

# STAGE MANAGER'S GUIDE

Latimer Shaeffer Theatre  
School of Theatre and Dance  
James Madison University

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c. 2005 JMU Theatre/Dance

## **INTRODUCTION**

Theatre, that is to say, live, produced plays, requires the efforts of a large number of artists and craftspersons. As an art form, plays are only complete when viewed by an audience. This audience, whether paying or not, deserves to see the best work of all who contribute to the production.

It is your job to make the production run smoothly. These guidelines are intended to outline your responsibilities and aid in the execution of your job. Please be aware that these guidelines are not complete or carved on stone tablets, and are subject to change from time to time. Remember that the faculty and staff are willing to help you. Just ask.

The Stage Manager is the person who is responsible for everything, except the individual performances of the performers, that takes place on stage or back stage during each performance and during the rehearsal period. The stage manager delegates tasks to assistants and crew but is ultimately responsible.

## **DUTIES OF THE STAGE MANAGER AT JMU**

1. Make initial preparations for the physical production of the play before the first rehearsal
  - Make contact and form a dialogue with the director and/or choreographer.
  - Read the script.
  - Mark the stage floor or rehearsal space according: to the floor plan from the scene designer.
  - Prepare production property list with the aid of set designer and prop personnel
  - Secure rehearsal props from prop department and set up as required.
  - Prepare and distribute Production contact sheet, rehearsal schedule and master calendar with the aid of the appropriate personnel and staff.
  - Coordinate production meetings
  - Get stage manager keys from Technical Director
2. Program copy
  - Give program copy to Business Manager four weeks before opening.
  - Program copy, includes: (see detailed edition of this manual)
  - Take first draft of program copy to cast for proof. Return to Business Manager with corrections.
  - Program copy for dance productions are handled by Director
3. Prepare prompt script during the rehearsal period
  - Record blocking
  - Record changes in script
  - Note on Prop Running List a prop's starting position and ending position. Is it initially set on or off, left or right, or up or down stage-
  - Note any changes to prop list, notifying appropriate personnel.
  - Make costume notes as required, notifying appropriate personnel of any changes.
  - Note each light cue and warning if it is given by director
  - Note each sound cue and warning if it is given by director
  - Note warnings for shifts and scene changes.
  - Know the set and the shifts
  - All notes and cues should be clearly spelled out and simple enough to enable anyone else to call the show.

4. Conduct rehearsals
  - Attend all rehearsals and individual dances.
  - Post a Sign In sheet
  - See that rehearsal area is kept clean
  - Set stage before each scene
  - Stay on Book. Take blocking notes and cues, and prompt as necessary - Assist Director
  - Spike prop and set pieces
  - Fill out Rehearsal Log and distribute to appropriate personnel.
  - Restore rehearsal space to original configuration.
  - At the end of rehearsal, return props to cabinet and costumes to appropriate dressing room.
  - Maintain communication with costume shop as regarding performer's responses to measurements, fittings and other requested meetings.
  
5. Before First Technical Rehearsal
  - Meet with the TD to go over stage space and all systems located there in, and discuss production check lists
  - Work with the TD and others to determine where glow tape and run lights are needed.
  - With prop personnel, set up prop tables on appropriate sides of the stage as determined by position recorded on Prop Running List. Prop tables should be covered with paper and labeled for each item to be stored there.
  - Organize the props in the prop cabinet. List the props on each shelf and create a check list for the removal and replacement of props.
  - Post Technical and Dress Rehearsal calls for cast and crew.

In Prompt Book:

  - Mark each light cue go, warning and standby as it is given by lighting designer
  - Mark each sound cue go, warning and standby as it is given by sound designer
  - Mark warnings for shifts and scene changes as it is given by scene designer.

For Dance Concerts:

  - Coordinate transfer of any equipment and scenic elements from the dance studio to the theatre.
  - Coordinate the preparation of the sound tapes between the Choreographers and the TD.
  
6. Run Technical and Dress Rehearsals
  - Post a Sign In sheet that includes the names of all cast and crew members.
  - With TD, assign run crew to specific jobs that he or she will be responsible for every rehearsal and performance.
  - Make sure that the run crew knows what they are doing and that they, are properly trained by the appropriate personnel.
  - See that the stage and back stage areas are clean and swept and dance floor is mopped.
  - Have stage completely set by 1/2 hour of Go.
  - Have Cast ready for places at curtain time - Follow book
  - Mark actor warnings as needed.
  - Time each scene, scene change and act
  - Post call times for future technical and dress rehearsals and performances
  - Strike all props and set pieces at the end of rehearsal
  - Record and distribute tech and acting notes
  - Inform run crew of the requirement to dress in black if they are back stage.

#### 7. Run every performance as set in dress rehearsal

- On opening night, meet with House Manager to set up system of communication, determine length of intermission, and let the House manager know the length of the show.
- Let the crew know that conversations on headsets are broadcast into the box office, dressing rooms, and hallway leading to the stage. All conversations should remain professional and business like.
- Use pre and post performance check lists.
- Fill out Performance Log and distribute to appropriate personnel Note any damage to set, props, and costumes
- Inform department heads so that repairs are effected.
- Monitor stock of consumables, ie food props, candies, matches, etc to insure continued supply.
- Organize and run the photo call (when there is one).
- Participate in the strike following the final performance of the production.

#### 8. Backstage Etiquette for cast and crew

- No unnecessary noise or activity
- No unnecessary talk backstage
- Respect the facilities
- Respect others.
- Respect the property of others.
- Put trash in the garbage can.
- Do not eat or drink in costume except for water.
- No visitors after 1/2 hour.

# PRESHOW CHECK LIST

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PRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 hours before show begins:

- Unlock all doors:
  - Back stage doors  SL  SR
  - Dressing rooms  Womens  Mens
  - Paint cage
  - Booth
- Lights:
  - Turn on work lights
  - Turn on all run lights
  - Turn off wing lights
  - Turn off rail and wall lights
  - Turn off grid lights ( in breaker box)
- Unlock Props Cabinet
- Turn on Clearcom, communication system and the stage monitors. Watch what is said on stage and over the headsets. Conversations can be heard through out theatre.
- Run crew:
  - Sweep and mop stage
  - Set props  On stage  On prop tables
  - Foam on all doors: stage, dressing rooms and bathrooms.
  - As applicable, check color change gels
- Master Electrician, conduct Light and Channel Check with light board operator.
- With sound board operator, level & sound check

## 1 hour before show begins:

- Check sign in sheet. Is everyone here?
- Phones:
  - Turn off phone in Paint Cage
  - Turn off phone in Scene Shop
  - Turn off phone in Sound Booth
- All props should be in place:
  - Check on stage props
  - Check prop tables
- Are the special effects loaded and ready

- Has House Manager checked for debris in:
  - Auditorium  Lobby
  - Men's Restroom  Women's Restroom

## Has everything been checked?

## 10 minutes before House is open:

- Actors should check props
- Turn on stage preset
- Turn off Viewpoint system, Turn off all work lights
- Perform a "dark check"
- Turn on Booth run lights. Turn off overheads.
- Close Grand Drape (if appropriate), lower legs or other scenic elements as necessary for preset.
- When ready, inform House Manager that House can be opened
- Inform cast and crew when House is opened.

## House Open

- 15 minutes before go:  Call 15 minute warning
- 10 minutes before go:
  - Call 10 minute warning
  - Contact House Manager, check on possible hold of go
- 5 minutes before go:
  - Call for places
  - Contact House Manager, check on possible hold of go
- 2 minutes before go:
  - Call for confirmation of places
- 1 minute before go:
  - Contact House Manager. Is House closed? If yes, you may start the show.
- 0 minutes:  Actors Go or 1 st cue

## INTERMISSION CHECKLIST

PRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### Checklist for 15 minute intermission

- House and Preshow lights are up
- Communicate with the house manager during intermission to make sure watches are synchronized for close of house.
- Minute one:  
send out run crew to  
 Set Props    Set Scenic Elements
- Minute seven:  
 5 minute warning for places
- Minute nine:  
 Verify that Crew are in places
- Minute ten:  
 Have House Manager flash lobby lights  
 2 minute warning for places
- Minute twelve:  
 Call places  
 Contact House Manager, ask if House is closing
- Minute thirteen:  
 Confirm that House is closed
  
- Minute fifteen, Begin Act

### Checklist for 15 minute intermission

- House and Preshow lights are up
- Communicate with the house manager during intermission to make sure watches are synchronized for close of house.
- Minute one:  
send out run crew to  
 Set Props    Set Scenic Elements
- Minute three:  
 5 minute warning for places
- Minute five:  
 Verify that Crew are in places
- Minute six:  
 Have House Manager flash lobby lights  
 2 minute warning for places
- Minute eight:  
 Call places  
 Contact House Manager, ask if House is closing
- Minute nine:  
 Confirm that House is closed
  
- Minute ten, Begin Act

## POSTSHOW CHECK LIST

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PRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### After the Production

- Check in Dressing rooms-make sure all items are unplugged and area is clean
- Check with costume crew as to whether there were any problems.
- Check all props - make note of any problems.
- Lock back door to stage, leading to dock
- Lights:
  - Turn on work lights, Housekeeping setting
  - Turn off all run lights
  - Turn on rail and wall lights
  - Turn off Clearcom, communication system
  - Turn off stage monitor
- Run crew:
  - Put away all props
  - Clear set of all furniture, etc
- Lock prop cabinet
- With light board operator, make sure board is off
- With sound board operator, make sure board is off
- Turn off lights in Booth
- Phones:
  - Turn on phone in Paint Cage
  - Turn on phone in Scene Shop
  - Turn on phone in Sound Booth
- Lock all doors:
  - Back stage doors     SL         SR
  - Dressing rooms     Womens  Mens
  - Paint cage         Booth
- Turn off Viewpoint system,
- Turn off all work lights except for designated ghost light
- Has everything been checked ?**