STAGE MANAGEMENT

What you need to know.

What does a stage manager do?

- 1. Call rehearsals
- 2. Assemble and maintain a prompt book
- 3. Work with the director and other heads
- 4. Assume the responsibility of form and discipline.
- 5. Maintain artistic intention of directors
- 6. Keep records
- 7. Does not include moving set pieces or running box office.

What is a stage manager?

- A stage manager is a **leader**, who is **self-motivated** and **even tempered**, with the ability **to anticipate** and **ada**pt to constantly changing conditions. Stage managers are **dedicated** to and **responsible** for every aspect of their productions without losing **their sense of humor**. They provide an **efficient** and **organized** work environment while remaining **empathetic** to to the people and the process. And finally, stage management is art. A stage manager is as **creative** and any other member of the production.

Stage managers role simplified

- The stage manager should be involved in the production before auditions even begin. The stage manager is at the center of making sure everything runs smoothly from the director, the technical director, the designers, the actors and the technicians. Communication, organization and collaboration are essential in the stage manager's role.

Pre-Production

- Two components: Research and Planning and Organization

- Must be prepared

Research

- 1. First read for pure enjoyment
- 2. Make a new book each time, short cuts do not work, the book should be made for the show
- 3. Two options, or could do both. Five detailed readings, scenery, lights, sound, costume, properties. Or complete a production analysis.

- Know center stage, upstage, downstage, stage right and stage left

- Scene breakdowns
  - Act/Scene
  - French
  - Song for musicals
  - Ranged breakdowns that make sense for the show

The production analysis

- This is a useful tool, a lot of work, but useful.
- Broken down by either french scene, song, act/scene breakdown, or one that makes sense for your show.
- Broken down in an organized and easily readable chart.
- Covers notes on
  - Act/Scene
  - Page
  - Setting
  - Cast
  - Action
  - Set
  - Lights
  - Sound
  - Props
  - Costumes
  - Special Effects
  - Song (in musical)
  - Special Notes

Production Meetings

- Set standard and regular production meetings. The first meeting should happen before auditions when the design team is put together. This meeting is essential for communication between designers and getting them in line with the vision of the director.

- Should include
  - Director
  - Technical Director
  - Stage Manager (and assistants)
  - All designers, lights, sound, costumes, scenic, props, other

Auditions

- Run auditions as professional and organized as you can. The director should focus on casting, not on running the auditions. Actors also should focus on the actual auditions, not information they are trying to find out, make it easy for them.

- Make sure you and your director have made an audition contract for the actors and technicians. You can create an audition form on paper (template provided) or you can create one on Google forms. The same can be done for an audition sign up.

- The stage manager should be the first person an actor sees and should be completely organized. Make sure any system you use works for the actors, the director, and you. If you have an assistant stage manager, this is a good time to divide and conquer to make sure everything is done smoothly and accurately.

- When it comes to auditions and callbacks, make sure you know what your director wants from the actors and try to make that happen.

- Create a contact list during the audition process, that way when it comes time to contact the cast, you already have it done.

Design Charts/breakdowns

- Each has its own
- Page number, act/scene, scenic element, notes
- Page number, act/scene, lighting element, notes
- Page number, act/scene, sound element, notes
- Page number, act/scene, property element, notes

- SAMPLES ARE LOCATED ON THE WEBSITE

Production Book

- Prompt script
- Plots and schedules
  - All preliminary designs, scenic breakdowns, entrances and exits, pronunciation guide, facts and figures, contact sheets, ground plans, sections, costume sketches, costume plots, light plots, instrument schedules, sound plots, preset sheets, calendars, rehearsal and performance schedules, due dates

The Rehearsal space

- Spiking
  - Always spike upstage corners
  - Use different color tapes for different scenes
  - Label tape marks
- Rehearsal Furniture
  - When possible, get furniture on stage as soon as possible, Sometimes it may not be what you use, but it is good to put someone in place.
- Rehearsal props and costumes
  - It is good to get a feel for props. It also makes actors get off book faster.
  - Actors need to get used to shoes, skirts, hats, and other items as soon as possible, it may not be the actual costume, but it helps.
- The stage managers kit, a lot of items

Rehearsals

- Calling
  - Start times
    - Start on time
    - Warm ups are a good idea, encourage director to do it
  - Breaks
    - Breaks are helpful, professional theatre requires them.
    - Keep them concise, start back on time
  - Notes
    - Notes should either be part of the scheduled time or given its own (also scheduled time)
  - Finish time
    - Finish on time.
- Managing
  - Be on time
  - Document
  - Be professional
  - Lead by example

First Read through

- Make sure the full cast is there
- Make sure everyone is introduced
- Make sure a clear hierarchy is established, not to be bossy, but so people know who they can go to for help
- Make sure your director and you are on the same page as to rules for the read-through. What do they want out of the day.
- Make sure all contact information in collected and recorded.
- Establish a group communication
- Establish callboard and rehearsal expecations

Scheduling

- Have an established calendar
- Who is called when? Be clear
- Make sure there are paper copies and digital.
- Changes in scheduling should be given with advance notice. Actors are busy. Don't say, you're now called tomorrow and penalize and actor if they cannot be there if they were not always called.
- Try not to waste someone's time, they will appreciate it.

Blocking

- Blocking is the process of telling actors where to go and how to get there.

- Two methods, short hand and diagramming

  - Shorthand

    Make a character key, do not try to write out all the names and directors. You can make notes right on the script. Also use a key for blocking directions.

  - Diagramming

    - Using your rehearsal script, you can create diagrams of the set on the opposite sides of the script. Use the floorplan if possible from the scenic designer, it can be copies right on the page, saves time.

    - This method allows you to draw out where actors go visually, which can have added benefits.

Rehearsal Rules

- Have them clear
- Printed
- You set the rules with your director for the show
- Be consistent
- Follow the rules yourself
- Establish rules on
  - Bathroom usage
  - Water usage
  - Talking
  - Materials to be brought or not brought
  - Prop handling
  - Cellphones
  - Anything you see need a for

Callboard/Communication

- A physical callboard space is vital for students. Make sure you keep it updated.
- The world is going digital, don't be afraid of it, utilize and improvise to make it better
  - Google Drive
  - Group Me
  - Email
  - Text Messaging
  - Facebook
  - Virtual Stagemanager/Online Callboard/Other sites
  - All can be useful, don't over do it, pick the ones that work best for your group and make sure you're consistent with how you utilize it.

Moving the show forward acting and technically

- Set Deadlines
  - Acting
    - When are actors off script?
    - When are actors carrying props?
    - When do different elements need to be in place on the acting side, like accents, movements, and dance, etc.
  - Technical
    - When are designs done
    - When is the set up, costumes done, etc
    - In the space
    - Be clear on when things will be done

Production meetings

- Covers major notes for the different sections of tech.
- Everyone involved in design should be there.
- If they cant, phone them in.
- It should not be a rehashing of the rehearsal and production reports, sort those out ahead of time when possible. If you cant, those are brought up.
- This is a time for discussion, sometimes debate, but keep it civil and moving forward. Remember who gets the final choices.

Technical Rehearsals

- Once again, plan ahead, schedule everyone and everything, with the design and technical team, so that time is wasted as little as possible.
- Coordinate groups so they are not waiting on others
- There will be some time that is not "interesting" find ways to keep them moving to keep them going

Opening Night/Show Prep

- Opening night is different than every other show.
- Opening night is the same as every other show. Make sure a schedule, pattern, and attitude are all set and prepared so actors know what they have to do and when.
- Make sure there are plans
- Don't reinvent the wheel, if something works or should be done, use it.
- If you have a better way, don't be afraid to use it either.
- Make sure lights and sound run through cues.
- Flyrails as well

Preshow

- Have checklists for all your crew.
- Have a checklist for you
- Keep to the schedule
- Keep calling time, create a dialogue that everyone knows.
- If there are preshow traditions, let them happen (if not destructive or disruptive)
- Keep a calm and collected face, no matter how nervous you or others all, its show time and you're ready.

Calling the show/Crew Responsibilities

- Do a dry run with your technicians before tech rehearsals start so questions can be answered and holes filled.
- For calling cues, you should call lights, set, sometimes sound. Microphones are usually run by the operator.
- Call lights with numbers
- Call sound with letters
- All cues should be marked down in the script.

Handling Conflicts

- You are in charge of making the show run. Have set rules, personal conflicts should not interfere with the show. Remind people that they are here to do the show. Work with them if it can be resolved quick, make needed mediations and get back to the show.

Production Reports

- Production reports are very similar to rehearsal reports. These are still helpful, even in short run, educational shows because if a light burns out, a note should be made for the next day to get it fixed.

- Also these would include house counts, reactions, issues, actor mistakes, and any other notes. When shows are done, the last thing you want to do is fix things (or maybe the first but you will be worn out), make the list so it can be fixed the next day.

Striking/Ending a show

- When a show is over
- Make sure all scripts are collected
- Make sure all crew heads have cleaned up their area
- Make a strike list that has everyone doing a job.
- You're the last one to leave
- Evaluate what you did right, what you could do better.