



College of Liberal Arts

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS AND DANCE

**STAGE MANAGEMENT
HANDBOOK**

Department of Theatre Arts & Dance

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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an outline of the responsibilities, expectations, and guidelines of a student stage manager for the University of Texas at Arlington Department of Theatre Arts and Dance.

Included in the handbook is a breakdown of the duties required for stage managing and follows a chronological path from the initial meetings and preparation through the closing of the show. The duties listed are the general procedures and practices at the university but are not an exhaustive resource on the art of stage management.

The handbook will deal with questions such as: "What forms should I be sending out every night after rehearsal?" "What should I have prepared for the first tech rehearsal?" and "What should I be doing now," not questions like: "How should I arrange my prompt book?" or "How should I call cue?" Those types of discoveries will happen for you as you settle into your own stage management style.

Although this handbook outlines the general practices, know that every production is different and will have its own unique needs and challenges that will extend beyond the guidelines within this handbook and that you as the stage manager will need to familiarize yourself with and address.

A good stage manager is organized, a good communicator, intuitive, relaxed, patient, pro-active, optimistic, timely, polite, and organized (again), among other things. The stage manager is the communication hub within a production and the key element for the communication of a show's many parts to be successful. Many of the guidelines listed in this handbook revolve around keeping those lines of communication open and helping to facilitate a healthy process from start to finish. Be prompt in your reports and replies, pay attention to wording used in correspondences, and stay on top of any concerns or confusion that may arise. Likewise, a good stage manager is often the center of the morale of a company.

A good show is the product of a healthy process, and that process is related to the overall morale of the company involved. The actors and crew will feed off the stage manager's demeanor; use this to help control the mood of the company for the better. Do not let your stress and frustrations negatively affect the company as a whole. The more proactive and prepared you are the more confidence the cast and crew will have in you and the more successful your work and the show will become.

Being a stage manager can often be a stressful and an exhausting experience, but if at any point during the process you feel lost, confused, overwhelmed, or unsure, seek out the stage management practicum professor for help and guidance. This process is an educational one, and we are here to help prepare and teach you along the way. Our goal is that by the end of the production you will have had a fruitful experience and come out a better artist.

Stage Manager Responsibilities

The manager acts as a communication link between the director and the other artists, creatives & technicians associated with a production. They function as company manager for the actors and aids the director in conducting rehearsals. Once the production moves on stage, the stage manager's responsibilities include opening and locking the theatre or studio, delivering calls to the actors for makeup and costume, setting the stage each night, calling the cues, calling entrance cues, and arranging equipment. The stage manager is required to attend all production meetings, all rehearsals and performances and strike.

Getting Started

Below are the basic guidelines that you should be familiar with and have accomplished during the initial phase of the production.

Script and Production Calendar

The first thing you want to do is to meet with the Stage Management Practicum Professor to get a copy of the script and to talk through the production calendar, any important dates, and any conflicts that exist.

- A copy of the production calendar can be obtained in the Theatre Arts & Dance SharePoint.
- You should also discuss this handbook and any other general production needs at that time.
- Complete the Theatre Arts Practicum: Stage Management - **Pre Production Checklist** sent out by the Stage Management Practicum Professor

First Rehearsal Paperwork

Reach out to the departments administrative staff & coordinate having copies of the script printed for all cast, creatives & crew that wish to have one, as applicable. This may have already been done by the time you were assigned to Stage Management.

Build your 1st Rehearsal Questionnaire: This will be a digital form that all production team members that will be in the room for rehearsals will need to send out. The stage management practicum professor will send out an example form for reference.

Meet with the Director

As soon as you have a script and have been officially assigned as the stage manager, you need to setup a meeting with the director to discuss the show and any specific short & long term needs they may have.

Please refer to the **Theatre Arts Practicum: Stage Management - Pre Production Directorial Meeting** sent out by the Stage Management Practicum Professor

Meet with the Assistant Stage Manager

Once the assistant stage management (ASM) positions have been assigned, meet with them to discuss the show, and catch them up on things they may have missed. Also, discuss the rehearsal process and what they will be responsible for on a normal basis.

The number of ASMs will vary based on the show, but typically run from 1 to 3.

Establish a good relationship with the ASMs, as you will be working closely together for a few months.

Do not be afraid to delegate some of the responsibilities to the ASMs; a successful stage manager doesn't try to do everything on their own, but rather knows how to delegate their duties and use their assistants effectively.

Keep in mind that for many ASMs this is their first time stage managing and will need some guidance throughout the process.

Attend all design meetings

During the semester, prior to the opening of the show, there will be a series of design meetings with production staff, that you need to attend (they are listed on the production calendar).

Being at these meeting will keep you informed on the production and help prepare you for what to expect in the following semester.

Encourage the ASMs to attend the meetings as well – it will be a good information gathering process for them

Create a Production Contact List

Create a production team contact list that includes email addresses and phone numbers for the following people: director, designers, technical director, stage manager, any assistants, prop master, master electrician, costume shop supervisor, & scene shop supervisor

This information can be acquired via the First Rehearsal Questionnaire mentioned previously

Some productions may have additional positions (choreographer, music director, etc.) that are not listed above. Likewise, some productions may not have all the positions above or those positions may not be filled until a later date.

Distribute the Rehearsal Schedule

Once the director has finalized the rehearsal schedule, make sure it is sent out with the daily call prior to the 1st rehearsal

Make sure to keep the production team up to date on any changes that may occur in the rehearsal schedule.

Create a Prop List

Collaborate with the director to develop a prop list for the show. This finalized list should be shared with Scenic Designer, Prop Master, and Production Manager. A preliminary prop list is one of the items on the Pre-Production Checklist provided by the Stage Management Practicum Professor.

Obtain a Ground Plan and Tape out the Stage

Once the scenic designer has a finalized ground plan, request a scale printed drawing from the Technical Director.

Use the ground plan to develop a plan for taping out the basic scenic footprint out on the stage floor. It is helpful to mark up the ground plan with a determined color code prior to the meeting for tape out, so the delineations between different parts of the set & stage can be clearly seen.

Once you have a plan, tape out the floor. **This needs to be done before the first day of rehearsal.**

Meet with the Stage Management Practicum Professor to schedule a time and to get help with the taping.

The Rehearsal Process

Below are the basic guidelines for the weeks of rehearsals. These responsibilities are not exclusive to the actual rehearsals, but also cover duties that fall within those weeks.

Attend weekly production meetings.

Production meetings are held typically every Monday at 12pm in FA 419, and you are expected to attend every meeting, (check the production calendar for the exact schedule of meetings).

During the meeting you will need to take notes of the events that transpire, create a Production Meeting Report, and distribute this report to the production team by the next morning.

The goal of the production meetings is to address any issues or questions that arise since the previous meeting. Use this time to help address any needs you or the rehearsals may have.

Attend and assist in running nightly rehearsals

Sweep, clean, and ensure the rehearsal venue is safe for performers every night.

The stage manager and ASMs should arrive for rehearsal at least 30 minutes in advance of the cast in order to prepare the space.

Create nightly Rehearsal Reports.

Get the rehearsal report template from the Stage Management Practicum Professor and distribute the form after every rehearsal.

Beware of etiquette when writing the rehearsal reports.

Make sure the wording of the report does not come off as a demand rather than a question, gets a clear message across, and communicates the appropriate desire.

Etiquette is one of the biggest issues most young SMs have.

These reports should be emailed to the production team before leaving campus from rehearsal nightly

If the report is received after this time, it limits the production team's ability to respond to any issues that may be contained in the report.

After the production prescribed off book take, facilitate the taking of line notes (see the Stage Management Practicum Professor for suggestions on how this can be accomplished)

Record and update blocking in the stage management script

Create and maintain a nightly Sign-in Sheet for the cast and ASMs. This information should be included in the nightly rehearsal reports.

At the moment rehearsal is scheduled to begin, start calling those in the cast or crew that have not signed in. This should be done for all rehearsals, tech rehearsals, dress rehearsal, and performances.

The above duties are just a sampling. You will have many responsibilities (many unique to each show) during the nightly rehearsals. You should be delegating and utilizing the ASMs to help achieve these goals.

Check-in with the Technical Director

Once the set build begins in the rehearsal space, check in nightly with the technical director and/or scenic shop supervisor to get an overview of any updates that have occurred to the set since the previous rehearsal. This meeting should be used to discuss the set and see if there are any new scenic elements and/or safety concerns you should be aware of before rehearsals.

By the beginning of the third week of the semester the crew for the production will be assigned. The technical director will send out the crew assignments via email to the Stage Management Practicum Professor, who will then disperse them to the student SM team.

Using the provided list, create a crew contact sheet and have the production manager double-check the list.

Often crews can change slightly as the semester progresses, so periodically check with the production manager for any changes.

The overall practicum supervisor will create a list of crew call times; get a copy of this list when it is completed.

The stage manager will often help in distributing the list.

A few weeks prior to the first crew call time, start sending out weekly reminders to the crew.

Work with the costume designer and/or costume studio supervisor to schedule costume fittings and measurements

The costume designer and/or costume studio supervisor will need to call actors in for measurements and fittings throughout the rehearsal process.

It is the stage manager's responsibility to create sign-up sheets for these times, communicate them to the performers, and to get the cast to sign up for the appropriate times.

Tech/Dress Week

Below lays out basic guidelines for the weeks of the production's tech and dress rehearsals, as well as preparations that should be made in advance of these weeks.

Paper Tech

The week of the first tech rehearsal will be scheduled a paper tech meeting. At this meeting the stage manager, director, lighting, sound, and scenic designers will talk through the script and discuss any/all cues and shifts that are planned for the show.

This is the time for the stage manager to notate their script for all cues and shifts that will be initially occurring.

Do not be afraid to ask questions during the paper tech, you want to make sure you have a clear understanding of all the cues and their order by the end of the meeting.

It is also generally a good idea in the regular rehearsals that follow the paper tech to follow along and practice calling these cues, to make sure they are clear before tech begins.

Beware that is common for cue placement to change some after the paper tech, so take notes in pencil.

Run List

Prior to the first tech the stage manager should create a detailed run list that clearly shows any/all onstage/backstage movements of props, scenic elements etc. By actors, ASMs or run crew during a performance.

Meet with the technical director and scenic designer when creating this list so that you are clear on how each piece of scenery moves and how many people are needed to safely move them.

Have this ready for the first tech so that crew can easily and quickly be assigned and taught their duties for each role.

Train your ASMs on each shift and let them help in training the crew, since they will be the ones actively doing the shifts during the show.

Know that during the tech rehearsals it is likely that the list will be modified as the rehearsals progress.

Prop Tables

Prior to the first tech rehearsal, obtain prop tables from the scenic shop supervisor and tape out the tables for all props.

Make sure the ASMs understand the layout.

Do not forget to plan for the placement of props that may be too big for one of the tables.

Preshow/Post-Show Duties

Create a list of the crew's pre-show and post-show duties. Plan out the duties so that they are appropriately and evenly spread out.

Example duties include sweeping, mopping, setting out props, turning on running lights, setting up for the top of the show, flying in masking, etc.

Create a nightly sign-in sheet, similar to the one used for the cast in normal rehearsals, which includes the crew.

Costume Parade

A costume parade will be schedule about a week before the first dress rehearsal. This meeting is a chance for the costume designer, lighting designer, and director to see the costumes, on stage and under stage light, before the dress rehearsal.

Make sure the actors are fully aware of their call time for the parade.

Meet with the costume designer and help them coordinate and run the costume parade.

Make-up Demo

A make-up demo will be schedule about a week before the first dress rehearsal. This meeting is a chance to train the cast and see the make-up design, on stage and under stage light, before the dress rehearsal.

Make sure the actors are fully aware of their call time for the parade.

Meet with the make-up designer and help them coordinate and run the make-up demo.

Technical Rehearsals

The technical rehearsals involve the production team, crew, and cast (without costumes or make-up) and are used to introduce the lighting, sound, and scenic design elements into the show.

Use these rehearsals to perfect the calling of the cues and make any changes that are needed in the prompt book. These rehearsals are largely for the stage manager to rehearse the implementation of the technical aspects of the show and for the designers to make adjustments to their designs before the introduction of costumes.

It is typical for the design team to update the look and sound of things during these rehearsals.

These rehearsals are also used to train the crew on their duties during the show, so come prepare with all the need paperwork to do so.

Do not be afraid to "hold" during a rehearsal in order to go back and rerun something for the purpose of correcting an error or to better understand something.

There is a limited amount of time for each rehearsal. If time is running out the stage management practicum professor will step into speed things along or take appropriate action.

The tech rehearsals are typically split into multiple days and run slowly as the design elements are woven into the performance. They can be stressful and tense, so the stage manager should play a key role in keeping things moving and spirits high.

After every technical rehearsal there will be a meeting with the production team to discuss the day's rehearsal, any issues, and the plan of action for the next night's rehearsal.

After these meetings, be sure to send out a rehearsal report that details the major notes of the day.

Dress Rehearsals

The dress rehearsals involve the production team, crew, and cast and are used to introduce the costume & make-up designs into the show.

The stage manager should create a nightly timeline that lays out what the cast and crew should be doing from the moment of their call time to the start of the show.

Work with the stage management practicum professor in creating this timeline.

Dress rehearsals should primarily only be "held" for costume related issues or major issues with the show only.

The final dress rehearsal should be treated as though it were a public performance and run accordingly with no stops unless there is an emergency concerning actor or crew safety.

After every dress rehearsal there will be a meeting with the production team to discuss the night's rehearsal, any issues, and the plan of action for the next night's rehearsal.

After these meetings, be sure to send out a rehearsal report that details the major notes of the day.

Performances

Below lays out basic guidelines for the weeks of the production's performances, as well as preparations that should be made in advance of those weeks.

Performances

Once the show opens the stage manager will take the take over control of the production's run.

Maintain a performance sign-in sheet for the cast and crew in the same manner as the previous sign-in sheets.

Each performance there will be a faculty and/or staff house manager and box office manager with whom the stage manager will need to coordinate the show's schedule.

Before opening the house and starting the show, make sure you have a “clear” from the house manager.

Likewise, be sure to synchronize your time with that of house management and box office.

Try not to hold the house for more than 10 minutes past the schedule start time.

Performance Reports

After the end of each performance the stage manager will need to send out a performance report that details the events of the performance.

Post-Show

Below lays out basic guidelines for after the last performance of the show.

Strike Duties

Most productions will have a strike immediately following the last performance, in which the majority or all the technical elements will be reset in preparation of the next production.

Check in and out students

Work with the practicum supervisor/technical director to check students in and out of the strike

Clean green room, booth, and dressing rooms

Stage management is responsible for making sure the green room and control booth are clean. Also, double checking that the dressing rooms are clean (check after the wardrobe crew has finished).

Turn in Paperwork to Practicum Supervisor

Turn in copies of all the rehearsal, tech, dress, and performance reports digitally to the practicum supervisor

Return keys to Key Control

Return all keys that were checked out of the main office back on the next business day after the last performance.

Who's Who

Below is a brief list of Faculty and Staff and that may need to seek answers, advice, and/or help from during the process.

Production Manager

Oversees the entire production as a whole and will deal with issues pertaining to stage management, scheduling, crews, budgets, personnel, deadlines, and anything else not described below. When in doubt the PM is a good place to go when you are not sure where else to turn.

Current: *DJ Badon*

Technical Director

Oversees the overall technical aspects of the production; including but not limited to scenic construction, backstage crew training, scene shifts, technical problems, and backstage safety.

Current: *DJ Badon*

Facilities Manager

oversees the condition and use of the department's facilities; including: the Main Stage Theatre, Studio Theatre, 143 Theatre, FA 419, and supporting shops. Also, oversees maintenance of these spaces.

Current: *DJ Badon*

Department Chair

Oversees the Department of Theatre Arts as a whole. If you have issues with or are uncomfortable with the Production Manager or other faculty/staff members.

Current: *Jeanmarie Higgins*

Stage Management Practicum Professor/Stage Management Mentor

Oversees the Student Stage Managers during their Production Assignment. Should be the first point of contact for student SMs looking for clarification or direction during rehearsal.

Current: *Hailey Green*

Administrative Assistant I & II

Works in the main office and can help and guide with office needs, i.e., copies, office supplies, box office questions, comp ticket issues, etc.

Current: *Chris Insall & Mary Grace Held*

Costume Studio Supervisor

Oversees the costume studio and can help with any costume related questions.

Current: *Kris O'Brien*

Scenic Studio Supervisor

Oversees the scenic studio and can help with any scenery related questions.

Current: *Benjamin Phillips*

