

DAVIDSON



Theatre Department

The Actor's Handbook

Revised Fall 2017

All students who wish to participate in a department production in an acting capacity should become familiar with all guidelines presented in this handbook.

Table of Contents

I. The Audition and Casting Process.....	3
The Audition Form	3
Conflicts.....	4
II. Applied Theatre Credit	4
III. The Rehearsal Process	5
Key Phrases.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scheduling.....	8
IV. Technical Rehearsals.....	8
Things to remember	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Tech Terms	10
Dress Rehearsals.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Make-up and Hair	Error! Bookmark not defined.
V. Performances.....	12
VI. Time Frame Regulations	13
Second Stage Productions**	13
Mainstage Productions**	13
Tech Rehearsal	13
VII. Strike	14
VIII.	14
Post Mortem	14
VIII. FAQs	14

I. The Audition and Casting Process

All Davidson College students are invited to audition for roles in Theatre Department productions. It is customary for auditionees to present a “cold read” of a side, or small selection of the script, which they will receive just before the audition. Though no advance preparation is necessary (i.e.: there is no need to come prepared with an audition monologue) reading the script beforehand is strongly encouraged.

It is the Department of Theatre’s intention to create performance opportunities for all students basing casting decisions, whenever possible, on the quality of a student’s audition and not on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, physical ability, and/or sexual orientation.

Signing up for auditions

1. Visit the department’s [Audition](#) page on the Davidson College Theatre Department website.
2. There, you’ll see a button for “AUDITIONS.” Click that link to reach a Google Doc where you can sign up for an audition slot for one or both productions.
3. On the auditions page, you will find a link to the audition forms you must print and complete before your arrival. These forms tell the director not only any important facts that might not be evident from an audition, and also give them a sense of your availability during the production process. Though it isn’t required, some students choose to attach a résumé that gives more details of your past production experience. Please bring the forms with you to Cunningham and turn them in to the director(s) at the time of audition. **Plan to arrive no less than fifteen minutes before your scheduled audition time.**

Theatre department Policy States: “A theatre major, if s/he chooses to audition, must audition for BOTH shows.*”

**In the case of a musical, should a major feel that they are unable to sing, they have the option of not auditioning for that show.*

The Audition Form

For a first time auditionee, the questions on the audition form might seem daunting. Often times, directors ask these questions to get a broad sense of the tools each of their potential actors can bring to the table. Directors always want to know as much as they can before making their final decisions and sometimes answers to questions may affect their final decisions. Honesty on these forms is essential. For example: no director wants to cast someone who is horrified of singing in a role that necessitates it.

Here are some examples of questions you might be asked on an audition form:

Will you accept any role offered? Yes No

Be specific here—if you do not feel comfortable enough accepting a lead role, say something. **When making a casting decision, directors honor comments made in this section and, when casting decisions are made, expect you to accept the role and all accompanying responsibilities.**

If you are not cast would you be interested in a backstage position? Yes No

We are always looking for students interested working in a backstage capacity. Often students who aren't cast learn a lot about the process, and our department, through stage management or run crew.

Are you comfortable singing on stage? Yes No

Do you play any instruments? Yes No (If so, which?)

_____)

Do you have any dance or acrobatic experience? Yes No

Do you have any other talents that you would like to share with us?

Some productions might require some live music or dance interludes, but often, directors will use the actor's talent to explore a new way to tell the story than previously anticipated.

Are you comfortable kissing someone of the opposite sex on stage? Yes No

Are you comfortable kissing someone of the same sex on stage? Yes No

Productions do offer a great experience, and we encourage you to be open to stretching yourself as an actor. **If performing actions related to these questions is a deal breaker, however, please be honest.**

Conflicts

On the second page you will be asked to list your regular and one-time conflicts that will occur during the rehearsal process. **It is absolutely necessary that you be as specific as possible when identifying your conflicts.** Though you might not have a complete class schedule, please offer as much information as you can. More than one regular weekend conflict could severely affect the rehearsal schedule especially for ensemble based pieces.

You are required to attend all technical rehearsals and all performances. Before accepting a role, be sure to make arrangements to negotiate/end any conflicts during that tech and performances.

Even after you are cast, it is important to communicate all conflicts to the director and stage manager immediately.

II. Applied Theatre Credit

Once a Davidson Student is cast in a Theatre Department Production, they will automatically be registered in Applied Theatre (pass/fail, non-credit). This registration gives transcript recognition for involvement in an activity which, while not technically a course, is **co-curricular**.

Typically, the producer in collaboration with other faculty involved with a production, determines whether a student will pass Applied Theatre. To successfully pass, adhere to these criteria:

1. Strict observance of rehearsal and performance schedules, particularly attendance and punctuality.
2. Meeting expectations in preparation for rehearsal (ex: line memorization)
3. Committing to a respectful and mutually supportive production team dynamic.

If and when a student is unsure about expectations, questions should be brought immediately to the director. In the event conflicts should arise which could prevent your continued work on the production that cannot be resolved by the director, please approach the producer.

In addition to the above, all student actors should be aware that the following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

1. No participant may be under the influence of alcohol or any mind-altering substance prior to or during any rehearsal or performance.
2. No participant may miss a technical or dress rehearsal.
3. No participant may have more than one unexcused tardiness
4. No participant may have **any** unexcused absences from rehearsal
5. No participant may miss the strike of the show or the “post-mortem” discussion.

Since failure to follow any of the above guidelines could seriously affect the final outcome of any performance, directors will treat any infractions with appropriate consequences, including dismissal from the cast and a “fail” in Applied Theatre.

III. The Rehearsal Process

Who’s Who

Director: The director is the person you will see most often in rehearsal. Since (s)he is in charge of the show, it is their primary job to be able to effectively communicate their vision for the final production and help all collaborators hone their creative energy to achieve the desired finished product. The Director conducts rehearsals and serve as the outside eye to keep everything on track. Actors will see them every rehearsal period, and are encouraged to communicate regularly.

Production Stage Manager: Better known as the PSM, you can find them in rehearsals taking notes, managing breaks, and making sure that all actors are on time/accounted for. **In the event of an emergency, contact the PSM as soon as you are able.** The PSM has his/her hand in every corner of production, and is in charge of making sure the production runs smoothly. During the run of the performance, the PSM will sit in the booth calling cues. Stage management is in charge of making sure that everything is set up and ready to go for rehearsal, and often must stay late in order to ensure that everything is reset for the next day. If you want to make a stage manager's day, help them out in their endeavors.

Assistant Stage Managers: In a similar vein, assistant stage managers serve an extension of the production stage manager with specific job duties related to the production. Whenever the PSM isn't in rehearsal, you'll find an ASM fulfilling their duties. Often the ASMs serve as the actor liaisons to the Prop and Costume departments, organizing fittings and making preset lists. **If you see ever see an email from the PSM or an ASM, never let it go unread without a response.**

***Note:** If an emergency arises that will require you to be late or absent from a rehearsal, please first contact the Stage Manager.*

Producer: The department producer is the person that oversees the production from a distance, making sure that all components of the project are on track and fully funded. Mostly to serve as an advisor to the stage managers, actors should come to the producer if there are any logistic concerns that for whatever reason cannot be resolved with the director alone. The producer is also an excellent resource if you have sensitive questions or concerns.

Scenic Designer: The scenic designer is responsible for crafting the world that's seen on stage. You might see her/him during occasional initial blocking rehearsals observing the movement of the show and what, if anything, needs to be changed to accommodate new activity. You probably won't interact with them much, but a friendly introduction is always welcome.

Technical Director: The technical director is responsible the oversight of a production's technical execution. You'll see him/her mostly during runs and rehearsals once the set is in the load-in process, technical rehearsals, and strike. If you interact with the technical director, you are probably talking about protocols that affect your personal safety. Their word is law.

Costume Designer: The person in charge of dressing every actor or crew member involved in the production. The costume designer is the designer you'll have the most interaction with since you will be required to attend at least one fitting session outside of rehearsal.

COSTUME FITTING ETIQUETTE:

Be on time for your fitting. If your fitting is scheduled for 4:00 – 4:20, you are expected to arrive no later than 4:00. Be sure you know exactly where you're supposed to go.

Tie up long hair above your shoulders.

Wear underwear: it would be helpful if it were the type you would wear during performance. Be sure to check with the ASM beforehand to find out if the designer wants you to bring anything in particular.

If you have them, bring tights, socks and shoes similar to what you expect to wear in the show.

The costume designer will most likely ask you to change completely into costume. Communication on what's comfortable for you is encouraged, but don't get in the way of the designer doing his/her job.

Please take the time to **ensure you are clean and odor-free** prior to a fitting.

Rehang your costumes on the hangers once the fitting is over.

Do not remove any pins, tags or labels without asking.

Treat the costume designer with respect. **A smile goes a long way.**

Properties Manager: The props manager is responsible for maintaining the objects used by actors during rehearsal and performance. You might see them running around rehearsal watching scenes to determine how objects need to be used, dropping off new objects, or fixing things that have broken. Occasionally the props manager might ask you questions about how you use a particular object to make sure that it does everything it needs to do in performance. Please take care of your props. There is no worse pain to a props manager than reading a rehearsal report and learning that an actor broke a prop they thought was finished. If a prop does break during rehearsal or performance, notify your nearest SM.

Lighting Designer: The Lighting designer is charged with crafting the environment of the playing space with lighting instruments. You probably won't see them in rehearsal save for the designer run, but you will see them in tech.

Choreographer: Whenever a production necessitates a choreographer, their job is to craft stage pictures with bodies and movement. The director looks to the choreographer to use their expertise to get actors where they need to go, so when the choreographer has control of the room, treat him/her the same way you would treat the director. Key Phrases

Blocking: Term used in reference to the planned and recorded movement of actors on stage throughout a performance.

Stage left/right: The Actor's left/right when standing onstage, facing the audience.

Upstage: Away from the audience.

Downstage: Towards the audience.

Scheduling

Call Time

“Call time” is when a rehearsal will START. All actors must arrive BEFORE call time so they may take care of any preparation necessary before work begins and ground themselves in the space. It is strongly suggested that you arrive at least ten minutes early. Being early is respectful to both the director and your peers.

Call times are posted on a weekly basis via email from a director or stage manager and posted on the callboard outside of RM100 in Cunningham. **If you have any questions concerning the schedule, email or speak directly to the production stage manager IMMEDIATELY.**

The actor is responsible for alerting the production stage manager to all schedule conflicts by the end of the first rehearsal week. Conflicts added after this date will be honored at the director’s discretion. Significant changes in availability or tardiness to rehearsal could result in removal from the production. In the event of an emergency, actors should contact the stage manager as soon as possible.

Rehearsal Etiquette

All actors should come prepared as guided by the director. This includes closely adhering to any warm-up routines, outside assignments, or line memorization that might be necessary for a given rehearsal period.

It is an actor’s responsibility to help create a constructive rehearsal environment through active listening, thoughtful communication, receptive thinking, respectful positive attitude, and tact. Be sure to do all of your scene preparation beforehand. Considerable time is lost when actors have not come up with scene objectives and tactics before entering the rehearsal room. Do your research and think about who your character is and what they want.

Interacting with other actors

The bond formed through prolonged interaction on a show is one of the most beneficial pieces of the rehearsal process. Actors are encouraged to work together to run lines and help each other master any material outside of rehearsal. All actors should remember that they are not each other’s director—avoid giving criticism.

IV. Technical Rehearsals

The Technical Marathon

Technical rehearsals refer to the period of time when the designers overlay all of their work on top of the production that the director and actors have crafted. It is the ultimate form of collaboration. The director and actors have had weeks to do their work and over the few days of tech, the designers complement the storytelling with lighting, sound, scenic and costume aspects.

Tech can be an exciting and stressful time, and involves a lot of time in a dark performing space. Here are some tips and tricks to surviving:

- **Balancing school work:** Because tech is about adding the technical elements to the show and everyone wants to make sure they are done correctly, there is often a significant amount of down time for the actors. It is a great time to bring some homework and use the time productively. **Because of the period of many long nights compounded upon each other, all actors are encouraged to get as far ahead in their school work before tech as possible.** Though you might be in the theatre as late as 11pm several nights in a row, make it your top priority to get to class the next morning.
- **Stay healthy:** A balanced sleep schedule is the key to keeping your physical and mental health on point. By the time tech has pulled around, you want to make sure you are as focused and consistent as possible. Keep a balanced diet and see your friends when you can.

Who's who during tech

Unlike previous rehearsals, control of how the night is run is left up to the Producer and Production Stage Manager, with checkpoints set up by the director. Since the Production Stage Manager will be running the show from the booth, s/he will slowly remove themselves from regular face-to-face interaction with the actor and hand off the responsibility of being the actor point person to the ASM. The ASM should be easily accessible backstage.

You might notice a lot of new faces during tech, from designers to run crew and it can be a bit difficult to keep track of who's whom, so when in doubt, just go to your nearest ASM. You might notice that many of the run crew members are part of the THE101 class participating backstage for their lab hour requirements. **Please take the time to learn their names and be respectful of their time and attention.** Though the run-crew might have a lot of down time during tech, they will need to be constantly attentive to the needs to the ASMs. Remember that the run-crew are people too, and the production would not happen without them.

Things to Remember

Always sign in: at DFPH and the Barber, the stage managers will post a sign-in sheet on the bulletin board across from the group dressing rooms (right outside the orchestra pit). Stage managers monitor this sheet closely as rehearsal or performance call time approaches, so make signing in the first thing you do each time you arrive.

Don't touch stuff that isn't yours: seems simple, but you'd be surprised how confused and complicated things get when someone does something as simple as picking up a prop and setting it down somewhere unexpected.

Be aware of your surroundings: Technical rehearsals are the most *dangerous* time during a rehearsal period. Things may be moving above your head, or right at you, or in the dark, or some combination of all three. It's important that you keep a cool head and stay on your toes, ever ready to take new direction or repeat something.

Know when to HOLD: During a tech rehearsal, the PSM will call "hold" often so he/she can address something and repeat a cue. When you hear "hold" and you're on or off stage, stop moving and talking. If you're carrying something, set it down. Look at the PSM, and await your orders. YOU are empowered to call a hold, as well, as is everyone backstage, in the event that you see a dangerous event about to take place. If you see that someone is about to be hit in the head and they don't know it, yell "HOLD!" If you see that a set piece is about to crash into another set piece, yell "HOLD!"

Be Patient: A lot of things are going to look ugly and disjointed at first during tech. It's not your job to worry about anything other than yourself. If you see a light cue that doesn't start at the right time, and the PSM doesn't call a hold to fix it, you just keep right on going. It's not your job to call a "HOLD" for anything other than a genuine emergency.

Routine is everything: If you use a prop during the show, ask an ASM where you should be able to find it pre-show and during the performance itself. Get into the habit of double-checking that all of your hand props are where they belong (backstage or onstage) at the top of every call time. When you're done with a prop, put it right back where you found it! If you can't put it right back, hand it to an ASM and explain the circumstances.

Don't go AWOL: Tech is a very fluid process, so while you may think you're done for a while, the production team might decide they need you back onstage to try something else. Searching for actors who wandered off is a big waste of time. If you're trying to figure out whether or not you can leave the backstage area and head to the green room, check in with an ASM.

Tech Terms

Cue to Cue: The period in tech in which the production stage manager, board ops, run-crew, and actors (depending on the day) go through each moment of the show where something needs to happen in the order that they will happen in performance. These "cues" could be anything from changing lights and sound to moving furniture and fly pieces. The cue-to-cue is finished once each moment of change in the show has been covered at least once.

Quick Change: Refers to a change in costume that must happen within a short amount of time. Often taking place in a makeshift changing booth on one side of the stage, actors often prepare for these moments with the assistance of run-crew.

Mic-Check: For musicals, actors often wear Microphones. At some point during the very beginning of each tech day, certain actors will be called to the stage to recite lines and ensure the quality of sound coming through the system. **All actors should be present and on time on stage ready for your mic-check.** Be sure to check with your nearest SM on when you should be present. It is not their job to look for you.

Fight Call: In certain cases, events that must take place during performance that can be potentially harmful to the actors involved will rehearse that particular instance of blocking prior to the run of the show. The blocking might not be done at full force with full props, the exercise is just to refresh your muscle memory and make sure everything feels safe.

Dry Tech: Dry tech is a time for the crew, stage management team, designers and director to run the technical elements of the show without the actors present. Typically, this is used when there are a significant amount of set moves that require coordination.

Wet Tech: Technical rehearsals that add the actors and are typically done without costumes. Sometimes the best way to begin tech is with a cue-to-cue, which is driven by the Production Stage Manager. The PSM will give you a pick up point in the script and it's your job to perform the blocking and lines as you have rehearsed them. Meanwhile, the PSM and other members of the technical team will time cues around you. When they want you to stop and skip ahead to a new line, the PSM will tell you exactly what to do.

It's helpful, during Wet Tech, to start keeping an eye on your props. Where do they live backstage? Do you foresee any problems with where they currently live? For instance, do you have to exit SR, grab a prop, and come right back onstage, but for some reason, the ASM has been keeping your prop on the opposite side of the stage? Talk to them if you have concerns. This is the time to work things out.

Dress Rehearsals

Once the show has been cued and transitions worked through with actors, it's time to add in the costumes. During dress rehearsals, the show will run as though an audience were watching it for the first time, meaning stops will only be called during emergencies or foul-ups that halt the continuation of the show. Actors should be on their toes at all times and maintain their awareness of where they need to be and what they need to be doing at all times.

Make-up and Hair

Actors are expected to provide their own make-up for production. An actor planning on performing throughout their college career and into the future should invest in their own make-up kit to experiment with and have in case a role calls for make-up effects.

Assistance is available for actors who are unable to purchase makeup. Talk to the producer for details.

During your fittings, talk to the costume designer about what will be expected of you for make-up and hair in the final performance. Often times, directors will instruct you not to cut your hair or shave any facial hair you might acquire prior to the performance run and give you further instructions as it comes closer to show time.

In preparing for performance hair and make-up, actors are often expected to show up well before call time to do any preparation that might be necessary. Wardrobe assistants and costume designers will be around to help teach you how to do what's expected of you during dress rehearsal prep, assuming you will be fine to carry it out by yourself during the run of the show.

V. Performances

Once productions have entered into the technical rehearsal phase, all actors must sign-in at the call board to alert stage managers of their presence during preshow. During the first tech day, the PSM will explain to you where the call board is located.

Actors all also responsible for the care of any costume, wigs, and hand props used in production.

All actors must be respectful of the stage managers' authority over the performance process.

All actors must be constantly aware of their surroundings during the performance process and treat set, lighting, and sound equipment with extreme care.

All actors must hang up their costumes carefully after each performance and clean their make-up area.

All actors are expected to maintain the quality and integrity of their work through the run of the production.

VI. Time Frame Regulations

Specified below are the time regulations to which the director, stage managers, and design team must adhere. Should they fail to follow these rules, please contact the producer or the department chair immediately.

Second Stage Productions**

1. Five weeks maximum (holidays excluded) including tech unless the actors are informed otherwise during auditions.
2. Six days a week maximum.
3. Monday-Thursday rehearsals must be no longer than 3 hours in length and end by 10pm.
4. Directors may rehearse a maximum of 4 hours on Sunday, Saturday, or Friday ending by 10pm.
5. Rehearsals are traditionally not scheduled on Saturdays, though it has been known to happen in cases with difficult scheduling conflicts.
6. Rehearsals are never held before noon on Sundays.
7. During rehearsal, frequent breaks should be provided. We recommend the Equity model: 5 minutes of every hour or 10 minutes every 90 minutes—(with the exception of the running of an Act).

Mainstage Productions**

1. Seven weeks maximum (holidays excluded) including tech unless the actors are informed otherwise during auditions. The accepted length for musicals is 8 ½ weeks.
2. Six days a week maximum.
3. Monday-Thursday rehearsals must be no longer than 3 hours in length and end by 10pm.
4. Directors may rehearse a maximum of 4 hours on Sunday, Saturday, or Friday ending by 10pm.
5. Rehearsals are traditionally not scheduled on Saturdays though it has been known to happen in cases with difficult scheduling conflicts.
6. Rehearsals are never held before noon on Sundays.
7. During rehearsal, frequent breaks should be provided. We recommend the equity model: 5 minutes of every hour or 10 minutes every 90 minutes—(with the exception of the running of an Act).

Tech Rehearsal

When technical rehearsals occur on a weekday, they may not last more than five hours and it must be completed by 11pm. **Dress rehearsals must end by 11pm with a maximum of 5 ½ hours of rehearsal time.** Occasionally dress rehearsals might be held after a tech rehearsal on Sundays, in which case actors might be called for more than 5.5 hours.

** The exception to the above guidelines for the productions is when the director, actors, production team, and the departmental chair mutually agree to extend a rehearsal within a reasonable time frame

VII. Strike

The actor is required to attend and work responsibly and safely through the strike, or dismantling, of the scenic, costume, and light elements of the production. The actor is dismissed only by the technical director. Should an actor breach this rule she/he may fail the applied theatre course.

VIII. Post Mortem

The purpose of the post mortem is to make recommendations for future productions by identifying both areas of excellence and breakdowns in the audition process. It also provides an opportunity for students to learn about the production process in a comprehensive manner. Just before the post mortem, all actors will be required to fill out an anonymous evaluation form which will inform the format of the group discussion. Attendance at the final discussion is mandatory. Should an actor breach this rule she/he may fail the applied theatre course.

VIII. FAQs

I have never been involved in theatre before and I'm really worried that I will screw up the audition. What should I do?

Never fear. The Theatre department faculty, staff, and current students are always open to questions and helping students prepare for auditions. It is often tough for students with little previous experience to get cast in roles the first time they try to audition. We encourage all interested students to either take-up a backstage assignment or Acting I to help put a few more tools in your box before trying out.

I was just cast in a production and I concurrently found out that I now have a two-hour conflict during a technical rehearsal. What should I do?

Contact your director immediately and explain the conflict. They are more than willing to help figure out possible solutions, though it can't be guaranteed we will be able to work through all of the possible conflicts and you might have to drop out. Unfortunately, all actors are required to be in all parts of dress rehearsal and shouldn't miss any of the wet tech. Because you know so far in advance that there might be an issue, often the director can help figure out a plan that works for everyone.

We are halfway through the rehearsal period and I just found out that my parents want me to come home for a day during tech. What should I do?

Missing tech rehearsals is similar to constructing a building with no supporting structure—it just can't happen. First, explain to your parents that it's simply impossible to miss tech rehearsal, even for one day. If you live close enough, encourage them to come to campus and of course to see the show. In the event of an unforeseen family emergency happening just before or during tech, speak to the Director and Producer for guidance.

I just tested positive for the flu/barfed/broke a bone and I'm supposed to be at rehearsal in an hour. What should I do?

First, call the stage manager on duty and explain the situation. (The stage manager on call can be found on your rehearsal schedule) No one wants a sick actor in rehearsal to make everyone else the same way, and we really don't want to risk any further adverse effects on your health. Missing a day of rehearsal is a large setback, but sometimes it can't be avoided. Recurring absences due to illness will need a further discussion with the producer and director concerning your ability to continue working on the show. Your health should be your first priority!