



## **Theatre Royal Nelson Volunteer Usher Guidebook**

The Theatre Royal's volunteer ushers are an integral part of the front of house staff and work with the Front of House Manager in welcoming, providing guidance, safety and comfort of all patrons. We strive to ensure that each and every patron has a wonderful experience and our ushers are key to that effort. A positive attitude is essential! We ask for and appreciate your adherence to our policies, procedures and protocols. Your hard work keeps everything running smoothly and ensures our patrons have the best possible experience.

Thanks to you all!

**Kate Alexander – Front of House Manager**



Please read the information in this guidebook fully and refer to it as needed throughout the season of productions at the theatre. We strive to provide consistent, professional and a uniform set of expectations and procedures for you to follow. A common sense application of these principles will ensure that both you and our audiences have the best possible experience.



### **Contact information:**

Usher contact email: [frontofhouse@theatreroyalnelson.co.nz](mailto:frontofhouse@theatreroyalnelson.co.nz)

Box office: 03 548 3840 option 2

Front of House Manager cell phone: 027 546 9971

Please note: The Box Office will be the contact prior to performance where you can advise if you are late or unable to attend due to emergency or illness.

### **Office Hours**

The theatre's box office is open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and one hour prior to performance. You can leave a message or send a text message to the Front of House Manager during standard business hours or up to four to six hours before show time.

### **House rules and policies**

#### **Cameras or Recording Devices**

As standard, the use of cameras, phones or other recording devices is not allowed in the theatre during the performance. If you see someone taking pictures, sending text messages or recording during the performance, and you are comfortable approaching the audience member, please do so immediately and politely ask for the device to be turned off. Alternatively please note their location as specifically as possible and inform the Front of House manager as soon as practicable. Ushers can reinforce this policy when greeting audience members or showing them their seats. Audience members are to be advised the use of electronic devices (screen light) is a huge distraction to the artists on stage and the glow from devices can destroy the enjoyment of the production for audience members. Some shows have an open photography policy (without the use of a flash) and this information will be provided to you during your pre-show usher briefing.

#### **Late Seating**

Patrons who arrive late will be seated at an appropriate opportunity during the performance at the discretion of the Front of House Manager. Note: Some performances have a lock-out whereby late comers cannot enter the auditorium until a point specified by the producer or the interval. In this case patrons can watch the performance on the Front of House monitors or be seated in one of the boxes (if available) at the discretion of the Front of House Manager.

#### **Aisles must remain clear at all times**

Please keep aisles clear and ensure bags and other personal items are kept under the seat or in designated areas. Also ensure patrons remain in their seats unless the performance involves the audience in more active roles (dancing or movement encouraged).



## **Pets**

Pets are not allowed to attend performances. Service animals accompanying audience members are invited to attend all performances and the Front of House Manager will advise ushers of any service animals and their position in the theatre.

## **Smoking**

The Theatre Royal is smoke free – audience members can leave the building to smoke (front entrance and balcony). Should you see or smell evidence of smoking in the theatre, please advise the Front of House Manager.

## **Wheelchair Seating**

Wheelchair seating is available in the Front Row of the stalls (A18). This seat is booked through box office and the Front of House Manager will advise ushers if the wheelchair position will be used for any given performance.

## **Volunteer Basics**

Ushers must be able to respond quickly in case of emergency as the number one priority is the safety of our patrons. Ushers must also be physically able to maneuver stairs and stand for at least 30 minutes. Ushers must be 16 years of age or older.

## **Attendance and Punctuality**

The Theatre Royal depends on our ushers. It is vital that ushers arrive on time and ready to work. The Front of House Manager will lead a pre-show orientation to relay important information regarding the performance. You won't be able to meet the expectations of your job if you don't know this information.

If you need to cancel, please let the Front of House Manager know as soon as possible (where possible 5 days notice) so your position can be filled. If you find your own substitute, please advise the Front of House Manager in advance with that person's name and contact information.

## **Arrival time**

Arrival time is 70 minutes before show time. If you arrive early, please wait patiently. The Front of House Manager starts orientation one hour before curtain and this takes approximately 10 minutes. Please ensure that you have signed in and out of the theatre. Try to bring your own torch, and use it if you need to during a show if people come and go in the dark. If you do not have a torch you can borrow one – FOH Manager will get you one for which you will have to sign. Please make sure to return the torch after the show.

## **Storing and securing your belongings**

If you need to store your belongings during the show you may leave them in Front of House offices where there is a rack of hanging coats and storing bags/belongings.



Please turn off cell phones when you arrive and they must remain off until the final curtain.

### **Torches**

Torches should only be used in instances of low visibility. Be mindful of seated audience members when using your torch and always keep it pointed at the floor to avoid creating a visual disturbance. Torches are to be used for ushering audience members only and are not to be used for reading programmes or finding items in your belongings.

### **Before the show**

The Front of House Manager will allocate roles for ushers, give any additional information and answer questions. Do not enter the auditorium until FOH confirms the doors can be opened.

### **During the show**

While a perk of ushering is the opportunity to see performances, please remember your role is to keep an eye on the audience. Try not to be so entertained that you miss patrons talking, texting or taking videos. This aspect of the role is to ensure audience members don't disrupt or detract the experience for everyone.

### **Interval and post show**

Only open the auditorium doors once the house lights have come up. As a Theatre Royal usher you are required to provide assistance if needed. After the show we ask that ushers pick up any discarded programmes, glasses or food wrappers in their section before leaving.

If FOH asks you to hand out flyers after the show please make sure you do so – you may take them to your seat after the interval.

### **Working with the Front of House Managers**

The Front of House manager will tell you when the house opens and when you may be seated. At the end of the show, please do not leave without signing out.

### **Attitude and Conduct**

Our volunteer ushers work very closely with our audience members. Please be sure to exercise patience and courtesy at all times with a smile.

### **Dress Code**

We require our volunteer ushers to wear suitably comfortable clothing in black. Don't forget to put on your usher badge so you are easily identifiable to audience members. You are also required to wear shoes that cover and protect your toes. Also



remember to wear shoes that are comfortable as you may be required to stand for a period of time and to walk around the theatre.

### **Volunteer Usher Duties**

#### General Usher Requirements

- ❖ Volunteers must be physically fit and capable of running up and down staircases and standing for occasionally long periods of time if required.
- ❖ Ushers are required to stay throughout the entire performance and complete all tasks
- ❖ All volunteers must be comfortable working with the public, enjoy live performance and have a friendly disposition.
- ❖ Safety: Torches are available from the FOH Manager and must be kept in the Usher's possession during a performance in case of emergencies. Seating patrons safely is an important part of the usher's duties.
- ❖ All enquiries and complaints are handled informatively and politely and referred to the appropriate personnel if required
- ❖ The theatre is checked to ensure that it is in appropriate condition to receive our audience
- ❖ Emergency procedures are activated as required

### **Tickets**

Please be friendly and quick when checking all tickets. Please check date, time and the performance then direct the audience member to their correct seats. Should a patron have tickets for a different performance time, please advise the Front of House Manager who can then resolve the issue with box office staff. If a ticketing conflict arises, please call on the Front of House Manager to resolve any issues.

### **Theatre Bar**

The theatre's bar is open one hour prior performance and during the interval. Normally the bar will close directly after the interval, unless there has been a specific request from the visiting company to keep the bar open (opening/closing nights). The Front of House Manager will allocate an usher to assist the Bar Manager pre-show and during the interval with the sale of ice creams. One usher will be responsible for filling the water bottles for the public. Please bring your own water for your own consumption.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Should you hear an announcement requesting an evacuation of the theatre, please take your position at the end of the aisles and direct the audience members to the exits in a calm and orderly fashion. The assembly point for the audience and all members of the Front of House team is at Briscoes directly opposite the Theatre Royal (Rutherford Street).



Theatre Royal is a three storied building and has a fire alarm throughout. A means of escape stairway is provided from both front and back of house and is clearly indicated by exit signs and directional arrows from areas on each floor.

Notices are throughout the building and identify the fire exits on each floor and the location of alternative exit routes to the place of safety outside where the occupants are to assemble.

The front of house is served by exit routes on both sides of the auditorium which lead to the main entrance of the building.

Should a power outage occur during any performance, emergency lighting will activate. The Production Stage Manager and Front of House Manager will confer and determine if the show must be aborted. If so please assist in guiding the audience to the exit routes.

### **Minor accidents and falls**

Ushers should stay with the injured person and send another usher – or patron if necessary to get the Front of House Manager. If the patrons insists that he or she does not need assistance but appears to be injured, take a note of the patron's appearance and where they are seated and report the incident to the Front of House Manager immediately. There is an accident and incident report log to be filled out by the Front of House Manager and the injured person/observers (should they wish). Should a patron request a bandage or ice pack, these items are available from the Front of House Manager and our first aid kits are located in the Front of House management office.

### **Medical Emergency**

In case of a heart attack, stroke, seizure or medical emergency, please notify the Front of House Manager immediately. If it is during a performance, the stage manager will be instructed to make the following announcement:  
"Ladies and Gentleman, we are experiencing a medical emergency. Would individuals with medical training please identify themselves to the Front of House Manager (now standing in the auditorium and clearly visible). If possible the Front of House Manager will move the person to the foyer seating area with assistance from the ushering staff. If this is not possible, the patron will be made comfortable or put into the recovery position and an ambulance will be called immediately.  
Ushers will then return to their posts and await further instruction – especially if the foyer needs to be cleared of audience members in the event of ambulance call.



## **Earthquake**

In the event of an earthquake the Front of House Manager will make the following announcement. "Ladies and Gentlemen, please remain in your seats and protect your head and neck – do not rush for the exits. As a precaution, would those of you underneath our chandeliers or technical equipment move to the sides of the auditorium".

When the earthquake stops, the Front of House Manager will account for all Front of House staff and audience members if possible. Do not evacuate unless the area is immediately threatened or you are instructed to do so.

Await instructions until it is safe to evacuate the theatre.

## **Threatening Behaviour (Physical/Verbal)**

Remove yourself and others from immediate danger and advise the Front of House Manager immediately.

- Do not take risks or try to struggle with the person and observe the aggressor for:
- Physical features or type of clothing worn
- Distinguishing features, voice or tattoos and any weapons and the escape route taken.
- Write down as quickly as practicable all that was observed.

If you or any member of the Front of House team feels unsafe at anytime, please report to the Front of House Manager immediately whereby 111 can be called requesting the police.

## **The fun stuff – The Perks!**

When you become a Royal Family member and put your name forward to usher you will receive a welcome letter and a list of shows will be sent to you two weeks prior performance. All you need to do is let us know the shows you would like to usher!

Our ushers enjoy the following:

- **Complimentary Admission** to the Theatre Royal's performances – see the shows you work as our guest. In exchange for your time before the show, during the interval, and immediately after the show, you will enjoy wonderful productions from regional, national and international producers.
- **Discounts** – Volunteer ushers enjoy special discounts on tickets for some productions through your Royal Family membership. Some local businesses also offer discounts to Royal Family members (see our website for details).
- **Meeting People** - People of all ages and from all walks of life usher at the Theatre Royal, and all share an abiding devotion to theatre and the arts.



The same is true for our patrons. With so many fascinating personalities coming through our doors for every show, sharing a good conversation and discovering common interests is as easy as saying “hello.”

- **Getting Inside** – Ushering gets you inside the world of the theatre. See how things work from the inside-out and meet the people who make things happen.

**In closing an enormous Thank you!**

The substantial investment of each volunteer’s time and talent is greatly appreciated by our audience, staff and the Nelson Historic Theatre Trust Board.

You make a huge contribution to the success of our theatre!