



THEATRE ROYAL: STAGE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

For Health & Safety reasons and also to effectively manage risk, the venue insists each and every production using the facility has a delegated Stage Manager. The Stage Manager needs to be over the age of 18 and approved by venue management. The venue will allow a student or trainee under the age of 18 to fulfill the duties outlined below, as long as they are fully supervised by a person over the age of 18. The supervisor is required to be present in the building at all times with the trainee/student and must be approved by venue management.

The stage management responsibilities of every production in the Theatre Royal are fulfilled by a team comprised of the production Stage Manager and the venue House Technician. While every member of the production team may be assigned different duties and responsibilities during rehearsals and performances, it is paramount that they not only work together as a team but also fully understand what each other is doing and are able to take on another's tasks if an emergency arises.

The Stage Manager (SM) works with, or at least crosses paths with, everyone involved in a production. You are "the conduit of information" between all production and management personnel. Although most information will be disseminated during production meetings and through the rehearsal process, do not hesitate to contact members of the theatre staff privately if you have a question, a problem, or information to share.

Each show director/producer will expect different skills from a SM. Be Adaptable. Never Assume Anything. Ask Lots of Questions. Your job will be so much easier if you know specifically what each Director/Producer expects.

THEATRE ROYAL STAGE MANAGERS' GENERAL DUTIES

1. **EMERGENCIES:** In the event of a fire, earthquake or any emergency that requires the building to be evacuated the Stage Manager is the delegated Backstage Fire Warden reporting to the Front Of House Manager who is the Chief Fire Warden. If the alarm is sounded the Stage Manager is responsible for ensuring ALL personnel backstage clear the building quickly and safely. It is essential that the Stage Manager has a list of all personnel working backstage and that they can be accounted for in the event of an evacuation. The evacuation assembly area for all backstage personnel is on Vanguard Street. It is the Stage Managers duty to report to the Front Of House Manager that all personnel backstage are clear of the building and accounted for in the event of an evacuation.
2. You should be the first to arrive and the last to leave the building. Unlock and lock up the rehearsal areas and theatre every time you use them. You can delegate this job to another trustworthy person but remember – **the Stage Manager is over-all responsible for security!**
3. The Stage Manager needs to be present at all rehearsals and performances held on stage, preferably along with at least one other member of the production team.

4. COUNTERWEIGHTED FLYING SYSTEM: No person is permitted to operate or fly any scenery or rig lights in the theatre without first obtaining clearance from the House Technician.
5. LIGHTING SYSTEM. No person is permitted to use the theatre lighting system without first obtaining clearance from the House Technician. This includes the use of ladders, the electric personnel hoist and Front Of House Lighting Truss Motors.
6. SOUND SYSTEM. No person is permitted to use the theatre sound system without first obtaining clearance from the House Technician.
7. The stage management team is responsible for keeping the stage floor clean. In general, while the set is being installed, you may have to sweep or vacuum the stage and wings etc before and after rehearsals. During any technical rehearsals and performances it is your responsibility to sweep, and perhaps mop, the stage before every rehearsal and performance.
8. Once the set is installed and the stage is "show ready", walk the cast through it and show them how things work. Each performer should familiarize themselves with entrances and furniture placement before working on the set.
9. Locate and place glow tape backstage where it may be needed to ensure the performers' safety, such as stairs and levels where performers may walk during dark or blackout scenes. Make sure you use the BLUE LIGHTS during performances (and rehearsals so both performers and crew get used to working under reduced light conditions).
10. Locate the emergency medical kit (AUDIO RACK) and make certain it is fully supplied and kept in an easily accessible place (if not – inform a theatre staff member). You should know what to do if an emergency arises during a rehearsal or a performance and who to call. Safety first. You must assist the cast and crew in providing a safe work environment.
11. Make sure you and all backstage crew wear black clothing for all performances, including socks and shoes.
12. You should insist on the respect from performers and any backstage personnel as the Stage Manager. This is not to say that you should be dictatorial, but problems should be addressed promptly and efficiently. Always try to find a solution first, and then seek the advice of the Director/Producer or theatre staff.
13. Prior to each rehearsal and performance you are responsible for overseeing and assisting with any pre-set situation, technical checks, cleaning and safety checking the performance and backstage areas. Your physical environment will be changing regularly, especially while scenery, lights, sound etc are being installed. You are responsible for providing a safe environment, ensuring clean, unobstructed walkways and adequate visibility.
14. TV Monitors. There are TV monitors in each dressing room as well as two in the foyer areas.
15. FIRE CHECK. Before each performance carry out the fire check as instructed by the House Technician, then fill in and sign the fire check form located in the Managers office.
16. There is **NO SMOKING** allowed in the theatre at any time - directors and theatre staff included. This is now Policy for public buildings in NZ. Unfortunately, you must enforce it.
17. You cannot start the show until the Front Of House Manager gives you clearance to do so. However, you may need to give the Sound and Lighting Operators a "go" prior to the house opening to start the pre-show music and cue the pre-show lighting state.
18. Opening the House - Understand the sequence of events and the required communication with the Front Of House Manager and Ushers. You must inform the Front Of House Manager when the house can be opened for patrons by

making sure all of the pre-show checks are completed on time. This includes a dark check (aisle lights and emergency lights working), lighting/dimmer check, sound check, communications check, stage check, and frequently updating all relevant personnel of your status.

19. Know the procedures concerning seating of latecomers and emergency stopping of a performance. It is a general policy to hold the curtain no longer than 5 minutes for the audience. The Stage Manager and the Front Of House Manager need to establish a firm policy in this regard and decide at what point the show must begin if it's going to begin late. The seating of any latecomers is at the discretion of the show Director/Producer. Well in advance of the first performance, check with the director on his/her policy for the seating of latecomers. Some directors may want latecomers not seated until intermission, while others have no preference. Make sure the Front Of House Manager is aware of the Director's wishes in this regard.
20. Post-Show Obligations - After each performance, you are responsible for making sure that the scenery is shifted if necessary, props are struck and properly stored. Finally, if any changes or repairs are necessary, it is your obligation to inform the relevant personnel.
21. Establish with the Front Of House Manager who is responsible for the lockup. As the last one to leave, lock up everything, stage doors, front doors and switch all lights off including upstairs rehearsal areas and toilets/dressing rooms. Set the security alarm if required to do so.
22. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Everyone is depending on you to know what is going on, and if you encounter a situation where you are unsure about who has to do what when, the only way to know is to ask.
23. And lastly HAVE FUN!!

THE ROLE OF THE STAGE MANAGER WITHIN A PRODUCTION

DURING REHEARSALS

1. Establish a schedule that defines which members of the stage management team and crew should be at what rehearsals. You can split the schedule until technical rehearsals start. During this initial period, regular communication between members of the production team is essential to keep apprised of any changing rehearsal needs, etc.
2. Share the recording of blocking notes, placement of calling sound/light cues, and other matters that are beginning to be defined at that time. You may share duties, but be careful to arrange things so that each of you keeps up with the entire play as it is developing and changing. Also make sure that you have a dependable means of conveying changes to each other. It is important that the each member of the team learns your responsibilities so they can substitute for you if need be.
3. Set up the rehearsal area. If the first rehearsal is a read-through, have a table set up with the correct number of chairs around it. Once the performers are on their feet, set up an approximation of the scene being worked on with tables, chairs, benches, etc and have rehearsal props available. If the director is rehearsing more than one scene each day, make sure you have items needed for the later scenes readily available off stage so they can be set up quickly.

4. At the beginning of rehearsal, silently take attendance. Immediately call anyone who is late - don't assume they are on their way. Be aware of staggered calls - some performers may not be arriving until later – Keep track of who is supposed to be there when - make sure the performers needed for the next scene are in the vicinity and call whomever is late. Before rehearsals begin, discuss with the director/producer how you are to handle tardiness.
5. Well before the first rehearsal, and working with the Set Designer/builder or production technician, layout a floor plan of the scenic design in the rehearsal space. Different colors may be used to denote different scenes. After you have taped out the ground plan for rehearsals, walk the cast through it and show them where all entrances, stairs, doors, etc will be. Show the placement of furniture and other moveable objects with different colors for each scene so that placement stays consistent. If the placement of an object changes, be sure you move the tapes as well.
6. Make sure that during rehearsals the performers are using the right motions in pantomiming scenic elements that are not yet on stage. For example, if a performer has to open a door, make sure that the performer knows which way the door is supposed to open - in or out (or perhaps it slides). Work closely with the Set Designer/builder to fully understand all scenic elements.
In general, it is the SM's responsibility to gather (with the assistance of the operator or designated theatre staff) rehearsal furniture and props. It is also your responsibility to preset and strike these items for each rehearsal.
7. Determine with the director/producer the specific rehearsal when rehearsal items will be required, once you have obtained these items, make sure the performers use them by taking the time to introduce each performer to his or her props and identify specific furniture. Make sure the performers know not only where each item starts out, but also where it ends up.
8. Coordinate with the director/producer and the Costume team the use of any rehearsal costumes. For example, if you are performing a period play, it may be desirable for the actresses to rehearse in long skirts and perhaps corsets. Rehearsal costumes should be limited to things that are difficult for performers to deal with or things that directly affect the performer's "business". The wardrobe designer/team will organize these items, and it is your responsibility to make sure the performers use them for each rehearsal and that the items are properly stored between rehearsals.
9. Stay "on book" during the rehearsals - follow along in the script, so you are ready to read a line to an performer who calls for one. You may also be called upon to read the lines of a performer who is not at the rehearsal. Some directors/ producers may want you to time scenes once they are running without stops, and jot down the times for future reference.
10. If the director gives notes immediately following a rehearsal, gather the needed personnel and quiet them if necessary for the session. Each director/producer works differently. Some may want your opinion and others may not. Some will expect you to work independently in giving notes to the cast, while other directors want you to give them your notes for them to tell the cast. Discuss with the director his/her style, and what their expectations are.
11. Discuss with the Set Designer or builder what they want you to do during a rehearsal or performance if a piece of the set breaks.
12. Discuss with the Lighting Designer/technician where in the dialogue and action the light cues take place, and note the cues in your prompt book. Have a basic understanding of what each lighting cue does. Do this before the first tech. Expect changes to the light cues on a nightly basis - be adaptable. If there are any "practical" lights on stage, are these turned on and off by the performers, or

- do you need to cue the operator? The Designer or technician should provide you with any changes before rehearsal each night.
13. Technical and Dress Rehearsals - By the time these rehearsals arrive they are your responsibility. This includes having your operator in place, having achieved the appropriate cue status, and having given calls to the performers at half hour before, fifteen minutes before, five minutes before, and beginners. Go over the plan for each tech rehearsal with the director/producer and the designers to understand what elements will be added when. Go over all cues for light, sound, prop, costume and set changes. Even if it is a cue for which you are not responsible, you need to be aware of it so you will be instantly aware of any failure to execute a planned cue. You should have a device to record running times and to time shift sequences, etc.
 14. You should always be the first to know if a mistake has been made. When that happens, go about correcting things as quickly and calmly as possible. Maintain communication with the design staff and the production technicians during these rehearsals and when problems arise that necessitate stopping the rehearsal, you should be prepared to re-organize all personnel to begin again. Stop the performers with a verbal command and quickly determine the point in the script that must be repeated. After the staff has input their solutions, cue the performers at what point in the action to start again. Realize that you are the main instrument to prevent confusion during periods when everyone is working to perfect the execution of a cue or the production team is trying to solve a problem.

DURING PERFORMANCE

1. During the run of the show the SM keeps things running smoothly backstage by calling performers to places and supervising/coordinating the changing of scenery and props. It will be your responsibility to designate their assignments and give them cues when necessary.
2. Cue Calls: You should mark in your script places to give standby as well as the actual cue. When you give a "standby" or "go", instruct the crew to give you a response so that you know they have heard you.
3. It is important that you be professional, and most importantly, consistent with your calls. Avoid being cute on the headset and keep chatter to a minimum. In a show with a great number of calls, it is imperative that you set a policy of no chatting on headset. Set the example of professionalism.
4. Performers' calls: Before the first curtain and at intermission give the performers' calls. With an 8:00 p.m. curtain, there should be four calls made for the performers.
5. At 7:25: "Half hour to beginners"
6. At 7:40: "Fifteen minutes"
7. At 7:50: "Five minutes"
8. At 7:55: "Beginners Please"
9. Repeat each call one time. At intermission the only calls needed are "five minutes" and "beginners." Be sure the performers know that the calls of "15" and "5" mean until beginners not curtain.
10. Once a dress rehearsal is over, dismiss the performers to the dressing rooms to change and then to come back immediately for notes. It will be your responsibility to round up any stragglers. Some directors like to continue to give notes to the performers once the show has opened. Check with the director to see if this is desirable, and if s/he wants to do so before or after a performance. It is your responsibility to inform the cast and assemble them at the appropriate place and time.

11. Once the play is in technical/dress rehearsals, and especially in performance, you are in charge. That is not an excuse to become officious, dictatorial, or unpleasant. It is a point at which your professionalism will be noticed and contagious. If you proceed to take charge in a way that is clearly helpful and knowledgeable, you will assist the performers and technicians in following that example and behaving in an equally professional manner.

OUTSIDE OF REHEARSALS & PERFORMANCES

1. Read the Script - Consult with the director/producer in case s/he has made any deletions or additions. Be sure to make copies for any production or members of the artistic staff who may not have the script already.
2. With the director/producer develop a scene/character plot - a scene-by-scene breakdown of who is in what scene. Make sure to list page numbers and have the cast, operator, production technician and director check for errors.
3. With the director/producer and the set designer and/or builder develop a prop/furniture list - a rough list of all prop and furniture items needed for the show. Talk to the director/producer as you work through rehearsals and write detailed descriptions of each item including size, time period, function, etc. Communicate any changes to the set designer immediately.
4. Do a prop/furniture-preset checklist - a scene-by-scene breakdown of all props and furniture and their location - on stage, off stage, etc - be specific. Be aware of any costumes and props that need to be preset on stage rather than carried on by performers. You may want to designate a cast member backstage to organize and coordinate all prop/furniture items.
5. Do a prop/furniture change plot/flow chart - Indicate who handles what and from what side of stage they carry it in from, and where it ultimately ends up - THIS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS between the stage manager and the set designer/builder.
6. Obtain a sound cue list from the designated sound person. Discuss this with the director/producer early in the production process. Often, directors will want sound cues or music during rehearsals. In this case, you will need to work with the house technician or sound engineer to ensure equipment is organized and ready to use.
7. Distribute to all of the performers, production personnel and crew members (or post on the call board) a Rehearsal and Performance Schedule - this should include a list of all rehearsal times, locations, and pertinent production dates/times. It should also be promptly updated as needed.
8. For photo calls make sure that everyone, cast and crew know they are stay for the duration of the call. Make sure this event is listed on the original schedule you give to the cast and crew so they are prepared for it well in advance. At least 24 hours before the photo call, work with the director to make a photo list. This list should include scene #s, who is in what photo, and light cue #s.
9. Meet with your production team. Your relationship with them should be very close. These people are there to help you achieve organization and to substitute for you when necessary. DELEGATION IS VERY IMPORTANT! Treat each other with respect. Pitch in and work as a team.
10. With the Director/producer, make sure that the cast are given guidelines regarding use of the space, lines of communication to resolve problems, punctuality, discipline, and responsibility.
11. You must attend all production meetings. Some directors like to run their own production meetings, some like to have the SM run them. In general, at each production meeting, each member of the production staff is asked for a status

- report of how things are going, what progress has been made, and what still needs to be done.
12. Learn as much as you can from the Set team and the Production Technician about how the set and lighting will work and how changes will happen. Do you need to call cues or other set change cues? Note where these cues are in your prompt book. How many people are needed to facilitate each change? It may be your responsibility to make crew assignments to facilitate these changes throughout the course of the show.
 13. The Costume team may notify you when there is a fitting schedule posted. You are responsible for communicating this information to the performers, and impressing upon them the need to attend their fittings.
 14. Consult with the director and the production staff about any publicity photos. If any, when are they? Which performers are called? What costumes and props are needed? Some directors/producers like to be present at publicity photo shoots; others want the stage manager to supervise it.
 15. Liaise with the various show personnel - lights, sound, scenery, props, and wardrobe. Communicate with them early on in the rehearsal process and give them a production schedule that clearly lists dates and times they are called for rehearsals and performances.

REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE NOTES

1. Rehearsal notes are very important for communicating with those production staff members who do not regularly attend rehearsals or performances. Make sure any notes are sent to the staff, cast and/or crew.
2. This is where a lot of the "Assume Nothing" part of your job comes in, as in "assume no one knows this but you". You need to be acutely aware of everything that is happening onstage that may affect the work of others. Because you are watching every rehearsal and the production staff members are not, it is your responsibility to note needs, additions, things that need repairing and potential problems, such as:
 3. Props that are added to the properties list - "Performer B needs a suitcase in scene 2. Be aware that with such a statement, you haven't indicated you need a rehearsal suitcase.
 4. Potential costume problems - "Actress A has to climb a ladder - is her long skirt going to be a problem?
Can we have a rehearsal skirt of approx. the same length?"
 5. Potential scenery problems - " Performer C is blocked to jump up and down on the upstage chair. Is the chair you have selected going to support his weight and this action?"
 6. Broken things - " Very Sorry, but one of the legs on the table was broken last night" (be able to state how, in case this is a potential recurring problem).
 7. The production crew may not be aware of such needs and must be informed as soon as possible. Make sure everyone gets the same report, and not just the notes that pertain to only him or her. Be sure the production staff notes are sorted so that they address each individual department separately. If you have no notes for someone, be sure to acknowledge this - " Scenery – nothing for you".

THE PROMPT BOOK

1. Throughout the rehearsal process, you will be building a prompt book. You should never be without this. It is your guide through the exciting journey of a production, and when information is requested of you, you should be able to find the answer in your prompt book. Prepare your prompt book with adequate

margin space for notes, diagrams and technical cues. Keep your prompt book correct and up to date throughout the process.

2. The prompt book should contain the following items-
 - The script as altered for this production
 - A contact list for cast, crew and production staff with ph numbers etc
 - A rehearsal and a production schedule
 - A scene/character plot.
 - Prop/Furniture lists. This should list all props in each scene & description
 3. Prop/Furniture preset checklists. This should delegate where all props and furniture should be placed at the beginning of show.
 4. Prop/Furniture change plot/flow chart - including stage diagrams showing placement of props, furniture and moveable scenery for each scene. The Scene Designer should provide these.
 5. A sound cue list-This will be provided by the Sound Designer.
 6. Costume lists and a costume change plot. The costume designer will provide these.
 7. A running the show check list - a moment by moment listing of everything you must do from when you first arrive at the theatre to when you leave the building, including responsibilities during interval placement and times.
 8. Playing times for scenes and acts once the rehearsals are running without interruptions.
 9. Production Notes, Rehearsal Reports, and important responses. Copies of these should be kept in your notebook in order to refer to them. Again, all of these items must be accurate, legible and up to date at all times. Someone who has not attended should be able to understand your notes and run the show from them.
 10. Be certain that your diagrams of the stage (placement of all stage props, whether curtains are open or closed, placement of preset props onstage, etc.) are complete and accurate for each scene. You may also want to include diagrams, which show initial placement of performers at the beginning of a scene. Each director will want you to keep track of different blocking. Ask your director exactly what s/he wants. The following things are noted by you within the script:
 - The blocking notes and "business".
 - The light, sound and music cues
 - The set/prop change cues
 11. You must be present at every rehearsal to record the blocking (place-to-place movement), cues, and property requirements in the prompt book. It is also helpful for you to include brief descriptions of stage business (i.e. - lighting a cigarette) and gestures. Keeping track of the blocking is one of your most important tasks. It is crucial you accurately note every place-to-place movement. If you miss something, go back over it with the director. Use fairly standard code or shorthand:
 - 12. X = cross R = stage right B = indicates which character by initial
 - US = upstage L = stage left wndw = window
 - DS = downstage ^ = stand ch = chair
 - C = centerstage v = sit tbl = table
- Be sure to use uppercase letters for directional notations and lowercase letters for scenic elements. You can create your own short hand for different scenic elements, just make sure you also include an explanation or key of your notations at the beginning of the script. So, for example, character "B" is blocked to cross upstage center to a chair and sit - your notation would look like this: B XUSC to ch v
13. Incorporate arrows into your blocking notation to indicate if someone crosses upstage or downstage of a scenic element while they are making a cross:
B XUSC ? tbl to ch v. The clearer your notation is, the better it will be in solving "I

don't remember what I did yesterday" problems, and will help facilitate the replacement of an performer should it become necessary.

14. If you are performing a show with dance numbers, you may or may not have to note the blocking during the dances, but you must note blocking at the beginning and end of each dance.

GENERAL NOTES:

1. Everyone needs to be able to trust and respect you, as you need to trust and respect them. The performers need to have a secure framework in which to produce their art. Understanding and accepting their need for consistency should motivate you to make sure that certain things are where the performer expects them to be.
2. If there are any variations, however small, the performer(s) involved need to know BEFORE it becomes an issue, so that s/he has time to prepare.
3. Everyone needs structure. Set a clear routine and follow it consistently. Any rules need to be established by the Director and SM from the very beginning. Clarify any rules that are set, such as:
When you call "beginners", what does this mean? What kind of response do you expect? Some stage managers like to have the cast and crew reply to calls, such as: "15 minutes to curtain" Reply: "Thank you 15". If the cast and/or crew are unable to hear or deliver responses given their location in the building, delegate a crew member to give time warnings in person.
4. Be clear with the performers about how you want them to call for lines during rehearsals. It is usually best to have them say only "line". Let them know that this is all they are to say so as not to break everyone's concentration and that you will not give them a line if they do not ask for one.
5. Be clear about call times for rehearsals and performances. If the call time is 6:00, are they expected to walk in the door at 6:00, or be there and ready to start work at 6:00 (which means they have to arrive a few minutes earlier)? After arriving, it is the SM's responsibility to give time warnings.
6. Try to solve problems before they become problematic. If you have a chronically late performer or crew member, politely and privately ask him/her to be more prompt. Ask him/her to show respect for the rest of the company and the project at hand by being on time. It is not your responsibility however, to handle discipline problems. If someone repeatedly breaks the rules, let the director or show producer know. Be courteous and civil at all times. Do not, under any circumstances, publicly humiliate people, yell, or be rude in any way.
7. You must set the example. Always arrive before the performers. This means at least 15 minutes before rehearsal or performance call times in order to get things in order and ready to go.
8. And lastly, **ENJOY!**