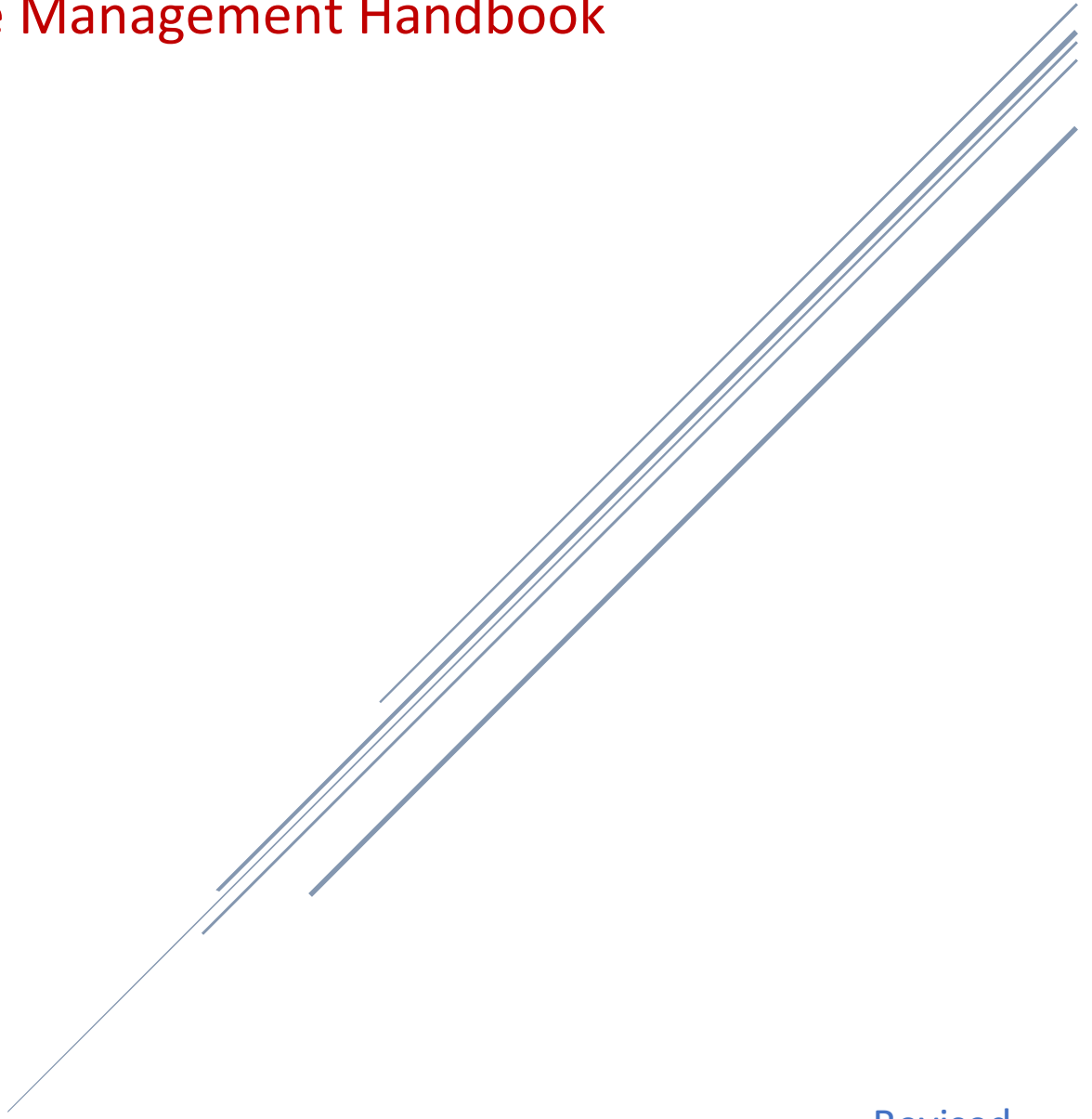


# DAVIDSON



Theatre Department

Stage Management Handbook



Revised  
Fall 2017

## CHAPTER ONE- An Introduction to Stage Management

### What does stage management do?

- Makes rehearsal happen
- Makes each performance happen
- Is the essential point of communication between everyone.

If these responsibilities sound enormous it is because *they are*. Throughout your experience, remember that you are a part of a stage management team and together you will share the responsibilities, challenges, and triumphs of this role. The department's Producer serves as your advisor. Come to him or her if you have any questions, concerns, or problems. Remember that this is a learning experience. No student steps into a stage management role equipped to execute the job perfectly.

### Why do I have to stage manage?

1. **It provides a comprehensive view of the production process.** As a stage manager, you will see how all parts of the producing machine work together. The stage manager is the only person on a production that follows it all the way from pre-production through closing night.
2. **You will get practical managerial and organizational experience.** As a stage manager, you will be involved in managing artists, technicians, and fellow students. You will manage a lot of information, numerous schedules, and reams of paper. You will be called on to answer all kinds of questions about the production and you will need to know how to find those answers very quickly. This experience will serve you in any career or life path you choose.
3. **You will learn and practice diplomacy and delegation.** When you fill a room with artists, you also get a room filled with passions and strong opinions. When all of that individual artistry is combined, theatre happens. But it is not easy and it is not always peaceful. Part of your job is to make sure that each of these individuals is heard and that all needs are addressed in the most effective way possible.
4. **Your communication and creative problem solving skills will be tested.** As theatre makers, we pride ourselves on good communication skills. From first rehearsal to closing night, the success of the production depends on your effective communication, verbal and written, with the entire team.
5. **If you want to be an actor, understanding the role of the stage manager is essential.** As a professional actor, your stage manager can be your biggest ally.

## **Chapter Two: Pre-Production**

Before the rehearsals even begin, the Production Stage Manager will ideally be on board and hard at work. There is a great deal of pre-production organizational business for the PSM to attend to in order to aid the production process. The PSM will become well acquainted with the play, the director, and the production team. This important pre-production work is outlined below.

### **CONFLICTS:**

During Auditions, the actors will have turned in sheets detailing their conflicts. It is important that all of these conflicts are considered when forming the rehearsal schedule. This schedule may be something the director puts together alone or with your assistance. Only the director can approve (or disapprove) conflicts.

Once the production assignments have been posted, the Stage Management team should sit down with the Producer and discuss the team's own conflicts and how they want to cover the break down of rehearsal. Be sure to speak up when you have a conflict, and try to assemble a schedule before the first rehearsal even begins. **(For an example of this break down applied to the rehearsal schedule, please refer to Chapter 4: Scheduling.)**

### **THE STAGE MANAGEMENT KIT:**

A vital tool in the process, the stage management kit is a box containing items that may be needed during rehearsals. The box is obtained from the Producer, and should be brought to every rehearsal without fail. An inventory list for each toolbox is listed on a laminated card on the inside of the box. Should something be missing from the box or you are running low on supplies, you should let the Producer know so they can replace it for you.

### **IDENTIFY THE SPACE:**

Before the first rehearsal or even table work begins, the stage management team should familiarize itself with whatever rehearsal space the production will operate in. Be aware of the rules of each space (no food on risers, the sound equipment etc), and plan ahead as to what props and seating will be needed for rehearsal.

### **CREATING THE STAGE MANAGER BOOK:**

The Stage Manager book is perhaps the most important thing to a stage manager, besides the SM Kit. The book should include everything concerning the production, and should be in a location accessible to the entire stage management team. The book will be further expanded on in Chapter 6, but a quick checklist of what it should include:

- Any keys (to the main office, sound equipment etc)
- The Production Meeting notes
- Character Scene Breakdown
- Cast List
- Contact Info
- Props lists

- Rehearsal Reports
- All Schedules
- Master Calendar
- A copy of the ground plan
- Inserts of the ground plan (for blocking)
- A blocking key
- All conflicts
- The Master Script
- The Prompt Book
- Line Note Sheets
- Blank Paper for notes
- Costume Plot
- Pre-set lists

### **THE PAPERWORK:**

The paperwork that the PSM generates should always be organized, clear and accurate. All paperwork must be created in conjunction with the director, and must be distributed to the entire production team immediately. The Production Stage Manager should create the documents listed below in consultation with the larger Production Calendar. In order to allow the director time to review the documents and make revisions, the PSM should submit drafts no later than one week prior to the first production meeting. Always note the date of last revision, as documents may need to be revised during the process.

**\*\*Hint – save documents that are to be distributed as PDF’s.**

#### **Contact Sheets**

As the Production Stage Manager, you will create a Contact Sheet to distribute to both the production team as well as the cast. This list can be both handed out at or before their first production meetings, and given to the cast at the first read through.

The Contact Sheet includes:

- The name and role of each person involved in the show
- Their email addresses
- Their office phone numbers (and extensions)
- Their home or cell phone numbers, if volunteered.

#### **Character/Scene Breakdown**

The character scene breakdown is important to the director and PSM as they are helpful with the creation of the weekly rehearsal schedules. This document provides a clear breakdown of which characters are in which scenes/pages of the play. Such information is also, for example, helpful to a costume designer who might need to create multiple costumes for a character. The Character/Scene breakdown should include:

- Scene Number
- A title or description of the scene
- The starting page
- The ending page
- Who is in the scene

## Chapter Three: Scheduling

Scheduling is one of the most important details in a production. It is vital that you, as the Stage Manager, are abreast of all scheduling conflicts, which can include anything from actor conflicts to rehearsal space issues.

**Master Rehearsal Calendar** – used for the majority of productions. Working with the director and in consultation with the master production calendar, the PSM creates a Master Rehearsal Calendar that includes:

- Rehearsal times
- Rehearsal locations
- Rehearsal nature to the extent known (ex. working rehearsal, read-thru, run-thru, tech rehearsal, dress rehearsal)
- Performance dates and times
- Performance date call times
- Strike

### **OTHER WAYS TO SCHEDULE**

Some directors choose to schedule rehearsals week by week, posting the following week's rehearsal schedule on the Friday.

- **Reserving the Rehearsal Venue** – Once the PSM and director have created the Master Rehearsal Calendar, the PSM must immediately reserve the rehearsal venue for all rehearsal times. Schedules for each room are maintained by the Theatre Department and typically posted on bulletin boards in the hallway. If there are any conflicts, the PSM should notify the director immediately. In Cunningham, there are two rehearsal spaces; the Barber theatre and room 100. Be sure to check with the director as to what room you are to reserve, and be sure to make sure the location is indicated on the master schedule.
- **Rehearsal Assistant** – During the production process, the stage management team may be assigned a rehearsal assistant who has a specific number of hours to complete as the lab requirement for their THE 101. Not only is it important to schedule in the Rehearsal Assistant early on to ensure they complete their hours, the Rehearsal Assistant can often times serve as a member of the stage management team, and can help with anything from line notes to set up.
- **Conflicts** – It is important to double-check all actor conflicts when preparing the master schedule. These conflicts should be listed on the audition forms each actor filled out, and should be kept in the Stage Management book for reference. The stage manager should confirm conflicts with the cast at the beginning of the rehearsal period.

## Chapter Four: The First Rehearsal

After the cast list has been posted, the next concern of the stage management team is to get ready for the first rehearsal. Typically, the director may want to spend several days doing “table work” where the actors spend rehearsal time around a table reading the script and exploring objectives, characters, history, etc. In order to be fully prepared, there are a few housekeeping details you should attend to.

### **Contacting the Cast**

- The Production Stage Manager should contact the cast immediately via email to introduce herself.
- Initial contact should include:
  - A positive welcome to the production!
  - The name and contact information of the Production Stage Manager.
  - A brief description of the PSM’s role. It will be explained in detail later, but they should be told to contact the PSM, NOT the director, regarding any schedule conflicts or questions regarding logistics. **\*\*This is important!! Establishing the chain of communication early on is key. This helps minimize any miscommunications and mistakes, and clearly informs the cast who to contact.**
  - The confirmed date, time and location of the first read-thru.
  - When and where the cast can obtain scripts and/or scores. (This may happen at the first rehearsal itself)

**\*\*Hint:** Be sure to check that every member of the cast and any rehearsal assistants have cat card access to Cunningham

### **Script and Score Distribution**

- Scripts and/or Musical Scores can be distributed at the first read-thru, if it is happening immediately. If the director prefers, or if there is a significant lag time between casting and the first read-thru, the cast can contact the PSM to obtain their copy of the script.
- The PSM should make the actors aware of the conditions under which they are using the script/score.
  - Acting Editions or Photocopies: The actors are typically permitted to permanently mark and keep Acting Editions or Photocopies of the script.
  - Rented Scripts and Scores: The actors are typically allowed to mark these lightly in pencil. The PSM should assign a number to each script/score and keep record which actor or production team member has which copy.
- The PSM should strongly encourage actors to put their name in their copy of the script immediately. Be sure to stress to the cast that their script is their responsibility—not that of the stage management team.

**\*\*Hint:** Be sure that the entire stage management team has a copy of the script, and that you have at least 2 clean extras in the SM Box.

Stage managers will often need to make copies of forms, reports, and other items for rehearsal. Once chosen, the stage management team should meet with the Producer to receive a copy of the stage management keys along with instructions on how to use the department copy machine.

## **THE FIRST READ-THRU**

The First Read-Thru is typically scheduled within the week after casting is posted. Sometimes it occurs as early as the following day. The Production Stage Manager should be sure to sign out the rehearsal venue, and confer with the director as to what setup he/she would like.

### **Who Should Be There**

- The entire cast
- The director
- The musical director (if applicable)
- The choreographer (if applicable)
- The production stage manager and any other available members of the stage management team. (This is important for the cast to meet the team in person!)
- The dramaturg, if the director wishes
- The designers, if the director wishes – they might present their designs
- The dialect coach, if he and/or the director wishes

### **Materials Needed for the First Read**

- All scripts and/or scores that have not yet been distributed
- The Production Stage Manager should come prepared with a packet for all actors that must include the following:
  - The Contact Sheet
  - The Master Rehearsal Calendar
  - The Weekly Rehearsal Schedule (if applicable)
  - The Cast Conflict Sheet
  - The Actor's Handbook – obtain this document from the Producer prior to the first read-thru and make copies for the cast. The Production Stage Manager must also read and be familiar with this document.
  - The Applied Theatre Requirements – the Producer will ensure that any needed paperwork is brought to the first rehearsal
  - Emergency information sheet

### **The Production Stage Manager's Role**

Prior to the beginning of the script reading, or at some other time during the rehearsal if the director prefers, the Production Stage Manager must attend to housekeeping details.

- The PSM should circulate the cast conflict sheet and ask all actors to double check their conflicts and make all adjustments necessary at that time.
- The PSM should also circulate the contact sheet to ensure that the contact info for each cast member or any remaining members of the production team is correct (you can do this via email)
- The PSM should distribute script/score copies.
- The PSM should sign out by number any scripts/scores that are rented or must be returned at the end of the run.

Check with the director on how he/she wants to use you during the read-through. Often it is the PSM's duty to read all pertinent stage directions printed in the script. The PSM does not need to read every single stage direction, but all those that inform a better understanding of the

play and characters. This will be fairly easy to feel out as the read-thru progresses. You should try to get a timing on the first read thru – this will inform everyone of the approximate running time of the production.

You should take notes during the table work sessions. Even if the director does not need these detailed acting notes, be ready to write down questions that arise from the reading that will affect your work (props, costume changes, scene changes, etc.)



## Chapter Five: The Stage Management Book

As a PSM, you will be required to create a stage management book (also called a “prompt book”) for your production. This book is vital to the production process, and includes all the paperwork and information you will need throughout the entire process. The easiest way to organize/create a book is to use a three-ring binder and have divided sections for each separate category of information. You will be asked to remove pages (or have to add new ones) constantly, so be prepared to keep track of all of your documents! It is absolutely key to keep this book neat!

### **The Stage Manager Book should contain:**

- Any keys (to the main office, sound equipment etc)
- Notes from meetings
- Character Scene Breakdown
- Contact Sheet
- Props lists
- Rehearsal Reports
- Master Calendar
- A copy of the ground plan and miniatures
- A blocking key
- Conflict sheet
- The Master Script
- Line Notes Sheets
- Costume Plot
- Pre-set lists

**Production Meeting Notes:** These notes are important to have on hand, because they list any changes or updates made by the production team, and the director may call upon them during rehearsals or refer to past notes in subsequent production meetings. They are also helpful to have on hand when meeting with the properties or costume masters.

**Props Lists:** Like everything else, this document should be dated with each new version. The distinction between rehearsal and real prop (or what will actually be used during the show) is a **major** distinction that needs to be clearly and accurately communicated with the properties master and director, and this form is a great tool to help track these distinctions. Generally, the properties master will create the table and the properties master and the SMs will communicate (usually via e-mail) to make changes. This is a process and WILL change often, so each new draft should be dated.

**Ground plan:** The ground plan is key for both the tape down of the set in the rehearsal space as well as a helpful page for blocking. By having a ground plan insert, you can write blocking as it would be on the stage; these diagrams can be very helpful when you need to clarify blocking notation (which can get confusing with a large stage management team).

**Rehearsal Reports:** Prop additions, costume notes, and any other change need to be clearly documented here, for without clear description, confusion can arise. After each rehearsal, these reports should be dated and e-mailed to everyone on the production team, and then printed out, hole punched, and placed in the SM book for future reference.

**The Master Script:** This copy of the script is the master log of all of the blocking for the play. All blocking should be taken down in pencil, as it can change at any point. The stage management team must all be comfortable enough with the master script to stand in for a missing actor if necessary, so be sure to track any changes!

**The Tech Script:** Like the master script, this version is the PSM's script used to call the show. All lighting, sound, and other technical cues are listed here, but blocking typically is not.

**Line Notes Sheets:** Once the actors are off book, it is the stage management team's job to ensure they are on book to supply a called for line, and to document any variation from the script during a rehearsal.

**Costume Plot:** A breakdown of costumes for each character that tracks all changes throughout the play. This is generally produced by the Costume Designer, but is a vital document for the stage management team to have, especially during the tech process.

**Preset List:** Like the costume plot, these lists track prop and set pieces throughout the play. It is vital to keep these up to date, and for the list to clearly track changes in sides and if an actor, SM, or member of running crew must move a prop or set piece throughout the production.

## **Chapter Six: Blocking Rehearsals**

Blocking or staging rehearsals follow table work, and are where the stage management team will work the majority of their hours. In the rehearsal hall, the stage management team will be responsible for the organization and preset of props, costumes, and set pieces, and will unless otherwise noted assist with the scene transitions. The stage management team will be responsible for recording the rehearsal notes and sending them out to the production team, as well as controlling any technology that may be used in the hall—such as an ipod or stereo system. In order for the blocking rehearsals to begin, the floor needs to be accurately taped down from the ground plan provided by the set designer.

### **REHEARSAL PROTOCOL AND THE PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Taping the Rehearsal Hall Floor**

The Stage Management team is responsible for taping the ground plan of the set on the floor of the rehearsal hall. She should consult with the director regarding the date by which the floor should be taped and how you should orient the ground plan in the rehearsal space. You will need a ground plan (ask the TD), a scale rule, some spike tape (again, the TD), a long tape measure (25'), and a framing square (scene shop).

Please note that the methods below are just basic suggestions. If you are at all confused, don't be afraid to ask for help – taping the floor is not an easy process, even for seasoned SM's.

- Note the centerline and plaster line on the drafting of the ground plan. It should be clearly marked. (Do this with one color, and do not repeat this color)
- Measure the length of the centerline from the back wall (or back of the playing space) to the front of the stage. Clearly mark your Center/Center point.
- Using a different color of tape, and again measuring from the centerline and back wall, mark any other permanent set pieces (platforms, built furniture such as a bar, etc.) When working with straight lines, it often works to mark points then “connect the dots.” Doors are typically marked with a dotted line and walls with a solid line.
- If there are any steps on the set, distinguish them with another tape color or dotted lines.
- Finally, if it fits in the rehearsal hall, and again measuring from the center line and back wall, create the front of the stage.
- For a Thrust Stage (audience on three sides) follow the instructions above.
- For Theatre in the Round (audience on four sides), begin by taping the boundaries of the stage. Measure in from the sides.

Each set will present different challenges in taping. Some have intricate nooks, others complicated curves. So, take some time and figure out the most efficient way to get everything that is important taped. You will not need to tape out furniture, it will be spiked during the rehearsal process once the director determines positioning.

### **Materials Needed for Rehearsal**

The Stage Management Team should always have the following materials easily accessible at rehearsal:

- The complete prompt book
- A watch – to keep time, call breaks, etc. I recommend a stopwatch that is not your phone.
- At least one extra clean copy of the script
- Extra sharpened pencils (with erasers!) for cast and stage management team
- A ruler
- Hair rubber bands – Actors and Actresses will need to get their hair out of their faces
- All necessary rehearsal props – these should be stored in the property storage room off of room 100.
- Proper keys
- Enough line correction sheets for each actor to use 1-3.
- Access to a first-aid kit

If you do not have these materials, ask the Producer where you can find them.

### **Set-up and Clean-up**

The stage management team should arrive 20-30 minutes prior to the start of rehearsal on any given night to prepare the room for rehearsal. Depending on the complexity of the show, you may need to arrive earlier.

Your set up should include:

- Sweeping the floor if there is any debris that might be dangerous to actors moving about on the floor
- Putting all rehearsal furniture in place for the scheduled scene
- Preparing all rehearsal props for the scheduled scene
- Presetting all rehearsal props by placing them in the appropriate place on or offstage for the scheduled scene

The Production Stage Manager is responsible for making sure the rehearsal space is clean after each rehearsal - be sure to clean any items that held food or beverages.

### **Managing the Rehearsal Hall**

The artistic elements of rehearsal are under the jurisdiction of the director. The Stage Manager should refrain from interjecting comments unless expressly requested by the director. Even then, the stage manager should use discretion. The organizational and logistic elements of rehearsals both on and off-stage are the stage manager's responsibility.

- Onstage
  - Stage Management is responsible for maintaining the safety of actors. This point cannot be stressed enough. You are the actors' advocate in the rehearsal process.
    - The SM team should be familiar with the location and contents of the first aid kits. There is one in the prop storage room, scene shop, and the dressing rooms.

- The SM team should make actors aware, prior to the beginning of rehearsal, which set pieces are safe to stand on, sit on, etc., as called for in the play. If any injury does occur, the must be noted in the rehearsal report.
    - The SM team should keep actors from using props when on breaks. Props are not toys. A good rule to have is to not touch a prop unless you use it.
  - Stage Management is responsible for preparing the stage for the scene the actors are performing.
    - Stage Management should have record of prop and furniture movement and quickly restore the set to the desired condition.
    - Stage Management should have ready access to all props that will be needed during a night's rehearsal.
    - Stage Management should have the necessary materials to wash glasses, etc during rehearsal if needed. Cunningham and the Duke have sinks in the green rooms.
- Off-stage
  - Stage Management must call any actor who is 2 minutes or more past their call, unless otherwise instructed by the director. She should leave a message if the actor does not answer.
  - The Stage Management team must maintain a focused rehearsal environment.
    - The stage management team must provide an example for the cast by remaining focused at all times, and quiet unless performing functions of the job that require otherwise.
    - Stage Management must keep actors, crewmembers or observers in the rehearsal hall or house quiet. This includes mentioning at the top of rehearsals that all cell phones must be turned off.
  - The Stage Manager must stay ahead of the game, by anticipating needs. Ideally, a rehearsal will never be held up or hindered by logistical needs.

### **Calling Breaks and Rehearsal Endings**

It is the Stage Manager's responsibility to keep time during rehearsals. This includes:

- Being sure rehearsals start on time.
- If the director is repeatedly late for rehearsals, the SM should bring it to his/her attention in a private manner. If the problem continues, it should be brought to the attention of the Producer.
- Notifying the director when the schedule indicates it is time to move on. A director might wish to finish what s/he has started at which point it is the SM's job to determine if the remainder of the schedule can be salvaged that evening or create a plan to move the intended work to another rehearsal. It is not productive to argue with the director about the schedule.
- Calling the appropriate breaks within rehearsals and notifying the director when you have reached the end of day.
  - Check with your director to see how they would like breaks called – 5 minutes every 55 minutes or 10 minutes every 80 minutes (these are AEA guidelines). Also, check with your director about whether or not they would like a warning about when break is coming.
  - *The Stage Manager is also responsible for calling all actors back from breaks on time.* If there are actors out of the rehearsal hall, a Stage Manager or rehearsal assistant should

round up the actors in time to resume promptly at the end of the break. When the break is over, simply call, “we’re back.”

### **Daily Rehearsal Notes**

The Stage Manager is responsible for taking detailed notes during rehearsals. The notes should include the categories noted in the template and should be as specific as possible. Think about your language and communicate in an effective and diplomatic manner.

- When possible, give dimensions when talking about physical structures.
- The PSM should consult with the director at the end of rehearsal or during a break regarding any unclear notes.
- Phrase things as questions or requests, rather than demands.
- When speaking about costumes or props, give as much detail as possible.

Daily Rehearsal Notes should be sent out **via email** each evening after rehearsal – it is a good idea to ask another member of the SM team to check them to ensure that nothing was missed. It is important to send them directly after rehearsal so that the production team is able to work on them during the work day. They should be sent to the entire production team, but not the cast.

### **Technical Needs During Rehearsals**

While the lighting and sound design are ultimately not under the jurisdiction of the Production Stage Manager (except to call cues during the performance) –the stage management team may have to attend to provisional lighting and sound needs during rehearsals. The SM team should familiarize themselves with the lighting system in the rehearsal space. If sound is provided by the Sound Designer, the SM team should secure use of a playback system.

### **Accidents and other emergencies**

Accidents occasionally happen in a rehearsal. Should someone become injured in a rehearsal, please let a faculty or staff person know immediately. If there is not a faculty or staff member in the rehearsal hall (which may be the case if the director is a guest or a student), find one in the building or call one of them at home. Once it is clear that the injured person is out of danger, the SM should fill out an accident report. This report should be filled out regardless of whether there is a faculty or staff person in the room. An accident report will keep a record of what happened and how it happened. This is necessary for the college’s insurance policy, which will cover any medical costs incurred by the injury. A first aid kit is located in the Barber dressing rooms. It is a good idea to check it before rehearsals begin and let the Producer know if any of the supplies are low.

## **Chapter Seven: Run Through and Getting Closer to the Performance**

As the performance dates get closer, rehearsals will shift to run-throughs. At this point, the actors are generally required to be off book, requiring the SM team to keep track of lines missed. The rehearsal assistant can be helpful at this time, as run through often require someone to watch blocking, someone to take notes, someone to be on book, and someone to help with the scene transitions. At this point, your preset lists will become your best friends.

### **Off-Book Rehearsals**

Once the actors are off-book, you will need someone to be on book consistently. This requires focus and commitment.

- Being on-book requires:
  - Following closely along in the script.
  - Calling lines *quickly* and *loudly* with no line reading
  - A line should not be given until it is requested by the actor
- Whoever is on book (whether a stage manager or a rehearsal assistant) must also take line notes for each actor once he has memorized his lines using the template provided.

### **Run-Thrus**

At various points during the rehearsal process, the director will schedule a run-thru of the show. For these rehearsals, the SM team must:

- Be sure all props available are set for the top of the show.
- Time each act of the show
- Schedule as many assistants as possible as run-thrus will require more hands.
- Take note of any challenges that will need attention during performances.

## **Chapter Eight: PROPS AND COSTUMES**

Each Mainstage and Second Stage Theatre Department production will have, at a minimum, a prop master and a costume designer. As the stage manager, you will assist both of these department by communicating important production information to them and scheduling times when these personnel can meet with actors.

It usually works best to assign an ASM to props and costumes. The ASM can manage specific communication, scheduling, and forms.

### **PROPS**

Props run the gamut from large pieces of furniture to small items an actor uses onstage like a lighter, a glass, or a piece of food.

In advance of first rehearsal, the props master will compile an initial list of props and share it with the SM team and the director. Every time a new prop is mentioned or added in rehearsal, it should be added to the SM team copy of the list AND included in the daily rehearsal report.

#### **PROP LIST**

The prop master will maintain a detailed prop list. Every time a new prop is added in rehearsal, the SM should add it to their copy of the props list and note it in the rehearsal report.

Props can be used for rehearsal only, for performance only, or both. The props master will provide rehearsal props, but the SM team needs to create a list of rehearsal props needed. Most of these props will likely not be used for the actual performances.

Often in rehearsal, the director or actors will find that a prop does not work. Whenever this is the case, make sure to let the prop master know through the rehearsal notes. Thoroughly explain why the prop does not work and what needs to be changed – this is one of the cases when it is especially important to practice your diplomacy.

#### **PROP MEETINGS**

The props department will be at production meetings. These meetings are a good time to discuss specific issues. It is a good policy to stop by to visit the props master a few times a week in case there are notes that need to be clarified or specific rehearsal needs that are immediate. Face to face meetings, with the props on hand, are always better than email and will often save a lot of time.



## **PROPS SECTION OF REHEARSAL NOTES**

The prop master may not see a rehearsal until the designer run through. For this reason, he or she may have no idea how specific props are used. Is the prop thrown? Jumped on? Does it need to be a certain color or texture? Does it need to look old or new? Is it eaten? All of this information should be provided through rehearsal notes. As the play takes shape, props will take on new duties and stresses. All of this should be noted on the rehearsal notes so that the prop master can be prepared.

## **PROP OR COSTUME?**

Some props cross the line with costumes. An example might be a handbag that a character uses throughout a play, or a walking stick. Both might be considered costumes or props. For our purposes at Davidson College, if a prop is an article of clothing or an accessory, the costume designer shall either help select it or pull several options from the costume stock.

## **COSTUMES**

Each production will have a Costume Designer and in most cases, that designer is a guest artist. He or she won't work at the College or even reside in Davidson. For this reason, clear communications with the costume designer is of the utmost importance. The ASM will be in charge of coordinating fittings with the designer and disseminating that schedule to the cast.

### **FITTINGS**

Throughout the rehearsal process, the costume designer will need to see the cast members for costume fittings. Between each cast member's conflicts and rehearsal schedule, these fittings can be very difficult to schedule. The ASM must work with the designer and the director to schedule these fittings. Some important things to consider when scheduling fittings:

- Does the director want to be there? If so, the fittings need to be scheduled when there is not rehearsal.
- How long does the costume designer need with each actor? Depending on the type of fitting, the designer might want an actor for five minutes (to try on a hat or a pair of shoes) or upwards of an hour (to fit several costumes or to pin an elaborate costume)
- Actors need to have at least 24 hours notice of fittings. Make sure that the costume designer is aware of this so that he/she plans in advance.
- Once fittings are scheduled, actors need to be informed about them. Do so in the following ways:
  - Post a fitting schedule on the call board
  - Send the fitting schedule to all affected actors by email
- The ASM should plan to be at the fittings unless there is a wardrobe assistant in place. At the fittings, the ASM can
  - Call actors who are late
  - Take notes for the designer
  - Keep an ear out for costume issues that will affect rehearsal or performance

Actors will need to be reminded by stage management and by the director that fittings are **required**. Often the designer is driving quite a distance to do the fittings and they cannot be re-schedule.

### **REHEARSAL COSTUME PIECES**

For most productions, there will be costume pieces that need to be used in rehearsal, specifically if the costume pieces affect the actor's movement at all. These might be pieces such as high-heeled shoes, a long skirt or period pieces such as a corset or panniers.

Before rehearsals begin, the director and the stage management team should consult with the costume designer about what rehearsal costume pieces will be needed in rehearsal. The costume designer is responsible for finding these pieces unless he/she gives permission to stage management to locate them. Once the pieces are located, they should be stored in the rehearsal hall for easy access. You will need to inform the actors that the pieces are available for use and remind them to use them in rehearsal. Sometimes actors should bring their own rehearsal costumes such as shoes, skirts or suit coats. New or different rehearsal pieces can be requested in the rehearsal notes.

### **COSTUME SECTION OF REHEARSAL REPORT**

During the rehearsal period, the rehearsal report is the primary means of communication between the costume designer and the rest of the production team. Any costume related questions or issues that arise in rehearsal should be documented here or any additions to costumes that are requested by the director. Anything that will affect costumes needs to be communicated through the notes and might include information about the movement of the actors (ex. crawling on the floor or tumbling) or whether or not a costume piece is to be used a certain way (ex. needs a pocket or a hood, etc.).

### **QUICK CHANGES**

A quick change is a costume change that happens in a very short period of time and typically, will not allow the actor to return to his/her dressing room. There is no hard and fast rule for what constitutes a quick change. Sometimes what may seem like plenty of time in the script may be very little time depending on the extent of the change and the pace of the play.

By the third week of rehearsal, stage management and the costume designer should identify possible quick changes. The ASM should make a list of quick changes and note the following:

- What page of the script the change is on
- What costume the actor is changing into
- Where the actor exits for the change and where he/she re-enters

- The exact amount of time between the character's exit and re-entrance

All of this information will help the production team determine if a quick-change booth is necessary and where it should be placed, how the costume(s) must be rigged in order to make the change happen, and whether an assistant should be backstage to help the actor with the change.

### **COSTUME PLOT**

A costume plot is a comprehensive list of costume pieces for each actor in the production. The costume designer will be in charge of generating this list. The ASM should have a copy of this list and be familiar with it.

## **Chapter Nine: Tech Rehearsals**

Tech week is arguably the most exciting time for the Production Stage Manager. Bit by bit, the show becomes yours to run, and the fruition of the artistic vision is entrusted to you. The technical rehearsals are very different from the rehearsals to which the SM team has become accustomed, and require patience and a great deal of multi-tasking.

During tech, each designer and the director is trying to make his or her piece of the puzzle fit perfectly into place. Meanwhile, the actors are doing their best to perform, and the PSM is trying to learn to call the show. The key for every stage manager: relax. Keep the cast informed and focused, call the cues, stay levelheaded and calm, and keep your sense of humor. Remember to stay on headset whenever rehearsal is underway. If you are going off headset, announce it on your microphone.

### **What Happens at Tech (In Brief)**

At tech rehearsals, the full crew runs the show for the first time. There is often a good deal of stopping and starting as cues are changed or altered. The PSM begins to call the cues they received during the paper tech, perfecting timing and making alterations. The director is making notes about what does and does not work for her. The lighting designer is making changes to cues. The sound designer sets and changes levels for the sound cues. It's exciting, it's fun, and it's very busy. Another added layer of tech is meeting, training, and integrating the crew into the process.

### **The Changing Role of the PSM and ASMs**

During Tech, the PSM begins to gain responsibility for the technical running of the show, and seeing that the artistic vision of the production team is upheld in production – this will primarily be done from the front of the house. The ASM becomes the line of communication to the backstage workings of the production is responsible for handling all backstage affairs. If there is any sort of problem, the ASM should notify the PSM immediately.

### **PRIOR TO YOUR FIRST TECH ONSTAGE**

Before you begin tech rehearsals, the stage management team should prepare the space for tech. Likely, the set has already been loaded in and your cast has already had the opportunity to space the show on the set. The spacing rehearsals are sometimes a good opportunity to get some of the backstage tasks accomplished for tech. Things to consider include:

- Set up of props tables
  - Cover in brown craft paper
  - Set a space for each prop – can be outlined with Marker or with tape
- Set up quick change booths
- Organize your backstage area and set places for props/furniture that will not fit on a props table you might consider creating boxes on the floor for these items
- Ensure that there is enough lighting backstage
- Transfer any spikes from the rehearsal hall to stage (if able, this should be done before spacing begins)

- Ensure that your backstage area is safe – that there are clear paths for your actors and crew to easily and safely move about the backstage area
- Crew Meeting
  - This meeting can be held prior to the safety instruction from the TD in the theatre
  - Give the crew clear instructions about their jobs and why they are important to the process
  - Give them a brief overview of tech and how you expect them to work within that process.
  - Give out production assignments
    - These should be determined ahead of time and if crew members are working backstage, their duties should be clearly outlined for them on the run sheets

## **PAPER TECH**

Ideally, Paper Tech is when the Production Stage Manager, director, lighting designer, sound designer, and the technical director meet, and all light, sound, scenery and fly cues are transferred to the PSM's prompt book. If for some reason, all of these parties are unable to get together at one time in the same room, it is the PSM's job to get the cues and get them into the book. It is vital that the PSM's book be properly prepared for this transfer.

### **Preparing the Book**

In order to prepare the prompt book for cues, the Production Stage Manager must:

- Make sure all blocking is legible and on one side of the text only.
- Eliminate any other stray marks on the script that might cause confusion.
- Or have a new blank script created.

### **Cue Notation**

- All cues should be written in PENCIL. Many will change over the course of tech rehearsals.
- Light cues should be noted as, LQ1, LQ2, LQ3...
- Sound cues can be given letters, or simply noted as SQ1 (SQA)
- Scenery and Fly cues can be designated as the stage manager sees fit. Some choose to begin numbering scenery cues at 200 or fly cues at 500. Others find that confusing. If there are only a few such cues, it often works to just assign numbers or letters. \*\*It may be best to call these sorts of cues by name. Example: FSB OUT GO. Or, Curtain GO.
- When you are writing the cues in the book, it is important to always include a "when", the cue type, the cue number or letter and if you feel you need to denote it, the word "GO"
- Some people choose to color code their cues by type, just be sure that it is easy to read and understand – the goal of your book is that anyone can pick it up to call from it if necessary

By the end of Paper Tech, the Production Stage Manager should have all cues that need to be called during the Tech rehearsal. Without a doubt, cues will be added, removed, moved, and changed over the course of the following days. Always have pencils and erasers, and be prepared for a flood of information.

## **DRY TECH**

Dry Tech is the name given to the technical rehearsal with everyone EXCEPT the actors (unless the actors are the stagehands for the production). Sometimes a dry tech will not be necessary

(or productive) if many of the scene shifts are actor motivated or based on the timing of the stage action.

### **What do we do during dry tech?**

Dry Tech takes various forms depending on the director and on the technical demands of the play. Here are some things that you should consider addressing in dry tech.

#### **Coordinate scene changes**

Difficult scene changes are typically the reason to hold a dry tech. Any large scene changes should be thought through and choreographed before tech begins, but this is the concentrated time to rehearse them. Assign the movements of various items to your backstage crew.

#### **Training**

This is the time to get trained on equipment you need to use and to make sure that the stage crew gets trained. This can be anything from fly lines to headsets to microphones to automation stations.

#### **Repetition**

One of the benefits of dry tech is that the actors are missing. This rehearsal is entirely about the technical aspects. Now is the time to rehearse complicated scene changes and cues. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification, to ask for something to be repeated, to ask for help. The play and all of its machinations will evolve over the tech period, but now is the time for you to become comfortable with the equipment, the surroundings, and your new and greater responsibilities.

#### **Calling cues, setting levels, etc.**

During dry tech, the PSM will have the opportunity to call cues. This is a skill that takes some time to learn and even more time to master. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Often during dry tech cues will be called over and over again. Things will move slowly. Be prepared.

#### **Calling Cues – a crash course**

At Paper Tech a number or letter was assigned to each cue. These should be noted clearly in the prompt book. Cues are called as follows:

- Approximately 1/4 page prior to the cue, the Production Stage Manager gives a standby (ex. "Light cue 14 - standby")
- The recipient of the standby must confirm by giving a callback ("Lights" or "Lights Standing")
- The Production Stage Manager then calls "Light cue 14 – GO" when the cue is to be executed.
- If cues are grouped, they may be called together (ex. Light cue 4, sound cue B, and Fly cue 2 – Standby/GO.)
- If cues occur in rapid succession, their standby can be called together, ex. Light cues 2-4 and Sound cues B-D standby, *but each cue receives its own GO.*

- The Production Stage Manager may also have to cue the backstage crew to preset items such as fog machines, etc.

\*\*Calling a show can be very complicated. Finding the timing is very important, but remember that you won't be able to do this perfectly on the very first try. Be sure that all of your cues are clearly indicated, and that if you need to call multiple cues at once that you walk through these complicated moments with everyone who is involved.

Keep in mind that the word "GO" is a powerful one and try hard not to use it unless you are intending to start a cue in motion.

### **WET TECH**

For the stage management team, dry and wet techs are very similar, **but the wet tech adds the actors.**

Prior to any wet tech, the TD will instruct the cast on the safety procedures and any specific set hazards that the cast should be aware of. If any of the cast has to enter through the house over the course of the play, it is the SM team's responsibility to show them the proper procedure to do so.

In the Duke, absolutely NO food or drink is allowed anywhere but the green room. In the Barber, no food or drinks are allowed on the risers. Please stay aware of this and keep this rule enforced.

It is important to remind your actors of tech protocol before tech begins. You might ask your director for a few minutes in the last full cast rehearsal before you start tech. It is also a good idea to attach these thoughts to a pre-tech email to your cast.

- The actors should feel free to bring work to do during down times.
- Actors should wear a shirt that approximates the color of their costume. If that is not possible, under no circumstances should they wear white.
- Actors should always be within earshot of a stage manager. Tech requires jumping back and forth at times, and tracking down actors takes up more time and delays the process.
- Actors should stay quiet when offstage.
- Actors will be asked to stop and start frequently. If "Hold Please!" is called, they should hold immediately. They should not resume until given specific instruction. This is when adjustments are being made. Instruct the cast to not continue or move on until prompted by the PSM. It is also best practice to give the actors an explanation as to what is being fixed and to let them know if they need to hold their positions onstage or if they can relax until you are ready to move on ("Please stay where you are, we are adjusting a light cue.")

### **Managing the Cast During Tech**

Once given the above information, casts are typically happy to oblige. However, it is important that the cast remain quiet and focused as the tech process progresses. The stage management team should enforce this. If you need staff or faculty to step in and speak to particular offending actors, just ask. If you are clear and focused and maintain a calm and controlled environment, your cast will follow your lead.

### **Calling Breaks**

During tech, it is a good idea to write down the start time of each part of rehearsal and what time is 80 minutes later. As a break time approaches, notify the director. He/she may want to break early rather than break in the middle of a complicated technical moment. **Make sure that you take a break yourself!** You must be back in your place before the rest of the cast and crew, but this does not mean you shouldn't take a break.

### **TECH NOTES**

Once Wet Tech begins, the notes process changes. The production team meets for notes following the end of each tech rehearsal. The Producer runs this notes session, and each department is called on to give notes, ask questions, etc. Over the course of the rehearsal, the PSM and the ASMs should take notes on any questions, complications, or needs that have arisen. They can share the appropriate notes with the production team. Tech notes are written up and distributed by the Producer.

### **Tips:**

- Have plenty of spike tape on hand. The actors will help with placement.
- Have plenty of glow tape on hand. Safety is our first concern.
- Have clean scripts and plenty of pencils
- Remember headset etiquette. The headset is for show business only. Outside of the PSM, no one's headset mic should be on unless you need to speak to the rest of the team about the show.
- If you must go off of your headset for any reason, announce this on mic



## Chapter Ten: Dress Rehearsal and Performances

**DRESS REHEARSALS:** A dress rehearsal will serve as your first non-stop run before opening night. At this point, the show should have been fully teched, and costumes added. Quick changes should be tracked by now, but don't worry if the timing isn't exact yet. Below is an explanation of how to run a show. While this is related to the dress rehearsals, this is the same procedure you can use for actual performances.

### **PRE-SHOW**

As far as you are able, the Production Stage Manager should run a dress rehearsal as though it were a performance. Dress rehearsals come directly after tech. Unlike the tech process, a dress run should not stop. If a problem occurs, the crew should make a note, but move on, and deal with the issue after. The exception to this rule is if the problem is a safety concern, then it should be addressed immediately.

### **The Cast**

- Call Time and Check-In – The director determines the cast's call time for dress rehearsals and performances, but it is the PSM's job to communicate both starting and ending times for these rehearsals to the cast.
  - Stage management must post a sign-in sheet in a pre-determined location in or near the dressing rooms. (In Duke Family Performance Hall there is a callboard that can be used for this purpose.)
  - All cast members must initial *for themselves* upon arrival. The Production Stage Manager must impress upon them the importance of cast members signing in on time and for themselves.
  - The stage management must call any cast member who has not arrived within 10 minutes after their call-time.
- Dressing Rooms – Stage management must be sure that:
  - The actors have access to all necessary costume pieces, make-up and hair supplies at least 15 minutes prior to the actor call time.
  - The Production Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are NOT responsible for doing an actor's hair or make-up. Usually, Theatre 101 provides student dressers for this purpose.
  - It is vital that the cast be reminded to keep these spaces clean!
- Pre-show Notifications
  - The Production Stage Manager will notify the actors one hour before GO, reminding them that they have 30 minutes to take care of stage business before the house opens.
  - The Production Stage Manager will ask actors to check their props between 35 and 40 minutes before GO.
  - The Production Stage Manager will give a "30 minute" call, thirty minutes before GO. Actors are no longer permitted on-stage.
  - The Production Stage Manager will give a "House is Open" call when the stage is clear and the House Manager can open the house for seating. This call must go to both the cast and the house manager.
  - The Production Stage Manager will give a "15 minutes to places" call, seventeen minutes prior to GO.

- The Production Stage Manager will give a “5 minutes to places” call before proceeding to the booth.
- The Production Stage Manager should give a “places” call two (2) minutes before GO. She may have to give the call through the ASMs. Before starting the show, ASMs must confirm that all actors are at places and let the PSM know that all are ready.

### **Duties in Relation to the Backstage Crew**

- Stage management should post a check-in list for all crew members, as well.
- The SM team should call any members who have not arrived by 10 minutes after their call time.
- The ASMs should oversee the crew’s completion of the Pre-Show Checklist.
- Prior to the opening of the house, the Production Stage Manager should do a walk-thru of the set, checking the placement of all set pieces and props, as well as checking the props tables to be sure that all props are present.

### **Light and Sound Operators**

The Production Stage Manager should be sure that the light and soundboard operators perform pre-show checks.

- Light board operators should check each dimmer to be sure all lights are working. If there are any problems, he should notify the PSM immediately. He should then progress through all cues, and practice any manual or complicated cues.
  - If there is a problem the PSM should notify the technical supervisor assigned to the production that evening. This is typically the technical director.
- Soundboard operators should test all cue levels and speakers. Pre-Show music should be started.
- **The Production Stage Manager must ensure that these checks occur prior to the opening of the house. This allows us time to fix any problems!**

### **Front of House Policies**

The PSM should provide the Front of House staff with the following information.

- The procedure for opening the house and restarting after intermission.
- Any opening speeches, etc.
- Seating latecomers – when, where, etc., and who will provide flashlights for ushers.

### **Opening The House**

The Production Stage Manager should notify the House Manager when all actor and crew business onstage has been completed and the house can be opened. All such business should be completed 5-10 minutes prior to the scheduled opening of the house.

### **During the Show**

Just before the beginning of the show, the Production Stage Manager goes to the booth from which she will call the show. She must get confirmation that the house is closed from the house manager before beginning the show.

### **Timing the Show**

The Production Stage Manager must time the show during each dress rehearsal and performance, from beginning to end, by indicating the time on the clock for the following:

- House Open
- Act I Start
- Intermission Start
- Intermission End
- Curtain

### **Performance Report**

After each performance, the PSM must complete a performance report. Like a rehearsal report, a performance report includes sections for each department. Like a rehearsal report, this document will let everyone know what needs to be done before the next performance. The report **MUST** be distributed no later than 1 hour after the show's end.

## **Chapter Twelve: WORKING WITH YOUR STAGE CREW**

Likely you will first meet your crew on the day the crew meeting. The stage crew is usually made up of two types of students:

1. Students who are volunteering their time to serve on the stage crew or who are fulfilling a technical requirement for the major or minor (this often includes board operators and wardrobe heads)
2. Students who serve on the stage crew as a part of their Theatre 101 laboratory requirement.

Both of these groups come to the production process with varying degrees of experience. However, in nearly every case, each crew member will have to learn a new skill, a new piece of equipment, or a new process.

### **Getting started**

You should contact your crew by email at least five days in advance and impart the following information:

- The schedule for tech rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and performances
- A reminder to wear black shirts and pants and dark, close-toed shoes
- Notification that crew members can bring work to do during downtimes, because, while they will be kept busy, tech can move slowly at times.
- As always, an invitation to contact you with any questions or concerns.

### **Get to know the crew**

Tech is an enormously stressful time for stage management and the production team. However, make sure to take a moment to learn the names of the people on your crew and to introduce yourself. Establishing a friendly and respectful rapport will make the entire process more fun for everyone. You will also find that the crew will often go above and beyond expectations if they know you respect them as individuals. Please do not refer to your crew members as 101ers - even though they are there to fulfill a class requirement, everyone has the same goal in mind: A good show experience.

### **Have patience**

In most cases, each member of the crew will be doing his/her job for the first time, whether it be the sound and light board, a spotlight, a costume change, or a fly. Each member will need time to learn the job and time to practice. Some may grasp it very quickly; others may need more time. As a stage manager, you have already lived with this play for at least four weeks. These crew members may never have attended a rehearsal. Not only will they need to learn the rhythm of the show, they will be learning specific duties and how they fit into the big picture. Patience is essential. It will come together.

### **Delegate**

Now that you have a crew, you need to use them. No crew member chose to work on this production so s/he could sit around. Delegate as many specific tasks as you can. Ideally, once the show gets running, you should be able to sit at your post and concentrate on what is coming through on the

headset, prepared for any emergencies or sudden changes. Things like furniture moves, prop food preparation, costume changes, hand offs, pre-sets, can be handled by the crew.

### **Issues particular to the Theatre 101 crew**

#### *Double Crews*

In order to keep the lab requirement to a manageable amount of time, the Theatre 101 backstage crews may be divided into two groups- Crew A and Crew B. The technical director and producer will determine who serves on what crew well in advance, based on schedules and preferences. Occasionally there will be crew members who need to switch with their opposite crew counterpart. If this is the case, they will need to get the approval of their THE 101 instructor and the producer and must report the change to stage management.

Every move or change should be rehearsed at least twice so that each crew member has the opportunity to try it and ask questions.

#### *Commitment*

Crew members know their call times and should be ready to go at the start of rehearsal. Occasionally conflicts and late arrivals may be approved, particularly when dealing with athletes in the fall. If crew members are not in attendance, call them, just as you would an actor who is late. Should you notice any specific issues with a crew member's attendance, commitment, or performance, report this to the producer and the THE 101 instructor immediately.

#### *Attendance and Scheduling*

As noted above, the technical director and Producer will schedule the crews and ensure that their calls are within the lab hours allotted for them. It is important that the stage management team not add additional hours to the calls of the 101 crew. Should stage management need additional rehearsal with crew members, consult the producer or the technical director. These individuals will find a way to schedule additional time.

#### *Attire*

In general, the stage crew must wear all black (black shirt, black pants, black shoes). Shoes must be closed toe.

## **Chapter Thirteen: The Stage Management Team**

The Stage Management team should always have at least one Assistant Stage Manager along with the Production Stage Manager. Assistant Stage Managers are among the Production Stage Manager's greatest assets, and the relationship between them is vital for the success of the production. While the ASM is there to assist the PSM, they have their own set of responsibilities that should be clear at the outset of the process. In some cases, the experience level of the ASM will dictate the tasks they undertake, but regardless, all members of the team must trust and respect each other.

### **NEGOTIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSM AND ASMS**

The production stage manager is responsible in the end, for the whole team. Everyone will still work as a team, but having each stage manager spear point a major section of the production is a good way to handle a complicated production. Having the ASM take on props and/or costumes frees up the PSM to focus on scheduling, blocking, and all of the other production/paperwork concerns. It is imperative that the PSM and the ASM remain in communication with one another at all times to present a united and consistent front for the rest of the production team and the cast.

### **THE ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS**

It is difficult to pinpoint an exact job description for an ASM, as it varies from show to show and depends on factors such as the technical needs of the show and the number of ASMs involved. Nonetheless, some common responsibilities of the ASM will be enumerated below. The ASM should always consult with the PSM to clarify his/her responsibilities for a specific production.

### **ASSISTING OUTSIDE OF REHEARSALS**

The ASM will be asked to take on additional responsibilities outside of the rehearsal hall. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Props**

An ASM may be responsible for prop management. He is not to serve as the prop master, collecting final props for the show, but is responsible for:

- Collecting all rehearsal props
- Updating Prop Lists
- Creating the Prop Preset List
- Tracking Props
- Creating Prop Tables
- Taking inventory on perishable props at the end of each rehearsal and performance (ex. Do food products need to be replaced? Do we need more cigarettes?) and seeing that they are stocked for the next night.

#### **Costumes**

An ASM may be assigned to serve as a logistics assistant for the costumer. These duties include:

- Contacting the Costumer regarding fittings
- Obtaining any supplies the costumer needs for fittings (measurement sheets, etc.)

- Scheduling fittings in accordance with the costume designer and rehearsal schedule.
- Being present at all fittings
- Serve as point person for the costume designer and liaison between the director and costume designer.
- Oversee the move of costumes to the Duke Family Performance Hall, when necessary.

#### **ASSISTING IN REHEARSALS**

In the rehearsal hall, the ASM will typically serve as assistant to the Production Stage Manager. The tasks he might perform will vary from night to night, however, some duties remain consistent.

The ASM must always arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the start of rehearsal, as determined by the PSM, and help set-up the stage.

- The ASM must remain at the end of rehearsal until the rehearsal hall is clean.
- The ASM must be attentive to the rehearsal and the PSM at all times. Additional rehearsal duties may include:
  - Resetting the stage during rehearsal
  - Being on-book
  - Taking line notes
  - Cleaning props
  - Calling late actors or crew members
  - Running a CD player
  - Any other requests of the PSM or director
  - Serving as PSM in the absence of the PSM
- The ASM must review with the PSM the blocking notation to be used for the production.
- The ASM must diligently attend to blocking notation, whenever entrusted with the Prompt Book (A meeting must occur with the ASMs and PSM regarding blocking notation early on in the rehearsal process.)

**ALL STAGE MANAGERS must *always* respond promptly to emails or voicemails from the PSM, director, and designers.**

#### **TECH, DRESS, AND PRODUCTION**

During the Tech process and beyond, the ASM becomes the manager of backstage affairs as the PSM moves to the booth to call the show and manage from afar. The ASMs responsibilities include:

##### **Pre-Show responsibilities**

- Checking all props tables to be sure all props are present
- Preparing the props (unwrapping food, burning half of a cigarette, etc.)
- Testing their headsets
- Presetting the set pieces
- Presetting props
- Completing the show-specific pre-show checklist
- Checking that all backstage dressing areas are preset

### **Post-Show responsibilities**

- Cleaning props
- Resetting anything that must be reset
- Properly storing props and furniture
- Untangling wires of headsets
- Turning off Headsets
- Completing show-specific post-show checklist

### **Managing Backstage Affairs**

Unless otherwise determined by the director or technical director, the ASM is responsible for:

- Cueing all fly and scenery cues (taken on the PSM's GO.)
- Cueing actors (if an entrance is taken on the PSM's GO.)
- Backstage troubleshooting in conjunction with the PSM during dress rehearsals and performances.
- Maintaining the appropriate backstage environment – quiet, dark, focused, attentive, etc.

### **Managing the Running Crew**

- The ASM leads the running crew in all scene changes.
- The ASM should help the actors and crew understand and maintain proper backstage decorum – quiet, attentive, prepared.

### **Communicating with the Production Stage Manager over Headset**

- The ASM should not engage in headset conversation unless it is confirming a cue, or giving needed information to the PSM.
- The ASM should notify the PSM immediately of any problems backstage.
- The ASM should respond immediately to an instruction given by the PSM unless doing so will cause injury to an actor or crew member.

Overall, the assistant stage managers and the production stage manager are the part of the same team. The most successful productions are those with teams who trust each other, and communicate quickly and without fear of mistakes. Work together, and the process will be much more enjoyable for all parties involved!



## **Chapter Fourteen: Production Meetings**

Production Meetings are an opportunity for the entire production team to assemble and discuss the progress of the play. At these meetings, each department is asked to give an update. Multi-department issues that have come up in rehearsal notes can be addressed and schedules can be confirmed. Depending on the semester and when the stage management team is chosen, the producer may run the first couple of meetings.

### **Design/Concept Meeting**

This meeting may take place well before the stage management team is on-board. The design/concept meeting usually happens several months before rehearsals begin. This meeting is an opportunity for the design team to get in a room and hear the director talk about his/her vision for the production. This meeting includes the director, producer and technical director, along with the set, costume, and lighting designers. Notes from this meeting are taken by the producer and distributed to the entire team. Reading the notes from this meeting should be one of the stage managers' first tasks. It will help put you on the same page as the other production team members.

### **Bi-Weekly Production Meetings**

Production meetings are scheduled for every other week. The Producer schedules all of these meetings well in advance of the semester. They are included on the production timeline.

The following people are invited to bi-weekly production meetings:

- Theatre Department Chair
- Director
- Stage Management team (PSM and ASMs)
- Producer
- Technical Director
- All designers (sound, set, lighting, and costume)
- Props Masters
- Also, the following individuals, if these roles are filled in the production: choreographer, vocal coach, wardrobe assistant, assistant director, dramaturg

### **Post Tech production notes**

At the end of each technical or dress rehearsal, the production team assembles in the house for notes. This note session is run by the producer. During that day's rehearsal, each stage manager should keep a running list of questions or problems that can be brought to this meeting. As in the weekly production meetings, each department will have an opportunity to give or share notes with the group. The next day's work schedule is also determined at this meeting. The producer will write down the notes from these sessions and distribute them to the group by the following morning.

## **Chapter Fifteen: Post Production and Strike**

After the run of the show is over the Stage Management team has a few more responsibilities to which they must attend.

### **STRIKE**

At strike the set is taken down, props are returned to their rightful storage location, technical equipment is dismantled, and lights are taken down under the close supervision of the technical director. With everyone involved, the process can be completed in just a couple of hours. The technical director will often times send out an e-mail before hand, detailing what crews each individual person is to attend to. For any concerns, you should direct all questions to him.

**\*\*Hint:** Be sure to send out an e-mail to the cast and crew the night before to bring strike clothes, i.e. to wear close toed shoes over sandals, work clothes, etc.

#### **Who Should Be There**

- All Cast Members (mandatory)
- All Stage Managers (mandatory)
- Others as determined by the technical director and director (costumer, etc.)

#### **The Stage Manager's Role**

- The Production Stage Manager must take attendance at Strike and be sure all individuals required to attend are present.
- The Production Stage Manager should call any individuals who are not present.
- The Production Stage Manager should NOT allow anyone to leave until the technical director has granted that individual permission.
- The Production Stage Manager should assist the technical director in organizing people and delegating, when requested.

### **POST-MORTEM**

Post-Mortem is an opportunity for all individuals involved in the production's process to discuss the process itself and offer constructive recommendations for future productions. As such, post-mortem is divided into several sections in order to facilitate a productive and constructive environment. The entire process is usually scheduled over 90 minutes as follows.

- Director, designers, technical director, stage management team – 30 minutes – to discuss the production/stage management team process
- All of the above and cast members – 30 minutes – to discuss the interaction between cast and production/stage management team
- All cast members, director – 30 minutes – to discuss the audition, rehearsal and performance process between actors, crew, stage management team, production team, and director.

## Chapter Sixteen: Spaces and Staffing

Depending on the production, Davidson College has a variety of performance and rehearsal spaces.

**The Main Stage:** This phrase refers to the two department productions performed annually in the Duke Family Performance Hall. Main Stage productions have the largest production budgets of the season and rely on larger audiences for ticket sales. They also have the longest rehearsal period of any department project.

**The Second Stage:** This phrase refers to the two department productions performed annually in The Barber Theatre (excluding the one acts). These two plays have much smaller budgets than the Main Stage productions and have two weeks' shorter rehearsal time.

### **Cunningham:**

- **Room 100:** This space is typically used as the rehearsal space for the main stage productions that will eventually move over to the Duke Family Performance Hall. This room contains a basic lighting grid, sound system, and has a set of mirrors on the front of the room. Typically, the curtains are drawn over these mirrors, and a table is set up at the front of the room for the stage management team to set up. There is no food or drink allowed in this room (with the exception of bottled water), and like any of the spaces in Cunningham, needs to be signed out on the outside bulletin board.
- **The Barber:** This space is the rehearsal and performance space for the second stage production. A flex space, the risers can be arranged in a variety of configurations, depending on the show. This space has a full cat walk/grid, booth, and swing space. The scene shop is next door, as is the dressing rooms. Like room 100, it too must be signed out before hand, and no food or drink is allowed on the risers or seats. The ghost light must be turned on and all other lights off at the end of a rehearsal, and all props and set pieces should be returned to the props storage closet.

**The Duke Family Performance Hall (DFPH):** The Duke is the performance space for the main stage productions. It has 3 levels of audience seeing, an orchestra pit, catwalks, fly system, and is located in the Student Union. The stage management team will communicate over a headset system.

**Duke Family Performance Hall Technical Director-** Currently Jim Nash. This person is an employee of the College Union and is responsible for the DFPH facility. He/she manages the staff for that space. One of his/her staff is in the theatre whenever we are rehearsing. Should a facility or equipment issue arise, the Duke staff are the ones to approach.

**Theatre Department Technical Director-** Currently Evan Kinsley. The Technical Director builds the scenery for all of the department shows. He also manages the load in, strike, and technical rehearsal process in both the DFPH and the Barber Theatre. He maintains the equipment in The Barber Theatre. The Technical Director is an excellent resource and a person to consult about everything from equipment to cueing to safety to props to taping the rehearsal hall floor.

**Theatre Department Producer** – Currently Karli Henderson. The Producer is your direct supervisor as an SM. Come to her with any question that you have. The Producer oversees the budgeting process for the productions. She also manages the marketing, contracting, and personnel hiring as related to the productions. She is an excellent resource for your questions regarding scheduling, calling cues, managing actors and crew, and any other issues that come up during your time as a stage manager.