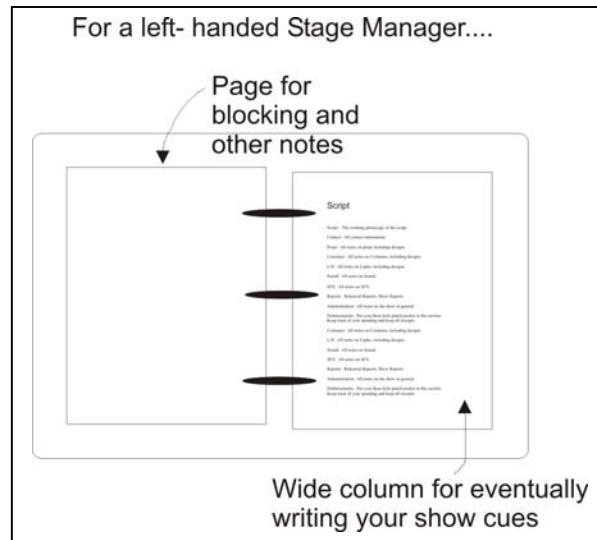
The Script

Again, I am going to remind you that all folks do things different ways. You will have to decide what works for you.

However, I believe that in order to take effective blocking and show notes, the script needs to be photocopied and you need to leave large margins for Call Notes – or Cues.

So this is how I do it.

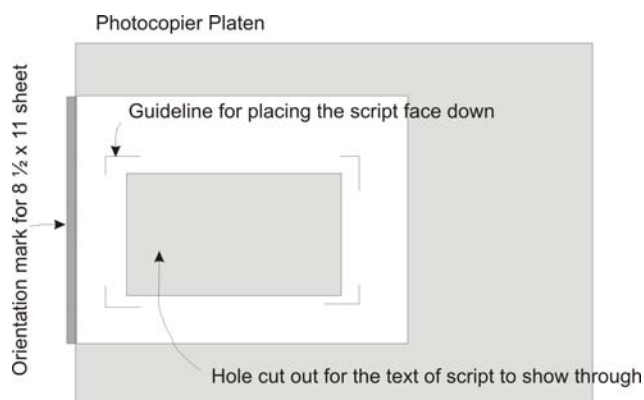
I photocopy the script with wide margins on the outside edge – eventually for cues – one page of the script for every two pages of the Prompt Script. The blank page becomes available for blocking and other notes. I leave the left page for blocking notes *because I am left-handed*. Right-handed folks would want to do this the other way around. Okay, a diagram....



Okay, great. You may have a few problems regarding size of the script you are photocopying. If the script is already 8 ½ by 11 inches per page, you will need to reduce it to about 85 percent before you photocopy to give you a wide margin. Most photocopiers have this feature. If each page of the script is larger, then you will obviously need to reduce it more.

If the script is too small – most come in slim little volumes – you can get a problem of shading when you photocopy. You may also have trouble placing the script so that it photocopies straight on the page.

To solve this problem, take a few moments to make up a little frame out of a letter sized sheet of white paper. Cut a rectangular hole in the white paper where you want your script to be placed on the final sheet. Place that piece of white paper on the platen of the photocopier. Then take a few tries to figure out where you need to place the script to have it all print out the way you want it and then make a guideline mark on the white sheet of paper so that you know how to place your script on the platen without having to check. You will need a different guideline for the left and right pages of the script. As so...



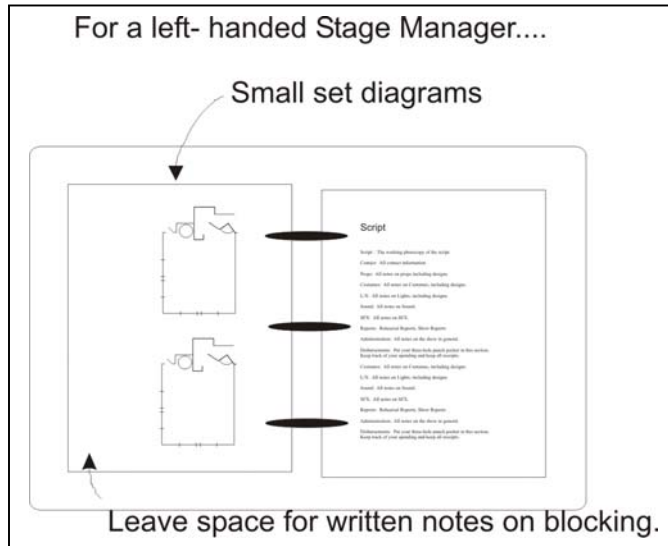
Remember to press down on the script when you place it and, of course, look away as the light scans by.

Again, if this seems like overkill to you, photocopy the darn thing any way you like. However, if you take the time to do this, you won't get shadows on the page and you won't have to think about too much – after the initial planning, of course.

Great, I am done with photocopying! Right? N'up.

Now, we might turn our heads to how we are planning to take blocking notes. In short, you want to take notes in a way that works best for you. Personally, I find that I can look at a diagram with added written notes and I can immediately recall what happened. So, on the facing page, or blocking notes pages, in my book, I like to photocopy what I call my 'football diagrams' for blocking.

Might be a bit of a pain? No worries, I have my handy-dandy tape plot to work from. I can reduce it, photocopy it, cut it out and tape a couple onto a blank sheet of paper to make a master. Then, I could photocopy this onto the back of my script. Remember to do a few trial runs so everything is oriented correctly. Your Prompt Script could end up looking like this:



You may want to hold off photocopying the blocking page until you know roughly where the furniture is going to go.

However, if your director is not too helpful (and many aren't! – for whatever reason) you might have to draw in your furniture every time.

FYI, I often use these diagrams without furniture marks because things can and must and do change right down to the wire. We must remember to be as flexible as we can.

Whatever it takes....

Okay, I'll get back to this later when we actually discuss blocking notes.

Zoinks!

The text of many of the great plays (now past copyright) are available ON LINE in their entirety. If you are clever with formatting and computers – I am – you might download the text and format it yourself so you can skip the photocopying completely. Just make sure that your page numbers match exactly the page numbers in the version everyone else will be using...

Contact

In the Contact section you will want to have two things: 1) Master and spare copies of the Contact Sheet and 2) your own personal Theatre Contact List.

Contact Sheet

I have talked about the Contact Sheet before. Let's talk about what it is. This sheet is to be published only for the cast and crew and staff involved with the show. It details all the telephone numbers a cast member or crewmember might need during the course of the show.

So, it will include the following:

1. All of your own telephone numbers and your own email address. You should be at the top of the page in nice, big, neon (okay, okay) characters.
2. Cast in alphabetical order. Get their contact information from their audition sheets. Make sure they know that their information will be posted... Get permission.
3. Technical and Design Staff
4. Producer(s)

5. Artistic Staff
6. Theatre
7. Box Office
8. Unit Emergency Contact

I recommend that you format the Contact List so that you can see easily what type of numbers you have for each person (home, work, cell), either by column or notation.

If anyone balks at this information being published, make a note for your show report that a sentence be added to the audition sheets that says that their information will be published for the cast and crew and staff in a contact sheet. Look, we work in Scarborough. The cast and crew is likely the least of our problems security-wise.

After you photocopy this for posting, and copy for all, I would recommend doing another ten or so extra, just in case. People lose things all the time.

Personal Theatre Contact List

I highly recommend that you start to put together a personal contact list of folks in theatre. I would do this in a database program but, heck, you do it any way you want to.

When I was Stage Managing, I carried around a list in very small print with just about everyone I knew in theatre organized by what they did. It helped me time and again. Things go wrong. Sometimes you need to contact folks FAST.

My little list also had names of companies and key people that provide supplies for theatre. Let's say a light fails and there is no one else around to replace it. Wouldn't you like to know who to call right away?

Your list will grow the more you Stage Manage (or the more you do theatre!) because it will start to include every cast member or person you ever worked with. If you manage musicals at EMP, you will meet about 70 people in a go. Greedily keep a note of every last one of them organized by what they do best.

Attendance

Something that is almost never done in professional theatre and needs to be done in community theatre, is keeping attendance. I recommend starting how you mean to continue and having a sign in sheet at first rehearsal especially with a cast of ten or more. (For a two-hander, though, this is overkill.) You will thank me. I also recommend an attendance sheet.

Make up an attendance grid for the whole show. Mark all your conflicts on it. You can use this sheet to keep track of anyone who is late or missing. Identify your problems early.

Cast

I recommend you keep a photocopy of each audition sheet. Why? You'd be surprised. You might need to refer to their written conflicts, check their phone number, who knows?

But you could also consider photocopying the CALLBACKS as well! This is in case someone needs to be replaced – the director can immediately look at each sheet and decide who would be the best to call.

Get these sheets from the Audition secretary.

Set/Props/Costumes/Make-Up&Hair/LX/Sound/SFX

These sections depend very much on the play. You may remove or consolidate sections as necessary. Remember you are putting information in here that helps you (or another) know whether what you are looking at on stage is what the show was originally intended to be. You will want to clock if a hairstyle is wrong, the prop is not as designed. You are the eyes and the ears of the production.

So, each show is different and each show will have different priorities depending on the Director's Concept.

Put all designs in plastic sleeves so that you do not have to three-hole punch them. Designers get funny.

Some plays will have almost no Make-Up and Hair notes – Cut or consolidate and section(s) that have little or no notes.

Production Notes

This section allows you to be effective at Production Meetings and pass on relevant notes to all departments about what has emerged from rehearsal.

More on this later. For now, take most of your lined three-hole punch paper and put it here.

Show Reports

These are the reports you can make up for every show. More on this later.

Administration

Here, put your notes on group policies, internal ticket sales etc. If you are willing to collect internal ticket orders (and I don't recommend this), have a three-hole punch pocket in this section so you don't lose anything.

Zoinks!

If you are handling or keeping money or ticket orders, lock up your Prompt Book every night.

Disbursements

Keep close track of how much you spend or you will find yourself out-of-pocket. This was me in Community Theatre. Just dreadful. I was so poor at keeping track of money. I smartened up when I went professional as I wasn't making as much money – especially as an Apprentice. What do they say about necessity... I recommend the following:

Number each receipt in sequence in order of the date you made the purchase. Circle the total on the receipt (helps the person checking to see if you got it right) and, if the group makes a GST return, circle the GST.

Keep your receipts in a three-whole punch pocket and then make up a table or spreadsheet.

No	Date	Item	Amount	GST	Notes
1	Jan 1/06	Tape - various	\$46.00	\$2.80	Taping floor
2	Jan 1/06	Pencils & Pens	5.75	.35	Spare cast pencils and pens

Keep a complete record and submit when you run out of money.

Meet & Greet – First Rehearsal

As you go into the rehearsal process, remember that there are a few aims you are trying to meet that may or may not be obvious:

1. Support all staff and cast to building a great show.
2. Group building/team building. Folks in Community Theatre perform better when they care. Actually, everybody tries better when they care...
3. Train the cast on what you deem correct behaviours – run a disciplined show.
4. Keep it safe.

Most of what you will do and how you comport yourself during rehearsal will be with these aims in mind. I repeat, however, that you must do things in your own way, applying your own style.

Contacting Folks

In preparation for Meet & Greet, make sure that everyone involved with the production knows where and when you are going to meet. This is the first chance for folks to get together. Remember that part of what you are facilitating in theatre is group bonding – Let’s get everyone together – from the leads and the directors to folks who have already committed to do a bit of set building.

Also, contact and invite all Board Members to attend. Board Members who attend but aren’t involved with the show will make the cast feel like the group is behind the show a hundred percent. Those uninvolved with the show do not have to stay for the whole rehearsal, of course. They can do a cameo at the beginning and take off.

But the first thing you want to do is make sure folks were informed of a first date and time of rehearsal at auditions and, also, when they were told they were cast. Second, determine whether this date and/or time has changed. Do this as early as you can – as soon as you start working if after auditions.

If the date is changed, get in touch with people *immediately* to let them know the change. But if there is no change, get in touch with people about a week before the rehearsal is to begin.

Telephone or Email?

How do you plan to contact folks? For at least the first rehearsal, I cannot recommend more strongly that you contact the cast and artistic staff by telephone. You will have a chance to talk to them for a few moments. Be professional, kind, but firm. Tell them the start time (usually 7:30) and that you *will* be starting on time. Ask them, please, to arrive at least ten minutes before the rehearsal is to begin so that they might be ready. Tell them to call you if they are going to be even a bit late or to call if they bump into a problem on the way. Give them your cell phone number.

At this call, you can confirm the contact information and conflicts listed on the audition sheets.

But, jezz-louize, there are fifteen (twenty, thirty, forty...!) people in the cast! That’s a lot of telephoning. It sure is but, trust me, this first contact will stand you well the rest of the show. Folks, will know you mean business. They will accord you more respect if you are working in a professional way and you will need every ounce of their respect as you go through a show.

Also, you will be able to identify people who might be a prospective problem. If they are tardy getting back to you or snippy on the phone, now you have a heads up.

I am a Walking Clock

Let's talk a little bit about standard rehearsal practice. If you plan to run a tight ship (and I cannot suggest more strongly that you do), you need to *start how you mean to continue*. Part of what you are doing is training your cast to behave in a professional manner.

Keep in mind that in a cast of about thirty, one or two could be completely new to theatre. Of the rest, almost no one will have been exposed to good stage practice. You may well be the first real stage manager they have ever bumped into. So, whatever you do, don't take anything personally and don't get cranky. You are teaching folks. Be professional, kind, but firm.

Arrive at least a half-hour before cast call. If cast call is 7:30, be there at 7:00. Earlier, if you can. If you are there earlier, leave the door locked behind you until about thirty-five minutes before call.

It's all about Gray Hair...

You don't want to go prematurely gray and you can never be late or the cast will see this as an excuse to be late, themselves, from time to time...and when you have thirty folks in a cast...

Aim to arrive a half hour before cast call. If you are a few minutes late, no one will know and you will never get prematurely gray hair. ☺

Keep your eyes on the time:

About thirty-five minutes before call (assuming you are there ☺), unlock the door. Also, a little before the half hour, put your cell phone somewhere on your person. It may well ring – a cast member who is late or in distress – and you don't want it left, sad and alone, ringing in your coat or your purse.

I recommend that you post the day's schedule or evening's schedule on the door to the rehearsal hall and/or somewhere in the green room, and at your information centre. Just write it out by hand and tape it up – or, if you like, do it on your computer at home. Folks will appreciate it and you will have to deal with less questions.

Set up your water stations, make sure the pencils are sharpened, etc., etc.,....

For first rehearsal, I might put up a sign on the front door or near the front door; somewhere cast and crew will easily see it as they enter. Remember Stage Managers love signs. Welcome the cast and crew and invite them to come immediately into the rehearsal hall and find you. Some folks will be new to theatre or new to the group and will not know that they are welcome in the inner hall.

Put out copies of the schedule and contact sheet for folks to pick up as they come in. Put out a sign up sheet for cast to sign as they come in – if you choose – for a large cast I would do this from Day One. Try and have a word with people as they arrive. A smile and a friendly hello helps folks to settle their nerves and make them feel welcome. Both are good things.

If there are folks around at half hour before rehearsal is to start (almost no one will be), walk around and give them the half hour call and ask them to sign in. Continue to greet folks and answer questions.

At fifteen minutes, more folks will be there. Walk around and give them the fifteen-minute call and ask them to sign in. Continue to greet folks, hand out schedules and answer questions. Assuming your Producer(s) is (are) there, find out if they would like to run the rehearsal. Usually this is the case.

At five minutes, most folks will be there. If you have a large cast (along with design staff, board members and other staff – you may have fifty-odd people in your hall), start raising your voice to give the time call as you may not have enough time, now, to go around and talk to each group.

Training the Cast – Time Calls

When giving a time call, always try to use the following terminology: “Half hour, please.” One says ‘please’ not asking for permission to call the time but requesting a response so that one is certain one was heard. Cast, crew, whatever, are required to respond with a “Thank-you.” This is not thanking you for the call, but letting you know they, in fact, heard and know what the time is.

If both fully articulated the whole conversation, it would run something like this:

“There are five minutes left before rehearsal is to begin. Please prepare as necessary. Please let me know that you heard me.”

“Yes, thank you. We heard you and will prepare as necessary.”

This conversation is shortened to...

“Five minutes, please.”

“Thank you.”

Much more efficient.

So, if you are giving a group call, you need to train people to respond. I wouldn’t start this until your first five-minute call when you raise your voice to give the call to the whole room. At first rehearsal, unless folks have worked with you before, no one will say anything. It is necessary for you then to let them know they need to respond to the call so that you know they got it. I usually raise my voice a little louder – not angry, just to be heard – and say something like the following:

“Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please. It is customary to say thank you when you receive a time call. Five minutes, please.”

You should receive a chorus of ‘thank-you’ back. ☺

You will have to do this quite a few times before the cast understands that you mean business. You will almost certainly have to train every cast. Keep smiling.

After you give the five-minute call, continue to greet people, and answer questions.

Top of Rehearsal

At about two minutes to the start of rehearsal, encourage folks to come into the room if they are not already there and remind them to sign in.

At top of first rehearsal, it is your job to hush folks, get them to settled, ask the cast to sign in (if they have not already done so), and draw the whole group’s attention to the Producer. Hand over the rehearsal to the Producer.

Training your Cast – Address Lateness at First Rehearsal

As soon as you have handed over the rehearsal, check your sign in sheet. Make sure everyone sees you do it – not in an officious way, just that you are doing it. Again, try not to pass judgment – lest you yourself be judged, hmmm?

Some signs keep going up, and coming down, and going up...

If you are constantly putting up and taking down a sign, consider using a sticky Velcro system to make it easier for you.

If there are people missing, try and make eye contact with your Director and Producer and let them know non-verbally or quietly that you will be a minute or two. Gesture to the sheet so they know what you are doing. Walk out of rehearsal hall with a Contact Sheet and your ‘Rehearsal in Progress’ sign. On your way out, close the door behind you and put up your ‘Rehearsal In Progress’ sign.

Telephone any cast member who is missing – sounds odious, but there should only be one or two late folks – and leave a professional, kind, but firm message that they were late to rehearsal and to contact you. Leave a number for them to call – the Unit telephone number is better than your cell number at this point.

If you have their cell number, call that. If you get them – assuming all is well – they are on their way and they will probably give you some excuse or other. Don’t sweat the excuse; just tell them that next time, they are to telephone if they are going to be even a little late. If they claim not to have known the rehearsal time or place, keep this in mind. Assuming you have done your job, this person might need a little more help than others.

If you can’t get in touch with them and, then, they come in late, make sure you take them aside – away from others – tell them that they were late and that you expect them to arrive on time. Be professional, kind, but firm. Don’t centre them out or be rude.

If you are the type that likes to keep attendance, make sure you have your attendance sheet set up for first rehearsal and plop an L into the box beside the name of folks who were late. Some managers keep the sign in sheet and put it in their books. Does this sound small-minded? It’s only small-minded if you make a big issue out of a small thing. However, if a month into the process, you have a cast member who is behaving badly – consistently not showing up on time, consistently missing – you have the statistics to back up your claim.

For Meet & Greet, there is usually very little actual rehearsing done. There is, however, a lot of information given out by all departments. Usually everybody gets a chance to speak. Make sure you take five or ten minutes:

1. Welcome folks to the show and tell them that you look forward to working with them. Some managers are a bit too severe.
2. Deliver and EXPLAIN the schedule and any Cast Breakdown sheet that you give them. Take questions on the schedule. Make sure that people understand the schedule. Despite your best efforts, there will be one or two who have troubles.
3. Make sure that everyone knows that the schedule is SUBJECT TO CHANGE. It is a GUIDELINE only. Remind folks that they have already given us their conflicts and we will be coping with those but tell them to please avoid making plans on standard

rehearsal nights just because a schedule has been posted. Remind them that they have committed to these nights already. We simply do not want them hanging around unnecessarily; so we put together a schedule. They should consider themselves available for all normal rehearsals (whatever the standard rehearsals are in a week Mon/Wed/Sun or Tues/Thurs/Sun) – especially the last month. If, for whatever reason, the show gets behind, you will need folks to come in.

4. Re-explain your policy on lateness. Let folks know that you will be starting rehearsals on time and that you expect everyone to be there, ready to go at the time allotted.
5. Make notes on Rehearsal attire. It is wise to ask folks to bring shoes to change into especially during the winter – they don't want to be rolling around on a stage full of melted ice, salt, and mud.
6. Remind folks that you like to run a quiet, orderly rehearsal and tell them that they are welcome to sit in the Green Room if they want to chat.
7. Introduce your Assistant(s) to everyone.
8. Take any questions.

During the First Rehearsal

For the rest of the first rehearsal you will be assisting anyone who needs it. Listen carefully to the presentations of the Designers; you may be getting the information for the first time, too. If there are designs you can copy or things you can post, do so.

Make sure, in consultation with your Director or Producer, you call a break.

A clever trick is to, on a quiet moment, write out the next rehearsal and post at your information centre under a clever little sign: 'Next Rehearsal'.

First Read-through

During the first rehearsal, most non-musical plays hold a read-through of the script, which is done around a table (set up the Hall accordingly!). In that read-through, the Stage Manager should read many stage directions (usually italicized in the script) and provide a verbal substitute for all sound and lighting effects.

Also, the Stage Manager should time the first read-thru – producing totals for the first and the second act as well as the whole show. First read-thru is often surprisingly close to the final run time – except in farces and comedies or other productions that rely on significant physical business. These run times should be noted in your Production Notes. More on those later.

End of First Rehearsal

Take over from the Director at the end of the rehearsal and remind folks of who is called at the next rehearsal. Tell them it is posted if they want to check. Thank everyone for their time. Offer to take questions as folks leave.

After everyone leaves, have your Assistants tidy up while you answer questions, put things in lock up, and pull your signs and schedules. Go through your lights out/lock up procedure. I recommend you check every door even if you would swear on a pack of bibles that no one used it.

Go home for goodness sake.

Terms and Sayings 4

Kabuki Traditional form of Japanese theatre still practised today by a select group of male actors in Japan.

Key Lighting The primary lighting for an area, or person. (TV)

Kill 1) To turn off lanterns or sound effects. 2) To remove something from the set, such as a prop.

Kliegl Bros. The oldest stage lighting manufacturer - founded 1896 in New York.

Ladder A non-climbable frame used to hang lanterns from.

Lamp The light source within a lantern, but also used to refer to the complete unit. Also Bulb, Globe, Envelope, Bubble.

Lamp Check The visual systematic checking of each lantern before each performance in case any lamps require replacement.

Lamp Focus Knob on a lantern to adjust the alignment of the lamp to the reflector.

Lantern One of the many words for a theatre light. Also Luminaire, Instrument, Light, Fitting, Lamp.

Lash To secure abutting flats with rope. The rope is known as both a Lash Line and a Throw Line.

Lavalier Microphone A small microphone that can be clipped or attached to a performer's clothing. Sometimes called a pin microphone - particularly the very small models that are now available that are virtually invisible to the audience when hidden, for instance, in the performer's hair.

Leak 1) Light that is unintentionally emitted from holes around the lantern. 2) Voltage from a badly adjusted dimmer that causes lanterns to be on when they should be off.

LED Abbrev. for Light Emitting Diode. A small light often used as an indicator light in electronic equipment.

Legit Short for Legitimate - a play with no music. Originates from the Letters Patent issued by Charles II in 1662 giving two men a monopoly over the performance of all plays in the City of Westminster - the legal theatres became known as Patent Theatres. Some clever entrepreneurs got around this decree by deciding musicals were not plays and staged them defiantly. So musicals became illegitimate, and plays legitimate.

Legs Vertical strips of fabric, usually black, used mainly for masking the sides of the stage.

Leko An American brand of profile spot, now can mean any profile spotlight. (US). Named after Ed Kook - founder of Century Lighting in the USA - and his partner Levey, who developed the compact ellipsoid spotlight.

Libretto The part of a musical score containing the sung and spoken words.

Lift To add life to a line or scene.

Light Board Richard Pilbrow - inspired memory lighting control desk, originally for London's National Theatre.

Lighting Design The drawn plan detailing what lanterns will be used where, in what way, with what colour, and on which dimmer.

Lighting Designer The person responsible for deciding in conjunction with other members of the production team, and executing, the Lighting design.

Lime Light The lime or calcium light was developed in the early 19th century and was popular for its intense white light. In the early days it was often used for 'realistic' beams of sun or moon light. Invention is attributed to a Lieutenant in the English Royal Engineers, Thomas Drummond. It used a block of quicklime heated by an oxygen and hydrogen flame to provide an intense point source of light for use in a hand operated or follow spot. Lime Light was also used as a light source for early film projectors.

Lines Down Lines committed to memory.

Load In/Out Move the set and properties in or out of a space.

Lock The knob on the side of a lantern which tightens onto the harness to stop the lantern tilting.

Loudspeaker See Speaker.

LX Abbrev. for Lighting.

Unit 6 – Running Rehearsals 1

Okay, make no bones about it: You are now seated firmly behind the table. The rehearsal hall is your domain. Start how you mean to continue.

We'll take a look at the following in this unit:

1. Preparation
2. Top of Rehearsal
3. Physical Safety
4. Professionalism
5. Things Can Go Wrong
6. Blocking Notes

Where should I sit...?

I would advise that you sit as close to the Director as possible so that you can communicate quietly with him/her from time to time. Don't be bashful about handing notes back and forth. It's a great way to communicate without involving the cast...

Preparation

When preparing for a rehearsal, everything begins and ends with the schedule, assuming you have a schedule. ☺ The schedule will tell you what part of the script will be blocked, worked, or run during that rehearsal.

What does this term on the Schedule mean?

Blocking	The process of deciding when, how, and where actors will enter, exit, stand, or move.
Run	Going through that section of the play (or the whole play), hopefully without stopping ☺
Stop/Start Run	A working run, in which the Director (and the actors) can stop the action from time to time to clean up moments or clarify things.
Stumble Run	The first run of an act. There are many stops and things go very, very wrong.
Move-In	The day we move the show into the theatre. In Scarborough, this is a 14 hour day for most Stage Managers who arrive early at the Unit to help supervise the truck load.
Dress Rehearsal	The final run of the show in complete costumes and make up
Tech Week	The ten days prior to most openings in Scarborough. The set is put up, lights hung. The cast gets used to the stage. All the elements of the show come together.

Performance	A performance date and time.
Matinee	Afternoon performance.
Work-thru	A rehearsal in which the section is picked apart and put back together in sequence. It is usually run at the end of the night.
Q2Q	Cue to Cue Run. The rehearsal in which the technical elements are integrated into the show. Sometimes long and laborious, it is a necessary step to putting the whole show together. In Scarborough, Q2Q day is another long day – about 12 hours for the Stage Manager.
L/X and Sound levels	The day that the director is shown the lights and the cues are built. Also, the sound cue levels are set with the Director in attendance.

Preparation of the Script

You need to be ready to provide substitutes in rehearsal for effects called for in the script. You also need to know who is needed to be in rehearsal hall and when they are needed. I would recommend doing the script preparation the night before as the information will have more time to sit in your head.

Now you need to go back to your lists: Running Props, L/X, Sound, SFX, Costumes, etc. With these as guidelines, go through the pages that are scheduled and make sure that all lighting, sound, or other effects are highlighted or marked as you deem necessary; so that you maximize your ability to be ready to recreate all effects that occur during that part of the script.

I, personally, highlight with a yellow marker. Some folks like to use post it notes. Some folks like to put coloured dots in their scripts. Even other folks prefer written notes. Only you know what will work the best with you.

A little note, here, about the top of the next page: If a special effect or whatnot comes at the top of a page, make sure that you warn yourself on the previous page; so you're not caught off guard.

Assuming you have done a Cast Breakdown sheet, you can make sure, easily, that you know who is coming on so that you will be able to have them in rehearsal hall and ready when the director needs them. I used to put a mark in my script about one page before the character enters to remind me. I also used to highlight the note in yellow so that I didn't miss it. You should use whatever system works best for you.

I recommend that every time you hit a section after the initial blocking rehearsal, take a look at your script to remind yourself of what happened and what you will be expected to do. This process may only take about five minutes prior to rehearsal but it will be well worth your time.

Preparation of the Hall

You might want to get in earlier for the first few rehearsals until you get into a rhythm and therefore become more efficient.

The hall and green room need to be clean and orderly. Walk around and make sure that all is well. Clutter causes accidents. Take a look at the working area. Sweep it if it needs it. Folks might be rolling around on the stage or working in bare feet. Always remember: if it were you having to roll around or walk around without your shoes, would you be comfortable?

Are there dirty dishes? Are the toilets okay? Does the garbage need emptying? I am not saying that you're supposed to do all the work personally, but consider yourself in charge of seeing that

the work gets done. Various groups have different policies about who does what, but in a large cast, you can conscript a couple of cast members who want to work out their tech hours by helping to keep the hall clean. If you do have folks to assist in this job, give them some training:

- 1) Let them know what you need them to do (kitchen clean, garbage changed, etc.)
- 2) Show them where the cleaning stuff is.
- 3) Show them where full bags of garbage are disposed.
- 4) Tell them to let you know if they run out of anything.

If you have a small cast, you will need to do most of this work yourself or you can delegate the work to your Assistant. Without an assistant, you can ask cast members to help you by cleaning up after themselves or doing their own dishes. Most people are willing to help.

However this work is being done, it is wise to do a walk around before every rehearsal and make sure your Hall is shipshape. Make note of anything that needs doing. Only if you have the time, do the work before the rehearsal.

Now, turn your mind to confirming that you have the rehearsal props or costumes that will be used in the pages scheduled. If something is missing, go ahead and scrounge it up out of the props department. Put all props and costumes out in the areas you set up during your prep phase.

If you are using a CD player or some such to help you do sound effects in rehearsal, make sure you have all CDs you need and that the equipment is running.

Now turn your head to set. Make sure you have all substitute pieces required during the pages you are working.

If you have not blocked the scene or pages before, attempt a rough placement of the set pieces. Make sure the Director knows that the pieces are only rough placed ready for her or his adjustment. Take care with your rough placement and ensure that it is as close to the set design as you can manage. You will be surprised how often the rough placement holds.

If you have blocked the scene before, make sure all pieces are out and on spike.

Last, but not least, is the Production Table in order? Are there spare pencils and pens? Is there Kleenex? Are there enough chairs? Is there fresh water and a stack of Dixie cups?

You may wonder why you would have to check all these areas before each rehearsal. Remember that you're not the only folks using the space. There are meetings and such. Unit Managers sometimes come in and poke about. There are parties and special events. There may have been auditions in the space.

I recommend highly that you budget a good chunk of time to making sure the hall is in order. Fairly frequently, stage managers come in and have to deal with a disaster: Someone has pulled the tape, or put away the props or some such. Nightmare! Don't worry. You are in early. You can cope.

What if I don't have a schedule?

Firstly, let your Producer know and allow her or him to deal with it. If you don't have a schedule, it is likely that the director is planning to work through the script from beginning to end. It is rare that more than ten pages are blocked in one rehearsal so prepare for ten pages and you should be fine.

Top of Rehearsal

It is important that all rehearsals start in the same way. Routine breeds comfort. Besides, the cast is trained more easily when the routine is predictable. See First Rehearsal, Top of Rehearsal for specific notes on procedures.

However, you will almost always do the following:

1. Arrive at least a half an hour before Cast Call – more if possible.
2. If you were early, leave the door locked behind you. At about 35 minutes to the start, make sure the door is unlocked.
3. Start to prepare the hall.
4. At about 30 minutes to start, walk around and call the half hour and encourage folks to sign in. There will likely be no one there but you. 😊
5. Continue to prepare for rehearsal.
6. At about 15 minutes to start, walk around and call the fifteen minutes and encourage folks to sign in.
7. Continue to prepare.
8. At five minutes, General Call five minutes and encourage folks to sign in.
9. At two minutes, call the actors into rehearsal hall and remind them to sign in.
10. At time, encourage folks to settle and focus, and welcome them. Folks, remember you can be gracious, warm, witty. Some managers are a little severe. Make any general announcements. If there are rehearsal props or costumes that folks have not previously used draw the actors' attention to them.
11. If there are any guests (Internal Ticket Sales, for example) who need to address the cast, hand the rehearsal over to her/him.
12. As soon as the rehearsal is handed over, check the sign in sheet. Make sure that you do this every time. If there is anyone missing, make sure that you silently or quietly get the Director's attention, gesture to the sheet so that they know what you are doing, and go out and do your calls.
13. On your way out, or simply after you have finished your announcements if no one is missing, make sure you put up your 'Rehearsal in Progress' sign.
14. Once all business is complete, focus the room again and hand the rehearsal over to the Director.

The Physical Safety of All Concerned

As you sit down to take your notes, clock in hand, all efficient, you might pause. Everyone's there. The rehearsal is running smoothly. Well, give yourself a pat on the back, but whatever you do, don't relax now.

Accidents happen all the time. But if you are on the look out for, oh, a wet floor, for example, the hall becomes a safer place. So keep those eyes peeled.

Also, and on a more serious note, Directors are notorious for demanding that their casts do artistically effective but deeply unsafe things. One of your primary functions is to monitor rehearsals, monitor how the work is being done, monitor what the director is planning to do in the theatre, and make a clear determination of whether there is a threat to the safety of the players or

technicians. However, simple common sense may not help you understand whether something is safe in theatre. There are many theatrical tricks and methods about which you may be ignorant. Before you make an issue of anything, make sure you NORMALIZE your information. Find out how the trick is to be done. Find out if it is something the director, fight director, or SFX person has done before.

In professional theatre, risk is assessed and managed. Actors are paid a premium to do unsafe things. But the risks are considered; safety measures are put in place. Professional consultants are brought in. The real risk to the actor after all this work is done is minimal. He or she is only in danger when fail-safes fail.

In Community Theatre, we must walk slowly and with care. Admit all ignorance and encourage the Artistic Staff and Producer to source a professional who knows how to, for example, fly a person safely, walk on stilts, use flame or guns on stage. Be kind to this professional. He or she is usually paid handsomely for their work.

Now, an unsettling word about this: Actors will rarely stand up to a Director EVEN IN DEFENSE OF THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY because they fear they will not be cast by this director in the future. Whether we like it or not, actors who challenge directors run out of work WHETHER THE DIRECTOR IS RIGHT OR WRONG. Directors talk to one another. People can be blackballed. It is not right and it is not fair but it happens all the time.

It is your job, then, to stand up for the folk. Remember, a good stage manager is worth their weight in gold. Good stage managers will always work. Always. In fact, good stage managers will have their pick of work. You have nothing to fear.

Be professional, kind, but firm. Theatre is dangerous enough, really, to add to the risk. When you see something that is potentially dangerous, you are required to courteously interrupt proceedings, fix what is wrong (if it is an easy fix) or initiate the necessary dialogue that will allow you to make things safe.

Remember, there may be a safe way to do what the director wants. Always try to do what the director wants; however, if you or no one else in the production can come up with a safe solution, the movement, action, whatever, must be altered or struck.

Okay, at a rehearsal in which a potentially dangerous problem emerges, make sure that you make note of all the detail.

You will then immediately bring up this hazard to your Producer and then again (if unresolved) at the next production meeting.

Any full-blown confrontations with the Director regarding safety must be done by the Producer with you in attendance. Don't worry, I cannot think of one Director who would insist on doing something patently unsafe.

Professionalism

Now, let's not get carried away, here. It's called professionalism because it is how professionals behave. But we are not dealing with professionals; so, let's not get too mean or exacting. This is a point on which many stage managers falter and become too severe.

However, in order to ensure that the necessary work gets done, you will have to, as much as possible, keep things rolling in a focused way. You will want to encourage discipline and mannerly behaviour.

And, by the way, nobody likes it when they see a police car speeding on city streets for no apparent reason. It builds resentment and encourages folks to break the rules themselves. You will help yourself if you role model the kind of behaviour you expect from your cast.

Now, wait a minute, you say. You've told me I shouldn't be exacting with amateurs. But here you are telling me I have to be professional and I can never be late. Well, I am an amateur! What about me? Can't I have fun, too? I totally understand how you might feel. I have felt this way many times.

But it's kind of a pay now or pay later proposition. I guarantee that, should you not behave better than everyone present from the word go, you will have a tougher row to hoe as you try to keep things in order going into the theatre and then, later, during the run. And, as I have said before, the job is hard enough already. A little bit of respect from your cast never hurt anyone.

I started to look at the job as a role, like a role that one might play on stage. A four and a half hour improv every night. I know that a lot of teachers feel the same as they are required to adopt behaviours that are formal and unnatural in order to fulfill the increasingly restrictive requirements of their position. This is no different. For me the fun and the satisfaction came from doing a great job.

General Comportment in Rehearsal

A surprising number of cast members won't have a clue about how to behave. It will be up to you to teach them what is appropriate and what is not. I have listed what I would consider to be a basic set of rules, but I do not recommend you post them or read them out.

1. Encourage folks to be on time.
2. Encourage folks to arrive prepared (including learning lines, etc.)
3. Encourage folks to be quiet and respectful of the work being done when not being used.
4. Encourage folks to respect their fellow cast members, artistic staff, and production staff. You never know when you are going to need someone in the future.
5. Encourage folks to behave in a safe way and leave the running and roughhousing for outside.
6. Encourage folks to turn off any electronic devices while in the hall.
7. Encourage folks to eat and drink anything other than water outside the hall in the green room.
8. Encourage folks to not wear perfumes.
9. Encourage people to walk around the edge of the working space while other people are working on it. Encourage folks not to walk in front of the production table.
10. Encourage folks to change into rehearsal clothes and bring shoes to wear in rehearsal.
11. Encourage folks to bring a pencil and make copious notes in their scripts.

The Stage Manager's Mask

I keep mentioning that the Stage Manager needs to behave in a professional way. Well, what does that really mean?

The Stage Manager needs to act like a doctor or other professional person might. I would suggest, then, that the Stage Manager be reasonably well dressed and well groomed. Self respect breeds respect from others.

Another technique to encourage respect and professionalism is formality in rehearsals. Formality in addressing folk when talking to the group. Formality in written form.

For example, if you were writing out the next day's schedule and I were called in, you would refer to me, not as Jacqui, but as Ms. Burke on the call sheet. All other cast members would be addressed as Ms. or Mr. as appropriate. When calling out the schedule, requesting that specific people do things, etcetera, in front of the group, use more formal language. When chatting with folks at break or talking one on one with people, you can drop the formality, of course. But I have to mention here that some Managers do not. I have seen people keep the mask on AT ALL TIMES around the theatre or the theatre complex.

Try, always, to keep your temper. Just about everybody else has permission to throw a hissy fit but not you. There must be the one adult in the room and, well, that turns out to be you. If you are prone to crankiness, keep in mind that crankiness will not serve you well. However, your reason and balance will inspire the same in others. Your fairness will inspire fairness. Don't get angry. No one is fair when they are angry.

Also, walk the walk. Do as you say. Always. Oh, and don't play favourites. Oh yeah, and hands off. No touch the cast.

What will all this restraint achieve? Why am I suggesting such a restricted role for you to play? A professional demeanor inspires others to behave professionally. It implies a deep respect not only for the process but the folk involved in the process. And respect breeds respect.

Focus

Rehearsal focus is difficult to maintain. People have trouble holding concentration. In order to keep concentration, you sometimes have to break it. People like each other and like to chat. This is first and foremost a people business.

The larger your cast the more you will have to deal with chatter. Please be aware that you cannot chatter, yourself, if you expect no one else to chatter. In fact, no one at the Production Table should be chatting. So bear this in mind when you have guests. I don't care if the President of the group is discussing something important, s/he can go out in the Green Room like everybody else.

Okay, now we fall into a bit of gray area as we always do when we are dealing with human beings. How much sound is okay? How much can folks chat? Are we breaking our focus too much?

Well, it's kind of a feel thing.

You've got a bunch of creative, funny people in one room. Rehearsal will break for laughter. There will be a break in concentration after running a scene or working a scene or song. Some directors are more relaxed than others. I, myself, tend to laugh a lot in rehearsal. My poor stage managers have to figure out that when we're laughing, we're working hard. However, other directors crack jokes and allow distraction and don't realize they are falling behind.

So what is our real goal, here? Our goal is to stay focused enough to complete what was scheduled for the day. Again, it's all about the schedule. It comes down to whether or not you are falling behind.

So if everyone is being a little goofy and laughing but magically, somehow, you are half way through the day's work a third of the way through the rehearsal, you're happy! Take the notes and enjoy the ride (everyone will be having a good time) but don't interrupt the process just for the sake of being quiet. On the other hand, if you are planning to block seven pages that night

and, after the first hour, you are still on page one – for whatever reason – the stage manager needs to intervene.

How do you intervene? That depends on who is the problem.

The Director might be over-indulging, taking too much time on the scenework or the Director might be joking around and being a bit silly. In either case, a note or a quiet word to say that the rehearsal is falling behind is almost always enough. The Director will appreciate it if you do not make a big issue of things in front of the cast. Or should.

If the Cast is the problem, and the larger the cast the tougher it is, you will find that you might have to literally shush them. I have a way of holding the ‘sh’ sound long and only just loud enough to carry. This works well because it tends not to interrupt rehearsal.

Zoinks...

Don’t do it just because it’s a rule or you’re ‘supposed to’...do it because it serves your end goal – doing a great show. Whatever it takes.

Also, there’s always the Stage Manager’s great fallback: ‘Quiet, please’. Say this loudly, with some authority. Keep yourself emotionally level even if folks are behaving badly. Be professional, kind, but firm.

Ahem. Ahem!

Folks, make your general announcements supported with enough volume to ensure you are being heard but don’t scream. If you don’t know how to properly support your voice, find an actor who will show you.

Punctuality and Reliability

We have already discussed a method of dealing with lateness. Go through the same motions every rehearsal. Every. Like sunrise. Also, when dealing with folks treat everyone the same way. The cast will notice if you are lenient with your friends and will not respect you for it.

But what do you do if the behaviour doesn’t change despite your best consistency and fairness? What if a person is constantly late or constantly missing?

Firstly, as already stated, I highly recommend keeping an attendance record. It sounds fussy and it won’t be cited very often. However, the times when you do have to refer to the record are times when it is really needed. People are rarely a problem but when they are, they really are. If you have a written record in front of you and can cite chapter and verse the story of the problem, your Producer will be well armed and properly informed and your Producer and Director can make any necessary decisions.

Please be aware that replacing a person in a cast, especially one who is well liked, is one of the most damaging things you can do to a show. However, folks who are constantly coming in late or not at all are not usually that well appreciated by their fellow cast members and it might, in fact, make everyone happy to see them gone and replaced by someone with a bit of respect.

Either way, your opinion will be sourced but the decision is not up to you. Don't let the Director or the Producer duck making a decision one way or another.

As a final note, most folks, when a cast sees that you mean business, will try to meet or beat your standards. Remember to keep training them and be fair across the board.

Things can go very, very wrong.

Folks, I cannot tell you what to do if the process breaks down and people become upset or act out. I would recommend keeping cool, if you can. But, your personal style will affect how you deal with people. I can, however, tell you what I would do and have done in the past.

One bad apple...

Folks, everybody has bad days and actors and directors are no different. I think you will find as I did that the following is true: The more insecure a person is feeling the worse they will behave. The corollary, of course: The larger the ego the smaller the, well, you know.

Everybody has an ego. Everybody. And that goes double for theatre. One is attracted to this business because it appeals to the ego. If you meet someone in theatre who insists they do not have an ego, watch out, because they are not being honest with themselves.

Insecure actors get more insecure as the show approaches opening and behaviours can become extreme during Production Week. I promise you that at some point in your career, you will be standing in front of a red-faced screamer who is telling you s/he doesn't have enough counter space in the dressingroom and how do you expect her/him to....!

My advice? First, count your breaths especially if the person is going on for a bit. Breath in deeply through the nose, exhale through the mouth and count. This will help you to not internalize what the person is saying. It has, really, nothing to do with you; so you don't want it to affect you.

This may sound disrespectful, forgive me, but the actual content of the problem is of no matter. If a person is insecure, they will find something, anything, to get upset about.

Now, the final outcome of this doesn't really depend on you. It depends on the person who is having their fit. You will continue to be professional, kind, but firm. Wait until they have blown out. Then:

1. Ask them to kindly take a walk with you. Can you buy them a coffee? Let's get a little fresh air. Whatever. Often removing a person from the physical surroundings has an immediate effect on their state of mind. If the person will not leave, clear the rehearsal hall. (I have been known to get my Assistant to clear the hall as the fit is happening – no one should have to stand around and listen to it.)
2. You will tell them that you understand how they are feeling (especially when you don't) and that you would feel the same way if you were they. This is a standard Customer Service tactic. Get on their side. (It also has an added benefit of making the person feel okay about getting upset).
3. You will tell them that you will do what you can to help them but, remember, make no unfair promises. What you don't want to do here is get into a situation in which the lead gets a dressingroom to him/herself and the rest of the cast is shoved upstairs. Not good. The ego feeds on white sugar and gets fat, fat, fat.

4. You will ask them to kindly take a few moments to compose themselves. You will remind them that we still have to finish the run, the costume parade, the Q2Q, the whatever and that we need them to go on.

Most folks will be appeased. If you are courteous and respectful, they should settle down. But if someone is going to go off the deep end, please remember it has nothing to do with you. The worse case scenario? They will give you an ultimatum.

In general, it will sound like this: “If you don’t give me my own f#\$&*+! dressingroom, I quit!”

If you give in, this will only happen again and again. Let me repeat that. If you give in, this will only happen again and again.

Now, take a deep breath. Screw up all your courage. And say the following or something like it:

“I know you’re upset about this. I might feel the same way if I were you. But I cannot give you your own dressingroom. I would be willing to work out a compromise to give you more space. If this is not enough, I totally understand how you might feel. We would be very sorry to see you go.”

In this way, you are still offering to work out the problem in a reasonable way but you are throwing the ball squarely and with authority back into this person’s court. If they walk away, it will be their choice. If they stay, it will be their choice.

Trust me when I tell you that anyone – anyone – can be replaced. You would be surprised what you can do with a motivated cast and one afternoon. So even if it is coming up to Dress Rehearsal or Opening Night or it’s even during the run, don’t give in. Even if the actor is your lead. Don’t give in. Be firm.

This is when your trusty list of personal contacts will come in handy. Within minutes of the person walking out, should they walk out, you should be able to propose solid substitutes.

In Community Theatre, funnily enough, the folks who are getting their egos fed unhealthy food these days are often technical staff and designers. This flip-flop of the usual theatrical situation is due to the fact that there are not enough folks to perform all the jobs. This problem has been ongoing these last, oh, twenty years, I would say. Someone new and reasonably competent comes in. We brazenly suck up to her/him and feed their ego tons of white sugar. Then, we get them to do more and more until they burn out and have a hissy fit. It’s our fault.

But your response should be the same.

Mutiny

Things can go very wrong in a show. The cast can lose respect for the Director and the whole process can break down. Don’t worry about this but I have seen it happen more than once and always with new directors. New directors most need your support and wisdom but unfortunately are least likely to know that they do and least likely to listen to you. Sigh. You can only suggest.

Cast warning signs are the same you might look for in a teenager: rolling eyes, talking back, physically hunched, not investing in the work, etc.

Make sure you document the story of the problem. More on documentation later. However, I will mention now that it is always wise to make all problems obvious to all folks involved. Ignoring the problem or whispering about it behind people’s backs in dark corridors will never make it go away. There is a reporting function that you can perform that will allow you to inform all individuals about what is going on – not only on technical requirements of the show but also about administrative or personal issues that arise. More on reporting later.

Just remember that it is doubly important in a situation of mutiny that you not sit in judgment of the Director. You are there to support the director whether or not you personally think he is a no-talent waste of time.

Guests

From time to time, there will be guests in rehearsal: Board Members, family members, friends. These folks should be reminded, with respect, that they need to be quiet and respectful of the work being done. If they chat, they should be reminded to be quiet. If they continue to behave in a disrespectful way, they should be removed from the hall.

Problem Parents

Parents of child actors can be problematic. For this reason, most Directors require that the parents be kept out of the rehearsal hall. However, some don't (and I am one of them!); so sometimes you will have to deal with the parents during rehearsal. If they are intrusive, pulling the child's focus, clearly passing judgment on the quality of the work being done, or redirecting the child, you need to handle the problem.

There are a few approaches you can take. Firstly, appeal to the Director and ask that the parents be made to wait in the Green room. Second, you can meet the parent head on and be professional, kind, but firm that the parent is overstepping their bounds or creating a distraction in rehearsal. Your last resort is simply stand in front of the parent or have your Assistant block the view of the child to the parent.

The Director will usually acquiesce to your request to close the hall to parents and that will clear the problem up nicely. It is your hall, remember. You can always nip this in the bud and make it a rule from the word 'go'.

Blocking Notes

The keeping of Blocking Notes remains one of the primary secretarial type functions of Stage Management. Blocking notes are particularly important in a process that continues over months. Community Theatre shows often block a section and do not get back to it for weeks. Someone needs to have taken solid notes that will jog the memories of all involved.

Often, when a cast and director hit a scene for the first time, there is a synergy, a creativity that is lost on those very same folks only weeks later. Why? Weeks later, all of these people are different. So what they would do with the scene is different. Very creative, but how do you think a show would run if we changed it every time we came back to it? Part of what makes theatre work is building a solid, stable framework that allows folks enough freedom to be fresh every night. The movement (blocking), however, needs to stay the same. Without that structure, you would have chaos more nights than not.

So the notes allow you to revisit that point in time when you blocked the section and recreate it. The notes will allow you to make sure the show does not change too much during the run and the notes will also be absolutely important if you have to replace an actor during the run.

Okay, so it's important. How do we do it?

There are so many ways to record blocking notes, it would be hard to relate them all. So, as usual, I will show you what I do and you, knowing how important this is, will likely come up with your own way of doing things. I will caution you, though, that if you are trying to put together a book that can be passed on to anyone, you will want to make sure that your shorthand is universal. More on this later.

I use a combination of written notes and football diagrams. It goes without saying that the notes must be legible – easy to follow.

During your script prep, I recommended that you put together your book with your tape plot on one side and the script on the other. The diagram on the next page is that same book, but with an example of my blocking notes. Assume that the writing in the boxes and all the diagram notes would be in pencil, handwritten.

On the left hand side of the page (because I am left handed), I have marked the characters with their first initial. I show them entering UR, and crossing DL. In the next movement, G goes to CS. Sampson then joins him and breaks DR just a little later.

Each movement is numbered in the order that it happens. On the right hand side I put the number where the movement occurred AND add additional text to back up the diagrams. The additional notes might be overkill, folks (with the exception of the note about sitting).

The image shows a page from a script book. On the left side, there are two diagrams of a stage set. The top diagram shows characters G&S entering from the top right (UR) and moving towards the center (DL). A box next to it says "G&S both carry swords. G has some coins in his hand." The bottom diagram shows character G moving from the center towards the bottom right (CS), and character S moving from the bottom left towards the center. On the right side, the script is written. It includes scene information: "Beginners – Gregory, Sampson" and "SCENE I, Verona. A public place." The script includes dialogue between Sampson and Gregory, with handwritten annotations in boxes: "1. G&S enter UR and X DL", "2. G X CS", "3. S X G", and "4. S X DR. Sit".

On the left, I have also made personal props notes. On the right hand side are noted the Beginners, the characters who start the play.

Zoinks!

Blocking can, will, and must change. Whatever it takes. Take all notes in pencil and keep that eraser handy. You don't freeze a show until late in the process (around move-in).

Short Forms in Blocking Notes

Short forms make it easier to and faster to take notes. The more efficient you can be, the better. The following is a table of terms and generally accepted short forms:

Term	Short Form
Enter	En
Exit	Ex
Cross	X
Down	D
Up	U
Centre Stage	CS
Left	L
Right	R
Centre	C

If you use these short forms, any trained manager should be able to read your notes. Remember, you must ensure that you can easily be replaced.

Splitting Up the Stage

When making blocking notes, it is wise to break your stage up into sections. Each stage is different, but the Scarborough deck could be split as follows (with upstage being the wall):

Up Right (UR)	Up Centre (UC)	Up Left (UL)
Centre Right (CR)	Centre Stage (CS)	Centre Left (CL)
Down Right (DR)	Down Centre (DC)	Down Left (DL)

This is a standard method of splitting up your stage. If you use these short forms, any trained manager could come in and read them.

Furniture in your Notes

Blocking notes can key off of furniture. In our example of blocking notes just above: Instead of saying that Sampson crosses down right, you might note that he crosses to the stool down right and sits. (S X Stool DR. Sit.)

Terms and Sayings 5

Macbeth The play that it is unlucky to speak the name of, or to quote from, in a theatre. Instead it is known as by euphemisms such as 'The Scottish Play' or 'The Unmentionable'. This tradition dates from the first opening night of the play in 1606 when the boy actor playing Lady Macbeth died backstage during the show. Since then the play has apparently been dogged by bad luck.

Marking 1) Indicating the position of scenery or props on the stage floor, usually with different colour tapes to avoid confusion. Also spiking. 2) In singing, a means of using the voice with reduced volume and without vocalising extremes of register.

Marking Out The process of marking the position of scenery and props with coloured tape on the rehearsal room floor.

Mask 1) Verb - To hide or conceal unwanted areas or machinery. 2) One actor obscuring another unintentionally. 3) Noun - A mould or prop used to conceal an actor's face.

MD See Musical Director.

Musical Director Abbrev. to MD. The person in charge of the musical content of a show.

Mechanist Crew person responsible for the operation of stage machinery and other related tasks.

Method Acting A style of teaching acting formulated by Stanislavsky.

Mirror Ball A polystyrene ball covered with small mirrors usually rotated by a small motor and used as a lighting effect. Had its foundation in the 70's disco revolution.

Mixer 1) Sound control desk, used to mix and adjust levels of sounds from various sources. 2) The operator of the sound control desk.

Mugging Playing Out Front too much.

Noh Theatre Traditional form of Japanese drama.

Noise Any unwanted sound.

Notes Similar to a Post Mortem, but particularly where the director gives notes to the cast and crew after a show about the good and bad points of the show.

Objective The end towards which a character urgently strives.

Offstage Backstage area outside the performance area.

Omni-Directional A microphone equally sensitive to sound source from all angles.

One Play Actors Actors who, for various reasons, have become associated with a single part. An actor in this position may be known as over-exposed.

One Play Authors One hit wonders, or authors who are remembered only for one work.

Onion At The End Old English music hall term, the moment or action that makes the audience cry at the end of the show.

Onstage 1) Inside the acting area. 2) Towards the centre line.

Open To turn or face more towards the audience.

Open Circuit An electrical circuit that has been broken or interrupted and so cannot pass a current or signal.

Orchestra 1) The musicians who provide the musical backing to a show. 2) The ground floor seating in an auditorium. Also Stalls.

Orchestra Pit The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra play during a performance. Also The Pit.

Orchestra Sitz An orchestral rehearsal with cast and musicians of the sung music only, not the acting movements or purely orchestral sections.

Out Flying term for up. In is down - which prevents confusion with Up and Down Stage.

Out Front 1) The audience. 2) Towards the audience. 3) See Front of House.

Overture The music that begins a performance

Unit 7 – Running Rehearsals 2

The Assistant Stage Manager

Now that we are getting into the nitty-gritty of running of rehearsals and shows, we need to turn our head to the Assistant Stage Manager and what he/she is doing. Where there is no Assistant, the Stage Manager is still responsible for all these functions and will need to do this work him/herself to the best of his/her ability. No heart attacks, please.

The Assistant Stage Manager is the hands and feet of the Stage Manager. During rehearsal, the Stage Manager should stay by the book as much as possible where she/he will take blocking notes, production notes, prompting.

The Assistant Stage Manager is not idle during the rehearsal prep phase. She/he has gone out and built her/himself a book similar to the Stage Manager's Book. However, this book is a Running Book, covering the backstage aspects of the show. In this book will be noted only the things that are of importance to backstage responsibilities and include the following:

1. Beginners
2. Entrances and Exits with warnings
3. Rehearsal Props/Props Presets and Pass-offs
4. Rehearsal Costumes/Quick Changes
5. Any SFX and Live Sound to be performed by the backstage crew
6. Child Minding
7. Live Animals

This, along with anything else that needs to be done. Whatever it takes.

Beginners and Entrances

The ASM's primary function is to ensure that everyone right down to the little lamb makes his or her entrance.

So using your cast breakdown sheet and adding notes as the rehearsal process unfolds, the ASM will note clearly all entrances and exits in his/her Running Script.

All entrances and exits including and especially beginners need to be noted – with about a page's worth of warning marked as well. The Assistant Stage Manager's primary function is to get everybody onstage who is supposed to be onstage.

During rehearsal, the ASM uses that page worth of warning to run and get any missing actors.

Rehearsal Props, Props Presets and Pass-offs

Rehearsal Props

Managing rehearsal props is a primary function of stage management. Professionally, the Assistant handles the function, but it is generally ignored in Community Theatre. If there is no Assistant, the responsibility falls to the Stage Manager.

Part of what we are trying to do as Stage Managers is, as closely as possible, reproduce the conditions that the actors will be dealing with onstage. I keep saying this. I might as well tell you why. ☺

The core reason is the body remembers. If an actor goes through a series of movements over and over again and they are the same or almost the same each time, her/his body will remember. The body, then, will take over these movements allowing the brain to be freed up for other things. I constantly talk about freedom within structure and this is one area in which the Stage Manager can have an immediate, almost visceral, effect on the process itself.

Okay, great. So how is it done? Again, I will go over what I consider standard stage practice but, as always, tailor it to work for you. I cannot recommend more strongly, however, that you perform this function whether you have ever seen in done or not.

I am going to refer consistently to the Assistant Stage Manager so that I am correct as far as stagecraft is concerned and, also, to encourage you to rush about and find yourself an Assistant pronto. They are worth their weight in gold. Or chocolates. Or whatever they are willing to work for.

There are three types of props that the Assistant Stage Manager needs to think about:

1. Personal Props
2. Carry-on and Passed-Off Props
3. Onstage Preset Props

Personal Props

Personal props are those that the actors carry on their person: a handkerchief, a cigarette lighter. Many of these props are pre-set in rehearsal costume pockets. The process here is simple. As the Assistant Stage Manager monitors rehearsal and identifies any required personal props, he/she will 1) make a note in her/his running script to remind the actor on entrance to check for the prop (anything can happen between the dressingroom and the wings) and 2) start to preset these props in the appropriate costume.

Where would you like that?

Some actors prefer that their Personal Props be left for them at their station in the dressingroom as opposed to actually in the pockets of the costume. Placing the prop becomes part of their process for preparing to play the character. This practice becomes less and less wise, however, as the size of the cast increases.

Carry-on and Passed-Off Props

Props, like a food tray carried on by a maid, for example, need to be in a spot that is easily accessible, and the prop needs to be clearly labeled. Whenever an actor can make a mistake, she/he will; so, the Assistant Stage Manager wants to set up Props Tables.

Passed-off Props are those that the Props Runner or ASM pass to an actor because the actor simply does not have time to get the prop him/herself. These, too, tend to go on props tables.

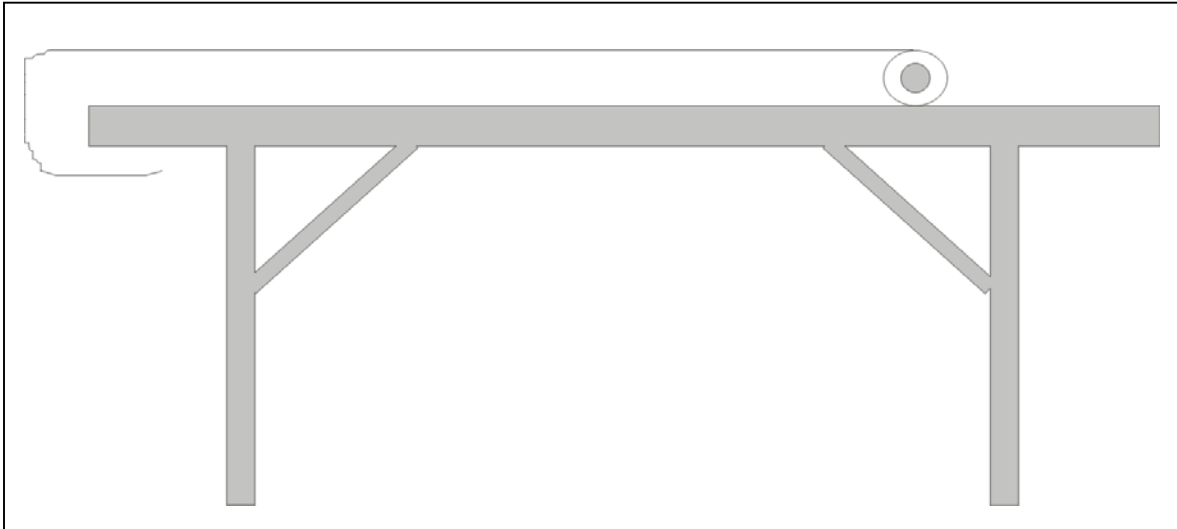
Props Tables

The Assistant Stage Manager needs Props Tables for stage left, for stage right, for personal props (that cannot be preset in a rehearsal costume), and another for any other area in which there will be proppy entrances – the loft, for example, if you have a second level on your set. As you go

through rehearsal, you will place and mark rehearsal props on these tables with their own marked spot, gradually replacing rehearsal props with the approved running props as props come in.

There are various methods of organizing props tables. Two I have used are as follows:

1. Paper Wrapping
2. Masking Tape



Paper Wrapping

Wrap the top of the table with a large piece of paper and tape the paper on. A large roll of industrial printer paper would be great for this.

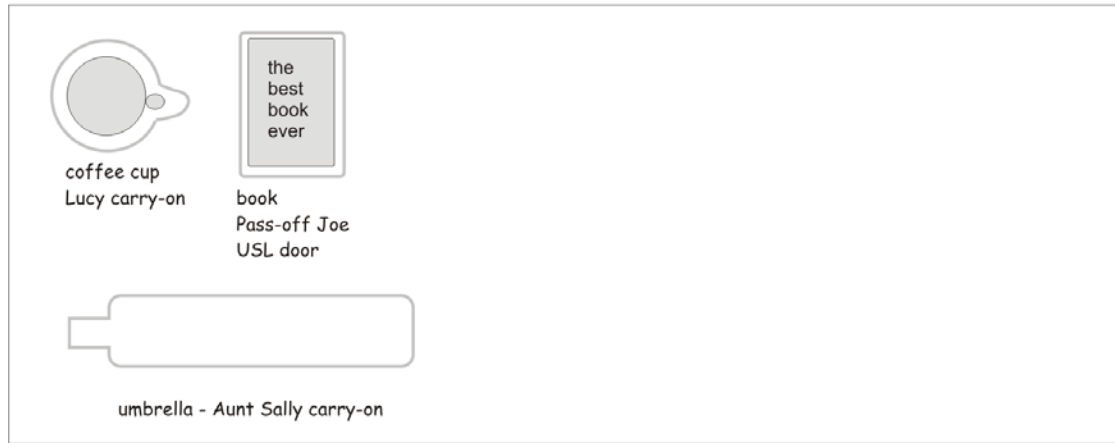
Before rehearsal begins the Assistant Stage Manager will put out rehearsal props that the Stage Manager pulled during prep and make sure that the cast knows the props are there for their use.

As the show is blocked, the Assistant Stage Manager identifies what props get used, what props do not, and identifies those props that are worked up during the rehearsal process. Those props that are not used get put away.

The props that are used and those that are added, however, will be given a spot on the table. That spot is labeled clearly in black marker. As soon as the final running prop comes in, many Assistant Stage Managers will also outline that prop in black marker so that it always gets preset in the same orientation and exact spot on the table. It's a little anal but it does help the actors to find what they are looking for – which is the whole point.

Here we see, from above, a paper wrapped props table, with three props marked and one prop missing. Using this method you can clearly see the size and shape of what is missing and you can go ahead and find the missing umbrella.

Props Table Paper Wrapped Props Outlined and Labeled



The beauty of Wrapping the Table is it helps facilitate moving into the theatre. The Assistant Stage Manager will carefully unwrap the table, roll up the paper, take the paper into the theatre, and then re-tape the paper to the props table in the theatre. Without any extra work, the production has the exact same prop layout that was used in rehearsal. This will make the actor's transition much easier and, of course, it will help the Assistant Stage Manager no end. Move-in is hard. Also, the Props Runner will have very little to think about. Everything is laid out for him/her.

What the heck is that actor really doing?

During rehearsal, an Assistant Stage Manager must take inferences from the action that she/he sees onstage. If an actor mimes lighting a cigarette, go ahead and find him/her a rehearsal lighter and a rehearsal pack of smokes. If an actor mimes taking a drink, go ahead and provide her/him with a glass or a mug. If the actor is on his knees miming scrubbing the floor, go ahead and get him a bucket and a scrub brush. Rehearsal will run along smoothly and you can pat yourself on the back. However, if the Director does not like the business, it will be cut and all your cleverness and hard work will be wasted. Keep smiling.

This method also has the benefit of being able to easily clear the table in question if there is a special event or other function in the rehearsal space. The props can be put in a box and the paper carefully removed and taped to a wall somewhere. Next rehearsal, the Assistant needs to get in a little early, but he/she has nothing to think about. He/she simply tapes the paper to the table again and places the props in their marked spots. Neat.

Thirdly, this method can really help the Props Runner because the Assistant Stage Manager can add running notes directly to the paper in pen – the Act, the scene, the page, whether it's a passoff

or a carry-on. This is in addition to any notes the Assistant Stage Manager will make in his/her book.

Also, as an added benefit, the paper itself provides a neutral background making all the props easier to see.

However, if something needs to be changed during rehearsal – and, folks, please be flexible – this method makes things hard to change. Remember, you have marked the paper with black marker. I recommend that you first mark the paper with pencil, and only add the black marker when you are sure the business requiring the prop is solid. However, be prepared that all could change. Whatever it takes.



Masking Tape

In this method, the Assistant Stage Manager sets out the props, identifies the props that are used or not used, and takes all necessary inferences, as before.

However, in this method the Assistant Stage Manager will mark the tabletop with masking tape labels. This method is clearly easier and does the job:

Some folks block out a box with masking tape and place the prop within it, clearly labeling the box by writing in pen or indelible marker. Using this method, the props are well organized and you can easily see the rough size of something missing.

Using this method, the idea is that the Assistant Stage Manager will physically move the table itself into the theatre. A little more work, but still very effective in helping both the actor and the Assistant Stage Manager transition into the theatre. This method also has the benefit of being very flexible. Any change is easily accommodated.

However if there is going to be a special event in the rehearsal space and a tablecloth is not appropriate, the Assistant Stage Manager may have no choice but to pull all the tape from the table, wasting all the work she/he has done and making a lot of work for him/herself before the next rehearsal. Also, the powers that be may not want masking tape residue on their tables.

So, it's your choice what you want to do.

Props Table Square Taped and Labeled



Onstage Presets

The Assistant Stage Manager is also responsible for onstage presets during rehearsal and the run (but, generally, the props runner – assuming there is one -- will actually do the work during the run).

Taking all inferences from the action and the script, the Assistant Stage Manager will note the Props to be preset onstage for each scene. Sometimes, as in the case of many plays in Scarborough, the scene doesn't really change and the Stage Manager will preset for the top of each Act.

Keeping a record of these presets is a matter of personal style. Usually, the Assistant Stage Manager will list the props according to where they are placed, as so:

1. On top the bar
 - six glasses
 - two decanters, full
 - stack of napkins
2. Under the bar
 - liquor bottles, various
 - soda water bottle
 - prop gun
3. On the side table SL
 - telephone
 - lamp (practical)

Some Assistant Stage Managers go so far as to diagram prop placement on a tabletop, for example. This is wise. The more consistent the ASM is in rehearsal, the better, and the more the Props Runner knows, the better. Also, the more diagrams drawn, the easier it is to step into the shoes of the ASM in the case of an emergency.

Take your time and build your notes. Whether you are aware of it or not, you are building a complete show pre-set checklist. Sounds daunting but, remember, every show is finite and quantifiable. Even Aida.

Resetting During Rehearsal

The ASM is responsible for resetting the props and costumes for a scene during rehearsal. It is wise to note, at the beginning of the scene exactly where all the props are.

Follow the bouncing glass or pipe or well, whatever...

The ASM must watch as props are moved around on the stage and track their movement as one might take blocking notes. This way, the ASM has the best chance of resetting for a scene or in the middle of the scene – gosh darn those Directors – correctly, quickly, and without too much stress.

The ASM will listen as the Director calls for the scene to restart and will immediately re-set all props as necessary. Aw, look, in Community Theatre, everyone will probably help – but the ASM will need to keep a sharp eye on what the actors are doing and may need to correct mistakes. Consistency is the key.

I keep emphasizing the effect of consistency on the actors but, remember, doing it all over and over will also help YOUR body remember what to do and train YOUR eye to see things that are wrong or out of place. I cannot recommend more strongly that you work your props as much as possible in rehearsal.

Guns, Knives, and Bears. Oh my.

All prop guns and knives – even toys used in rehearsal – need to be treated with the respect one would accord anything lethal. This means lock them up when you're not using them. And don't just lock them in the props room on the shelf. I would suggest a box or a case with a lock on it locked in the props room or, when in the theatre, in one of the lockers in a dressingroom.

Why, you ask? It's just a toy gun after all. It can't fire anything. True. But prop guns tend to look very much like the real thing. People who abscond with them can create various mischiefs, like scaring the beejeezus out of their friends or, worse, holding up a corner store. Or, sadly, getting shot themselves because someone thinks he/she is in danger and has a real gun he/she fires in defense. All manner of scariness. Lock the stupid things up.

Practical Guns

To use a real gun with real ammunition (blanks), you need to get the gun from someone with a license and you will sign that you are taking care of it. The Stage Manager is responsible for the gun during the rehearsal and run. Period. The Stage Manager must sign for it. Remember that only a person with a license can buy ammunition – that usually means you have to go back to your source for the gun and order more from her or him. Factor this into your time calculations if your supply is running low.

Also, remember that the ASM or SM should be testing the gun before every show. Get yourself some ear protectors. And, when ordering ammunition, factor your test shot into your requirements.

Practical guns need to be cleaned. Remember to empty the gun of all ammunition before you clean it. Let me repeat that: Empty the gun of all ammunition before you clean it. Remember that you should never point the gun at anyone, especially when you are working on it. The unintentional firing of a gun causes the largest majority of gunshot injuries in Canada. In short, most people are hurt by mistakes. Take care.

Each gun is a little different. Make sure you get detailed information on how to care for it from the props house from which you rent it. However, in general, it will need to be cleaned, oiled, and tested.

The gun can never, never, never be pointed at anyone onstage. I believe there must be a 30 degree cheat on the aim. The gun can never, never, never be pointed at the audience – the cheat in Scarborough is the gun must actually be pointing at the floor or the director must be very clever about what he or she is doing if she/he wants to use a practical gun.

Zoinks!

If you are using a practical gun onstage, always recommend a backup sound effect be prepared in case the gun does not go off. Saves the actor having to yell “bang!”. ☺ There are other ways to cope if the gun doesn’t work. In one show I did, the gun did not fire, and the actor stripped off his tie and strangled the woman.

You know how much I like to laugh, but I was backstage at the time and having to be very quiet. Sigh.

Practical Knives

I would recommend to never use a practical knife as a weapon onstage. Ever.

Prop Guns

Prop guns are much more fun because they can be pointed anywhere. However, I repeat, lock them up as if they were the real thing.

Prop Knives

Prop knives are much duller than the real thing. There are retractable knives out there, but you may find that they are finicky and like to break instead of retract. Recommend to your director that the cheat be done by the actors. If you don’t know the cheat, get a professional in and learn.

Rehearsal Costumes and Quick Changes

Rehearsal Costumes

The ASM is responsible for maintaining and presetting rehearsal costumes.

Before each rehearsal, the ASM will check his/her notes and ensure all Rehearsal Costumes are in place. During the rehearsal, the ASM will take inferences or follow direct requests for other rehearsal costumes. If the Costume Area is out of bounds for anyone other than the Costume Master/Mistress, the Stage Manager (not the ASM) will make any request for another Rehearsal Costume in his/her Production Notes. More on this later.

At the end of the rehearsal the ASM will be responsible to return all Rehearsal Costumes to the Costume rack and ensure that all is clean and in good order. Pay careful attention to anything that

gets wet during rehearsal. Give it a place to dry out. Always keep in mind that the costume needs to be fit enough that YOU would wear it. No one wants their skin next to some smelly, yucky thing.

Rehearsal Costumes may need to be tracked similarly to props. Jackets and coats are often taken off. Where are they put and when? If the scene needs to be reset at the beginning or part the way through, the ASM needs to be able to set everything as quickly and with as little stress as possible. Write it all down.

Zoinks!

How will I know what I need when the Director is likely to restart a scene halfway through??? Do you expect me to update my notes every page? Or what? Am I supposed to be psychic?

Yeah, sure. All stage managers are psychic, aren't they? ☺

ASMs: take a look at the Cast Breakdown sheet given to you by the SM. Scenes are often restarted in natural breaks in the action: i.e. as folks come on or off. You, as an ASM, could draw a line in your script at that point and make a note of where key props are. You will thank me.

Quick Changes

The ASM is responsible for ensuring that the cast get any necessary help backstage and will need to note any point in the play in which the actor will need help changing in order to get back on stage fast enough to make his or her cue. Mark this in your book and put in a page or two's warning. The need for a Quick Change is often readily apparent even in early rehearsals but some will sneak up on you despite your best efforts.

More on this later.

Live Sound and Special Effects

Any sound, lighting, or special effect done backstage will be the responsibility of the ASM. The ASM needs to make notes of all special effects called for in the script with warnings in his or her script about a page ahead. So: practical door bells, door slams, fog, live guns shots, etcetera, etcetera. Keep smiling.

Child Minding

Child Minding is usually done by what is now called a Child Wrangler. However, it is wise for the ASM to write up a complete plot of the child's movements – entrances, exits, etcetera – to which the Wrangler can refer.

Children, even those preternaturally mature for their ages, should not be left to cope for themselves. Anyone under the age of thirteen should be considered a potential problem and dealt with accordingly. Why? A child's nerves or worries tend to be reflected in their behaviour – they act out. Also, a child will never be bothered with keeping quiet or tidying up after him or herself. That's why we call them children. We would like to create an atmosphere in which a child can still be a child but, also, in which the play runs smoothly.

Professionally, Child Minding is now called Child Wrangling because no one wants to be called a Nanny. Nanny's don't make a lot of money but Child Wranglers do. If there is no Child Wrangler, then the responsibility falls to Stage Management.

All right, from the word go the ASM needs to pay special attention to the children: their entrances, exits, what they are supposed to be wearing, whether they need to be carrying props or not.

Also, the ASM should be turning his or her head to what to do with the kids while they are not being used. Videos, books, quiet activities (like colouring or drawing) could be set up in a specific area for kids even very early in the process. The children will get used to quietly amusing themselves when not being used – as opposed to larking about, roughhousing, etc.

Zoinks!

Don't spend too much money on children's activities. The dollar store will have tons of crafts and toys for a buck a piece.

Over the course of the rehearsal the ASM should also build a complete plot of the child's movements on and off stage. Often a Child Wrangler will come into the production when the show moves into the theatre. A complete list of the child's responsibilities will make the transition easier for all concerned.

For example, in *Sound of Music*, we had a very small child playing the Gretl role. Very sweet kid, but darn young. We put together a Plot that would help whoever was taking care of her during the run to be where they needed to be:

Gretl Game Plan

To Help Gretl be Quiet Backstage

We invented Theatre Fairies that like to sleep in the nooks and crannies backstage and would wake up and scream if someone was making too much noise backstage – thereby ruining the show. We made up little beds. The Fairies left the kids gifts.

To Help Gretl Focus Onstage

Tell her that there is a game she must play when she is onstage that the only people she can look at are the people in the show. She must pretend very hard that there are no other people in the theatre. Make up a little chart and give her a gold star for every show she does well. Have some of the other kids play the game so she will see how she is doing. As part of this game: as soon as she has her costume on, she must address everyone by their show name and everyone must address her as Gretl.

To help her find her mark

Please place a sticker on the stage where she is to stop her marching every night.

To Remind her of her Stagework Every Night

Before the show, every show

We identified parts of the show that were being dropped and rehearsed them every night – including the children marching.

Before Act 1, Scene 5

- 1) Tell her how great she is doing
- 2) Remind her that she needs to be quiet for the little fairies' sakes.
- 3) Remind her that she will push her way through the other children and wipe her brow
- 4) Remind her that she will march down the stairs and go to the sticker on the stage
- 5) Remind her that she will be playing the pretend game and that she cannot look at anyone except people in the show.
- 6) Remind her that she will do Do-Re-Mi and must remember her lines a-b-c and Doh! with the jump.

During Act 1, Scene 5

Children, feel free to help her but make sure that you call her by Gretl. Captain, if she turns the wrong way at the bottom of the stairs, guide her the right way as you do Brigitta later.

Before Act 1, Scene 7

- 1) Tell her how great she's doing
- 2) Remind Gretl that she needs to be quiet for the little fairies sakes
- 3) Remind her that early in the song, she will jump into Marias arms after the thunderclap
- 4) Remind her that she must get Liesl and Friedrich to the bed during the song
- 5) Remind her that she must go up the stairs after the song and do the thunder crossover. Remind her of what she is supposed to do.

And so on, for every scene the child was in. It's a little bit of work, but the whole show will run more smoothly if you take charge of the little children. So, in rehearsal, start to build your notes for the plot you will produce as the show moves into the theatre.

Animal Wrangling

Live animals are very hard to cope with in Community Theatre simply because we all have jobs. Who is going to come in and take care of the thing on dark nights?

Though it is the responsibility of Stage Management, I would highly recommend lobbying for a group of four or five people and setting up a schedule for feeding, watering, and, well, cleaning up after the animal.

Also, similar to the plot for children, I would highly recommend an Animal Plot as well. So, during rehearsal, the ASM should build his or her notes in preparation for building this plot.

Terms and Sayings 6

PA System The public address or any sound reinforcement system. Also, PA.

Pace The speed at which the story and action in a play runs.

Pan Movement of lighting from side to side.

Panatrope Large gramophone record player used in the 1940s and 50s. Specially designed for theatrical sound effects. It became so popular that stage managers used to write 'Pancue' in their prompt copy to denote a sound cue.

Pancake Basic make-up item, available in a range of shades, used the world over.

Panorama 1) Predecessor to the diorama developed in the late 18th century. 2) A bar running up and down stage (as opposed to across stage) to hold masking, scenery, or lighting. (From Greek 'Pan' = All and 'Horama' = View).

Parcan Type of lantern which holds a par lamp. The parcan is the basic lighting unit in concert lighting.

Parametric Equaliser An audio equaliser with separate control over the frequencies and levels being adjusted. Able to control groups of frequencies very accurately.

Par Lamp Type of globe with a parabolic reflector and sealed beam. Fits into a Par Can.

Par Bar Metal bar on which is hung a group of Par Cans - usually 4. Used to simplify lighting rigging - instead of each light having to be hung individually, groups can be attached.

Part An actor's part of the play is his or her lines and directions, the whole performance of an individual,

Patch 1) Verb - To connect a lantern or cable, to plug it in. 2) Noun - The Patch. See Patch Bay.

Patch Bay The main connection panel for the lighting or sound system, where all the elements are connected together.

Peacocks In some parts of theatre these birds are considered harbingers of evil.

Pepper's Ghost The effect of a ghost on stage created in the 1860s by J. Pepper using glass as a reflector. Pepper's ghost was such a success that several plays were written especially to use the effect.

Period When all the facets of a production are carefully aimed towards representing a specific period in history.

Piano Rehearsal Rehearsal for a musical show where the music is provided only by a pianist, to save calling the orchestra and incurring the additional cost.

Pin Spot 1) A small sealed beam light producing a small dot of light on stage. 2) A narrow focussed followspot used to pick out a small item on stage, perhaps the performer's face.

Pipe See Bar.

Pit See Orchestra Pit.

Pit Net A safety net over the Orchestra Pit to prevent injury to musicians or performers if someone or something should fall from stage.

Places Please See Beginners.

Platform See Rostrum.

Platform Stage An elevated acting area that does not use a proscenium arch.

Plot 1) Any list of cues for effects used in the play. 2) The fundamental thread that runs through a story, providing the reason for the actions of the characters.

Plotting To program or determine the levels of each of the lighting dimmers in each scene or cue. Also Lighting Rehearsal.

PM See Production Manager.

Point Of Attack The moment in the story at which the writer decides to start the play's action.

Post Mortem The session attended by cast and crew after a show to discuss problems. See Notes.

Practical Any object which must do onstage the same job that it would do in real life e.g. lamp post or telephone.

Preparation The activities used by actors to prepare themselves for a performance.

Preset 1) Used to describe any article placed in its working area before the performance. 2) A basic lighting state that the audience sees before the action starts.

Preview A performance given before the official opening night, sometimes it is in fact the final full dress rehearsal. Tickets, if sold, are often cheaper as a way of building audience interest in the show.

Principals The actors in a show with the lead or speaking roles.

Producer The person responsible for raising the finance to stage a show and then generally running the business side.

Production Manager Abbrev. to PM. The senior member of the technical team, in control of staffing, budgets, and liaison with venues whilst on tour.

Profile Spot A spotlight which projects a profile or outline of any chosen shape and with any desired degree of hardness or softness of edge.

Prologue Speech given to the audience by an actor before the start of the play.

Prompt The person who, during the performance, feeds actors lines if they 'dry'. Usually from the down stage stage left position - hence Prompt Corner. In opera it was traditional for the prompt to be positioned with the head projecting through a small slit cut in the stage floor down stage centre, with a wooden hood or cover to mask the prompt person from the audience.

Prompt Book See Prompt Copy.

Prompt Copy Fully annotated copy of the play with all of the various production details, used by the Stage Manager during the performance to co-ordinate all the various technical and staging departments. Also Prompt Book.

Prompt Corner The down stage stage left corner of the stage. Known as Prompt Corner because that is the area where the Prompt, or Stage Manager, usually sits.

Prompt Script Stage Manager primary reference book on the show, this book lists all blocking, technical requirements, contact information, etc.

Prompt Side Abbrev. to PS. The left hand side of the stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Stage Left, Camera Right.

Properties Abbrev. to Props. Any item or article used by the actors other than scenery and costumes.

Props Table Table in convenient offstage area on which all props are left prior to use.

Proscenium Arch Abbrev. to Pros. The archway which separates the stage and the auditorium.

Proscenium Theatre Any theatre that has a proscenium arch.

Protagonist The main character in a play around whom most of the action is based.

Pyrotechnics Any chemical effects used onstage or in the wings to create explosions or special effects.

Unit 8 - Running Rehearsals 3

Gosh, you're thinking. Isn't this enough to think about already? We-e-e-e-ell.... Let's turn our heads back to the SM. What is she/he really doing during the rehearsal besides taking blocking notes?

Is everybody ready?

The SM is responsible for getting the rehearsal going. Most rehearsals start at a certain section, as detailed in the schedule. That section is blocked or worked as required.

The SM needs to make sure that, before the rehearsal of a particular section starts, all folks required are there. As you get into runs, this means more than just cast. More on that later. However, the SM will eyeball the room as the rehearsal of a new section begins and confirm in her/his own mind, that all who are needed are there and ready to go.

Zoinks!

Eyeballing the room includes checking on Artistic Staff. I remember, very clearly, standing out in the lobby of a show I was directing, talking to the producer, and hearing the dress rehearsal begin – without me! Doh!

The SM will have made notes in his/her script at the beginning of each scene and/or French scene about who is required. The SM will have noted where each character will enter, etcetera. Take a moment to just check if the person is there and in the right spot. If there are problems, correct them.

How? That depends....

1. If the Director is addressing the cast, the best course of action is to whisper a request to your ASM to go and move the actor to the correct place – or go and find the missing actor. If there is no ASM available, get up and move the actor yourself.
2. It is perfectly appropriate to interrupt the Director if she/he is winding down to suggest that the actor move to the correct entrance. The Director will thank you. Just avoid interrupting the Director when he/she is in mid-monologue.
3. If the Director is not addressing the cast and you, alone, are getting rehearsal going, feel free to call out to the actor, yourself.

Once you are certain that all are in the correct spot, then, say the following (or something like it): “Okay, folks. Is everybody ready?”

Most of the time, you will get nods, some verbal assents. However, occasionally, someone will say, “What page are we on?” or “Where are we starting?” or the old stand-by, “Huh?” or even a blank, quizzical look directed your way. Watch, also for the frantic scanning and turning of pages. In the case of any of the above, say the following or something like it in a clear, loud voice: “Folks, we are starting half way down the page of page 5 (or whatever the page is) with the line, ‘I was a teenaged mutant ninja turtle.’”

If you, yourself, are not certain where you are starting, it is always permissible to confirm the start place with the Director. It is always permissible to interrupt the rehearsal to do so – just not, as I say, mid-directorial-monologue.

Once the SM has confirmed that everyone is there, in the right place, and ready to go, the SM will begin the rehearsal with either of the following phrases as appropriate:

1. “Lights up” (at the beginning of a scene)
2. or the phrase (or something like it), “whenever you’re ready, folks”

What was that?

Make all announcements in a clear, loud voice. If you are embarrassed to do this or are unaccustomed to making announcements, practice at home. Remember, we really appreciate your announcements. We really want to hear them.

The rehearsal will, then, begin. And hopefully everyone is focused, ready, happy. Better work gets done.

Sound Effects and all other Special Effects

You have carefully filled out sheet upon sheet of lists of effects. You have spent time the night before looking at and preparing the script. You are going along in rehearsal and you come to a highlighted portion in your script that says: “The doorbell rings.” What do you do?

The SM is responsible for providing substitutes for all sound, light, and other effects in the script. Okay, I keep saying this. Why? The external stimulus helps the actors react and prepare for what they will eventually have to cope with onstage. Again, the body remembers.

Okay, great. So how do I go about it?

Sound Effects

Stage Managers use various methods of providing substitutes in rehearsal and with the development of cheap, versatile recording equipment, some SMs are very high tech. My recommendation? Provide the sounds verbally and as low tech as possible. Why?

It seems a lot cooler to get a small, portable CD player, dump a few sound effects on a CD you downloaded free on the Internet, and bring them into rehearsal. It seems a cinch to set everything up on the table not far from you so that all you have to do is push a button....

Well, for some folks, this is actually a lot of work and let us remember that this is the job of the Sound Designer. The Sound Designer may not appreciate you doing his/her work because she/he may have some very interesting ideas for what he/she would like to do. But remember, also, that you have enough – or even more than enough – to do. I highly recommend that you do not go around asking for more.

Secondly, the cast may become too accustomed – almost reliant – on the sounds that you provide in rehearsal. Not good.

Instead of doing all that work, I recommend that at the appropriate time, you call out, “Ding dong!” Some SMs feel like it makes them look stupid to call out the cues or perform them. Really, you have no worries, here. The cast will appreciate your efforts – unless you overdo

things, perhaps. But those managers who feel a bit self-conscious performing the cues, will say something like the following: “Doorbell” or “Doorbell rings”. Again, make sure you say these things in a strong, clear voice.

As the section gets worked up, you will be able to get a good idea of how much or how long the cue will be running. For example, you should be able to count approximately how many rings of a telephone you will need, or just how long the ‘radio’ will be played. Keep a note of this information because it will be needed later. You could be publishing it in Production Notes. More on this later.

Lighting Effects

The SM will call, “Lights up!” at the beginning of the scene and “Lights Down!” or “Blackout” at the end. By the way, if the script notes “Curtain”, say “Blackout” instead. We, at Scarborough, have no curtain.

The only other lighting changes supplied by the manager are those specifically noted in the script like lightning, for example. In the case of lightning, I would say the word “lightning”.

Sometimes, however, a Director may have a complex lighting concept that involves light fades from one side of the stage to the other that may, in fact, influence how an actor moves or his/her understanding of what is happening. In a case like this, call the crossfade by saying something like the following: “Lights fading and coming up stage right.”

Not sure whether to supply a substitute? Go with your gut feeling about what would better help the actors understand what they’ll deal with on the stage. You’re smart.

Gun Shots

Whenever a gun is to go off, I recommend that you say, in a very, very loud and sharp voice: “Bang!” Seems a bit silly, eh? However, you are trying to give the actors something to which they can reasonably react. Make it loud, like the real sound would be.

Special Effects

Other special effects that change the action onstage should be called out, again, in a clear, loud voice. For example, when the fog begins, the SM would say, “Fog begins.” If a window shatters, the SM would say, “Crash” or “Window”. If an explosion occurs, the SM should provide a nice, loud “Bang!”

Work-throughs and Reviews

When the show returns to a section that was previously blocked, the Director will usually work-through and then stop/start run the section several times. The SM team must turn their heads to quickly resetting the props, monitoring blocking changes, continuing to call effects from the script, generally making sure they are learning the show along with the actors, and, also, prompting. More on this later.

The biggest challenge in a work-through or review rehearsal is keeping track of where all the props need to be at any given time. However, if you have been taking your notes, you will have a good leg up on this.

Blocking changes often occur frequently during the work-through. Be flexible, but if something has changed it is permissible to bring everyone’s attention to it. What do you note? Any major change in position. Give a note if someone doesn’t sit or stand in the right place. Give a note if the person takes a different path around a piece of furniture than they did previously. Small

things like a hand gesture or a look should be considered the bailiwick of the Artistic Staff and left alone by the Stage Management Team.

You are noting those things that have a PHYSICAL effect on the other actors, the lighting, prop placement. You are not worried about artistic details.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

During the work-through and review stage, a SM is most likely to make a few mistakes. However, Stage Managers are notorious for trying to be perfect. This is neither wise nor possible.

Now, professional actors and directors have extremely high expectations of professional stage managers. Truly, even at a relatively early juncture in the process, the SM is expected to know the show better than everybody, know exactly where all the props are at any given moment, etcetera, etcetera. And for the most part, SMs come through with the goods. Of course, they are likely to drop dead at thirty-five with a heart attack; so maybe there is something flawed with how they are approaching their work? Just a thought.

And in Community Theatre, everybody knows we all have a day job; so the SM is certainly allowed to make a few mistakes because the SM needs to go through a learning curve along with everybody else. And, darn it, this should be fun for you too.

Ironically, you will be hardest on yourself. I recommend that you cut yourself some slack. If you want to keep smiling, focus on all those things you did right – not just the one thing you did wrong... ☺

How to Prompt

One of the SM Team's key functions during reviews and early runs is prompting. Prompting is hard because it requires ongoing concentration and focus and Stage Managers usually have so much to do.

When do you prompt?

The basic rule for prompting is as follows: Never give an actor a line (prompt) unless he or she asks for it. In standard practice, the actor will say the word 'line'. An exception to this rule is if the Director calls for the prompt.

However, this rule assumes that the actor knows he or she is supposed to speak. In a true dry situation, none of the actors will know whose line is next. Now, this doesn't happen often. However, it is most likely to happen when working a scene or the first time the actors are off their books. The actors can become overwhelmed and confused.

Okay, so all the actors onstage will dry and the run will come to a grinding halt as everyone blinks at everyone else. Hmm. Not a great outcome. So, never say never. ☺ Let's talk about why the rule came into common use by prompters before we just follow it blindly.

Prompters are admonished not to feed a line without a request from the actor because the actor might be emoting and the prompt will spoil the moment. Stage Managers who are prompting, however, are more likely to be able to assess whether the actor is drying or not. They have been in rehearsal and seen the action and have learned, also, a bit about the actor. From time to time, the Stage Manager will see that an actor he/she knows well, in a situation they have worked time and again, cannot find his or her line. It is permissible on this very odd occasion to supply the line.

Calling for a line is standard stage practice but many folks in Community Theatre don't know that. No worries. Part of your job is training your cast. Make the following kindly announcement as you go into review rehearsals or runs where the cast is expected to be off book:

1. The only person who should be supplying lines is the Prompter. Explain that if they get in the habit of supplying lines to each other, they might do it DURING A PERFORMANCE. Very bad.
2. Explain that Stage Management will be prompting.
3. Explain that the Prompter will wait for the actor to say the word 'line' before she/he prompts.
4. Explain that the actors should feel free to start speaking as soon as they know the line. They are not to worry about cutting off the Prompter.

Who should prompt?

I have never been in a situation professionally or in Community Theatre in which there has been one person in charge of prompting. Never. I think the job is a myth. ☺ However, as we know, if there is no one else to perform the function, it becomes the responsibility of Stage Management.

I would advise that the ASM be responsible for prompting unless he or she is away from her/his book partially because during a run, prompting will be the ASM's responsibility but, also because this allows the SM to raise his or her head and think about other things. However, the ASM should consider him/herself under the "Don't prompt unless the actor asks for it" stricture. The ASM, in general, has not been able to focus on the acting the way the SM has unless, of course, the ASM has been in rehearsal all the way along.

Since the ASM is the SM's hands and feet, however, the ASM will be up and running a lot of the time. When there is prompting to be done at the same time that the ASM needs to leave the book, the ASM should quietly get the SM's attention and tap the book or otherwise let the SM know that the SM is responsible for prompting. The ASM will go off and do whatever needed doing – a props pass-off, a reset, whatever, and then return. As soon as the ASM has found his/her place in the script, the ASM should say quietly, "on book" or tap the script and take over the prompting once more. In this way, someone is always concentrating on the task.

Folks, as you get into prompting, this is usually a crunch time for stage management. If you have not had your ASM in yet, then I would highly recommend you get them in for these rehearsals and set them to prompting, if nothing else.

So you start to prompt. You need to be able to watch the action to see if someone is dry so the SM needs to have his eyes on the action and the book at the same time. Huh? Okay, here's how it's done. Run your finger along the lines and glance up frequently to see how the actors are doing. The SM should be one of the first, not one of the last, to identify a dry situation. However, if you are looking up when someone calls for a line, you should be able to find your place pronto because you are running your fingers along the lines in the book. I, personally, would simply keep my finger at the beginning of the line we were on – but I was someone who could find the place quickly.

When you prompt, folks, do not be shy. Say the line in a clear, loud voice, the same kind of voice you would use for announcements. The last thing you want to do is have the actor ask for the line multiple times because he or she cannot hear you. So, sing out Louise.

The actor will start talking as soon as he or she remembers the line. This may be after you say the first word or half way through the line or, if the actor is really confused, all the way to the end of

the line. However, as soon as the actor picks it up, be silent. Be aware that if the line is a real problem, the actor may call for another prompt half way through.

When prompting, try and keep your voice neutral even if this is the twentieth time you've prompted the actor on the same line and you are starting to feel cranky about it. Be professional, kind, but firm.

As you start to get into runs...

The early run phase of the production is probably the most taxing on the stage management team. In addition to their usual functions in a rehearsal, the team will need to

1. Cope with and organize running props as they come in
2. Fully preset rehearsal costumes and props for each run
3. Add water for liquids
4. Continue to supply substitutes for all sound, light, and special effects in the play
5. Time the runs
6. Prompt
7. Watch blocking as the early runs are the most prone to adjustment
8. Make sure everyone makes their entrances
9. Keep a record of all changes (Be flexible! Things will change...!)
10. Track set furniture and props to assess scene changes and feasibility
11. Identify problems with entrances, exits, hereto unidentified quick changes and props passoffs

A bit of a crunch time, huh? I cannot stress more strongly that your ASM needs to be with you for all runs.

There are ways that you can prepare that will reduce the amount of problems you encounter and, most importantly, reduce the amount of inquiries you are fielding while you are trying to run an already stressful rehearsal.

Helping the Cast

There are various ways you can prepare for runs of the acts or runs of the show that will help folks to know what they are on about, be where they are supposed to be, and subsequently have a more effective run.

Why? Haven't these folks been in rehearsal, working up this show? Aren't they responsible for their own entrances and exits? Absolutely. But you will find that there is a transition period as the show goes into runs, in which the cast struggles with everything – from their lines to the sequence of the show. You will discover that folks forget they are in a musical number; they will confuse the sequence of scenes. Commonly, the ASM will rush out to the Green room and find someone who is supposed to be making an entrance chatting blithely on the telephone. Rarely are they ignoring their responsibilities. It is most likely a brain fart.

How do we keep the brain farts to a minimum? Lists, lists, lists. Oh, and the ASM must be prepared to be on his or her feet a lot during the first few runs. No pun intended. Okay, maybe a little pun intended.

Zoinks!

Different levels of society have differing opinions on personal responsibility and commitment. If a person is called into the hall and doesn't hop to it, don't assume it's personal. Assume that they just don't know. Take them aside and let them know it is disrespectful to keep the cast and the artistic staff waiting. If this does not work, folks, I recommend that yelling is not a strong option. Be professional, kind, but firm. Continue to let the person know what is expected of them. Again, if the person does not fall in line, remember it is NOT personal. Start building a list of folk that you feel are unwise to work with. Directors will ignore you at their peril.

Pre-Run Announcements

I would recommend that you take a few moments before the run to make a few announcements:

1. Let folks know that the rehearsal is becoming more formal and all the focus they can muster will be most appreciated.
2. Ask the cast, please, to check in with Stage Management before they leave the building either for a cigarette just outside the door or for a quick run to their car.
3. Give the Prompting Announcement
4. Call for silence in the rehearsal hall (except only necessary talk) and ask for quiet chat in the Green Room.

Scene List

A version of the Scene Breakdown sheet should be published for the cast. This list will walk through the show, sequentially scene by scene, making clear note of the page numbers in the script, who is needed, and what musical numbers, if any, are in the scene(let).

You have options. Small paper lists delivered straight into the hands of the actors and/or posted on the walls of the rehearsal hall and Green room are more than appropriate. As the cast becomes larger, however, I highly recommend posting a large chart on the wall.

Make it neat. Put it on bristo-board. List the scenes in the show chronologically and, again, note the page numbers in the script, the cast required, and what musical numbers, if any, are performed.

By the way, use character names, not actor names on this list – anyone who has to replace a cast member half way through the run will thank you. So it is fine to list the Chorus as Chorus – not list all members individually.

Some Stage Managers like to name the scenes or the scenelets with titles that remind the cast of what happens within the scene. For example, in a ten-page section of a play in which party guests arrive at a party, it is wise to name that section: The Guests Arrive. Show the list to the Director, however. He or she may already have named the sections and may want to use his or her own naming system.

For a play we will call Jacqui’s Musical, the first scene starts with a large number of guests arriving to a society party and continues with the entrance and then an argument between the male and female lead backed up by their party guests, the Scene List could look like this:

Pp	Scene	Title	Cast Involved	Musical Number
1-10	1	The Guests Arrive	Male and Female Chorus	The Guests Arrive Jive
10-15	2	An Argument	Male and Female Chorus Lucy, Fred	
				Etc.

Putting this information up on the wall for all to see will reduce the amount of questions you will have to field and reduce the amount of missed entrances.

Making an Entrance

The Stage Management Team will be hard pressed to keep up with all the functions they will be performing in the early runs, partially because of the sheer volume of work that needs doing and partially because the ASM will be on his or her feet quite a bit performing the ASM’s primary function: making sure that the actors make their entrances.

The Team must assume that the cast will have trouble making their entrances especially in the first few runs until the production gets on its feet. If the Team assumes that mistakes will be made, then steps can be taken to avoid them and, subsequently, fewer problems will actually occur. I suggest that the ASM stay a few pages ahead of the action and, if an actor is missing, the ASM must get up and go and find them – in the Hall, in the Green Room, outside having a puff, in the bar across the street – as is necessary to ensure that everyone who is needed is, at least, in the hall about a page before they are to enter.

However, this may not be enough. Even though the actor is physically in the room, the actor may still gap and miss the entrance. Usually during a run in the hall, it is the SM who will keep an eye on who is ready and who is not because the ASM will so often be gone. Sometimes a person is just daydreaming; sometimes they are confused and standing at the wrong entrance. Be patient.

Assuming you have been taking notes as suggested in previous chapters, making sure that the actors make their entrances will be a relatively easy task.

Breaks

In the course of a three-hour rehearsal, the SM should call at least one break of fifteen minutes. In the course of a five-hour rehearsal, I would suggest two breaks of ten minutes each.

Why? Creativity is hard. Even if we’re all laughing and having a good time, we are taxing ourselves. So, about half-way through the rehearsal, if the Director is the type that seems oblivious to the human needs of the cast, send a note to him or her suggesting a break in the next ten or fifteen minutes. Most Directors will acquiesce.

The break gets called in a natural stop in rehearsal action. The Director may announce that it’s break time but make sure that you back this up with, in a strong, clear voice, “fifteen minutes, please”. The cast and staff should respond: “Thank you.” If not, make sure you say, “It is customary to say thank-you when you receive a time call. Fifteen minutes, please.”

Watch the clock. At ten minutes into the break, call out, or walk around and quietly say, “Five minutes, please.”

When break is over, call all folks back into rehearsal hall in a strong, clear voice. Keep the breaks honest or they start to creep into twenty or even twenty-five minutes. This will become a problem especially as you go into runs just prior to opening. Remember you are training your cast....

End of Rehearsal

Rehearsals should end reliably just as they began.

1. Thank everyone for their hard work
2. Review the next days schedule verbally – who is called and the times they are called. Have the next day’s schedule posted on the wall under a label marked Next Rehearsal Schedule. Handwritten is just fine.
3. If you are alone, ask everyone to grab their glasses and mugs and tidy any garbage
4. Make any administrative announcements or reminders
5. Pull the ‘Rehearsal in Progress’ sign.
6. Lock the door if you are left alone to tidy up.
7. Props should be tidied and returned to props tables. A partial props re-set doesn’t hurt assuming you know where you are going to start.
8. All cups and mugs cleaned
9. The rehearsal hall should be tidied.

Terms and Sayings 7

Quarter Backstage pre-show call given 20 minutes before curtain up (15 minutes before beginners).

Radio Microphones Microphones that instead of being connected by a cable to the sound equipment, transmit the sound via a radio signal. This allows great flexibility on stage, and has meant performers can wear very small, hidden microphones whilst still retaining complete mobility. There are two main types - hand held, where the microphone and transmitter are contained in one unit, and lavalier or pin microphones, where, in order to reduce size, the microphone is connected to the transmitter pack by a short cable. The pack can then be concealed in a pocket, and the microphone positioned on the performer's clothing, or even in their hair, for maximum audio effect.

Rag Slang for the House Curtain.

Rail Bottom or top batten in a flat.

Rake The incline of a stage floor or seating area away from the horizontal. Originally introduced as a way of improving sightlines to the stage under poor lighting conditions last century.

Ray Can A lantern with no lens producing a near parallel beam of light and often used in lighting for concerts.

Rehearsal The learning of the show by the cast and crew before public performance.

Repertory Abbrev. to Rep. A form of theatre production company, usually with a permanent company of actors, where each production has a run of limited length. At any time there is

normally one production in performance, one in rehearsal, and several in varying degrees of planning.

Restore To recall a previously used lighting state later in the performance.

Return A flat or curtain leading off from another at right angles.

Reveal A small return surrounding an arch, window, or doorway to suggest depth and thickness.

Reversal A sudden about change in the plot or action on stage leading to an unexpected outcome.

Reverberation Abbrev. to Reverb. The effect of multiple sound waves reflecting off surfaces in a room.

Revolving Stage A Revolve. A large turntable which turns the set so that, even though two or more scenes may be on the revolve, only one need be visible to the audience at a time.

Ride It A technique of pacing and timing employed by an actor to handle laughter from the audience.

Rig 1) Noun - The lighting system as a whole, 'The Rig'. 2) Verb - To hang lanterns on bars and connect with cables. 3) Often used to describe putting together any part of the show e.g. Rigging the set.

Ripple Box A rippling light effect produced by a light mounted inside a revolving cylinder in which thin slots have been cut.

Ripple Tray The effect of light dancing on water produced by shining a light onto a shallow tray containing water. To speed up the effect a fan can be directed onto the tray to agitate the water.

Riser 1) See Rostrum. 2) The vertical part of a step. 3) The vertical parts of the concentric rings of a fresnel lens.

Road Case A strong, rigidly constructed, well padded case to protect equipment from the vagaries of touring. Also Flight Case.

Roller A mechanism for hanging canvas cloth.

Rosco American manufacturer of colour filter widely used in Australia, and a range of other lighting effects equipment including smoke machines and fog juice.

Rostrum A portable platform usually in the form of a collapsible hinged framework (gate rostrum) with a separate top. Used to raise specific parts of the action or scene.

Royalty The performance fee paid to the author of a script.

Run 1) A sequence of performances of the same show. 2) Horizontal width of a step. 3) See Run Through.

Run Through A rehearsal at which all the elements of the production are put together in their correct sequence. Sometimes shortened to 'Run'.

Runners A pair of curtains parting at the centre and moving horizontally.

Unit 9 – Pssst, pass it on – Effective Communication

In Community theatre, the Director generally handles communication. Sigh.

Professionally, it is all about the SM. In fact, communication is likely the Stage Manager's primary function as the show is being rehearsed in professional theatre. But, you say, the Director is the one who knows. Okay, sure. But the Stage Manager is likely to have more up-to-date information. Why?

The Director is the one person who should not be making notes. He/she is recreating a vision, interacting with actors and designers. He/she is engaged in the process in a visceral way. She/he hasn't got their thinking brain on... How is she/he going to remember how many times the telephone rings?

So, although you are aware that the Director will likely be talking to people all the way through, keep in mind that the Director may not be giving out all the necessary notes. The Director may not be watching with the same eye and making the same inferences, let alone writing it all down.

So, assuming you are making and keeping all of your notes, when and where are you going to communicate them? There are four ongoing options, generally:

1. Quick Chats with the Director
2. Weekly Production Notes
3. Drop-Ins and Chats
4. The Production Meeting

Quick Chats with the Director

At the end or the beginning of a rehearsal or during the break, you will likely have the Director gathering up his or her stuff or popping out for a puff or making a little tea or some such. Start firing any questions you have. Uh, okay, you can be pleasant about it.

By the way, directors who smoke love to have people to chat with while they are doing it. So talking to the Director outside in thirty below weather inhaling second hand smoke is actually a positive thing. Hmmmmm. Okay, maybe this is a bad idea for those who want to live past fifty-five.

But, in short, the Director will appreciate it if you do not formalize meetings. They will be having enough meetings as it is. If the question is relevant and about the show, I can't think of one Director who would not be pleased to answer it.

So, ask away. It is always right to confirm that things are happening the way the Director wishes. You can then publish your Production Notes with confidence.

Weekly Production Notes

The taking and passing on of Production Notes seems to be a job unheard of in Community Theatre. However, it is a primary function of Stage Management during the rehearsal phase especially if there are few regular production meetings.

What exactly are Production Notes?

Production Notes are a record of what has happened in rehearsal inasmuch as it impacts the production team: the designers: set, props, costumes, L/X etc. Many of these notes are taken at

request of the Director but the Stage Manager, through inference of the action in rehearsal, will take a surprising number.

For example: The script calls for the telephone to ring, say, on page 35 after the line: “Why would he kill her? They were in love!” You have almost certainly dutifully noted this on your production requirements sheets very early on in the process. However, during the rehearsal of the scene, you realize that the Director wants the actors to hold before one of them goes to get the telephone. They work some more and you count the rings. You determine that the phone must ring six times before the actor picks it up. This is great information especially since most sound guys will only prepare four or five rings of a telephone. Most telephone cues don’t need three.

Excellent. You can see that this is important. So, now what?

Do you remember that notebook and clipboard I keep talking about? Ah! Well, they are about to make a most momentous entrance. Write it down. Make sure you note the page number, the type of cue, and the information. I used to keep on a letter-sized sheet, six or seven sections, depending on the show, and I would add notes as necessary. It will be rare that you get more than four notes per heading in an eight page blocking rehearsal. The handwritten notes may look as follows:

<u>Production Notes:</u> - January 2, 2250	
<u>Lights</u>	<u>Sound</u>
P2. Fade up on Snap p 8 Lamp must be practical	p 8 tel rings 2 twice
<u>Costumes</u>	<u>Props</u>
p. 5 Dress will have wine spilled on it	p. 1 practical lighter p. 2 add bottle of champagne
<u>SPX</u>	<u>Administration</u>
p.1 fog must be purple	Readthrough: Act 1 – 65 minutes

That night, then, or at the end of the week, the SM should compile these notes, expand upon them, and send out an email to all concerned, as follows:

Production Notes:

January 2, 2250

Jacqui's Musical

Scarborough Music Theatre

Subject to Change.

Lights

1. On page 2, when the lights come up, please make this a snap.
2. On page 8, at the line, "she doesn't know me like you do", Suzy will turn on a lamp on the SL side of the couch. This lamp must, therefore, be practical, please.

Sound

1. The telephone will need to ring twice, please.

Costumes

1. The blue dress worn by Suzy will have 'wine' spilled on it every night.

Props

1. On page one, please add a practical Bic lighter for Suzy's personal props.
2. On page 2, please add another bottle of wine.

SFX

1. The fog on page 1 needs to be purple, please.

Administration

1. The Read-through was timed as follows: Act 1, 65 minutes; Act 2, 45 minutes.

Make sure your language on these notes is clear and formal. Make sure you use the word 'please' a lot.

Okay, you will type up these notes and send them out to absolutely everyone who has committed to working on the show from the Producer right down. Why? For two reasons:

1. Everyone will act on the Production Notes that apply to his or her department.
2. Everyone will read everyone else's production notes and, hopefully, take inference from the notes given to other departments in terms of the impact on their own department and will act upon those inferences.

For example: The fog coloured purple may clash with the colours that the set designer is planning to use. The set designer would then get involved and initiate a dialogue with the Director that would, hopefully, resolve the issue.

One of the greatest complaints in Community Theatre is that 'I didn't know!'

Publishing Production Notes increases the level of communication on a show, reduces confusion and, because they are in written form and sent to all, reduces the amount of times a Designer says they weren't told something. It's good all around.

Who, When?

Professionally an SM will make it part of their daily, and I mean daily, routine to touch base with every department head in the show. Phew. Let's translate that: An SM in Community Theatre should make it part of his or her weekly routine to touch base with every department head in the show.

Back in the dim-darks, we used to use the telephone. Or...we typed up Daily Production Notes and dutifully dispersed them. Jeez-louize. Maybe we should just get some sleep and wait for the Production Meeting to role around.

But, then, on the sixth day, the heavens opened and god gave us: email.

Get everybody's email address. And every week, on a day that suits you, send out an email with all your production notes neatly organized as previously detailed. Make sure everyone knows that you are going to do this. Make sure they know that they can telephone or send you an email if they have questions. Let the information flow.

Pavlov's Bites

Try to do this on the same day every week. Very quickly folks will start to expect something from you on that day. So, if the email fails one week (and you'd be surprised how often email fails), you maximize your chance of folks contacting you asking for their weekly fix. Consistency is a tremendous tool for Stage Managers.

In Community Theatre, the following folks should receive this email:

1. The Producer (s)
2. The Artistic Staff
3. Assistant Stage Manager (s)
4. Assistant Artistic Staff or Assistants to the Artistic Staff
5. The Production Manager (if any)
6. All Design Heads: Lights, Props, Sound, Costumes, etc
7. Master Carpenter
8. Any folks attached to the show who are acting as Production Assistants
9. Front-of-House Manager
10. Publicity (if any)
11. The Cast (The Cast? Yes, the cast! In Community Theatre most of your cast has done a lot of tech. They might be able to help.)

The more they know, the happier everyone will be. I have met few folks in theatre who are trying to do as little as possible. Most people in theatre are committed to it as any artist is to any art form. If they know, they will try to do what is expected of them.

By the way: don't send notes that adjust concept, unless the Director specifically asks you. Simply make your inferences and observations in rehearsal and pass it on.

Drop Ins/Chats

Generally, when working in Scarborough, you know not only when folks will be in working on the set, for example, but almost certainly where. Drop in from time to time. Get a feel for the work being done. You might be able to chat face-to-face with folks about why something needs to be done a certain way.

Also, well, look, you are a personable sort. Drop people an email, telephone them. Folks will be impressed with your casual, hands on approach and will look forward to hearing from you.

Why? Why should I do such a thing? I am already in rehearsals three nights a week and, now, you say I should take time on one of my free nights to send out Production Notes. Why more?

Because if you do, you will catch just about every problem before it begins.

Of all the staff other than the Director, you have probably had access to most of the information. If you drop-in and see the Master Carpenter one day and you notice that a particular architectural feature is missing or something is clearly much larger or smaller than what you are working with in rehearsal, it is always permissible to bring it up. I cannot recommend more strongly that you do for the sole reason that you are likely going to be more reasonable about things. Directors get upset.

Most Master Carpenters will immediately adjust. However, if the Master Carpenter or designer or whatever doesn't seem to understand or suggests that they have more information than you, keep smiling. Simply make a note of it and bring it up to the Director when you can. As soon as possible, if you feel certain that what's been done is wrong, wrong, wrong. 😊

The Production Meeting

The Production Meeting is run by the Producer in Community Theatre. The primary function of the Production Meeting is to facilitate inter-communication by the staff of a show. Great communication means efficiency.

The Stage Manager is, therefore, a key player in a Production Meeting and will have input in almost every department. Many Stage Managers take over Production Meetings to ensure that all relevant points are covered.

In short, you need to be at the Production Meeting and you need to be prepared.

1. If you have been sending out weekly notes to all, make sure that you have retained a copy and have a couple of spares of each in your handy-dandy Production Notes section in your SM Book, just in case some folks did not get an email.
2. You might want to have a list – not official or crazy, just a list – of all the items that have come up during rehearsal and you may want to check each issue off as you see that it is being or has been handled.
3. Be prepared to answer questions. You will be surprised how much detail you have been able to retain because of your privileged position, watching behind the desk, pencil in hand.

Waddya mean, you don't have email....!

Folks in Community Theatre surprisingly sometimes don't have email. And they're proud of it! This means a lot more work for you. Every time you send an email out to the group, you need to telephone this person and let them know. A pain, truly, but think back – and it was not so long ago – that you had to call the lot of them if there was a minor change. Ack! Okay, the cast has forty in it and there are about a dozen or so other staff and, and, and...!

Keep in mind that there are aspects of the show that you may know about that no one on the team knows. You happen to know that a certain actor has a metal allergy. You happen to know that if they made a certain adjustment to the set a constant problem you are having in rehearsal would disappear. Even if the department head has no questions or input, it is likely that you will.

A last note on Production Meetings. You would expect, in Community Theatre, to have a Production Meeting once every three or so weeks. If you these are not on the schedule ahead of time, nudge your Producer a little. The Producer may not realize how critical these meetings are or may be waiting until all staff are on board. A meeting even with a few staff is a great idea.

If there is no Production Meeting organized before the rehearsals start (and even if there is), get everybody out to Meet&Greet. They will get the same talk from the Director as everybody else and everyone will be on the same page.

Terms and Sayings 8

Safety Chains Short length of chain with a clip on one end and used to secure lanterns to bars. Required by law in many places.

Sand Bag A canvas bag filled with sand used to secure and weight scenery on the stage. We rarely used sand bags these days and have, instead, theatre weights.

Scatter The light outside the main beam of a spot light which is lower in intensity.

Scene 1) A stage setting. 2) The blocks or parts into which a play is divided. 3) A particular setting of stage lighting that can be reproduced on demand. Also State.

Scrim Finely woven fabric which can be translucent or opaque using lighting from different angles. Small pieces of a scrim material is often used in front of lanterns to soften the light beam.

Script The text of the show, also containing information about settings, characters, costumes etc. to aid the cast and crew.

Segue Originally a musical term for an immediate follow on, now used more generally for any immediate follow on.

Semi-computerised Lighting Desk A lighting desk that combines a conventional manual control system with some computerised elements. Each channel still has an individual control fader, but the desk can handle scene recording and playback, and other such functions.

Sequence A series of related actions in theatre. For example: a series of lighting states and lighting changes that can be recalled on demand or a particular section in a script or a series of cues of various disciplines that need to run together smoothly.

Set 1) Verb - To set is to prepare the stage for the coming scene by placing everything in its correct position. 2) Noun - The set is all the scenery, furniture and props used to create a particular scene. 3) When an actor has learnt their lines and stage directions they are 'set'.

Set Dressing 1) The process of putting all sets, props and so on in their correct positions on the stage. 2) Props used to create atmosphere rather than having a function.

Set Piece A piece of scenery which stands alone.

SFX Abbrev. for Sound Effects, or Special Effects.

Shot Bag Canvas bag filled with lead shot used to secure scenery to the stage. Not used much anymore.

Shot Gun Mike A type of very directional microphone able to be used from much farther away from a sound source than normal.

Shutter A device in a profile spot which can alter or change the beam of light.

Sides A cut down version of the full script, prepared especially for a particular actor, showing only that actor's speeches with a few lines either side for cues. Usually on a smaller paper size such as quarto so it can be kept easily in a bag or pocket.

Side Fills Speakers set to the side of the stage.

Sightlines Lines indicating the limits of what an audience can see. The sightlines can be drawn on a plan or determined by someone in the auditorium.

Sill An flat metal bar screwed to the bottom of a door flat to secure it to the stage.

Sit In A director may invite a group of the actors' friends to 'sit in' on a rehearsal. Invited audience.

Skin Off Your Nose Theatrical greeting originating in the 19th century when make-up was coarse and crude, and would peel skin off the face. Actors in the early part of last century could often be identified by their blotchy appearance. So the greeting meant that the person hoped the actor would keep in work and thus lose more skin from their face!

Sky Cloth See Cyclorama.

Smoke Machine A device that produces the effect of smoke on stage. It operates by forcing a liquid mixture into a very hot chamber. The mixture, commonly called 'juice' or 'fog juice', becomes a gas and is expelled through a small nozzle. It emerges as a cloud of smoke. Also Fogger.

Snap Fade An instantaneous lighting change or crossfade.

Soft Edged A light beam on stage that has a out of focus or ill-defined edge or side. Also Soft Focus.

Soft Focus See Soft Edged.

Soft Patch Analogue lighting control systems still rely on the principal of 'one fader one channel' - sometimes known as parallel control - that is, each fader on the desk controls one dimmer. The only way to change this is to physically alter the wiring arrangements. A digital lighting control system, however, because the lighting control signals are combined all into one digital circuit, can use a 'softpatch' to electronically link different channels to different, or multiple, dimmers.

Sound Reinforcement The aim is to present the listener with an amplified yet natural sound.

Slapstick Slightly manic but physical comedy that relies on often violent behaviour to elicit laughter.

Speaker Also Loudspeaker. The part of a sound system that produces the actual sound that a person hears. The sound is produced by the vibration of a paper or synthetic cone by an electrical voltage in a wire coil.

Special A lantern performing a particular function, such as a fire 'special' or a window 'special'.

Spectrum Analyser Device that gives a visual readout of the level of the sound frequencies present in a room or on the input signal. Used as a tool in tuning a venue's sound system.

Spigot Small adaptor pin used to attach a lantern to a push stand or similar unit.

Spiking Marking the position of a set piece on the stage. See Marking.

Spill Unwanted light normally due to a poorly focused lantern.

Spot Line A line rigged from the grid to fly a piece of scenery.

Spotlight A lighting instrument in which the angle and beam size can be controlled.

Stage 1) The part of the theatre on which the actor performs. 2) The acting profession - an actor is said to be 'On The Stage'.

Stage Brace Portable support for flats - a metal rod, one end of which that hooks into a Brace Cleat on the back of the flat, while the other is affixed to the stage floor. (UK).

Stage Conventions Certain devices used within a performance that are accepted as portraying an event or style without necessarily being realistic.

Stage Directions Directions in the script about how the playwright intends actions or arrangements to be carried out.

Stage Door The door to the theatre through which the cast and crew enter and exit the theatre. Not the public entrance to the building.

Stage House The stage and everything up to the grid.

Stage Left Abbrev. to SL. The left side of the stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Prompt Side, Camera Right.

Stage Manager The member of the production team responsible for the smooth running of a performance. Before a production opens the Stage Manager attends rehearsals and meetings with other members of the production, and in smaller companies is often the coordinator of all of the various aspects of the production. During the performance the Stage Manager, using a copy of the script annotated during rehearsals, cues the actors and the various technical departments. On larger shows this last function will be performed by the Deputy Stage Manager.

Stage Right Abbrev. to SR. The right hand stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Opposite Prompt, Camera Left.

Stage Weight Used to secure the base of a french or stage brace.

Stagger Through A more realistic term for an early Run Through.

Sticky If a scene or paragraph is proving difficult to play, it is said to be sticky.

SRO See Standing Room Only.

Standing Room Only All seats having been sold the only positions left for the audience require standing for the show.

Stock Characters Type cast characters such as 'The Villain', 'The Hero', etc.

Stock Plots As for Stock Characters.

Stock Scenery Scenery able to be used for a number of different plays.

Strand Strand Electric, famous English stage lighting company, now represented all over the world. Once boasted that every theatre in the world owned at least one piece of Strand equipment. Founded in 1914 by two London theatre electricians - Arthur Earnshaw and Phillip Sheridan.

Strike To clear the stage of scenery and other materials, or to remove a specific article.

Strobe Lighting unit giving a fast series of very short light flashes under which action appears frozen.

Stumble Run/Through See Stagger Through.

Sub-Group See Sub-Master.

Sub-Master or Sub-Group. A control on either a sound or a lighting desk that allows a set of channels to be controlled from one fader. Generally a Sub-Master is a lighting term, whilst Sub-Group an audio term. In lighting - also Scene Master.

Subtext The meaning beneath the superficial surface of a play's story, often more important than the latter.

Summer Stock Theatre Companies that operate in regional areas, outside the usual theatrical centres, during the summer months, and who produce an intensive season of plays.

Surround Sound An extra audio track now added to many films often used for atmospheric or special effects sounds. The surround speakers are placed at the side and/or rear of the audience so that the patrons appear 'surrounded' by the film's soundtrack. When first developed was predominantly used for sudden special effects sounds such as explosions, and so was first known as the effects soundtrack.

Supernumerary An actor with a non-speaking role, employed, for example, to swell a crowd scene. Also Extra.

Unit 10 – Preparation for and Moving into the Theatre

Anatomy of Our Theatre

As you move into the theatre, make sure you are familiar and comfortable with every space or work area at Scarborough Village Theatre. Bear in mind, always, that the theatre is being run by non-theatre people. Things at Scarborough Village work a little differently than you might expect at a professional or even another community theatre.

Contact Information at the Theatre

Scarborough Village Theatre
is part of Scarborough Village Community Centre
3600 Kingston Road (northeast corner Kingston Road and Markham)
Scarborough, ON

Box Office: 416-396-4049

Backstage: 416-396-5052

Backstage

The Stage Manager (along with the Assistant Stage Manager) is in charge of backstage.

The area in which the cast prepares; props and set pieces are stored for the performance. The audience is not allowed backstage after the Half. Period. There are a lot of great reasons for this but the two that come to mind immediately are 1) People are changing and need their privacy and 2) Security of personal possessions.

After the show opens, the director is generally welcome backstage before or after but not during a performance. Directors have been barred from backstage, however. More on this later.

It is tremendously important that, as a Stage Manager, you turn a very critical eye on your own backstage area with a mind to safety. Cables should be suspended above or taped down. The backstage should be organized in an orderly fashion reducing clutter so that fewer accidents can occur. More on this later.

Backstage Door

In Scarborough, the backstage door is a door on the east and south end of the Front-of-House area. In general, the audience is not welcome past that door. Also, it is wise that any movement between the House and Backstage during a performance go through that door and not through the 'red doors' to backstage in the House especially if the house is being used as playable area.

The Booth

The (usually, but not always, small) room in which the Stage Manager and L/X and Sound technicians sit. From here, the SM monitors the performance and calls cues. Think of it as the brains of the show. In Scarborough, the booth is located behind (south of) the old Box Office through a half door and up a steep set of stairs. Three people working in the booth at one time is more than enough.

The Booth is equipped with all sound and lighting control devices, a mic to the house, and there are headsets that keep the Stage Manager in touch with crew. Unfortunately, we are using old-ish radio sets – so things can get a bit wonky. Nothing beats a solid Clearcom system. Sigh.

The key to the booth is in a lock box in the Box Office to the left of the booth door. The combination to the lock box changes frequently. Find out what the combination is and make a note of it in your script.

Box Office

Where the tickets are sold. In Scarborough, the Box Office is run by the city. We are very nice to the Box Office staff. The Box Office has moved to the Community Centre offices at the south end of the building, just inside the front doors.

City Administration/Office

The Office is located at the North end of the building, just inside and to the east of the centre's front (north) doors. The Office staff will have a lot of information about the show if you're interested – what shows are sold out, how the tickets are selling. Keys to the theatre are kept here when not in use. When you get to the theatre, you will likely be the first there and will have to sign out the key. More on this later.

The Deck

Also called the Floor or the Stage. The Deck is a term stolen from sailing. Many early stagehands were out-of-work sailors. Early stage managers – they weren't called stage managers then – would signal the sailors with a whistle just as the sailors were used to on their ships. So the superstition against whistling in a theatre was really a practical issue way back when. If you had whistled back then, a scene change might start... 😊

Dressing Rooms

The rooms in which the actors store their personal belongings and prepare for the show. In Scarborough, there are two sets of dressingrooms. Traditionally, the women change downstairs and the men upstairs. Each dressingroom has its own bathroom.

Just a general note about manners: All Stage Management should knock and request entry (even to dressingrooms reserved for folks of their own sex) before going into occupied dressingrooms after the half hour. I do it just about always even if we are not in the half.

The key to the downstairs dressingroom is kept in a lock box in the backstage corner to the right of the black door into the dressingroom stairwell area. The combination to this lock box changes regularly. Make sure you get the combination and make a note of it in your book and your memory banks.

Front of House

The Front of House Manager is in charge of the front of house.

Where the audience waits before the show or during intermission. We have a large lobby with the open Community Centre room on the east side of the building in which folks queue up and in which our Refreshments are sold.

Green Room

The area in which the cast relaxes while they wait for entrances and exits – also where the public can be met after the show. In Scarborough Village Theatre, there is no Green Room. What we call a Green Room is a misnomer. This should be called Backstage Left. After the half hour should be treated as such. However, the name has been bestowed and will stick, likely. You may consider training your cast that, at the quarter, the Green Room magically becomes backstage

area and the cast must behave accordingly. The only place the cast can speak in normal voices is in the dressingroom with the doors closed.

House

Where the audience sits. The Front of House Manager is in charge of the House from the moment the stage manager passes the house to them (at the half) until the Front of House Manager passes the house back (when the audience is seated and ready). Also, the Front of House Manager is in charge of the house during intermission. Otherwise, the House is the responsibility of the Stage Manager. More this sharing of responsibility later.

Lighting Loft and Grid

The lighting loft is the area that is accessed by the staircase going up on the west side of the orchestra loft or by a ladder near the top of the SR stairs going up to the loft. Here you will find lighting equipment stored. Up in the grid you will find the lights and cables for the L/X. More on this later. In general, the Loft and Grid should be considered off limits to cast. However, many items are flown in or dropped from the Grid. You want to familiarize yourself with the area.

Loading Dock and Shop

The Loading Dock is in the extreme southern end of the building and is usually not in use during a run. Try to encourage builders to leave the shop in a tidy and orderly way when they are done to reduce the possibility of accidents. Please be advised that the driveway behind the loading dock should always be considered a fire access and is not used for parking. Ever.

Orchestra Loft

In most theatres, the orchestra sits in a pit in front of the stage. The musical director is clearly seen in the pit by the players. In Scarborough, the orchestra sits up in the loft area behind the stage and the musical director must rely on monitors to keep the show running smoothly. When there is an orchestra, the Musical Director has complete control of the Orchestra Loft. When there is no orchestra, the Loft reverts to Backstage and the Stage Manager controls the area.

Prompter's Booth or Box

The place where the prompter sits. In Scarborough, we do not have a Prompter's Box or Booth.

Refreshments

Refreshments are sold before the show and during intermission. The key for the refreshments counter is in the booth, on a hook, halfway up the metal stairs.

The Stage

The stage is the area upon which the actors perform. In Scarborough that is not simply the deck. Often, second levels are constructed and the loft is used as playable area. Many directors use the house stairs as entrances and exits and, sometimes, the house, itself, as a playable area.

Thrust Stage/Full Thrust Stage

A thrust stage will jut out significantly into the house so that audience is on three sides and there is little or no playable space above the proscenium line. Scarborough Village Theatre is a full thrust stage. Scarborough has no permanent working mains.

Leaving the Rehearsal Hall

As you leave the Rehearsal Hall, you will want to think about packing up, cleaning up, passing off tasks to running crew, and solidifying your own blocking and production notes.

Developing the Dark Week Schedule

At the last Production Meeting, the Dark Week schedule should be discussed. Make sure that all Department Heads commit to the ways that they will share the stage. Issues to consider:

- 1) How many days will it take to erect the set?
- 2) How many nights will the Lighting Designer need to have the theatre lights out so he/she can properly focus the lights?
- 3) When will the floor be painted (needs to be done before the lighting levels are set)?
- 4) When does the Director want to get on the stage for rehearsals (bar none, Directors want to get on the stage as early as possible)?
- 5) When are Front-of-House pictures being taken? When will the show photo be taken?
- 6) When is the show furniture arriving?

From this information and in consultation with both the Director and Producer, it does not hurt to produce a complete dark week schedule. Try and do this well in advance, at least three weeks before move in.

What's on the Schedule?

About a week or so before you move into the theatre, take the time to chat with your Producer about the schedule to ensure that rehearsal rooms in the Community Centre are booked

Your Stuff

You will have a lot of stuff to take with you including your SM kit and your Book. I would recommend that you pack everything up at the last rehearsal – but leave everything at the rehearsal hall. Then on Move-in Day, take all of your stuff in your car with you. Things go missing when they are packed in the truck.

Blocking Notes

As you move into the theatre, blocking on the show should cement. The show should have had at least two or three stop/start or stumble runs BEFORE you move in. The director should have had enough time to assess her/his own work and make any changes.

Make sure the Director knows that this is your expectation as a Stage Manager. Assuming your Director has some respect for what you are trying to do, all will be well. But even Directors with deep respect will often ask to change blocking after move-in (I do it every show! Bad director. Naughty. Go to your room.). It is simply not wise to make any large changes and even small changes can pose an ongoing problem during the run. Use your discretion. Be flexible but, remember, you have every right to say no.

There are always problem shows. If the show has not had at least one stop/start run before moving in the Producer must be informed. Hopefully, you can track that earlier in the process – if the show has gone off the rails schedule-wise, you will have already told the Producer and the producer will be already handling it.

So, as a general rule, blocking should cement on move in. What does that mean to you? Take an hour or two, go through your book, and clean up, make neat and legible all of your blocking notes. Phew.

If you do not take the time before move-in, you will never have the time during production week (and a half) and the first week of the run. Your blocking notes are most critical during production week (and a half) and the first week of the run. You will refer to them more during this time even than you did as you went into runs! So take the hour or so, have a cup of coffee, sit down and clean up your script.

We are fam-u-ly! Get up everybody and dance!

It would be worth your while to find out who the next Stage Manager for the next show is and contact them on your way out. Invite them into the unit for a visit during the last week of your rehearsal period in the unit. Have a chat. Find out what you can do to help them in terms of your tape plot, the rehearsal furniture you are using, your noticeboard items, and all the other great things you can think of.

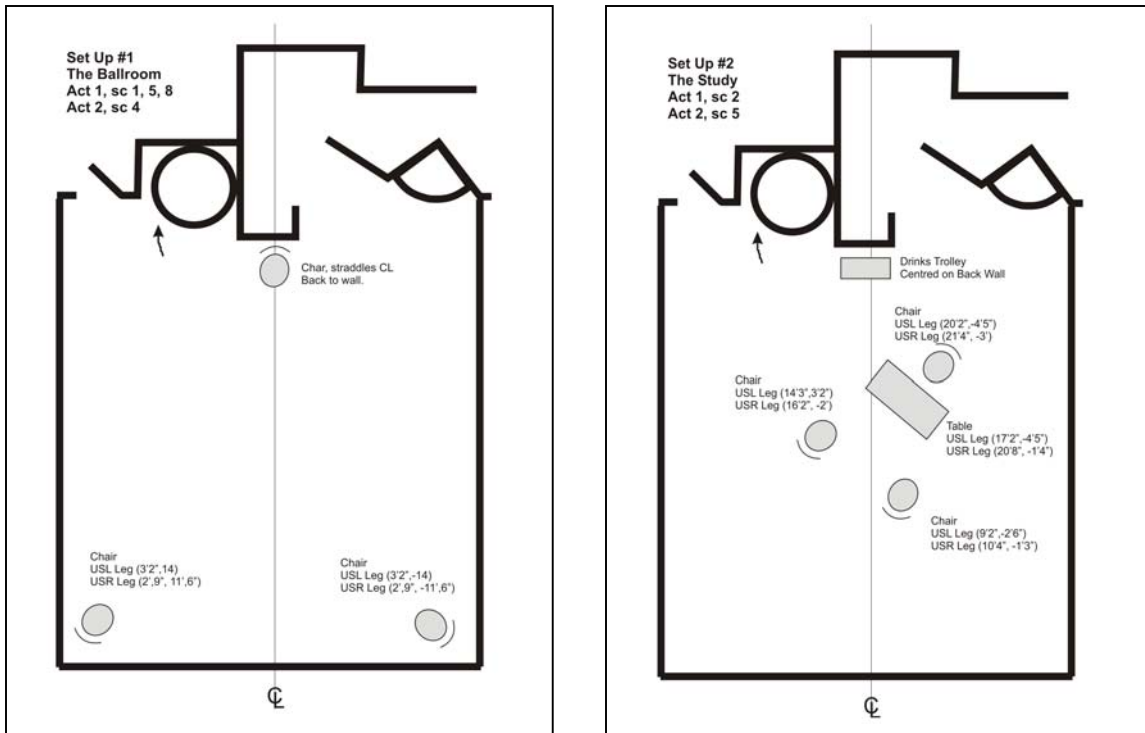
The Set

You will want to load all that furniture into the truck with the certain knowledge that you know exactly where it needs to be placed on the stage once you get to the theatre.

You have been dutifully spiking the set pieces all the way along using different colours for each set-up or scene (kitchen, livingroom, garden, etcetera). Now it is time to produce a diagram detailing each set up. The idea here is to maximize your chance that the set up on the Village Theatre stage is similar, or even exactly, like the set ups you were using in rehearsal. The tape plots you developed way back when are great for recording your furniture set ups.

For each significant change of scene, make up a new diagram. For example, in a musical, you are likely to be recreating four or even five different furniture set ups or scenes. Make clear note on each set up of the following: a) the scene (i.e. the kitchen, the bedroom, the office, the garden) and b) what scenes in the play (Act 1, Scene 3) need this particular set up. Sorry if this wording is a little confusing. God bless the English language.

Examples of diagrams follow. Once you have made up your diagrams, pull all tape from the floor, unless you have an agreement with the stage manager following you. Phew!



The Props

If your Props Coordinator is coming in to take over the running of the props, I suggest that you and your ASM and the Props Coordinator/Runner have a meeting with her/him the day before you move in. Gosh, Jacqui, another meeting? Yes, and you will thank me.

Before the table sheets or tape (or however you have organized things) are pulled and before the props are packed away, it's a great time to go over everything that has been done in rehearsal, solidify notes and pass them off to the Coordinator who will be in charge of running the props. Same, too, if you are only going to have an ASM. If that ASM is joining the show as you move in (a common practice that I would discourage – get them into the process as early as you can) have a meeting with that person the day before.

Though running a show may seem like a huge task, all things are quantifiable. All things can be reduced to lists – lists by scene, even (should the show be extremely difficult) lists by page.

There are only a finite number of props and a finite number of actions that a Props Runner or ASM will be performing during the run of any given show. Every time that show is mounted, it is likely that this quantifiable list will change slightly depending on how the show is staged and the demands of the particular director or cast.

This finite number of actions can be taught. I would recommend that you take the time the day before you move in to show the Props Runner or ASM what has been happening in rehearsal. Do this before you pull your tables. Make sure that the ASM or the Props Runner understands (in a firm, professional, but kind way) that you hope the props set up will change very little when you move into the theatre for the actors' sakes in the hope of making a smoother transition.

If you can transition smoothly into the space, you will find very few mistakes will occur with the props during the run of the show.

Once you have had this meeting, Stage Management will be responsible for preparing the props for transport if there is no Props Coordinator. How you decide to do this is entirely up to you. Some managers prefer to have the cast help wrap and pack up the props on the morning of the move-in. I recommend this approach because otherwise, you might be dumping too much work on yourself. There is already enough to do. Other managers prefer to do all the work themselves. Hmmmm.

However, in a perfect world, the Props Coordinator will be present and will be responsible for this work him/herself. However, remember that you will be responsible for assigning cast to help that person during move-in.

The Costumes

Make sure that any costumes you have been using in rehearsal are put away. If there are quick changes that need to be done that have not already been addressed in Production Meetings, make sure you have your complete notes copied for the Costume Designer, ready to pass off the next day.

Be aware that as you get into runs in the theatre, you will bump into little costume crises in which actors will need help changing – especially in a musical. But, you say, I have been watching diligently! I know how much time folks have...! Fair enough. But don't be surprised if you trip over the fact that the actor has to run up the stairs after the change has been made.... ☺

Jobs on the way out...

Very few managers organize the people power for the load out of rehearsal hall. Things will go more smoothly if folks know what is expected of them. For move-in day, you could make up Assignment lists and assign the following tasks to folks:

- 7) Cleaning of the bathrooms.
- 8) Emptying the garbage, tidying and sweeping out the space.
- 9) Load crew – set, set pieces, furniture, tools, make up kit, etc.
- 10) Vacuuming Green Room and Rehearsal Hall
- 11) Cleaning kitchen, including the fridge, counters, and floors.
- 12) Wrapping and prep of Props

Most of your folk will be on the load crew. Take extra care not to assign jobs along old-fashioned gender specific lines. Don't assume that your female actors just want to clean the bathrooms. Don't assume that your male actors are the only folks hail and hearty enough to work the load crew. Make sure you get to know people during the rehearsal process and assign jobs based on what you know about them.

Other rules of thumb:

- 1) Every cast member should have a job. No one is excused – unless they are too sick to attend.
- 2) The larger the cast, the more folks who can be assigned to each job.
- 3) Once a person is finished a specific job, they should consider themselves on load crew until the truck is ready to go.

I might not send out an email the day before with tasks assigned unless you want people to request adjustments to their assignments. Instead, make sure multiple assignment lists are posted all over the hall to reduce the number of questions you will have to field.

Organizing What Happens at the Theatre

Jobs on the Way In

More of a chance to share the fun. Draw up Assignment Lists for Posting:

- 1) Unload crew (cast and crew)
- 2) Props – unwrapping. Table set up, etc. (Props Co-ordinator, ASM, cast)
- 3) Costumes – hanging organizing. (Costume Designer, cast)
- 4) L/X (Lighting Designer, L/X Crew, cast with interest or experience)
- 5) Set Installation (Set Designer, Builder, cast)
- 6) Front-of-House Display (FOH Display Designer, cast)

Make sure all cast knows that they should consider themselves on unload crew until their department head pulls them off. Make sure all cast knows that if they are released by the Department Head for whom they are working, they should seek you (the Stage Manager) out to ensure that there are no other crazy, little jobs that need doing.

All actors are equal, but some are more equal than others....

Uh. Well, if you want to sleep well at night, make an effort to be extremely fair in your dealings with your cast. Especially where your friends are concerned. Folks will notice if you consistently drop the choice jobs on your buddies or on leads. Leads can load the truck, too. Leads can clean the bathrooms, too. Be fair.

Signage

If you have folks new to the theatre in your cast, make sure you prep a few signs before move in that will point the way:

- 1) To Stage Door (this should be pulled before the first performance)
- 2) Stage Door (this should be pulled before the first performance)
- 3) To Dressingrooms
- 4) Kitchen
- 5) Men's Dressingroom
- 6) Women's Dressingroom
- 7) To Stage Left
- 8) To Stage Right
- 9) To Front of House
- 10) To Loft

Make sure you have enough copies of the show schedule, the scene breakdown sheets, contacts sheets, lists of rules and regs, and any other piece of information you plan to post in the dressingrooms, and backstage left.

You may want to make up signs that identify each backstage entrance onto the deck for your actors. For example: front door, kitchen door.

You may want to make up large wall charts detailing the scenes as they progress and who is required for each scene.

Sign Up Sheet

I cannot recommend more strongly that if you have not been using one that you use a Sign Up Sheet from move-in day on. Theatres are large places; you can't necessarily eyeball folks as they come in. The sign up sheet can take any form you wish. Generally, a chart is built with the cast members' names down the left and the call day (and sometimes day and time) on the top. The cast members are asked to sign in as soon as they arrive for call and are settled in the theatre that day. Generally, the sign in sheet includes only the cast.

Note that if the cast member is dropping off his or her coat and then plans to go and get a hot dog from the concession by the skating rink and sit and read a book outside the theatre for a half hour, they should not sign in. They should sign in when they are at the theatre and settled backstage.

Make sure that you or your ASM has prepared the sheet and have a system ready for putting up a pencil or pen for folks to use when they sign in.

Words to the Wise

Send out an email to all cast and crew that details any rules or suggestions you have about comportment in the theatre. Keep this short. (You will likely give the same speech later.) Some ideas:

- 1) Encourage folks to use the Stage Door at all times.
- 2) Encourage folks to leave all valuables (jewelry, large amounts of cash) at home.
- 3) No eating or drinking of anything but water in the House.
- 4) No smoking in the theatre. Smokers need to step outside and close the door behind them if they would like a cigarette. Otherwise the wind blows the smell throughout the theatre.
- 5) Audience is not welcome backstage after the Half, and during the show.
- 6) Remind folks to sign in once they are settled in the theatre.

As you go along, your list of behaviours you will not accept may grow because of an issue or problem that came up in a production. Share this information with others. Add the new rule to your list.

Dressingrooms and More Signage

If you would like a smooth move-in, I highly recommend assigning space in the dressingrooms. The three different assignments to consider are as follows: costume cupboards, lockers, and mirror space.

Each person in the show should have a space in a costume cupboard. You can also assign mirror space, too. In a small show, this process is a snap. Give everyone her or his own locker. Give everyone his or her own space at the mirror.

However, the larger the show, the more difficult this process becomes. Locker space should be assigned, not by lead, but by amount of costume space required. Many leads have four or five or

more costumes. They need their own space. But leads or secondary leads who have only one costume can share with others who need only one costume.

For a very large cast, it is wise to assign leads mirrors and chorus mirrors especially if the leads have multiple costume changes and are constantly trying to get to the mirror to clean up their make up. This allows the lead a clearer path to their station and speedier, less stressful changes. However, if the show is not difficult for leads and it is for chorus, bring this up with your cast and tell them you will be assigning mirror space accordingly.

The small school-sized lockers also need to be assigned. The ASM and running crew often use these lockers. (You will likely stow your stuff up in the booth along with the booth staff.) Assuming there is a fifty/fifty split of cast along gender lines. I would recommend assigning crew space in the men's dressingroom (regardless of gender) because the women, in general need more space and have less lockers. Go ahead. Call me sexist.

When there is significantly less of one sex than the other, put the crew in those dressingroom lockers regardless of sex. Make sure everyone knows that they are to knock before they enter a dressingroom after the half hour regardless of whatever sex.

Once you have assigned lockers and stations, make up signage that will tell everyone what's what. List the names of the folks using the lockers and, in Community Theatre only, list beside the part they are playing.

Also, any unused dressingroom wall could become a communications centre or notice board. Put up a show schedule. Put up the scene breakdown. Whatever else makes sense.

But, heesh! They already know all this stuff!

Why put up the signage? Why put up the signage with run dates and rules? Bus schedules? The map to the show bar? Much like your communications centre in rehearsal hall, I guarantee you that you will field fewer questions and that the show will run much more smoothly. Guaranteed.

Last But Not Least

The afternoon before move-in, send out an email and/or telephone your cast, crew, and design staff to ensure that everyone is reminded that the next day is move in day, that your cell number is such-and-such, and that they should feel free to let you know of any trouble whatsoever. Phew.

Waddy mean phone? I think back to not too many years ago when email wasn't in general use. Stage Managers spent half their lives on the telephone. I would make forty telephone calls on a schedule change – and that was just the cast.

It's Move In Day!

You've prepared and worked and slaved and finally the day is here. You've organized everybody to work together. You've phoned and emailed your heart out. You're probably excited.

Wait! What am I supposed to be doing on Move In day? Funnily enough: As little as possible. Why? You will answer a thousand questions on Move-In Day. And then you will answer a thousand more. Yes, there are procedures you want to follow everyday you go into the theatre but more on this later.

Just try keep yourself open for ongoing and continual consultation.

The only exception to this rule is the rush during the load out of the Unit and the load into the theatre. Go ahead and carry a few flats. Folks will notice and they will appreciate the fact that you are helping with the scut work.

You will be responsible for handing over the signage that you brought to your ASM with detailed instructions on what to do with it. I would recommend that you prioritize the task of assigning space in the dressingrooms.

What is Move In Day Like?

Generally you will call the cast for 10:00 am or 11:00 am at the Unit depending on how much there is to load. Be there your usual half and hour early and post your work assignments sheets. But don't try and do a lot of work yourself. Conserve your strength. Read the Saturday paper. You're going into Dark Week. You might as well get a bit of information about the world before you immerse yourself in the intense project to come.

The idea of arriving early is that the truck be loaded, leave the space, and arrive at the theatre at noon when the space officially becomes yours. The next few hours are generally devoted to work around the theatre. Following you might have a run in the Community Centre rehearsal hall but, bear in mind that you will

Go Home, for goodness sake.

Theatre groups must clear the space by 11:00 pm every night EXCEPT a show night or dress rehearsal. This is non-negotiable. Good thing, too, or you might do what we used to which was spend the night in the theatre working on the set! But, of course, people have jobs. They should sleep. A tired cast does not perform well at all.

Once at the theatre, at least an hour of the cast's time will be spent on working on the tech. Many Directors call for a line run in the afternoon and a run in the evening in rehearsal hall. For a musical, often the orchestra sitz (sing through of the show with the orchestra) is held in a rehearsal hall in the Community Centre on the afternoon of move in.

For some straight plays and for most musicals, the day will stretch, then, into the evening with a run of the show in a rehearsal hall in the Community Centre. These runs are very difficult for stage management because your team is carting props and furniture up the to hall and then putting them away after the rehearsal is over. More on this later.

Just be aware that, for a lot of shows, the move in day is often well over twelve hours long.

The Theatre Coordinator

The first 'official' you will have to deal with at Scarborough Village Theatre and representing Theatre Scarborough (Playhouse 66) is the Theatre Coordinator. There is usually a team of three Coordinators – one from each group. One will be present at the theatre, usually before you arrive to eyeball the space and ensure that the last group left it shipshape. They are there to report any troubles.

Theatre Coordinators sometimes help with the work but, usually, they keep themselves separate or busy themselves with other light tasks so that they can monitor what is going on in the space, how the set is going up, what you are planning to do – and point out problems, errors, or

transgressions of policy or rule. These are great folks who embody years of experience IN THIS SPACE. They are invaluable to you.

Listen to them. Not only will they tell you about rules, they might proffer a few pointers. If you have a question on how to proceed or what to do, the Coordinator might have the answer. Be nice to them.

If you have a concern or question about the space or if something in the theatre is damaged or otherwise not working, you need to inform a Theatre Coordinator and work with him/her to fix the problem. Make sure you have contact information before the Coordinator leaves.

The Coordinator will often leave after she/he is sure that the move in went smoothly and you, as a group, are happy.

Theatre Scarborough? Who the heck is Theatre Scarborough?

Theatre Scarborough (formerly known as Playhouse '66) is the umbrella board that governs the inter-workings of the three Community groups who produce theatre in Scarborough Village Theatre: 1. Scarborough Music Theatre, 2) Scarborough Players, and 3) Scarborough Theatre Guild.

Fire Procedures and Theatre Tour

One of your responsibilities is to ensure that the cast knows what to do in case of a fire. Make sure you request a Safety and Fire Procedures document from your Producer. That document over-rides everything written in this document. Period. So read it. If there isn't one, make sure you include a recommendation to build on in your show report.

I recommend you give the cast this tour of the theatre with a mind to safety on Move-In Day. Remind them to stay off the stage unless they need to be there. Show them all the exits backstage: Both loading dock doors and assign exits for the US dressingroom, DS dressingroom, and anyone onstage in case of emergency. Tell them to keep roughhousing down, keep off the lighting grid, whatever you think is important safety-wise.

Make sure your ASM is trained to guide the cast out in case of emergency. Generally, Stage Managers leave last – however, you are not required to lay down your life, here. Do this within reason. Try to close fire doors after the cast has cleared the stage and the dressingroom area. Again, all within reason. If there is a gas leak, for example, just get everybody out.

Set up a place outside for the cast to meet so you can count noses. Make sure this meeting spot is well away from the building – out to the sidewalk, for example.

I believe you are required to actually run a fire drill at some point in the dark week process. Do it early.

Is there a Dr. Sands in the House?

How will the cast know there's an emergency? Train them to stop whatever they are doing when they hear "Is there a Dr. Sands in the House?" and head for the agreed upon exit even if they are mid-sentence onstage. This is the cross-group call for fire/emergency procedures.

Terms and Sayings 9

Tableau A finishing arrangement or placement of cast at the end of a scene or act that is achieved, then held as the lights fade down or the curtain falls.

T-Bar A metal bar with a slot down the middle mounted horizontally on a push-up stand, from which a small number of lights can be hung.

Teaser 1) Originally the border of scenery behind the front curtain for masking the flies, now the term refers to any short drop used as masking. 2) A small press or short radio or TV advertisement designed to titillate the public while giving almost no detail.

Technical The functions essential to a play other than those of the cast's actual interpretation of the script, in particular the set, lighting etc.

Technical Rehearsal Abbrev. to Tech. A rehearsal at which all of the technical elements are rehearsed and integrated into the show.

Theatre In The Round A stage in which the audience sits on all sides of the stage.

Theme The central idea of a play.

Three Fold Three flats hinged together.

Throw The distance between the lantern and the object being lit.

Thrust Stage Type of stage which projects into the auditorium so the audience can sit on at least two sides.

Tilt The vertical movement of a lantern.

Top And Tail See Cue To Cue.

Top End The highest part of the audible audio frequency spectrum.

Tormentor Narrow curtain or flat used to mask the wings, usually at right angles to the proscenium. We call them blacks.

Tragic Flaw The fundamental error in a character that often leads to a climax for the character within a play.

Translucent A property possessed by some materials that allows light through without showing the particular shape or form of objects on the other side.

Trap A trap door opening into the area below stage which can be used for special effects.

Trouper An optimist, some one who always sees the good side and rolls with the bad.

Truck A low platform with wheels or castors on which a piece of scenery can be moved. Also Wagon.

Tumbling Flying a cloth from the bottom as well as from the top when there is insufficient height to fly in the normal way.

Tune 1) Aligning a musical instrument to a standard pitch, or adjusting musical instruments for playing together. 2) Adjusting the equalisation of a sound system to suit the acoustic characteristics of a specific room and/or style of performance.

Unit 11 – Production Week 1

Opening and Closing Procedures

The theatre needs to be opened everyday you are working in it and closed up when everyone leaves. Make sure that an experienced manager walks you through this process at least once. The following explanation will help, but is not enough:

Arrive approximately two hours before a show is to begin, or about a half hour before anyone else is called.

When you get to the theatre, you must first sign out the keys from the Community Centre Office in the north end of the building. Go in and let them know that you need the keys. If they do not know you, they will ask you your name and check to see if you are on the list of folks approved for access to the keys. You will be given a binder that holds the keys, the sign out sheets, and the list of folks approved to access the theatre. Sign the keys out.

Take the keys and enter by the stage door. Never unlock the front doors of a theatre while you are in it alone. Let me repeat that. Never unlock the front doors of a theatre while you are in it alone. If you are a woman, let me re-repeat this rule: Never unlock the front doors of a theatre while you are in it alone. Got it?

You, then, have a decision to make regards the Stage Door. You may want to unlock the Stage Door as you go through, not merely open it or you may consider leaving the door locked until at least one other person arrives. If you decide to follow the second option (the most safe and wise), make sure you have sign that tells folks you are in the theatre and to knock loudly for entrance. Make sure the sign is removed and the door unlocked with the first other person arrives.

I don't do the second thing; I do the first. In my twenty odd years out there, I have never had a problem. However if you are young and cute and petite, maybe you should be a better Stage Manager than me.

Okay, back to the opening up procedure. I turn on backstage lights first. There is a switch in the loading dock on the right hand wall a few steps in. Turn into the backstage area on your right hand side. There is a switch on the wall on your left. This can be a hard switch to find in the relative dark before your eyes have adjusted. You should always have your flashlight with you to ensure that you don't trip over anything.

Argh...!!

Now, why did pirates often wear one eye patch? Night vision. I am not recommending this – it's just for fun. However, if you are going in and out of light and dark and you want to maintain your night vision in one eye, wear a patch...! If you don't, your eyes will definitely take ten or fifteen minutes to adjust. Uh, a flashlight is the modern solution to the problem of going into dark places. ☺

Here, also, you will find the switches for the backstage blues. These lights should go on and the work lights out just before the audience enters the house.

Next, go into the SL kitchen area. That is through the red door just to your right. The light switch for this room is on the left as you go through. Get the downstairs dressingroom key from the lockbox on the wall just to the left as you go into the kitchen. (The other little key in here is

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for the tool shed backstage right.) The code for the lock box changes every show, I expect. Your producer or the theatre manager will have the code that you need.

Go back into the central backstage area. Prop open the door into the stairwell on your right. There should be a wedge on the floor. Unlock the dressingroom and prop open the door – there should be a wedge on the floor. Turn on the stair lights just inside the door. Here, also, are some blue lights for when the show is running. They won't go on until the ASM flips them just before the House comes in.

Turn the overhead lights on (they are on the wall to the right of the door) and unlock the costume cupboards that are in use. The key for the dressingroom cupboards is on the ring for the theatre keys. It is a small silver key. I have suggested putting a dot or a mark on the key but, if the key is unmarked, try all the small keys until you identify one that opens the cupboards. Mark that key in some way for your own edification. By the way, the one key opens all the cupboards upstairs and down. Turn on the bathroom lights and eyeball the bathroom. To warm the dressingroom (in the winter the room tends to be cold), turn on the make-up lights. Eyeball the general state of the room. Tidy up anything yukky that was missed the night before. If there is an ongoing issue (something broken, for example) make a note of it to inform the appropriate folk.

Once you're done, take your dressingroom key back to the lockbox.

Go upstairs and unlock that dressingroom. It is unlocked with the theatre key, not the dressingroom key from the lockbox; however, the cupboard key is the same one used for downstairs. Again turn on the lights, just inside the door on the right. Turn on the bathroom lights and, to warm the room, turn on the make up lights.

If the loft is being used (an orchestra, second level on the set), open the door to the second level. The loft work lights are half way down the staircase SR; so if you want those lights on at this time, you will have to walk across the loft itself in the dark. Make sure you have your mag light handy. As you walk through the loft, keep an eye open for anything out of place or anything unsafe. If you are working a musical, remember that you must not touch anything up there without the permission of the Musical Director. Make a note of any problem (cords across a walkway, for example) so that you can bring it up as soon as the MD arrives.

Where should I keep my mag light?

Keep in on your person all the times while you are in the theatre. Many Managers carry fanny packs. I did for a while until I was single again and decided they were unattractive. Now that I am carrying a permanent paunch, I probably would wear one again. ☺ There are utility belts you can buy that have slots for mag lights and other tools. These are kind of geeky but really practical. I kept my mag light in my back pocket as I have a thing about geeky.

Walk down the SR stairs and turn on the loft works and the stairway blues. Walk down the remainder of the stairs and out onto the stage. Keep in mind that, during the whole process, you are looking for things that are out of place – anything that might have fallen, anything broken, something missing, something not working. As you step on stage, turn on the stage work lights with the remote control on the theatre key ring tab. The stage works are quite bright.

Then go up the stairs to the SL side of the booth. The house lights can be turned on with the lighting fixture just inside the theatre from the theatre doors. The mechanism can be a bit

challenging. There are four possible settings. Choose the top right button and press very hard. Count to 20. It often takes that long. Keep the button depressed until the lights are at full.

Turn around and go out the theatre doors into the little anteroom. You will need your mag light again. The switch for the lights in this room is across the room and to the right a few steps. Turn these lights on.

It is now time to open the booth. The booth is accessed through the old box office. The doors are very small because there is not a lot of space with which to work. Open the (old) box office with your theatre keys. Turn the light on – the switch is on the right as you come into the room. Step completely into the room and close the door. You will now be facing back the way you came. There is a lock box in the corner about eye height (for a short person like me), as I recall. The combination probably changes every show. Make sure you have the combination.

This lock box has proven to be the most frustrating one I have ever dealt with. I wish you luck.

Open the booth and put the key back in that stupid box. Turn on the lights just to the right inside the door. Stow your stuff. Go up to your station and make sure that you have everything you need: the call book, a notebook, your stopwatch, pencils pencils pencils. I would generally put my stopwatch on at this time and carry it with me. Your choice. You may prefer to work with just a wristwatch. By the way, the key to the Refreshment Booth is on the hooks halfway up the stairs. Just in case someone's asking.

Okay, go back out and into the theatre. Go back down onto the stage and out to backstage left through one of the stage exits. All the while, make sure that you are looking around to see if something odd catches your eye.

Off left you will want to make sure the area is tidy and you will want to start a pot of coffee.

Okay, assuming all is well, it is now time to sit down and wait for the world to catch up with you. Generally, this whole opening process will take under ten minutes. You have about twenty minutes before anyone else might think of showing up. Take the time for yourself. Read a book. Look at your callbook. Breathe. Eat chocolate. As soon as someone else shows up, unlock the stage door and pull the knock loudly sign (if you have chosen to keep the Stage Door locked), and open the front theatre doors.

More on what you will want to do after this, later.

Go ahead and build your own closing procedure. The closing procedure could be the opening procedure in reverse with the following to think about:

1. All fire doors (red doors) should be closed. Un-prop the lot.
2. The dressingrooms should be tidied. Props boxes locked (with special care to guns and such). Bathrooms checked for problems. Costume cupboards locked. Lights out.
3. Stairwell lights out.
4. All loft lights out.
5. Backstage neat and tidy for safety. (Don't feel like you have to do all this yourself. Your crew should be trained to leave their areas in a neat way.)
6. Kitchen should be tidied, coffee dumped etcetera. This can be delegated to the ASM, no worries.
7. All full garbage emptied and put by the old loading dock door.
8. The two loading dock doors need to be checked to ensure they are locked.

9. Backstage door locked.
10. Shop lights and backstage lights all out.
11. Any problems noted; so you can remember when you are in the office. (Dirty bathroom, need more garbage bags, etcetera. Be pleasant and respectful with your requests.)
12. Booth shut down (all lights out) and locked.
13. Work lights out. House lights out.
14. Front Theatre doors locked.

I used to leave the theatre by the front doors. The last thing that went out was the house lights. Very settling for me. ☺ But do it any way that works for you.

It is extremely helpful for you to do these walks in a systematic way. Very systematic. Why? The body remembers. You want to be able to guarantee, as much as possible, that you do exactly the same thing every night. Consistency increases your chance that everything gets done.

I never used to use a checklist for this process because I, honestly, just did the same thing every night. However, if you are a person that works better with checklists, this might be a time to build one both for opening and closing procedures...

Theatrical Superstitions and Traditions

Theatre people are a superstitious lot. Above the standard strictures against, well, walking under ladders or the number '13', there are a series of superstitions that you should, at least, know about. It's all hokum? Remember that being in a fearful state of mind can create problems all by itself; so try to respect folks and their belief in the old superstitions even if you don't believe a word of it.

Since theatre is such an old endeavour, much of the origins of theatre superstitions and traditions are lost.

Two Traditions Local to Scarborough Village Theatre

Leaving a chair on stage at move out

If the stage is left bare for the next production, apparently some consider this bad luck. Leave a chair CS and angled slightly to one side or the other. I cannot give you an origin for this tradition as I have never heard of it before. However, I recommend that you continue it or else a cast moving in might get thrown.

Leaving a sign in the dressingrooms for the incoming cast

The cast on its way out is expected to leave a sign or poster wishing the next cast to 'break a leg'. Little gifts are commonly also left.

Break a leg!

"Break a leg!" is the traditional way to wish that someone have a good show. The origins are unclear. The first theory is that wishing a person good luck was a way to tempt the evil spirits. It was something that was just not done. A second theory is the term 'break a leg' meant bending the leg, referring to the actor taking a low bow to the audience after a successful show. Another theory considers the curtain, often called a leg and that the opening and closing of the curtain during repeated bows was breaking the leg.

That Scottish Play

One of the most prevalent theatrical superstitions forbids mentioning the title of Shakespeare's tragedy about a lustful greed for power. Don't *ever* say its name when you're inside a theatre building. Call it "*that Scottish play*." Just about everyone has a story about something bad that happened because you mentioned the play's name. The story goes that one of the lead actors died on the opening night of the original production of that Scottish Play.

If the play is mentioned by name in the theatre, the person who mentions the unmentionable must leave the theatre building, knock, and request re-entry to clear the bad luck. Some say, the offender must leave the theatre, turn around and spit, and then knock and request re-entry.

The Ghost Light

The Ghost Light is the light left on in the theatre even after everyone has left for the night. Most people who believe in ghosts tend to believe that theatres are chock full of them. The light is left on for two possible reasons: either for the ghosts to perform or so that the ghosts don't run amok in the darkness. The true reason to leave a light on is safety – theatres can get cluttered and a person can trip in the dark.

Whistling or Clapping Backstage

Back in the day, stagehands were often out-of-work sailors who were cued by either whistles or claps. So, at that time, if you clapped or whistled back stage you could start a scene change early or start a piece of scenery flying or some other such catastrophe. Now, folks just think clapping or whistling backstage is bad luck.

A Bad Dress – A Great Show

Startling things can happen between Dress Rehearsal and Opening. Astounding things. Adrenaline is powerful. Time and again, you will see a show that is flat or experiencing extreme problems in Dress and have it open a hit. This is so common that the origins of this saying seem obvious.

Box Office Traditions

There is a superstition against letting anyone in with a comp (complimentary) ticket before a paying patron or else the production will be a financial failure.

Also, there used to be a stricture against allowing a female patron to be the first to enter the theatre on opening night. This is because William Wheatley, the producer of a show called **The Black Crook**, the first ever American musical opening in 1866, was sexist. He refused to allow the women in first and the musical ran 474 performances, a gigantic hit in its time. Wheatley attributed his success not to the new art form that was born, but to the fact that he had not let a woman go in the theatre first. Dope.

Mirrors

Put to rest by A Chorus Line, having a mirror onstage used to be bad luck. Why? Who knows? It reflects in the audience's and actors' eyes. It can fall and shatter?

Flowers on Stage

Live, real flowers on stage are bad luck (perhaps because they'll wilt under the heat of theatrical lights?).

A Black Cat

Actors who come across a black cat on the way to a show will, apparently, give a show-stopping performance.

The Green Room

Why is the Green Room green?

This is supposed to be a nice attractive place for actors to hang out while waiting to go on. It is the space friends and family of the actors are welcome to visit after the show. Great. But why not blue?

One theory is that the colour green is soothing to eyes that have been exposed to bright stage lighting. Some feel that, since early theatre was presented on the common or the 'green' of a town, the green room might have been a tent in which the actors prepared before they went on.

Other origins might be in language. In gaelic, the word 'grian' means sunlit and, since the green room is generally the only place in a theatre in which there are windows, this explanation seems plausible.

Another explanation is this: In the 18th Century, the then Prince of Wales had a liaison with an opera singer. He and his entourage needed a private room in the Royal Opera House in which they could socialize. Apparently, a room was renovated for just this purpose and this room was painted green.

Patron Saints of Theatre

Theatre has two patron saints, both martyrs from the third century, who are invoked to protect actors from disaster.

St. Genesius

St. Genesius, according to legend, was a comedian who converted to Christianity. While performing a farcical version of Christian baptism on stage for the Emperor Diocletian (Roman Emperor and persecutor of the Church, born 245, died 313), Genesius suddenly had a revelation and refused to continue to make fun of Christianity. Diocletian was outraged and ordered the actor's death. He was tortured, torn with hooks, beheaded, and burned on stage. (He is also described as patron saint of lawyers, printers, and secretaries.) His feast day is August 25.

St. Vitus

The story of the second theatrical patron saint is also ascribed to legend. St. Vitus exorcised Emperor Diocletian's son of evil spirits that caused him to twitch uncontrollably. The twitching, we now know, is a symptom of chorea. Despite the service to his son, the emperor was outraged that Vitus pronounced his belief in Christianity, accused him of sorcery, and placed him in a vat of boiling water. Vitus emerged unharmed, and an angel helped him escape Rome. The beautiful St. Vitus's Cathedral is the largest and the most important church in Prague. (He is also the patron saint of comedians and dancers, and he is invoked against epilepsy.) His feast day is June 15.

In Limbo – or Before You Get the Stage

There will be a period of days after you move into the theatre that you wish that you hadn't moved in at all. Why? Because you don't have the stage.

You will look to the sky and wonder often during those three to five days what the heck made you want to Stage Manage in the first place. This will be the hardest work – but not the most stressful – for the whole process.

How long will you be in Limbo? Depends very much on how well organized the Set Designer is and how much time the lighting designer needs. If the Set has been primarily constructed in the Unit, you should have to wait for only a few days before you are allowed onstage.

However, you have already built a schedule for Dark Week; so you know what is going to happen and all departments are aware of what is required. One way or the other, however, you are going to do a run or two in the rehearsal hall at the theatre (the Community Room that doubles as lobby and refreshment area during the run of the show).

Make sure your cast is aware that they should stay clear of the theatre itself on these days. There is no one in charge of watching things so anything left in the house could be stolen – same, too, for the dressingrooms. The people working on the set are not policing anything. Advise folks to bring their personal belongings into the Rehearsal Hall.

Why are we waiting...why are we waiting...oh why-y, oh why-y-y...?

The set pieces get moved in on Sunday. In a perfect world, the set will be constructed, that day. In practice, it takes a few days. And the lighting designer will need one, if not two, nights of complete black in the theatre, so that he can focus (aim) the lights.

Okay, I cannot stress more strongly that you arrive early on these days. Why? One day, mark my words, you will come in and find a rather bossy lady or officious man running a yoga class, or a hip hop class for seniors, or tap dancing or some such. When you tell him or her that you have a rehearsal in the space she or he will indignantly reply that the space is hers/his and you've got it wrong. Besides, he/she's always had this space on this day at this time and will not be moved. Breath. Don't worry. But, you don't have to smile. ☺

Go down to the office and inquire. They will pull the book and find out that your Producer did, in fact, reserve the necessary space for the necessary days. Tell them that you need the space right away and stand back. Do not smirk when the little old ladies click by in their tap shoes. It's not nice. Before the City employee goes back to the office ask him or her to open the doors for the chairs and the tables.

Once the room is clear, you will need to set up Production tables and post any notes/schedules that you deem necessary. Give yourself a break here. Remember, everything is already posted backstage.

You will need to set up props tables as well. If you have been clever, you might be tempted just to haul the tables from backstage...! Buy your ASM more chocolate. They will need the energy for running up and down the stairs to backstage so that they might get as many props into the Rehearsal Hall as is reasonably possible. As cast members come in, rope them into helping. The more that can get up into the Hall the better. Also, ask cast members who want to use certain costume pieces to go and get them with the proviso that they will return them back to their lockers at the end of the rehearsal.

Now. There are markings made out of slightly darker tiles or some such on the floor of each end of that large room. Go ahead and measure it yourself if you wish, but they correspond to the size of the stage. Huh? Yeah, neat, eh? That was one of the things we asked for when the

renovations were done years and years ago – it has saved the groups a ton on masking tape (and saves your aching back). ☺

Anyway, knowing this you should have no trouble placing your furniture and your props, setting up your tables, etc. You might mark the doorways or intrusive set features with masking tape. Mark your CS mark, down stage centre.

Start the Rehearsal as normal except the following: Add an announcement that folks will need to stay for a minute or two after the rehearsal to help break down the Hall and return props and set pieces backstage. Also, add an announcement explaining how the floor markings work, which way us US and which way is down. Tell them they are welcome to get their own chairs and ask them, please to exit and enter the room quietly (the doors tend to make quite a noise as I recall).

Make sure you place a ‘Rehearsal in Progress’ sign on the door to the hall as Rehearsal is about to start and make sure you close the door but you might want to tape it open so there is no clicking of the door as people go in and out.

Okay, I know you are starting your rehearsal on time. You are timing your runs. You are prompting, watching exits and entrances, your ASM is doing props pass-offs and helping you organize everything.... Aha! And you’re doing it all with a smile on your face. Excellent. Pooped yet?

At the end of rehearsal, don’t forget to pass off prompting/blocking notes in writing to the cast (or send them via email after you get home). Do not take time to give notes out verbally to the group. This will take time away from the Director – an absolute no-no. Don’t forget to give the Director a written note with the run times on it. Don’t forget to remind the cast when the next rehearsal is and what they will be expected to do.

Also, at the end of the rehearsal, don’t let anyone leave until they take some prop piece or furniture piece down to the backstage area or, at least, put their chair away. Pull all signs, drop your tables. Go back to the theatre and make sure the folks who are working know that they need to leave fairly soon (11:00 pm is it). Put all of your stuff in one of the dressingrooms or the booth for safekeeping. Generally, you will not be in charge of the keys because folks have been working in the theatre all day – but if you are, work out who is going to lock up.

Go home and drink a whole bottle of wine.

Moving Onto the Stage

Phew. Well, not phew yet exactly.

The first day you are going on the stage will likely be the Wednesday or the Thursday night – Day 4 or 5 of Dark Week. The floor will not yet be painted but the set should be mostly up.

You need to think about the following as you move onto the stage:

1. Staff
2. Furniture placement – spiking the stage
3. Props placement backstage
4. The SM is prompting
5. Safety

Staff

It is wise to invite all staff in for the first run in the theatre. Most will not come – Sound Ops and Lighting Ops, for example – but they will appreciate being invited. Make sure it is just an invite – not a requirement.

However, anyone who has committed to running backstage needs to come into the theatre for these runs. If you have identified a need for, oh, two runners and the cast cannot accommodate, you need to have those people in place as soon as possible. Many Managers in Scarborough wait until Q2Q to bring folks in. By then, it is too late to see if you are in crisis or not.

So call folks in. At worst, they will come in and become familiarized with the show itself. Never a bad thing.

Spiking the Stage

Okay, you are going to need time to do this; so, again, get in early. Call your ASM in early so she or he can help you.

The biggest thing to remember about spiking the stage is that you may have to do it more than once. Why? People pull tape. They think they are helping you. Make an announcement, put up a sign all you like. They think they are helping.

Also, the set designer or whoever is in charge of painting the floor may pull the tape as a matter of course. As long as you keep this in mind and are aware that you might have to do this job more than once (and that it is not personal ☺), it will be easier for you to cope.

Bear in mind, also, that this is the first time that the Director has seen the furniture on the stage. There may be a few adjustments. Agree to them, within reason. If, however, the Director starts talking about major changes, you are now going to get into troubled waters. Make sure that the point of view of the cast is covered. Any change at this point is ridiculously hard on them.

How do I avoid a blowout with the Director?

Right. The Director is stressed and making snap decisions and does not want to be questioned or criticized. She or he is on edge and maybe a little insecure. You don't want it to get personal.

Best way to avoid any kind of blowout is make sure that it's not your fault by blaming yourself. Huh? Tell the Director you aren't understanding her or him (this is your deficiency not a challenge to the Director's vision) and go and get the Producer. That's why they call them Producers.

Okay, so let's say the Director is talking about cutting a chair and it will require quite a bit of adjustment and it's, now, VERY late in the process. Let your Director know you are concerned. Cite when the chair is used. If the Director doesn't call him or herself a dope and back off. Say something like, "Wow. I don't think we're agreeing here. Let me get the Producer involved. I'm sure I'm not understanding something." The Director may back down. If not, get the Producer, bring the matter up right away.

Perhaps you're right and you didn't understand something. But perhaps you're right and it's too much of a change this late in the process. Let the Producer and the Director hash it out. Then, do as directed by the Producer.

This is one of those times when you have to remember who you are working for. You do your job mostly in service of the Director; however you answer to the Producer and the Producer speaks for the group.

Long and short, however, is this: If the Director makes a change in the spike of the set, that change must be measured and noted before you leave that night. You cannot guarantee that the tape will be there in the morning. So, at the end of the run, while the Director is giving notes, ask if you can, please, measure the new mark out. Or, if you have time before the run, do it then.

Once the stage is spiked, get the furniture out. Get out as much as you can, so that everyone can come in and do whatever they have to do. The Director needs to eyeball the stage to see if the furniture placement will actually work. The props folks need to get on the stage and preset things ready for the run. The cast may want to come and walk around to get used to things.

Allow about a half hour for this process on the day that you move onto the stage.

Props Placement Backstage

The props tables will have to be set up backstage and some props may have to be placed in slightly odd places so that the actors can find them easily. As actors come in, now is the time to find out whether they would like some personal props placed at their make-up station or whether they prefer their props preset on the props table. Now is the time to find out whether a particular prop needs to be preset on the floor just outside the door SR so that the actor can grab it easily. Now is the time to make necessary adjustments.

This process needs to be done in close consultation with the Props Runner/Manager. This job will generally be performed by the ASM. However, the SM should poke his or her nose in from time to time to make sure that everyone is playing nicely. Allow about a half hour for this process on the day that you take over the stage.

The SM is Prompting

The ASM will be backstage for the first time coping with everything that they have to do. The SM will likely be sitting in the House following the script and taking notes. However, it is unreasonable to think that the ASM will be able to cope with all her or his work backstage and still prompt. He or she would need two brains.

So, take over the prompting.

Safety

Perhaps I should have put this section first.

On that day that you come into the theatre to take over the stage for the first time, you will be faced with considerable stresses associated with the other crews and technicians just doing their jobs. There may be little bits of wood and other mess everywhere. There may be cables and cords crisscrossing walkways like little snakes. There may be screws sticking out. Okay. It needs to be checked. Think about the following and much, much more:

1. Walk the whole space looking down on the ground. Is the area clean? Any time you have to step over a cable, tape it down to the floor with black gaff tape.
2. Walk around the whole space looking up. Tape up any cable that is hanging down. Make sure that there is enough headroom to safely get through openings.
3. Walk around the space and touch everything. Run your hands over the back of the set, check for anything sticking out. Eyeball everything. Use your flashlight. Treat the set as the enemy for about fifteen minutes. You will invariably find jaggedy things sticking out. Tape them with masking tape or gaff tape.

Glow tape...

You have, of course, a healthy role of glow tape. Use it. I often find it is helpful to think about this the day before. Think about exits and entrances made in the dark. Think about what would help you get out safely if it were pitch black. I often used a copy of my tape plot and noted where I wanted to put all my glow tape. I highly recommend that placing the glow tape be a premeditated act of safety.

Remember, no matter how well you do this, someone will identify a need for more. Keep smiling.

Where do you put glow tape? Assuming folks need to move around in the dark through or on the following:

1. On the edges of stairs and on banisters.
2. On each side of a doorway and on the top edge.
3. On edges of furniture.
4. Exit paths on the floor.
5. X's on the floor as actor's marks that the actors have to make in the dark.
6. Especially anywhere that someone might hit their head. I have seen SMs write out in glow tape: "Watch head" over a low opening.

One thing to consider is priming the glow tape so that all of your carefully placed pieces glow. Stage lights or backstage lights will prime most pieces of glow tape. However, some are not hit by much light before the show. Identify any tape at risk of not glowing – this will likely be a VERY dark spot during the show – and have the ASM prime it by shining light on it before the show. The ASM can use their mag light, but I have seen folks bring in lamps just for this purpose. Also, you might chat with the Lighting Designer. She or he might have a nifty solution for you.

Allow about a half hour for this process. Hmmm, we're up to about an hour and a half on the day you move in and you haven't even started the run. Heesh. I cannot suggest more strongly that you plan to get in darn early on the day that you take over the stage.

Every night before the space is yours and yours alone...

Hopefully, you will only have to do most of this stuff once. However, despite your best efforts, allow a little extra time every night you come in before the show opens and all work crews are clear of the space. You just never know what gremlins lurk in the theatre before it becomes officially and completely yours.

As I said before, some of these are gremlins who were just trying to help. Keep smiling!

However, as you go around during your walk around the theatre, keep your eyes open for problems associated with the safety, the spiking, etc. Give yourself extra time on these days to fix anything that has been changed, moved, or damaged. Also, there is ALWAYS extra cleaning to be done, right up to and including opening night.

During the First Run Onstage

The SM

The Stage Manager might feel a little bit like a fifth wheel during the first run, because the ASM is truly under the gun; however, the more the Stage Manager helps backstage, the harder it is for

the ASM to finally do her or his job. Stage Managers: Be there for conferences or advice, but otherwise leave your ASMs alone to do their work.

The Stage Manager will be in the house near the Director (assuming that they put up the production table and headset for the Stage Manager).

1. Ensure that all staff are onsite, on time. Never forget that this is one of your primary functions. Don't leave the cast to the ASM – the ASM is in the trenches and dealing with these folks day-to-day, face-to-face. The only person who can be the Bad Guy is the SM. Make sure you are at the sign in sheet AT CALL TIME. Make sure you make a mark for everyone missing. Make sure that everyone knows you are aware of who is late. Make sure that you speak to those folks in a kind but firm way about the necessity for being on time. Try to be funny, but make sure that you perform this function. I know it's hard.
2. Open and close the theatre.
3. Theatre safety.
4. Time the runs
5. Prompt
6. Keep an eye on the blocking
7. Keep an eye on who is in the house who might be missing their entrances
8. Be ready to place more glow tape or spike tape immediately as the need arises
9. Assist in the movement of furniture and props
10. Be on headset to assist the ASM as necessary. You can help by reminding the ASM that an entrance is coming up, etc.

It's a lot to do. You don't have to feel superfluous.

The ASM

The Assistant Stage Manager will be working like a dog on the first few runs in the theatre because the backstage area, which will be in a shambles, needs to be up and running. If the ASM takes a day off work to accommodate the show, this is the day that he or she should do so – not Opening Night. By Opening Night, the ASM is going to be an old hand, quite relaxed, and eating bonbons.

Okay, as I said, backstage will be a shambles. You have to help the SM spike the stage, set up the furniture, and ensure safety. You need to set up your props and your area backstage. The cast, who is a little confused, is most likely to miss entrances at this time. Props will be misplaced. Costumes torn. Mayhem will ensue.

All I can say is: Don't Panic.

Think about the following:

1. You will first want to ensure that you have enough help for the Run of the show. Watch the amount of work that you do and, specifically, make a note of every time the SM comes down onstage to help. This is not a knock. Be aware that the SM is the one person who CANNOT HELP during the run. So a body must be found to replace the SM for every action the SM performs during these early runs onstage.

2. Extra signage might be helpful especially if you have cast who have not used the space before. Signs directing them to SL or SR or Front-of-House might be good. Also, make sure your Scene Breakdown signage is up.
3. Think about your props pass-offs and props placement. Talk to your cast after the first run and ask for input about what might help them the most now that you know what you are doing.
4. Make sure that your book is up-to-date with entrances and exits. If the SM is allowing cast to watch the show in the House (a very normal practice early in the Dark Week process), ask that you and the SM be on headset so that the SM can prod someone who has forgotten about the entrance without disturbing the run.

Crisis? What Crisis?

You will identify during your early runs any crisis of staff or problem that you feel is insurmountable. Take it directly to the Producer. Get help.

Terms and Sayings 10

Understudy An actor who learns the part of another ready to step into their shoes should they not be able to perform due to illness or other reasons. Also Cover.

Uni-Directional A microphone that is sensitive to sound from only one angle.

Upstage Abbrev. to US. The part of the stage furthest away from the audience.

Upstaging To deliberately draw focus on stage.

Ultra Violet light Abbrev. to U.V. Light emissions above the spectrum visible to the human eye. Used to produce a glowing effect from white fabric or materials treated with special paint.

Unit 12- Production Week 2

Costume Parade

The Costume Parade usually happens on the second Sunday after move-in, but it can be any rehearsal in Production Week and could, possibly, be move-in day.

What is a Costume Parade? The Costume Parade is the rehearsal at which every cast member tries on their costumes and walks in front of the Director; so the Director can approve or knock-back the design as realized.

Great. So what does the Stage Manager do?

Generally, the Stage Manager makes sure that everyone who is needed is cued up ready to get their costumes on as soon as the Designer is ready for them. Secondly, stage management will take notes during the parade and publish them as necessary.

Great. So how do I do that?

Firstly, make sure the cast required is called with enough time to get their costumes on.

Secondly, you will confer with the Designer over and over again, to confirm whom he or she wants next. Once identified you will either get that person yourself or send the ASM in search of them while you sit near the Director taking notes. Costume Designers can get snippy (pardon the pun) at Costume Parade. From their point of view, they have done their job to the best of their ability per the Director's requirements. The Director will almost always have differing opinions.

Make sure that you never leave your Director without support. Remember, it is a stressful time for the Director who will be required to make snap decisions very intensely in a short period of time. If you, for whatever reason, cannot sit right there with the Director during Costume Parade, make sure that a Producer is there.

Level Set

Level Set is a critical rehearsal. Stage Managers must attend. If you cannot be at Level Set, decline to do the show. Why?

Lighting is one of the critical elements in the show. You will need to know not only when the lighting cue occurs but, also, sometimes why. You are the only person who knows exactly where all the furniture is. You are the person who knows when folks enter or exit. You're it.

But, you say, the Director has been at every rehearsal. Really the Director knows the show better than I! He/she can handle this on their own! Maybe. But you are the only one who has it written down. You must be there.

Your Producer, generally, should be beating the bushes for staff but, a few days before the date, you will want to confirm with her/him that the following folks will be at the Level Set:

1. The Director and any Assistants
2. The Lighting Designer and any Assistants
3. The Light Operator
4. The Sound Designer and any Assistants
5. The Sound Operator
6. Any SFX (fog, for example) Operator

7. Your ASM
8. A couple of folks to move furniture (if there are scene changes)
9. Stage walker(s)

You will not need Costumes and mostly not need the Props people. The Producer can get your stage walkers and furniture movers from the cast. This is a great way for them to work out their hours and learn a little more about the process at the same time.

What? You don't like it....!?!

Lighting Designers are often nonplussed when the Director wants something other than what they have pre-loaded and, in Community Theatre, they almost NEVER call in help to re-focus the lights during level set and, what's more, it has even become the practice of folks not to call the Lighting Operator for level set. Big mistake. There should be one or two bodies that can run and make changes during the Level Set so the whole process doesn't come to a grinding halt. I have even seen Designers bypass a cue so that they can refocus later! The Director needs to see the lighting state before a run. It's only fair.

Scheduling

At the last Production Meeting before Level Set, make sure that you are clear with your Designers, Director, and Producer that in order for the show to open cleanly, you will expect levels to be set in a timely fashion. Be professional, kind, but firm.

If a Director and Designer are planning two hundred lighting or two hundred sound cues or two hundred slide show cues, they must factor a lot of extra time in pre-planning. Pre-planning is the key to ensuring that anything goes well and technical theatre is no different. If they don't know what you mean, encourage them to meet a few times ahead of level set day, mark each change in a script, and discuss what the Director is trying to achieve on each change. Offer to be at those meetings (they will help you, too) and do the script work. Suggest that they meet at least a couple of times BEFORE the show moves into the theatre.

In a show in which the Director envisions such a significant technical requirement, pre-planning is the only way to pull it off. The Designer and the Director cannot be inventing cues during level set when there are one hundred and eighty-five left to go – there simply is not enough time. They need to be on the same page BEFORE the day and ready to listen or watch and assess. Level Set is not a day for developing cues. It is a day for making some adjustments.

If you see that the show is heavy in one area or another and the Designer and Director don't seem to be making extra time allowances or planning allowances for their concept, go to your Producer right away. Let the Producer make the queries and set the Designer and Director straight. I am not saying that things should be cut – no way! Whatever it takes. But I am saying that tech week hell can be avoided assuming we are aware of the problems on the way in.

If you are starting to get worried, make your inquiries in a non-judgmental fashion and always in a Production Meeting with all staff involved. Do not give the impression that you are against the concept or idea, only that you are worried about ensuring that Tech Week goes smoothly. If the Director or Designer act as if they feel threatened or, worse, fob you off, discuss the issue with your Producer as soon as possible. Let the Producer handle it.

Lighting, Sound, and SFX Levels

Setting Up the Stage

Your first responsibility to the Level Set is to set up the stage with all furniture as required. Your ASM (and perhaps one or two others) should be called in to help you do this.

Ironically, the Set Designer or lead painter will have been in the night before to ensure that the floor is the correct colour for the level set. They will have pulled all the tape so that they can paint the floor. Hmmmmm...

You will likely be required to re-measure and re-spike the set. This could be the third time you've done it! This should be the last time, though. After the levels are set, you cannot, cannot move the furniture. Not even a little bit. Make sure your ASM and other staff are aware of this unwritten law.

If you are doing a musical, you're going to feel like swearing because you will likely have four or five different furniture/set piece set-ups to re-measure and re-tape. Assume your furniture set up will be a problem before you come in. Buy yourself some chocolate on the way. Then, get to work.

To add to this interesting little mix, the Lighting Designer will likely be frantically attempting to hang lights and focus them at the last minute. It is the nature of Lighting Designers. Lighting Design is hard. It is the only Design function that gets credit right underneath the Director on the front cover of Program in professional shows. Period.

Okay, so you will want the stage so you can set up your scenes and the Designer will want the stage clear and in complete pitch black so he/she can do some last minute focusing. There may be music for sound level set blaring from the overhead speakers and guns going off and such. Sigh.

Wait a second. There is nothing that says your ASM can't be measuring and spiking the stage as the lighting level set is going on; so don't sweat it.

Lighting level sets require a lot of discussion and decision-making. You would be surprised just how long this process can take. Directors will ask for last-minute changes in the design. Designers will argue. Designers will acquiesce. Directors will compromise. Designers and their Assistants will re-focus (re-aim) a light here and there. This process takes most of an afternoon even if both parties are grown-ups. And if you recall, I have told you time and again that, likely, you are going to be the only grown-up in the room.

At any rate, move heaven and earth to have the first scene furniture re-measured, spiked, and set up, ready for the pre-agreed start time for the Lighting Level Set. Don't worry about dressings or props unless they are large enough to cast shadows that might interfere with the design. It is perfectly permissible for you to insist on work lights for the final fifteen minutes or half an hour approaching the beginning of the Lighting Level Set.

So, if you have different scenes you have to set up, make sure the first is ready and, then, as the first group of cues is being discussed, the ASM can be measuring and preparing to do any other set ups as necessary.

Some things to know about Lights

If you want to call lighting cues, it's a great idea to know something about how the lights work.

Lighting cues happen in a certain area, with a certain brightness (or level), and the change occurs in a certain amount of time (count). Most lights are usually tinted with a gel – a piece of coloured plastic. When the Designer refers to cooler lights, she or he generally means colour in the blues.

Warmer colours are in the ambers. Bright white light is considered harsh on the stage and is only used for artistic effect.

The area of the stage affected may be the whole stage (a wash), or as tight as a 'window' – usually defined by a gobo. A gobo is a small piece of metal with holes etched in it designed to cast a shadow. These gobos are slid into slots in the lighting instrument and voila! You have the image of a window frame on the floor. In some designs the Director and Designer are working with pools of light or defined smaller areas on the stage. The Designer can also sculpt the light with what are called barndoors – straight panels that can be moved to open up or restrict the area upon which the light shines. Barndoors will sculpt the light into squarish shapes.

Make sure you understand what area of the stage is to be affected and what things are supposed to look like. You will need to watch closely to understand and make notes as necessary. Don't make a huge amount of notes, however. You will learn the show well over Production Week and will, likely, know when things are wonky. A replacement stage manager will, very likely, rely heavily on the lighting operator to make sure that all lights are working efficiently.

The intensity of the light or brightness of a cue is expressed as the **level** at which the cue is set. So, the level might be 3, 4.5, or 5 with a maximum of 10 (darn bright) and a minimum of 0 (no light). The level of each light is usually the most at issue quality of a cue, with the Director usually asking for things to be brighter (she/he'll say "but I can't see their faces!"), and the Designer looking for things to be darker (he/she'll say things like "we need to keep the mood low" and will talk a lot about subtlety). Directors will often ask for a level to be changed a smidge – often a half a point. There is a particular place in hell for Directors who want a light's intensity dropped by a quarter. Keep smiling.

The time it takes for the cue to be completed is the **count**. A **snap** or **blackout** is an immediate complete change, sometimes called a count of 0. Very subtle slow changes or cheat lights can come in over minutes with a computerized board. Most lighting changes happen over a 4 or 5 count.

How does it all work?

The Lighting Designer decides how he/she wants things to work and what instruments he or she wants to use. These lighting instruments are, then, plugged into numbered circuits. Using split cords called twofers (two for ones or two lights on one), two lights can be plugged into one circuit. These numbered circuits correspond with channels in the lighting computer. Back when God was in short pants, the circuits actually corresponded with sliding switches or dimmers that were manually set by the Lighting Operator.

In Scarborough, the L/X Operator programs a computerized lighting board with all the mechanical levels. This takes some time and can slow down the lighting level set. (Because of this, many Designers pre-load cues as opposed to build them on the day.)

It's actually pretty simple. Let's say you have a little stage that has 8 circuits available for plugging in lights. The Lighting Designer would like a warm wash (amber), a cold wash (blue), and two specials – one DC and one DL. The Lighting Designer needs three lights for the warm wash. He plugs them into circuits 1, 2, and 3. He needs three lights for the cold wash and plugs them into circuits 4, 5, and 6. He needs one light for the special DL and plugs it into circuit 7. He needs two lights for the special DC and, using a twofer, plugs them into circuit 8.

Okay. These circuit numbers correspond to channels in the computer: 1-8. The channels are then assigned to each cue which is, then, programmed into the computer. So, if the Director wants the warm wash at the beginning, the Designer will program the computer to bring up

circuits 1, 2, and 3. When actually running the show, the L/X Operator merely has to press a button to complete the action of the cue. The stand-by, therefore, can be very short.

Some houses still have old-fashioned boards with mechanical dimmers etc. If you find yourself in a House like this, make sure that you factor extra time for your stand-bys.

Walking the Stage

During the Lighting Level Set, the Director will want to see the lights as they play off people's faces. During some SFX set, the Director might want to see how you look in that fog. The production will need someone who is dedicated to walking the stage during the Level Set. This is a great way for an actor to work off time. Tell this person to come in with a book and be prepared to sit around for hours waiting until they are needed.

The Walker sits, often just to the side and sometimes on the furniture on the stage if there is any. The Walker must be gently reminded that they have no opinion and should try not to interrupt proceedings too much. Except if they have a great joke. Make sure they have a book, a bottle of water, and frequent breaks.

Houston, we have a problem...

You will know that there is a problem very early in the Lighting Level set if the Director and the Designer are disagreeing about most cues. Usually this means the two either haven't conferred properly or haven't understood one another. The outcome? The lighting design will be being re-built on the fly in front of your eyes. This slows the process down (so it likely will not be finished in time) and creates a situation in which mistakes can be made.

At the next break, call your Producer and let them know that you have a problem. Remember, you are trying to open the show clean. A messy show loses patrons (no matter what anyone says). Let the Producer know.

Also, if the Designer is running roughshod over the Director (perhaps he or she has a stronger personality), just have a private chat with the Director at break to see if the Director is happy. If not, intervene as you deem necessary in the process, bearing in mind that direct confrontation with the Designer simply is NOT wise. The solution can be as simple as you asking the Director if he or she is happy when the Light Designer displays the cue. The Director may simply be needing a psychological cue to start talking. In dire situations, call your Producer. That's why we call them Producers.

Some things to know about Sound

Is it live or is it...?

Sound effect can be done live or pre-recorded. In Scarborough, most folks used pre-recorded sounds but some directors go for as many real noises as possible.

Live Sounds

Make sure you understand exactly what the crewperson is doing to make the sound. Go back and watch them do it so that you understand exactly how much time it takes for them to complete the action before you get the sound. Even if you think you know what they are doing, just take a

look. You will, then, know how much you have to pre-empt the go in order for the sound to come at the right time. Take the look, obviously, before the Q2Q.

Pre-Recorded

Pre-recorded sounds are, generally, easier to run than they used to be. A good Sound Designer will present the operator with a CD with each cue on it in sequence. However, things are not always that rosy and sometimes the Operator will have to change CD's. If you know about what the Operator is doing, you can help be reminding the Operator to change the CD or by allowing an extra long stand-by or adding a Warning.

However, most cues can have a very short (a line or so) stand-by. Be guided by your Operator. See what timing works for him or her.

The Mix

Sound Operators are also required to try and mix the mikes and the orchestra. Right now, they are doing this from the booth. Some things to know about SFX

SFX cues can take quite a bit of preparation and stand-by time. Make sure that you go back and watch the person do what they have to do to make the cue happen. You will, then, know what you have to do for cuing and stand-by.

Eh?

Because the sound is mixed off a monitor in the booth, unfortunately, the mix is often wrong. Pick on your friends at a show at intermission. Ask them what they can and cannot hear...

Very often the orchestra is playing far too loudly. Depending on your relationship with the Musical Director, either you or the Producer should address this problem as soon as possible. If the MD considers you nothing more than a secretary, get the Producer. If you have a solid working relationship, talk to her or him yourself.

Marking Your Book

Okay, during the Level Set, you are going to be sitting at the Director's side so that you can listen in on the conversation between the Director and the Designer. No offense, but your opinion will not be requested. You are there to confirm, from your notes what is happening on stage while the cue is about to occur – where people are standing, for example.

So, don't throw in your artistic two cents (it will slow things down and not help a bit) but do listen very carefully so that you understand the following:

1. When the cue or action of the light is supposed to occur.
2. What the cue means.

The when is usually simple enough. It will be defined by the script or common sense – or will it?

What the Cue Means

Cues serve several purposes. They may be as simple as turning the lights out when an actor pretends to turn the light out. The cue may be a button on the end of the scene – meaning that the cue will complete the emotional moment or the cue may SET UP or signal a change in the emotional moment. The cue may be ridiculously subtle. The cue may need to ride audience

response – changing the lights or throwing in a sound cue too quickly can choke laughter and applause. Sound cues, similarly, may happen when it makes sense or the Director may want to interrupt the action or create a feeling with the sound.

It may sound artsy-fartsy, but you need to understand what the Director and Designer are trying to do with the moment. You will understand that only by listening intently to the conversation they have while the levels are being set.

Okay, once you understand the cue you will need to make a note in your call book (remember your call book?) of the following:

1. When you are going to call the cue
2. Your standby
3. Any warning that you deem necessary. (Even a good L/X Operator who has been twiddling her/his thumbs for the last fifteen minutes might need a Warning for the next cue. They do nod off from time to time... ☺)
4. Any notes that you think are necessary to get you through the first few L/X runs. For example, you might note that a certain cue should not go until the stage is completely black.

What's a Warning?

Warnings are reminder cues given often a page ahead. The Stage Manager will warn a crew that the Scene Change is coming, that a particularly tricky sequence of cues is coming or that a particular cue that requires a lot of preset is on its way. Warning cues are rare professionally but, in Community Theatre, it's great to throw in a ton of warnings... ☺

Okay, so when you are going to Call the Cue?

Once you understand what the Director and Designer want to actually see or hear, you will note to call the cue just before you want the action to occur. Again, you call the cue just before you want the action to occur. You must pre-empt slightly to accommodate the operator. Just how much of a pre-empt is needed will be determined during the Q2Q.

How do You Write Cues into Your Book?

A lighting cue is coming up. The light needs to snap black as a button on the end of the line. The cue, then, needs to be called ON the last word of the last line in order to get the effect the Director wants.

In the fictitious play, Jacqui's Play, your book would look something like this:

Betty: Able, I need you to tell the truth, just this once.

Able: Betty, I was only outside working on the garden.

Betty: Oh, really?"

Able: Yes.

SB LX 18

Betty: So, what is this?

LX 18 GO

This standby/cue is a little tight – only for an LX Operator you trust or one you know is wide awake. You might want to give yourself an extra line for standby, here, especially if you're new. For the stand-by, circle the word you at which you start talking. For the go, mark the word at which you would say 'go'.

Many folks make a huge production of writing their cues in their books with different coloured dots and so on. Whatever it takes. Be aware, however, that colours, especially pen colours are hard to differentiate in the low, blue light of the booth.

A little trick for level set...

Lighting Designers are so often behind their time that you can bank on it. In conference with the Director, you might consider doing the sound levels or SFX for the first part of level set. But don't tell your Lighting Designer or she/he will take even more time...!

Write the cues into your book during Level Set. Do not EVER write them in pen, even after the show opens. Small adjustments often need to be made during the run as the show tightens up to make sure the lighting or sound state is as was originally intended by the Director and Designer. You will have Cue to Cue (Q2Q) to find out if your stand bys work or if you need to adjust. That is what the Q2Q is for.

QtoQ/Cue to Cue

Q2Q is the only rehearsal that is the Stage Manager's rehearsal. This is the only time you and your team will be able to practice before you go into technical runs. Use this time as wisely as possible.

Preparation

Firstly, prepare yourself. I bet you're tired and feeling a little cranky. Wine or beer helps. But it is best to pour over your book in preparation for the next day. Mark every cue or cued entrance page with a post it note that hangs over the edge of the page, like a tab. This will help you find your next cue during the Q2Q.

Then, go through your book, writing your cues out as neatly as two bottles of wine will allow. When you are actually cueing folks in the Q2Q, you won't have much time for thought. Do the thinking the night before and trust yourself the next day, wine or no.

Secondly, assume that all folks (cast and crew) need to be trained on what you expect them to do. So have a meeting. Call the technical staff in a few minutes early, sit them down and explain to them:

1. How you are going to run the Q2Q
2. What you expect of your staff during Q2Q
3. How you are going to cue (see Unit 14)

4. Proper headset etiquette (see Unit 14)

It may not be ready...

Despite all the hard work from all your great people, certain elements may not be in place for the Q2Q. I recommend that, as much as possible, have the Operators pretend they have the fog machine or the lit torch or the 'whatever' during the Q2Q. Going through the motions will help everyone remember what is going on, even if it feels a little stupid.

How you should run a Q2Q

During a Q2Q, we practice when a cue happens and what the Operator or crewperson needs to do to make the cue happen, on time every time. There are ways and ways of doing everything but I recommend you not let the show run. No matter how much the director is begging you, don't let the show run. Even if the show has never been run before, don't let the show run. Even if the cast is begging you, don't let the show run. Hmmm. Even if the Producer is begging you, don't let the show run. I hope I've made my point.

Instead, go from cue to cue to cue. How? Start at the very beginning...

Get your top of show ready. Make sure everyone is in place, knows what they are to do and start from your first cue or sequence. This will mean that the show needs to be in preshow status:

1. The Preshow lights should be up.
2. All work lights should be out.
3. Doors closed.
4. Preshow music, if any, playing.
5. Everyone is on headset and ready.
6. Cast standing by.
7. Director in the house and on headset.
8. In a musical, the Musical Director should be on headset and the piano player in place.

When your Operators are ready, stand everybody by, and then start the first sequence of cues. It should be a big, fat schmozzle. Excellent. You're all human. Start again.

Repeat the opening sequence until the Director says she/he is happy. Then, don't stop the show until all operators are ready for the next sequence of cues. Let me repeat that: Don't stop the show until all operators are ready for the next sequence of cues.

Why wait? You need to identify problems. You need to know if your staff really has enough time to be ready for the next action or sequence. You will find out that your Props Runner literally cannot make it from one side of the stage to the other in time for the pass off and the ASM will have to do it. You will find out that the ASM cannot make it to the other side of the stage to cue an actor and a cue light might have to do it. So let it go until everyone says they're ready.

Now, not a word from you. Uh, please.

In Scarborough, the Director will need to be on headset for the Q2Q (unless they start putting out a Production Table again); so you can speak to him or her easily. Privately, however, please have a word with that Director and ensure she or he understands that he or she is not to talk on the headset during the process. Be professional, kind, but firm. For your part, make sure that you get the Director's approval on every little thing before you move on.

Instead of stopping the show right away, first flip to your next cue, props pass-off, or cued entrance – these have been marked the night before with a post it note; so they should be easy to find. Relay to all on headset that the next cue is L/X 3, or a cued entrance or whatever it is and ask the Operators to let you know when they are ready for that particular action. As soon as they are ready, stop the show.

Stop the show in a professional manner. Over the loudspeaker (the mike is right in front of you in the booth), say the word “thank you”. Repeat the ‘thank you’ until the actors stop. Then, direct the actors to the place they will be starting again. For example: “Let’s skip ahead now, please, to just before Able’s first entrance. We will start with Cain’s line: ‘Who would be so stupid as to fall for that?’ Half way down, page number 4.”

Wait for the confused cast to move into positions. They will blink a lot. Once they are in position, say something like the following over the loud speaker: “All right, we are starting with Cain’s line: ‘Who would be so stupid as to fall for that?’ Okay? Whenever you’re ready, please.”

The actors will start. Make sure that your starting point in the script is at least two or three lines before you have to start standing folks by.

Run the sequence. It should be a big, fat schmozzle. Excellent. You’re all human. Start that sequence again.

Keep running the sequence until the Director is happy. Then, repeat this process until you are done or until you run out of time. Sadly in Community Theatre, you often run out of time... However, make sure you have a healthy break between Act One and Act Two – at least fifteen minutes. Be kind to yourself. Rome wasn’t built in a day.

What you expect from the staff

During the Q2Q, your staff should be behaving in a professional manner. They need to be reminded that they are not to ‘go’ on their own and that you expect them to wait until the Stage Manager cues them.

Also, they need to let you know what they need from you to be able to do their jobs. Do they need a longer (or shorter) standby? Do they need a warning here or there?

Backstage problems are generally the responsibility of the ASM. However, step in if a) it’s a cueing issue or b) the crew or cast is not following the ASM’s instruction.

Dress Rehearsal

Dress Rehearsal will likely be incredibly stressful for you. Chocolate, chocolate, chocolate.

When running a Dress Rehearsal, I would suggest that you treat the night as close to a show as possible. This means standard calls just like a show night. Standard warm-ups like every other

night. The only difference is that the cast is not yours yet and the Director (obviously) has the last word. Therefore, you must let her or him know that you have announcements to make after warm ups and make sure that this is okay with him or her. Make your announcements just like every other night. Do your time calls just like every other night. Rehearse in your head what you are going to say to the FOH Manager when the time comes. Okay, make your last live call (5 minutes) and...

Up to the booth you go. Get that headset on; take a deep breath. Put your show in preshow as you did in Q2Q (accommodating any requested adjustments from the Director, of course). All elements are (hopefully) in place. Everyone is a little jittery...

Look, things will go wrong. That's why they call it a rehearsal. Try not to sweat it. Things can go very wrong! Muscle through it all you can, but if it gets dire, who stops the show? Only the Director(s). You are expected to fix things on the fly and bring it up in notes. However, just as in a performance situation, you are always required to stop the show if things are unsafe.

I'm not in my light, Mr. DeMille...

Make sure the actors are aware that they cannot stop a Dress Rehearsal for anything other than an unsafe situation. I don't care if they are singing in the dark. I don't care if the little lamb they are singing to did not make it out on stage. Tell them they need to cope just as they would in a show. They are to perform as if there is an audience in the House. Remind them that they do not have the perspective to know what is a simple fix and what is not and they need to continue to allow everybody else the chance to do their jobs.

Why? This is the last time your Director will have input. Stopping a show, for any reason, and for even a short while, can break the emotional build or tension build or whatever. Give him or her every chance to finish the show she or he has been working on so diligently for the last four months.

So after warm-ups and before they are released to the dressingrooms, make sure that you give the cast this note as part of any other announcements you want to make.

Invited Audiences

Some Directors, with the Producer's approval, will invite an audience to the Dress Rehearsal. There should be no more than about thirty folks invited. Any more and your Director is cutting down on the number of tickets sold and is forgetting why an audience is invited in the first place.

Why invite? No theatrical performance is complete without a key element: the audience (with its laughter and reactions). Some shows are so dependent on the audience that it takes two or three runs for the actors to understand where the laughs are coming from, what is working and what is not.

It is wise to have the Director make an announcement to the invited audience just before the show starts that the audience is witnessing a working rehearsal and things might not go smoothly. Also, have the Director let folks know that the cast will, likely not be available after the rehearsal.

Notes Following

The Dress Rehearsal is one night in which the show is not required to clear the theatre by 11:00 pm. Let your Director give all the notes he or she wants.

Once the Director is finished and said her or his farewells to the Production, make sure you step forward and take over. You will need to be clear about a few things:

1. Time calls. Issues regarding calls may have come up. Make sure they are addressed and that folks are clear about their time calls. (You will follow this up with a friendly email, I am certain.)
2. Technical Issues not already addressed. Ask the cast and crew if stuff came up backstage or during the run that can be addressed in front of the group.
3. Any other announcements.
4. Thank everyone for their hard work and release them. As folks are running out the door, restate the calls for the next day in a loud voice that everyone can hear.

Okay, the show is yours. Congrats.

Terms and Sayings 11

Vienna Action Curtains drawn up from part way along the inside vertical edge.

Volt The unit of electrical potential. (Italian physicist, Volta, 1745-1827).

V.U. Meter An audio meter that indicates sound level in decibels.

Waggly Mirror Lights A type of automated lantern. Instead of the actual lantern fitting being moved by motors and so on, a small mirror is attached at the front of the lantern that reflects the light output. By moving the mirror, the light beam can be moved. An efficient way of automating lanterns because there are less moving parts, and as only a small lightweight mirror actual changes position, the accompanying mechanics can be correspondingly lightweight. With modern electronics the mirror position can be very accurately controlled.

Wagon See Truck.

Walk Through Rehearsals at which the actors go through entrances, moves and exits to make clear any changes or alterations that made be necessary.

Wardrobe General name for the costume department, its staff, and the accommodation they occupy.

Wardrobe Plot Actor-by-actor, scene-by-scene inventory of all the costumes in a production, giving a detailed breakdown of each separate item in each costume.

Warm Up A session usually a short time before a performance in which the actors prepare their bodies through a number of physical, mental, and musical exercises.

Warning Bells See Bells.

Wash Wash lighting. Stage lighting focussed on stage not in a specific spot, but more as a general lighting over an area. Several areas may be combined and balanced to effect an even light over the whole acting area.

Ways 1) The maximum number of combinations of channels on a lighting installation. (UK) 2) See Channel.

Weight Cradle The metal frame that holds the fly weights in a counterweight flying system.

Whistling Whistling in dressing rooms is traditionally considered bad luck. To appease the gods you must turn around three times, leave the room for a minute, then knock three times and re-enter!

White Noise An audio signal that contains noise at the same level at all frequencies.

Winch up See Tree.

Windshield Foam cover for microphones that reduces the sound of wind and breath, so enhancing the sound the microphone is supposed to be picking up.

Wings The sides of the stage concealed from the audiences' view.

Wing Curtains See Legs.

Work/Working Lights Stage lights independent of the main dimming system used while the crew work on stage during Bump-in etc.

Workshop Any non-performing backstage area of the theatre.

Workshop Performance A performance in which maximum effort goes towards acting and interpretation of the script rather than sets or costumes, or the visual performance.

Unit 14 – In the Booth and Running

You are finally in the booth, now. And, boy, ain't it crowded?

Scarborough's Booth is a little smaller than most and is jam packed with equipment. There doesn't seem to be a place for you...! Stake out your spot in the centre between Lighting and Sound Ops. Make sure you have enough room for your book. Make sure you are comfortable in the chair. Make sure (if you are short, like me) that you have a good solid view of the stage.

There are a few things to think about while you are in the booth. Talk in a low, but normal speaking voice. The Stage Manager and Booth Operators should try to wear dark neutral clothing (there's nothing wrong with the traditional black) – a lot of the audience can see you; so no chartreuse, okay? I used to leave a sweatshirt at the theatre to pull over my clothes, as I am partial to bright, solid colours.

Try to have as many folk on headset as possible (even if they are sitting right beside you). This builds the team feeling.

Make sure your booth work lights (overhead) lights are off and you are just running with the blues before an audience enters the house.

For your first few days in the booth, it is reasonable to fall back on professional or formal behaviour to keep you on an even keel but, folks, remember you are trying to have a bit of fun, too. A few light jokes never hurt anyone and eases the tension for all.

Remember that you are the one in charge. Wherever you go, your troops will follow. So, start how you mean to continue. High standards, professional attitude. Be professional, kind, but firm. And never lose it when folks make a mistake. They are almost always trying their best. Yelling will NOT help.

Headset Protocol

It's helpful if you observe a few protocols when on headset. A lot of this may be common sense and most of it is born of the obvious fact that you can't see the person who is talking. Here is a list:

1. Announce yourself when you come on headset. For example: "ASM, on heads."
2. Use a calm, very low, but clear voice. Articulate.
3. Keep your microphone off unless you are talking. Make sure you are fully trained in using the thing.
4. Make doubly sure that your microphone is off when you are taking off or putting on your headset.
5. Announce that you are going off headset.
6. When being put on Standby by the Stage Manager, reference your station or task when responding. For example, say "SL Follow spot, standing by" or "Fog standing by" or "SL standing by" not just "Standing by" (even if you believe you are the only Operator or ASM on standby).
7. Speak formally and professionally until the show is running cleanly.
8. Speak formally and professionally if you are new to a show (a sub).

- Headset chatter is permissible up to any standby. Strict silence is then required until all 'gos' are completed in the sequence are completed. A good rule of thumb is to shut up until the Stage Manager starts joking around again.

Calling Cues

Right. Okay. I have everything in my book. I know the show inside and out. Great. Now what? How the heck should I be calling these cues...? Start off by remembering that nothing (generally) happens technically in a show unless the Stage Manager says it's time. You are the one in charge.

Why me?

The nature of theatre is that one vision dominates the artistic work. That is the vision that you need to understand and fully assimilate during the rehearsal process. Then, you, as Captain of the ship, will make sure that vision is realized as closely as you possibly can every night. This can only happen if ONE person is in charge. A cohesive artistic vision cannot be realized by five different captains. This is the job you signed up for. Have fun with it.

That having been said: There are so many ways to call cues in Community Theatre, I could write a whole book about that alone. However, I am going to explain to you how it's done professionally and why. You will avoid a LOT of potholes if you call your cues in a professional manner.

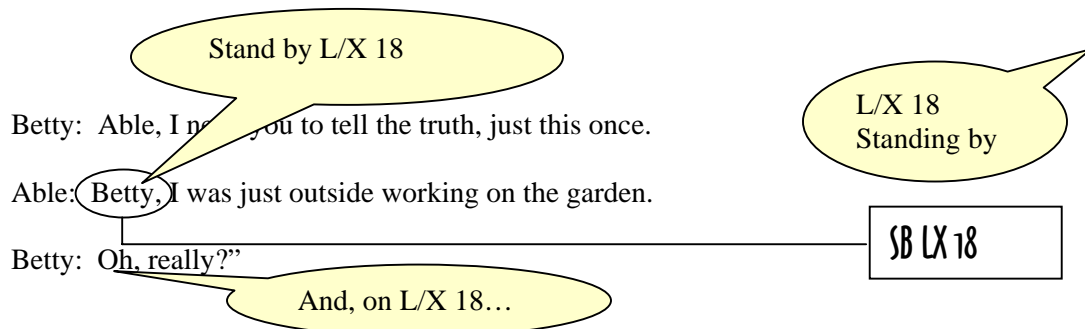
Firstly, get your staff ready for a cue by calling the stand by. The standby should be called with enough time for the Operator to be comfortably ready to do the cue. A lighting cue takes no time but running fog might be a little different. Use your Q2Q to find out how much time each person needs.

However, it is equally problematic to leave a person on stand by for too long. Folks can only stay focused in a complete way for a short period of time. Be aware of this and make sure you don't leave them hanging there forever...

Simple Cue

In a simple cueing sequence, the Stage Manager will give a stand by, expect a response from the Operator that they are ready, and then call the cue at the appropriate time.

Back to our fictitious play. I have repeated the little sequence inserted previously with the standby and the cue notes marked. For a simple cue, however, what you should actually say is in the comment bubbles as follows:



Able: Yes.

Betty: So, what is this?

...go.

LX 18 Go

There is often a short pause between repeating the cue number and saying the word 'go'. During that pause, the Stage Manager will lift his or her head from the book and watch the action to make sure that a) the cue is called correctly even if the cast baubles, b) that you go into the correct state as the lights or sound or whatever changes.

Always say the cue type and number on standby. Always make sure the Operator says they are standing by. Always repeat the type and cue number just before you say 'go'. Sounds like overkill, I am sure, but this is most important during your first few runs. And you must do it during every run, every time. Every time. Every time. You will avoid a TON of problems if you call your cues in a systematic way. People make mistakes and, if prone to panic, will panic just as a cue is coming up.

What you are trying to do is set up a scenario in which an Operator has the most chance to get it right. This means that you have to cue systematically, evenly, and in a predictable way. Keep your voice neutral and professional. No jokes during cuing sequences EVER. Joke all you want during non-critical times in the play (headset chatter is fun) but, remember, maintain headset silence on standby.

Busy Sequence

Okay, let's say that, again, in this fictitious play, the director and designers want a few things to happen during this sequence. As the actor enters, there is a lighting change. At a certain time, we hear a car pull up. At the end of this section, a snap to black. Then there is a scene change.

Okay, I almost always warn the end of the scene; so a page before, stick in a warning – especially when using guns.

This is what your book might look like (blocking and other notes excluded):

Betty (on phone): Yes, Andy. No, I can't put my finger on it but I wonder if you come by? I know. I know. I called the police fifteen minutes ago. What? I see. Oh, I...wait. I have to go.

SB LX 17, 18,
Sound 5 and
Sc. Change

(Able enters.)

LX 17 Go

Betty: Able, I need you to tell the truth, just this once.

Able: Betty, I was just outside working on the garden.

Sound 5 Go

Betty: Oh, really?"

Able: Yes.

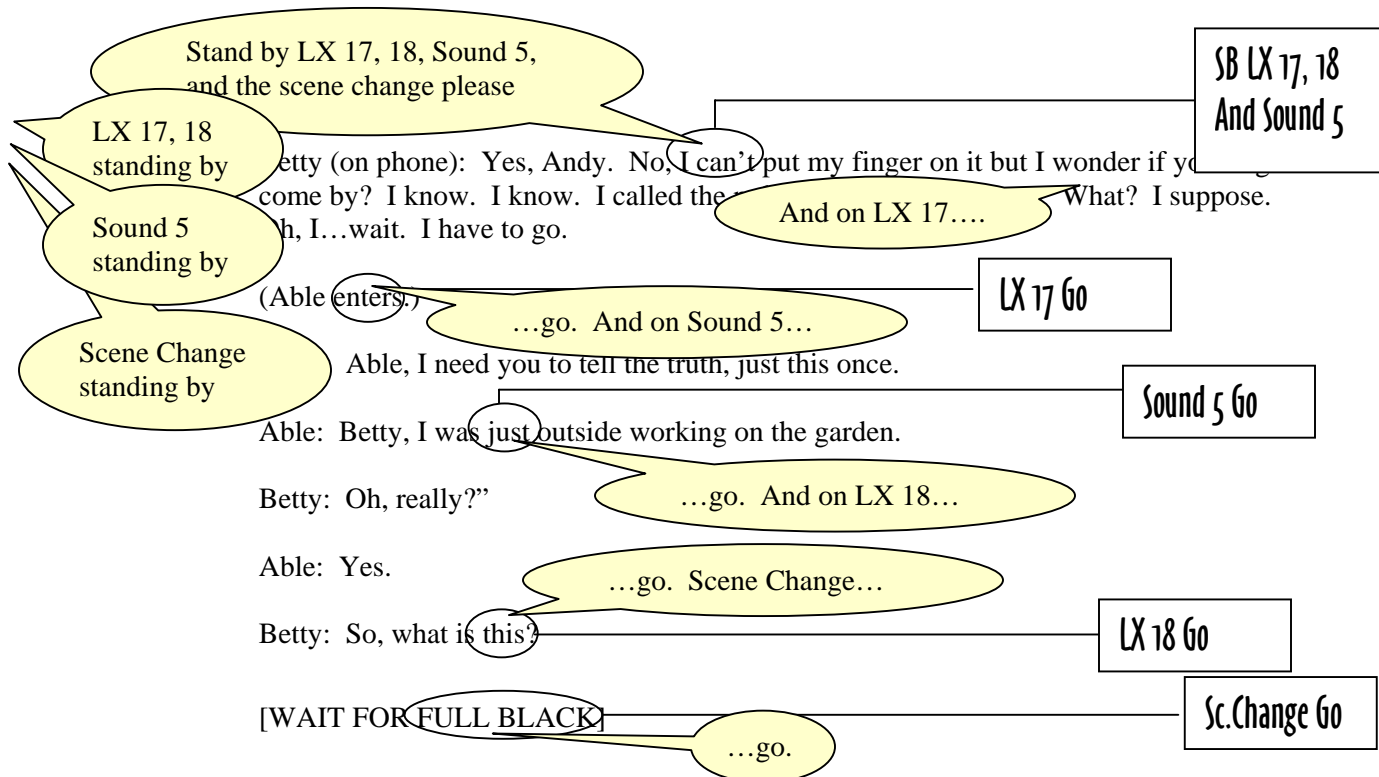
Betty: So, what is this?

LX 18 Go

[WAIT FOR FULL BLACK]

Sc.Change Go

Okay. Easy enough. Makes sense and is clear to you and anyone who might have to take over for you. From these notes, you would actually say the following:



Say the word 'go' when you want the Operator to press the button, pull the trigger, flick their follow spot on, drop the crash box, enter the stage for the scene change or whatever it is they are supposed to do. During the Q2Q, you will determine when you have to say what you have to say to ensure that the actual change happens exactly when and how the Director wants it.

Combined Go

There are times when you have two or more things go at the same time. In sequences like this, it is important to be very, very clear about what you are saying to your staff; so that they don't get confused. Again, say it the same way every time. Every time.

Okay, let's say that a gun goes off, lights are going to drop, and the scene change is going to start all at the same time.

Your book might look something like this:

(Able enters.)

SB Gun, LX 18,
and Sc.Change
on one call.

Betty: Able, I need you to tell the truth, just this once.

Able: Betty, I was just outside working on the garden.

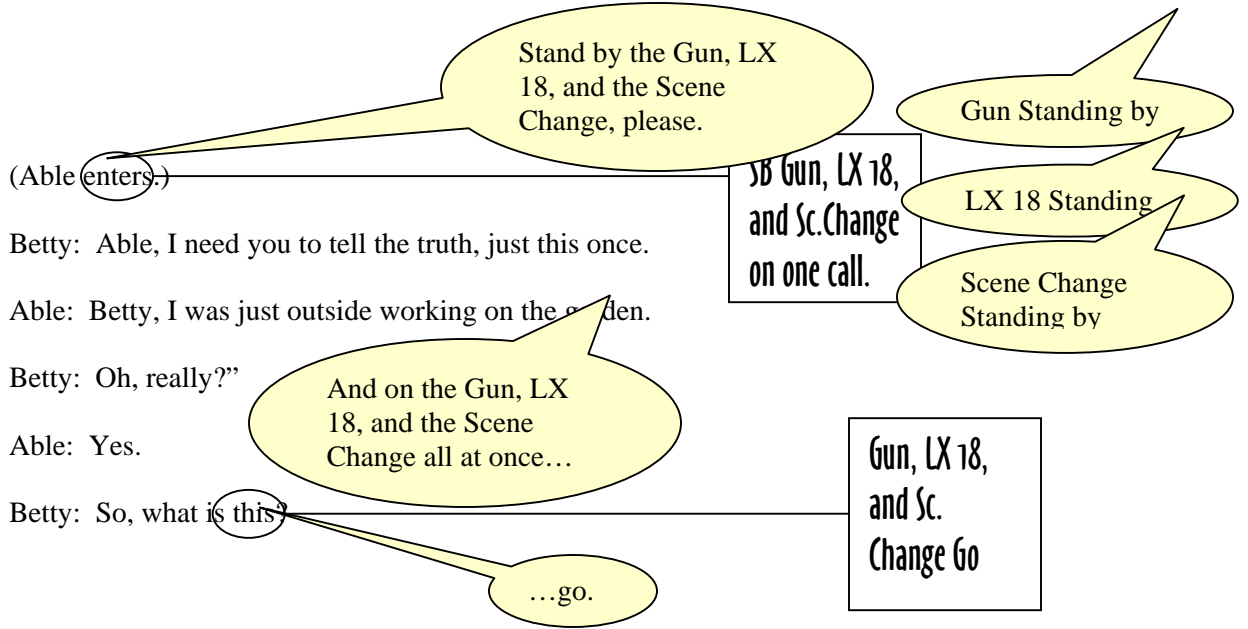
Betty: Oh, really?"

Able: Yes.

Betty: So, what is this?

Gun, LX 18,
and Sc.
Change Go

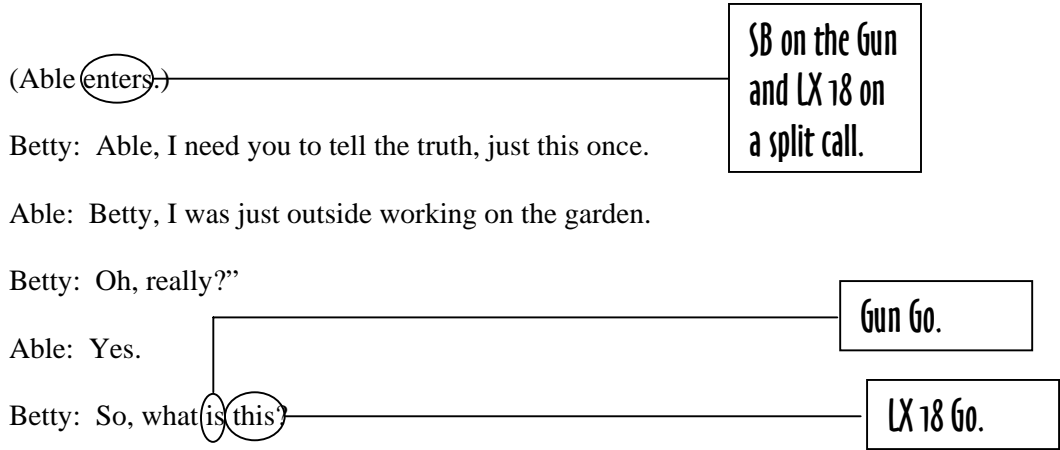
What you would say would be the following:



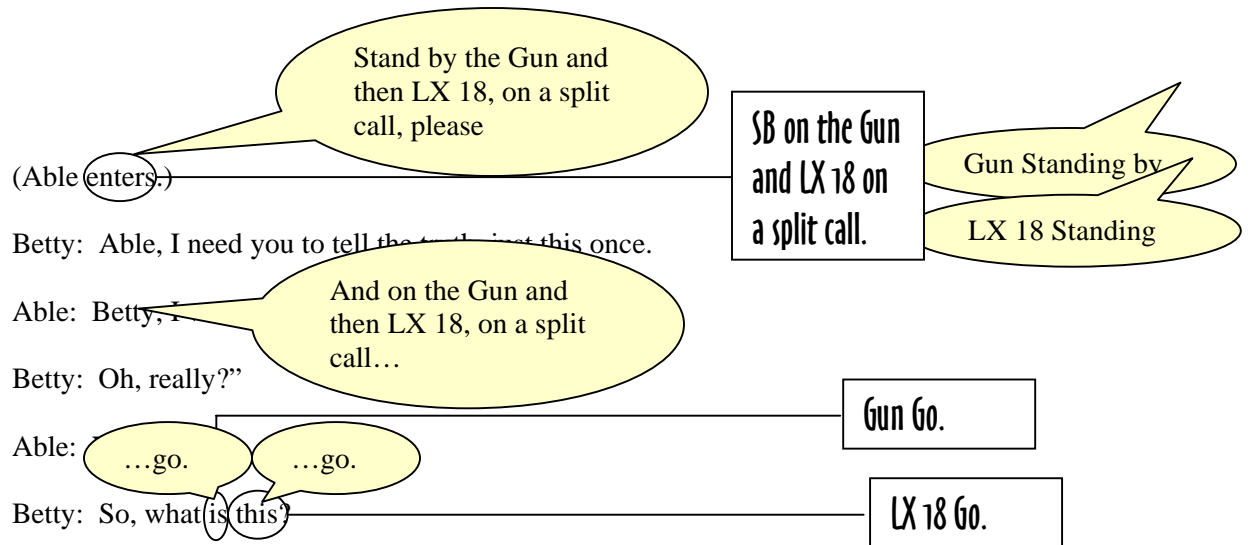
Split Go

Sometimes, the timing is so tight, the Stage Manager needs to do two cues so quickly that he/she cannot possibly say everything in the time available. Here is how I recommend you deal with that situation:

Here is how your book might look:



Here is what you would say:



Cue Lights

Cue lights are a fantastic tool especially in farces or shows where there is a lot happening at once and only a limited number of folk backstage. Cue lights are usually used for entrances but I have seen them used for other cues as well. The Stage Manager tends to operate them to allow even closer timing on tight entrances and exits or actions. With a set up using only one light, the stand by is the light going on and the go is the light going off. With two colours, stand by is the red light and go is the green. Obviously, no one can tell you they are standing by. You've got to trust your people sometime... Keep smiling.

Cueing Backstage

The Assistant Stage Manager will also be responsible, under the direction of the stage manager (and, rarely, alone), to cue entrances or some SFX to ensure correct timing or when the technician, for whatever reason cannot be on headset (guns).

The process for cuing backstage MUST have a visual component because the ASM cannot speak in a normal tone of voice. She/he cannot be heard by the audience.

When standing an actor or technician by, make sure you have his or her attention and then whisper the words "stand by" and raise your arm deliberately up in the air. When giving the go, drop your arm abruptly to point at the actor or technician and whisper the word "go". Do this action the same way every time.

If the actor is by a door ready to go through and not looking at you, make sure you are out of any line of sight if the door were opened, stand the actor by as before but, when giving the go, lightly touch the actor on the arm or shoulder. Ensure that you have permission to touch the actor before you do so. Request this permission every time until the actor laughs at you. You will thank me one day.

A final word...

You have the final word. You are the person ensuring that everything happens at the correct time. It is your responsibility to make sure that everything runs smoothly and when it is supposed to occur. It is your responsibility to realize the Director's vision every night.

Some technicians, having not worked with a real Stage Manager, will think they are supposed to go when they believe the cue should happen and not when you cue it. Be professional, kind, but firm. If you identify a situation in which you are not being followed, be clear with the Operator that they are to do as you ask, when you ask.

This puts more pressure on you. This means that you have to be a perfectionist. But better that than four different people doing four different shows. Take charge.

Before Each Show

Just get there...

I recommend you arrive for each show extremely early. Why? Actors like to prepare and some really need a lot of time to do so. If you cannot be there about two hours before curtain every night, spell this off with your ASM. I know this probably means there will be a lot of McDonalds in your future, but I truly recommend it. Being there also has the added benefit of making everybody feel more secure. When they get there, you're there and already in charge.

On rare occasion, you might bump into an actor who likes to show up even earlier. Oftentimes, when someone is on transit, it is simply too hard for them to get home and then out to the theatre before call; so they come from work straight away and end up tapping their feet waiting for you at 5:45. If the actor is trustworthy (and this is your decision), you might consider putting that person on the list for folks who can get the keys.

But, usually, folks don't arrive at the theatre until about 6:30 pm.

Opening Procedure

Follow the opening procedure as laid out in this book or the checklist you develop yourself. Do this every night, the same way every time you do it. As soon as other folks arrive, open the front doors of the theatre (and unlock the Stage Door and pull the Knock Loudly sign if you are being extra cautious).

What time should I call the crew?

Crew Calls are generally an hour before house opens unless there are some particularly difficult set ups. Encourage your crew to arrive an extra half-hour early for the first two or three runs with full tech. They will be stressed, trying their best, and a little extra time will help. The show will likely run more smoothly. Some Stage Managers have a sign in sheet for crew, but I have never done this. A crew member is, generally, a little more reliable than a cast member and will, often, come in a lot earlier than called. However, if you think you have a problem, you might opt for a sign-in sheet for crew. I don't recommend it.

In general, you want your stage prepped and ready for about 7:15 when fight rehearsals or physical warm ups happen onstage. However, if you have a really busy musical, your crew may need to be mostly ready by about 7:00 pm. If this is so, get the crew in at 6:00. Sigh.

What is the crew doing? Sound is checking that all their equipment is running cues and testing levels. L/X should be warming lights and using that time to make sure all lamps are functioning and focused correctly. Props are setting props, making blood packs, etcetera. Dressers are helping folks get ready and prepping fast change areas. There is a lot to do.

So, for an 8:00 pm show, the standard crew call is 6:30 pm, latest, 6:00 pm for the first few runs with full tech. The afternoon call is 12:30. Be very clear about your call times. Have a meeting. Remember you are in charge, here.

What time should I call the cast?

Community Theatre calls should never be more than an hour before the show. Calling folks in at 6:30 pm is extremely stressful for people who are under the gun at work and, right now, corporations are very demanding.

I have seen Stage Managers who are not clear about call times call people in for 6:30 and ignore the fact that most of the cast doesn't arrive until about 7:00. I, very strongly, disagree with this method. I strongly recommend being clear about your call times from day one and, then, for the show, calling folks in at 7:00. Remember that your call times mean that folks need to be in the building and ready to work – not just walking in at the time cited. If you have been disciplined all the way through, the cast certainly will be disciplined for the show calls and you have nothing to worry about.

Okay, assuming a disciplined cast, truly, a 7:00 o'clock call should suffice. Folks don't really need more time than that to get ready.

Just a small note. Make sure that the cast understands they should stay off the stage unless given permission to go on before the show. Before stepping on the deck before a show, dress rehearsal or Q2Q, they must ask permission. (Some folks start this rule the moment the show moves onto the stage.) Why? If there are lights blown, for example, that have to be changed before the audience comes in, the crew cannot be worrying about whether a cast member is wandering the stage underneath. They are already stressed enough. So, train your cast to ask permission to go onstage from (at least) about Q2Q on if not from the moment you move into the theatre.

Staggered Calls

Some parts don't require a person to enter until Act II. Or until an hour into the show. Have a heart. Call these folks later and, as a rule of thumb in Community Theatre, call them for an hour before their entrance time.

At Call Time

Okay. At call time (and I mean every time, every night, every show), a strong Stage Manager will be standing at the sign in sheet. The Stage Manager will, in a strong voice, remind folks to "Sign in, please. Call time."

A nice Stage Manager will hold for a minute or two for folks to run over and sign in if they have forgotten (while the Stage Manager chides them in a funny way for not signing in). And then that very same 'nice' Stage Manager will put a mark beside the names of folks who are late or who have not signed in. That Stage Manager will immediately pull out their cell phone or go to the phone in the SL area and telephone folks who are late. Simple. Do it every time. Don't dump this on your ASM. They are in the trenches, having to cope with folks face to face backstage every night. Only the Stage Manager can perform this function. I know it's hard to be mean but you will thank me. Be professional, kind, but firm. Folks simply have to be there.

If a person is problem, you already know about it and have been taking steps. However, keep records. You want to be able to cite chapter and verse to the Producer if this becomes a truly serious issue.

Dressingrooms are sacrosanct.

Stage Managers must be invited into dressingrooms. So. Knock first. Then, ask to enter. Always. Every time.

Warm Ups and Practice

As soon as you are done any telephone calls or spoken with any late folks, get on the walking time clock again. Make sure your Musical Director (or Vocal Coach) is ready for vocal warm ups and, then, roust the troops up to the loft.

If you have a lot of problems to deal with (say three or four late folks), enlist your ASM to go around and roust folks for warm ups. Either you or the ASM, then, should definitely go to each Dressingroom Door and knock. Open the door very slightly (don't look in) and say, "Vocal warm ups, please." You should hear a chorus of 'thank you' and the shuffling and movement of folks. If you do not hear folks move, say with some imperative: "Vocal warm ups, now, please." Your cast is smart. They will move. Repeat this procedure at the second dressingroom door. Be professional, kind, but firm. Absolutely everybody is required.

In a musical, vocal warm-ups are done around the piano with the whole group, generally. They are usually done around ten minutes after 7:00 (or 1:00). No one is excluded from these warm-ups. Remember part of what you are doing is assisting in building up a group feel and folks who insist and get exceptions all the time only build resentments from other cast members. Not good. Sooooo, EVERYONE is called for vocal warm-up whether they perceive a need or not. And EVERYONE should be onstage doing a physical warm-up whether they believe they need one or not.

From time to time, a cast member may say to you, "Look, I don't sing anything. Why have you got me up there doing vocal warm ups?" Explain to them why. Let them know that it is a group focusing exercise that is very powerful. Request their indulgence.

Okay, before you start the runs, work out with the Musical Director a physical sign you will give them when their vocal warm up time is done. Give this sign about nine minutes into the process.

In a musical, physical warm ups are done around 7:20 pm (1:20 pm) and usually last about ten minutes. Make sure that you have worked out a physical signal to whomever is running the physical warm-ups (usually a lead or the Dance Captain) that time is up. Give this signal at about 7:29 (1:29).

Fight Practices

In a straight play and sometimes musicals, there are often more physical fights. I cannot recommend more strongly that you rehearse these every night before the house opens especially ones in which knives are used. Get this over with by about 7:20 (1:20) pm. If the fight is in a musical, I highly recommend that you rehearse that fight right at 7:00 pm just before vocal warm up.

Talking to the FOH Manager

Once you have folks working their physical warm ups, seek out the Front of House Manager. He or she will need to know how long the show is running, when intermission is, and whether the aisles are being used. I know you have likely fired off an email to her or him a few days before, but it is great to touch base anyway – FOH Managers get subs for themselves from time to time. Remind the FOH that you will be handing the house over to them as soon as you are ready and to, please, hold the doors until you say the House is hers/his.

Also, remind the FOH Manager to let you know when the FOH doors are closed at the top of the show by knocking on the Booth door and letting you know the House is yours again. This long standing traditional pass off of responsibility for the House is best when done professionally and formally.

The last item you might request is this: If there is a problem getting the House Doors closed at the top of the show the FOH should be letting you know who, what, when, where, and why. You are NOT going to get involved in helping them work out the problem, you are simply going to relay enough information over headset so that folks backstage and waiting know why they are waiting.

The only time I would suggest you get involved with FOH is this: If you know that there are guns, strobe lights, or fog or some such being used in the show, you must eyeball the front lobby to ensure that the audience is warned. Guns can startle. Strobe lights can trigger epileptic seizure. Fog can elicit an allergic reaction. Make sure there are multiple signs.

It is NOT unreasonable to have a headset for the FOH Manager. The headset would go through the flap into the house from the booth for the preshow and be passed through and the flap closed while the show is running. However, since this is not done, don't feel like you have to rock the boat and request it. The FOH can simply direct an usher to come and let you know what is going on. Remember, the cast will feel like they are in good hands if you are on the ball and getting the information everybody needs.

Announcements

Following physical warm ups, get the cast used to you stopping them before they rush off for an announcement or two. Make these short and sweet but do something every night even if it's only Break a Leg (and always say 'break a leg'). Doing so reminds the cast that you are taking control and that you will be in control for the duration. It is a psychological trick but a very good one. Makes everybody feel all taken care of and warm and fuzzy. Well, secure, anyway.

Following Announcements

Assuming you are on your game, and I know you are, immediately following warm ups, call the Half Hour and release your cast to the dressingroom with the reminder that the House will be coming in, in the next few minutes.

At the Half

I recommend you now go down on the stage and give it one more cursory look. What are you looking for? Has a cast member left something on the stage? Is a prop missing? What looks wrong? Next, douse the work lights and as you do this, you should see if the loft lights or other backstage work lights are on that shouldn't be.

Turn, look up at the booth. Your booth staff should be there at the half. For the first few shows, you may need to train them, but when you look up at the booth, all bodies should be there. Then, go through your opening house checklist with them. Ask the same stupid questions every night. Here is an example:

1. Is the L/X in preshow?
2. Is the preshow music (if any) on?
3. Are the House Lights at half?
4. Booth work light out, please?

Each show may require a different checklist. For example, a show with little movies in it might require that you make sure the projector is on and working. This list is up to you. But do the list. Every night. Why on stage when everyone can hear you? Because everyone can hear you. It's another trick that illustrates you are in control, you are consistent, and you are doing your job.

Also, for me, it's ritualistic and can be so for the crew. So, do what you want, but that's what I do.

Some Stage Managers double check with their ASMs at this point, as well, to make sure that all on stage and backstage is well. If this is something you want to do, then the ASM should be trained to meet you onstage just after the half at every show.

Once you are sure that the House is ready for the audience to come in, turn to the FOH Manager, look her or him straight in the eye and say "The House is yours." Make sure she or he acknowledges you. Try to be formal about this. Once you have given up the House, turn around and call in a clear, strong voice: "House coming in, please." Repeat this call a few times as you walk backstage.

During the Half

You are going to try and breath and settle yourself but you do have responsibilities. If you are the type of person who recharges on your own, find a quiet space to be by yourself for a few minutes. I am one of those folks and sneak outside mostly to be on my own. If you are more of an extrovert, you might want to pal around with the cast or crew a little.

The Stage Manager should make the 15 minute and 5 minute call him or herself. At least, I recommend you do that. You can do whatever you please; however, you personally giving the time calls is a strong option, illustrating, again, to your cast that they are in firm and capable hands.

As you wander about backstage, keep a sharp eye out for things that are dangerous, out of place, odd. Human beings are predators, which means we have a natural ability to identify something wrong, something odd, something out of place. But you have to be looking. I know it sounds like a lot of work and requires that you be focused for a long period of time. You will see things, though, things that are possibly serious. You are the one person who can't relax.

Collecting Valuables

At the fifteen-minute call, I suggest that you have your ASM collect valuables. I would suggest a small bag for each cast member, labeled with their name. The valuables should get locked in a locker – with a lock on it for which only you and the ASM have the combination or the key. No one else. Collecting valuables is a surprisingly necessary job. It may seem like a pain and extra work, but, if you collect them and put them away, things simply do not go missing. No suspicions, no accusations. No problems. All good.

Valuables? What are you, nuts? I've got 35 people in the cast...

Okay, okay. Collecting valuables is only easy for a small cast. Large casts must be encouraged to leave their valuables at home OR bring in their own labeled bag to hand to you at 15 minutes. No reminders. If they don't have it ready and hand it to you, it doesn't get locked up.

Time Call Circuit

Everybody needs a time call. How are you going to remember to talk to them all? Develop a route or a circuit, whatever you want to call it, similar to your opening or closing routine. Develop a circuit that works for you. The following people deserve a time call not necessarily in this order (although this isn't bad):

1. The Musical Director
2. Upstairs Dressingroom
3. Dowstairs Dressingroom
4. The ASM
5. Props Runner
6. Other crew backstage
7. Anyone you might pass backstage
8. Anyone out for a smoke
9. The FOH Manager
10. The Booth

If you do it in this order, by the time you get to the booth, it will likely be around twelve minutes to show time, not fifteen anymore. Be clear about your calls. Remind Booth staff if they are in the lobby or knocking about that you expect them in the booth with headsets on for the five-minute call. Go backstage, again.

At five minutes, you should do the same circuit except this time, get the ASM to confirm with the booth staff (who should be there already) that it's five minutes over the headset. And formally let your ASM know that you are going to the booth. On your way, you will talk to everybody else.

Now, look. Most shows do not start right on time. Most professional houses commonly start at five minutes after. However, I suggest that you keep the show rolling on the correct time assuming an 8 o'clock start. Put the time on hold if there is a problem.

By the time you get up to the booth, it will likely be around three minutes to show. On your way past the FOH Manager, remind him or her know to keep you informed of any problems.

Go up to the Booth. Tell them the exact time. Put your headset on and turn on your blue light. At two minutes to show (assuming there is no hold on the House), call "Places, please".

The ASM should go off headset to go and get the Beginners.

Now, you breath and wait for the world to catch up to you. You've got two whole minutes.

As soon as the ASM is back, let her or him know whether you have the house or not.

As soon as you have the House (remember the FOH Manager will knock on the door and let you know) AND you have your Beginners confirmed, make a quick note of the time .

Any audience announcements should be made at this time. Some groups have a recorded announcement and some require live reminders. However, this is when they go.

Once the announcements are done, start your opening sequence. The only proviso during your opening sequence is keep your eyes on the audience. Some audience members may be chatting, obviously out of their seats. If this is so, you might drop your House lights a little bit (by ¼) before you go into your show sequence. The drop in light will send most theatregoers scurrying to their seats.

Ok. Away you go.

ASM

The ASM needs to arrive early, generally a half an hour before the cast call. The ASM is usually responsible for

1. Keeping the backstage neat and tidy.
2. Ensuring that any water or kleenex stations backstage are refilled.
3. Sweeping and mopping the stage floor
4. Putting on the coffee (if the SM hasn't already done so) and putting out any snacks
5. The ASM will prime any glow tape that needs it backstage.
6. The ASM will have a complete checklist for all props and costumes for which they are personally responsible and make sure that all is in its place.
7. The ASM will make sure all backstage headsets are turned on and working before the House comes in. (Generally the Booth staff will be in the Booth at the half and the headset check can be done then)
8. The ASM will ensure that all the blue running lights are on backstage (and the worklights out) before the house comes in.
9. The ASM will need to confer with the SM before the House comes in that all backstage is ready.
10. The ASM will be at his or her station for the fifteen minute call.
11. The ASM will be at his or her station for the five minute call. The ASM will be on headset from five minutes on (unless doing something else – like giving a time call)
12. The ASM will give the two minute (places) call under the direction of the Stage Manager.
13. The ASM will be on the headset at the top of the show to confirm Beginners and, well, whatever else they need to do.

You are the Stage Manager's eyes and ears. Make sure you let the SM know if anything needs fixing that you feel you can't handle.

By the way, the ASM usually gets dumped with all the things that fall through the cracks. Care of an animal, for example. Spot cleaning of a bloodied shirt. Quick changes. You name it, considerate your responsibility.

The ASM can, however, duck responsibility with a problem personality. You are too close to the cast to be a disciplinarian. However, make sure the SM is aware of the problem.

During the Show

Call the show as you have practiced. Some things can go wrong...

At what point do I stop a show?

Keep the show running through thick and thin, unless you are in an unsafe situation. I remember pulling substitutes out of the audience one afternoon because we had an injury...! Rely on your ASM to fix problems backstage, but if she or he comes to you for help, offer up as simple a solution as possible.

A little bit of water on deck may or may not enough to stop the show BUT if the water is there because a glass just fell and broke, send out the ASM with a dustpan and broom and a cloth RIGHT AWAY. Don't worry about it. Just do it. The cast will have a lot of fun with this (think of all the adlibs) and all the old ladies in the audience will have a theatre story to tell.

Is there a Dr. Sands in the House?

If there is a medical or other kind of emergency, the FOH Manager will let you know OR the Community Centre staff will let you know. Stop the show immediately with this call over the Loud speaker (the mic is right in front of you): “Is there a Dr. Sands in the House?”. Remember that the cast must be trained to stop what they are doing immediately upon hearing this call and assume that this is a fire drill. They are to go to wherever you agreed upon should there be a fire alarm. The FOH staff know what they are supposed to do and will handle the house. Get yourself out of the booth and backstage to make sure all is well and there is no panic. Be professional, kind, but firm. Get everybody out.

Assuming the show gets stopped for only fifteen or so minutes, start the show up where you left off. This is fun. I’ve done it a few times. If the show is to be cancelled, make sure you call your Producer if the Producer happens not to be there and let him or her know what has happened. The call for canceling a show must be made with the Producer’s input, assuming you can find her or him.

Replacing a cast member

God forbid the worst happens and half way through a run, you get a call from a cast member who has broken his leg. You have to replace someone.

Remember way back when I suggested you keep all your callback sheets in the show book just in case. Go to them first (the were called back for the role, remember!) and see if you can get someone to come in pronto. If that doesn’t work, remember that list of folks you keep in your pocket? You’re savvy. You know who’s good. Call in a friend if all else fails. Remember that you want to get someone who is going to fit the costume. This is true. Or you’re going to have to get a new costume! However, push come to shove, get anyone in who’s talented.

Make sure the replacement person can do all shows and can get into the theatre THAT afternoon (even on a work day) to start learning the part. Get to the theatre yourself and bring a kit for the new guy that includes the following:

1. Schedule of shows with call times
2. Contact sheet
3. Script
4. Songbook
5. Scene breakdown and synopsis
6. Candy bar (the chocolate is for you)

Call all the cast and get everyone who interacts with the new guy in that you can. Enlist the help of the Director, the Musical Director, the Dance Captain (assuming these folks are willing and able to assist). Get all key staff in you can. The more help you have; the more likely the new guy will be trained up. Cut moves or simplify difficult sequences as necessary. If the Director or Choreographer are not available to come in, get permission to make changes to accommodate the emergency.

Remember all those great notes you made about blocking? Well, now you need them. Get your book down from the booth and help everyone through the process. Make sure the new guy writes everything down.

Make sure everybody breaks for at least an hour before show call to eat whether you are ready or not. The food is more important than you might think and amazing things can happen because of adrenaline.

Inform FOH and have them change the FOH display to credit the new guy (if there's time). Introduce the new guy at Vocal Warm Ups and make sure he/she gets a huge round of applause. Remind your cast to help this person in any way possible. Remind your cast that the show might be a bit wonky this evening and for everyone to cope.

If necessary, bend rules about having the Director or Choreographer backstage if they are willing to continue to help the person through the process.

Keep smiling. You will be very surprised what a motivated cast can do with one afternoon. The show will go on.

Show Reports

Community Theatre Stage Managers rarely do show reports. Show Reports simply note the House Count (another thing we don't do in Community Theatre), the show run times, and any troubles you might have had. I recommend, very strongly, that you keep a sheet per show and make notes as you go. When it comes time for you to do your SM Report at the end of the process, you will thank me.

Terms and Sayings 12

X-Lights See Batten.

Yamaha Major Japanese manufacturer producing a wide range of audio and musical equipment.

Yoke See Harness.

Zoom A variable focus lens.

Zoom Profile A profile spot with two lenses that allows the beam angle to be adjusted.

Unit 15 – That's a Wrap

Closing Night and Strike

A Week Before

Out of courtesy, make sure a cast member has been assigned to collect money for cast gifts for artistic staff and producer at the cast party. Also, ensure that one cast member is in charge of the good wishes signs (and perhaps little gifts) for the incoming cast.

Start calling your department heads to confirm that they will be at the strike and confirm how much help they will likely need. It's a great time to connect people (the current lighting designer with the incoming lighting designer) as some co-ordination might mean less work for all.

Strike List

I cannot stress more strongly that you make up a list of what folks are to do during the strike. If they are assigned jobs, they will do them. Do not send out an email the day of the strike or post the list the night before unless you want to deal with a lot of folks requesting different jobs.

By this time your cast should be aware that you mean business and that you are doing a good job. They should have a lot of respect for what you are trying to do. They will do as they are asked even though the show is essentially over.

And, of course, you aren't going to release ANYONE until all (or most) of the work is done in the theatre. Make sure that at the announcements portion of the preshow everyone knows they have a job and they cannot consider themselves released to the party until they see you. Tell them to, at the end of the show, clear all their personal belongings out of the dressingroom and

What jobs are there?

1. Load crew (cast and crew)
2. Props – wrapping and packing. (Props Co-ordinator, ASM, cast)
3. Costumes – pulling and organizing. (Costume Designer, cast)
4. L/X (Lighting Designer, L/X Crew, cast with interest or experience)
5. Set Breakdown (Set Designer, Builder, cast and crew)
6. Front-of-House Display (FOH Display Designer, cast)
7. Dressingrooms and bathrooms clean up
8. Backstage clean up
9. Any proscenium repainting
10. Drapes folded and put away
11. Loft cleared (stairs stacked etc.)
12. Booth cleaned and cleared (booth staff – and that means you)
13. All swept and mopped.

In a musical, scores need to be erased as well.

It has become the practice of folks to release some cast to the unit to prep for the party. I recommend that even those folks should be given a small job at the theatre FIRST before they go.

A pretty party is fine, but many hands make short work and, really, we all want to get to the party quickly. Trust me when I tell you that the “Party Crew” will be sitting waiting for folks to arrive up at the Unit. Let them help with something small before they go. But regardless, remind these folks that the food should not be put out until the truck arrives at the Unit (or else the folks who work the hardest at the theatre will get no food!).

Okay, as in the move-in, make sure you contact your different department heads to confirm how many folk they think they will need. Just as in load-in, try and help out. You are good at certain things, I expect, but I would suggest that you limit your help to load crew. The cast and crew will see you working and feel good. However, if you are up a ladder trying to clear a light, it’s hard for folks to answer a question, so be judicious about where you help.

Keep a sharp eye on the work being done. If a group (lighting crew, for example) is done in fifteen minutes, tell the folks that they need to wait to help load.

Be very clear about releasing people or you will be at the theatre finishing up with two other folks at 3:00 am. No party for you. Keep people there, even if they are waiting around a little...

Once the set is mostly down, organize the truck load. Keep an eye on the load for shifting problems.

All areas should be clean and at least as neat as you found them. The stage, itself, should be swept and mopped.

Once the place is cleaned out and such, make sure you leave the chair in the middle of the stage (don’t ask me!), and walk through the theatre turning everything out. This will be very satisfying for you, I am sure. Take the keys to the office and sign them back in for the last time. Wahoo!

Get in your car and go the party.

Once you get to the Unit, you will likely find that the truck is still in the process of being unloaded. Help out. Keep an eye on folks and make sure they are taking care. Anyone who seems drunk should be jollied out of working.

Once the unload is done, go ahead and have a good time. At the party, I suggest you drink a lot.

Thank Yous

Thank you notes are tricky. I would highly advise you to give one to everybody if you are planning to give out even one on front of everybody. People will notice if they are not included in your list of thank yous and they will take it personally. Even in this most personal act, you are still The Stage Manager. Everything you do can have ramifications.

A note is not enough for your ASM assuming you guys got along and she or he did a good job. A heartfelt note and a token present (preferably something funny – but not a junk gift) are a good idea. Flowers are a nice idea, also. Chocolate. Anything to get them to work with you in the future (assuming you are ever planning to Stage Manage again ☺).

You may also have gotten very close to your booth and backstage staff. Give them something little if you want. Remember you are now paving the way for future relationships. Be as canny as you would at work.

After the Champagne, there’s...! Uh, report and expenses.

Look, your job is almost finished. You have little to worry about, now, except writing a show report and submitting your expenses for refund. Problems do crop up just following the closing of a show, however, and I would suggest that if a prop or costume is missing or if there is a mess at the Unit, help out if you can. It’s not in your job description but it’s good for your soul.

Show Expenses

If you have been keeping track of your expenses as outlined earlier in this document, simply give the Producer your list with receipts in a clearly marked envelope. They will likely give you cash back right away.

Show Report

Your biggest headache can often be the Show Report. What should you say? What shouldn't you say...?

On every show, problems occur. Folks don't get along with one another; mistakes are made out of ignorance along with a surprising number of errors in judgment. It is impossible to avoid all the potholes in theatre. Impossible. So, you could write and write and write a report. It could be War and Peace! After all, you've seen everyone at his or her absolute best and absolute worst. You're the Stage Manager.

Heesh. Who has time? So, instead, I would keep it simple and try to remember what a show report is for. Is it for bashing folks? Getting all your negativity out? Promoting your friends or a political agenda? Sadly, no. Though this might be very therapeutic for you. No, sorry, in this, too, you have to be the one adult in the room.

So, if the Show Report is none of that, what is it? Consider the show report a tool we can all use to improve our systems.

There is a current management theory that suggests that people aren't bad but systems are. Built into this theory is the assumption that the individuals involved are all well-trained and trying to do their best. In hospitals, for example, mistakes are made that cost human life. Horrible. And we are often ready to blame. If, however, we assume that the doctor or the nurse who made the mistake is trying to save life – not harm it – and if we assume that the person tried her or his best to administer the correct medicine or procedure, we are left looking at what was faulty about the process they applied. We want to try to make sure the problem does not occur again. We need to change the process. The procedure. Training, learning, procedure.

Theatre is exactly the same although the consequences of mistakes are nowhere near as dire (even though they feel like they are). If we remove that elusive quality called 'creativity', we see that each department and job can be approached with well-established procedures that minimize the likelihood of making mistakes. In some ways, I have tried to build this as a Stage Management procedures book that will help you deal with the varying situations and demands of the job.

All jobs in theatre (or anything, really) need established procedure. Remove ego. Remove creativity. And what are you left with? A long list of stuff you have to get done and a bunch of deadlines in which to do them.

Your show report, then, needs to focus on those problems for which you see a possible solution or for which you see that there needs to be a solution in order to avoid a serious problem in the future. So, for example: Let's say you watched the show unfold and saw that the Director was not laying down reasonable deadlines in terms of a published schedule. Let's say that the show suffered because of this problem and did not open cleanly.

Whether we like it or not, our patrons are going to be less inclined to come and see our shows if our shows are a mess when they open. We will lose subs. A show opening badly is something, then, that you should bring up. Theatre is a business.

So you propose that the Producer's procedures include a set of established deadlines. For example: Approximately half a show should be blocked about a third the way through the process. The whole show should be blocked about two-thirds the way through the process. And

so on. And you can propose that the Stage Manager should sound the alarm if the show gets two weeks behind. Or you...? Whatever you propose, whatever the problem, be neutral and non-judgmental. State that there was a problem. Explain how that problem had an impact on the show and the group. Offer a solution. Try not to blame.

In short, leave your grudges aside when you sit down to write your report.

You can, however, be all emotional and effusive if you notice that a particular person went out of their way to get a job done right. Or if you think a particular person was a positive influence on the whole process. Go ahead and be nice.

However, for the rest of it, you are going to go back to your Stage Management book and go through your notes (which, I am sure, you dutifully kept) and analyze them. Jot down things that came up again and again in notes. Problems that need addressing will emerge.

Once you sit down to actually write the report, be aware that anything in writing carries weight and cannot be erased. Remember that human feelings are involved here and that folks are truly trying to do a good job. And, after all this is theatre and folks have an, uh, ego. Nuff said?

The great part about the Show Report is that you can have a positive effect on the overall process and help things to run more smoothly. Go for it.

Uh, what if someone has a bone to pick with me?

Firstly, don't sweat it. It's rarely personal even when it seems, on the surface, to be a personality conflict. Mostly, this is all about ego or, really, insecurity. Sigh.

Secondly. Remember those notes I told you to take? You can go back to them now and you will have chapter and verse on the issue that person has brought up. It is likely that the issue that upset your accuser came up for you as well. Take a look at your notes! If someone has a problem with you personally, you are certainly permitted to defend yourself. It helps that you wrote it all down.

In defending yourself, try to refer to actions as opposed to intentions. For example, if someone has accused you of being too strict, you can agree that this might seem so (a Stage Manager who is not firm has no hope). However, you can also point out that the person was late seven times and twice, the lateness disrupted the normal flow of the rehearsal. You can report on the dates and times. You can point out that you spoke to that person about the lateness on this, this, and this date. Defend yourself. However, don't try to suggest that the person is lazy or neglectful. Just report on his or her actions. Let the Board make their own judgments on character.

But, remember, you can only defend yourself if you have all this written down. Notes, notes, notes.

Congratulations

You've finished one show. You are on your way to becoming a Stage Manager. I hope you had a good time.

However, if you did not have a good time and the whole thing seemed a lot like work and you didn't feel proud or good when you looked down and found things running smoothly...? Don't do the job again. Okay, I'll repeat that. If you got no emotional ya-ya at all from doing the job, don't do it again. Just mark it up to experience and move on. The job is too difficult and too time consuming to do just because you know how.

However, if you did have a good time, I now advise you to take your time taking the next job. Stage Managing should be done at most twice in a season. If you regularly manage musicals,

save yourself a bunch of angst and only do one show a year as a Stage Manager. (In this, I admit, I am telling you to do what I say and not what I did.) And don't do just anything. Try to work with people you like and on shows you are motivated to do. It will make the whole thing more fun.

Also, you will come across a show that was particularly stressful for whatever reason. So stressful that it made you hate Stage Managing. If this is true, stop doing the job until you genuinely feel an emotional urge to do it again. Even if that takes a year or so.

Okay, hope this has helped. Congrats, again. Best of luck. Email me if you're stumped. But only if you're stumped. ☺