



PRODUCTION TEAM GUIDE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

What are the tasks and responsibilities of those who work in theatre? While job descriptions may vary from company to company, the information provided in this guide is taken directly from the American Association of Community Theatres (AACT) and will provide basic expectations and activities common to a list of key positions. This guide also includes a few details on responsibilities that are specific to Center Stage Theatre. Every production is a different experience, so this guide should only be considered a rough guideline of responsibilities, not as rules for conduct.

How a theatre company, or even a single theatrical production, is organized often determines its success. Because community theatres vary so widely in size, composition, resources and offerings, it is difficult to specify exactly the responsibilities of any one person in a particular position. Sometimes a person may need to fill more than one responsibility, or due to the nature of the theatre or the production, may have to add layers to their job that might not be true in other theatre companies.

Due to the nature of community theatre, many of these descriptions will be altered from show to show. That being said, the most important issue is to make sure that each person's job on a team is well defined for the show, so that there is little chance for confusion as to their area of responsibility or what they are to accomplish. The director or producer/production manager should schedule a production team meeting prior to the audition process to be sure everyone is aware of their individual responsibilities and what the director's expectations are.

CENTER STAGE THEATRE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

It is important that the following policies be provided at the first rehearsal for every production and attached to the audition sheet for every production. If a cast or production team member is unable to attend the first rehearsal, a copy of this information must be provided to them.

In addition to the information below, a list of production team members and their responsibilities to the cast (i.e. who is the first point of contact for questions regarding costumes, sets, props, absences, etc.) should also be provided.

A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

CST can be a learning organization; so please do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have about the production of a show. If a production team member cannot answer your questions, they may be able to refer you to one of our organization's board members. Feel free to ask about anything from how we select our plays, set up finances, construct set/prop/costume pieces, advertise, etc. We want to be sure that all of you are informed and appreciate what goes on behind the scenes in addition to what we are trying to create on stage. We would love to have you involved in other areas of the organization.

REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

Productions may use a "three strikes you're out" policy in regards to tardiness/absence; if a cast member is tardy or absent three times without notifying the production team, they will be removed from the show. Remember, "early is on-time, on-time is late, and late is unacceptable."

CAST PARTIES

If a Center Stage Theatre production is performed at the Paramount Theatre or the Wayne County Museum, the cast party for that production will be held at the performance venue directly following the Friday or Saturday night performance (the day is to be decided by the cast & crew). The venue must be cleared out by midnight and alcohol is not allowed at these venues.

CENTER STAGE THEATRE PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

If/when you wear a shirt/hoodie with the "Center Stage Theatre" name on it, keep in mind that you are representing the organization to the public. Our shirts are a great memento for our cast and crew and a great way to spread the word about a show and the organization, but "bad press" can spread fast if we have individuals being disruptive and offensive when wearing clothing that represents our organization.

SOCIALIZING OUTSIDE OF REHEARSALS AND MEETINGS

We consider CST to be a family friendly organization, and we're always happy to see new faces. We often make plans outside of rehearsals and socialize; however, if you are under the age of 18, be sure that a parent or guardian is informed of your whereabouts at ALL times. CST cannot be held responsible for our lives outside of rehearsals and productions. Whenever possible, parents/guardians will be included on all scheduling emails so they are aware of the production schedule.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION

It is the policy of Center Stage Theatre to limit one-on-one interactions between adults and minors whenever possible by having at least two adults present at all times with youth. Our organization discourages one-on-one interaction between adults and minors such as indoor rehearsals behind closed doors and non-related one-on-one interaction in situations such as rides to/from rehearsals unless there is an urgent situation such as where a parent/guardian does not show up and the child would be in danger not having a ride. If such a situation arises, another adult should be informed.

ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES & ACTIVITIES

Center Stage Theatre does not condone underage alcohol consumption and does not condone the use of illegal substances.

POSITIONS IN A PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR

The work of the director is central to the production of a play. The director has the challenging task of bringing together the many complex pieces of a production—the script, actors, set, costuming, lighting and sound and music—into a unified whole.

To accomplish this task, a director needs to:

- Interpret the script
- Cast the production
- Collaborate with designers
- Plan the rehearsals
- Guide the actors in their work during rehearsals.

The director's work is most often based on a detailed study and analysis of the script to be produced. Many careful readings of the script help the director develop an individual vision of the playwright's intentions, which will form the core of his or her interpretation. This sense of "what the play is really about" will shape a director's thinking about every other aspect of the production.

Directors also study the characters in the script, gathering as much information as they can about their physical and psychological traits. This is vital preparation for casting, when the actors who are best able to bring the characters to life in performance need to be chosen.

Collaboration:

The director's initial meetings with the set, costume, lighting and sound designers typify the creative collaboration vital to theatre. Any notes the director has made on the technical needs in the script are shared with the designers. The free flow of ideas that takes place here will further refine the director's vision of the production as a whole.

Details in the script about the specific locale(s) in which the action takes place need to be attended to early in the production process, because they will determine both the basic requirements of the set and the possible movement of the actors on stage. Acting areas, entrances and exits, and furniture and props called for in the script or desired by the director will need to be a part of the set design.

The floor plan can then be sketched out. The floor plan is a basic outline drawing of the stage setting as it would look from above. It is an essential rehearsal planning tool because it allows a director to work out the blocking of the play. Blocking (or staging) is the precise moment-by-moment movement and grouping of actors on stage.

The director's creative collaboration continues during his or her work with the actors in rehearsals. The actors will bring their own interpretations to the project and perhaps inspire the director to rethink his or her interpretation. They will work closely together to breathe life into the lines and develop a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations and relationships, fleshing out the subtext of the play. Later the focus of the director's work in rehearsals will broaden to the overall look and feel of the whole production as transitions between scenes are smoothed out, effective pacing is achieved and all the design and technical aspects of the production are integrated.

The director should assign another member of the production team such as an Assistant Director or Stage Manager to manage rehearsals in the case of their absence.

Once the show opens, the director's work is essentially complete. Now it's the stage manager's job to make sure that every aspect of the production runs just as the director intended time after time, until the production closes.

Assistant Director

Center Stage Theatre's production teams have used the position of Assistant Director in many different ways and the Director may delegate responsibilities to the Assistant director in a way that suits them best. When an Assistant Director is used, they should be prepared to manage rehearsals in the absence of the director.

PRODUCTION MANAGER/PRODUCER

The Production Manager generally is responsible for budgeting, scheduling work, and coordinating the various production departments. The Production Manager is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the production are completed within budget, according to the designer's and director's wishes, and in time for the first public performance. Depending on the production, the Production Manager/Producer job may share some of the responsibilities of the Stage Manager.

The Production Manager oversees the cost effectiveness and planning of the entire production process. Responsibilities may include any or all of the following:

- Forming a production team with the Director
- Scheduling production meetings
- Scheduling rehearsals
- Coordinating the rehearsal venue with the Center Stage Theatre Vice President
- First call for cast and crew scheduling conflicts
- Rehearsal process and preparation
- Financial accounting of the show's expenses
- Keeping copies of all receipts for the show and providing originals to the Treasurer for reimbursements

Common responsibilities for a Production Manager/Producer in Center Stage Theatre are:

- Compose and provide audition forms and coordinate help to oversee the auditions
- Coordinating shirt orders for cast and crew
- Provide all Names and Email Contact information of the cast and crew to the CST Secretary in order to add them to the CST Email Newsletter list
- Collect information from the cast and crew for the creation of the shows playbill including cast bios, special thanks, and any ads purchased for the cast and crew. This information must be provided to the House Manager or the individual in charge of creating the playbill two weeks prior to the production dates.
- Coordinating lobby decoration and or lobby help (ushers, concessions) with the CST House Manager
- Coordinating additional marketing and advertising with the CST Marketing Chairperson, and help with the distribution of posters for the show.
- Coordinate the distribution of any rented or purchased scripts or vocal scores being handed out. Scripts and vocal scores for most musicals are rented materials and must be returned to the royalty provider. Most plays do not require rented materials. Please follow the following steps:
 - The Production Manager will pick up the rented or purchased materials from the CST Vice President and return the materials upon completion of the production.
 - Cast members that require a script should expect to pay a deposit of \$25 in the form of cash or a check made payable to Center Stage Theatre for the material which is refunded to them upon return of the materials, provided that the materials are not damaged. The Production Manager/Producer is responsible for keeping track of the deposits paid.
 - Any paid orchestra members cannot receive payment until their materials have been returned in good condition.
- Schedule Cast Parties
- Plan a "Director's Gift" in appreciation for the Director from the cast & crew.

STAGE MANAGER

Stage managers typically provide practical and organizational support to the director, actors, designers, stage crew and technicians throughout the production process. Depending on the production, the Stage Manager job may share some of the responsibilities of the Production Manager/Producer.

The role of the stage manager is especially important to the director in rehearsals. Here the director and the stage manager work side by side, with the stage manager recording the director's decisions about blocking and notes for the actors, keeping track of logistical and scheduling details and communicating what goes on in rehearsals to the rest of the team. This enables the director to concentrate his or her full attention on directing.

Stage managers have several key responsibilities and tasks to perform in each phase of a production, including

- scheduling and running rehearsals
- communicating the director's wishes to designers and crafts people
- coordinating the work of the stage crew
- calling cues and possibly actors' entrances during performance
- overseeing the entire show each time it is performed

In conjunction with the director, the stage manager determines the scheduling of all rehearsals and makes sure everyone involved is notified of rehearsal times, meetings, costume/wig fittings and coaching sessions. During the rehearsal phase, stage managers also

- mark out the dimensions of the set on the floor of the rehearsal hall
- make sure rehearsal props and furnishings are available for the actors
- attend all rehearsals
- notify the designers and crafts people of changes made in rehearsal

In rehearsals the stage manager also records all blocking, plus all the light, sound and set change cues, in a master copy of the script called the prompt book. The information in the prompt book also allows the stage manager to run the technical rehearsals, calling each technical cue in turn to determine precisely how it needs to be timed to coordinate with the onstage action.

The stage manager and the technical director also work out a smooth and efficient plan for the stage crew to follow during set changes. Furniture and prop plans for complicated sets are drawn up by the stage manager and technical designer to show exactly where the furniture and props are to be positioned on stage at the beginning of each scene and sometimes in the wings.

Once the show opens, the director's work is essentially complete. Now it's the stage manager's job to make sure that every aspect of the production runs just as the director intended time after time, until the production closes.

Assistant Stage Manager

Often needed in larger productions, the ASM is often stationed just offstage to facilitate communication between the stage manager (who is out in the house) and actors, as well as ensuring safety. The ASM often helps with complex set changes, quick changes offstage, or preparing the stage for performance.

ACTORS

Because good actors make it look so effortless, it's easy to forget just how much hard work acting really is. But the polished and natural feel of an actor's performance often represents years of training and onstage experience.

An actor's performance is enhanced by:

- an ability to put personal skills like imagination, emotional honesty and empathy at the service of a creative process
- an ability to focus and listen
- vocal training for greater power, expressiveness and clarity
- physical training stressing general fitness, flexibility and grace
- insight into the psychology of human behavior
- a ready understanding of and love for language
- high-level reading, research and text-analysis skills

Other performance skills an actor develops can increase the range of roles for which he or she may be considered. These include singing, dancing and playing a musical instrument; fencing/stage combat and physical theatre skills; circus skills like clowning, acrobatics and juggling; commedia dell' arte and mask techniques; and training in improvisation.

Theatre training is available through college, university, conservatory, and studio programs. Conservatories typically offer intensive training over several years. Colleges and universities offer programs varying from less to more intensive, depending upon other courses required to complete a degree. Studios offer ongoing courses that may be short or long term, and participants opt in or out depending on their needs.

While there is no agreement on the one right way to train actors, many working in theatre today have been exposed to the great Russian director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) and his ideas about how to build a character. Many actor-training programs are still founded on his basic theories, which in the U.S. led to the development of what's called "the method."

While not all actors, directors, or teachers subscribe to his ideas, many are useful to consider:

- Given circumstances—all the facts in the script that are not open to interpretation such as plot, historical period, the basic personalities of the characters and the social conditions in which they live.
- The "magic if"—a way an actor can stimulate his or her imagination by asking "How would I behave if I really was this character in this situation?"
- Motivation—the underlying reason for a character's behavior
- Subtext—the deeper meaning in the spoken lines that reflects the inner life of the character.
- Objective—the goal towards which a character is working in a scene; the specific outcome of an event the character would like to see.
- Obstacle—something that stands in the way of a character's achieving his or her objective.
- Concentration—an actor's ability to focus his or her attention completely.

Are you interested in acting? You can start now on what could be a life-long journey.

- Go and see as many plays as you can
- Check out the theatre arts/drama class or your school drama club
- If you're in school, join the school improvisation team
- Audition for Center Stage Theatre, or other community theatre, productions. Try not to get discouraged when you are not cast, the experience of the audition process is essential, and needs for every production are different.
- Volunteer to do backstage work and observe rehearsals when possible
- Read plays!

It's also a good idea to familiarize yourself with the roles of all the other people you'll be working with, or whose work affects your own.

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Choreographers design and direct the dance or stylized movement in musical productions, working closely with the director and musical director.

A choreographer works with dancers to interpret and develop ideas and transform them into the finished performance. This might mean taking overall control of a production, or working under the director of an opera, play or musical.

When working with a director, the choreographer must gain a full understanding of the director's vision of the show, including style and pacing, and must be familiar with the script and music. An effective choreographer is one who supports the director's vision, so that all elements of movement and dance work as part of the larger picture. Some directors will give their choreographers a great deal of freedom for their work, but even so, the result must be part of an organic whole, supporting the story, characters, and the overall artistic intent.

As part of the production's support team, the choreographer must work closely with the musical director, costume designer, set designer and lighting designer, to make sure that all stage movement is compatible with musical cues, costuming, sets, and lighting.

Choreographers in community theatre must often work with non-dancers, or dancers with limited experience, as well as those who have had considerable training. This can mean extra rehearsal time, which must be planned for. Many choreographers use team captains or assistants to work with individuals or groups within the ensemble, as a way of maximizing the amount of time available for rehearsal.

Almost all choreographers begin their careers as dancers and usually start choreographing while still performing, especially in smaller companies. Choreographers frequently absorb artistic influences from other art forms, such as theatre, the visual arts and architecture.

PROP MANAGER/MASTER

This person is responsible for designing and securing all stage properties needed for each character in show. Key duties may include:

- Works with director to understand his/her vision and needs related to time period or other limitations
- Determines needed props for each show considering script, time period of show, and usage of props
- Works with producer to communicate budgetary needs and work within the assigned budget
- Works with producer as necessary to find alternate sources of props if unable to find what is needed
- Works with producer and director to ensure props are ready according to schedule
- Works closely with each actor to develop understanding of usage of any special props
- Works with stage manager and crew to explain and develop mechanics of running the show, including setting up prop tables and assigning specific tasks to each crew member
- Available during production week to set up props for the show for each rehearsal/show.

Once a show has completed, it is the prop manager/master's responsibility to coordinate the return of all prop pieces to the Center Stage Theatre storage warehouse. After a production, the Center Stage Theatre warehouse should be left as it was found or better.

COSTUME/WARDROBE DESIGNER

Costume designers create the look of each character by designing clothes and accessories the actors will wear in performance. Depending on their style and complexity, costumes may be made, bought, revamped out of existing stock or rented. Their designs need to faithfully reflect the personalities of the characters in the script.

The shapes, colors and textures that a costume designer chooses make an immediate and powerful visual statement to the audience. Creative collaboration among the costume designer, the director and the set and lighting designers ensures that the costumes are smoothly integrated into the production as a whole.

Stage costumes can provide audiences with information about a character's occupation, social status, gender, age, sense of style and tendencies towards conformity or individualism. As well, costumes can:

- reinforce the mood and style of the production
- distinguish between major and minor characters
- suggest relationships between characters
- change an actor's appearance
- suggest changes in character development and age
- be objects of beauty in their own right.

Costume designs also need to include any accessories such as canes, hats, gloves, shoes, jewelry or masks. These costume props add a great deal of visual interest to the overall costume design. They are often the items that truly distinguish one character from another.

The Designer's Work:

Costume designers begin their work by reading the script to be produced. If the production is set in a specific historical era, the fashions of this period will need to be researched. To stimulate the flow of ideas at the first meeting with the director and the design team (set, costume, lighting and sound designers), the costume designer may want to present a few rough costume sketches. This is also an appropriate time to check with the director on the exact number of characters needing costumes, as any non-speaking characters the director plans to include may not have been listed in the script.

It is the costume designer's responsibility to draw up the costume plot. The costume plot is a list or chart that shows which characters appear in each scene, what they are wearing and their overall movement throughout the play. This helps track the specific costume needs of every character. It can also identify any potential costume challenges, such as very quick changes between scenes.

When the director and production team have approved the costume designer's preliminary sketches, she or he can draw up the final costume designs. The final designs are done in full color. They show the style, silhouette, textures, accessories and unique features of each costume.

The designer should schedule cast fittings and have a method of labeling the costumes for their characters. Costumes should be available for all characters at the start of production week with only smaller adjustments being made during production week.

Once a show has completed, it is the costume designer's responsibility to coordinate the washing and return of all costume pieces to the Center Stage Theatre storage warehouse. The CST Wardrobe Manager suggests assigning a select number of volunteers to take the costumes to a laundromat and that cost to be taken out of the production's costume budget. These volunteers can be relieved of their duty to help with the strike of the show since they are helping with the return of the costumes.

After a production, the Center Stage Theatre warehouse should be left as it was it was found or better.

SET/SCENIC DESIGNER

All the scenery, furniture and props the audience sees at a production of a play make up the set design. The set designer's job is to design these physical surroundings in which the action will take place. The overall look of the set also gives the audience information about the director's concept of the production.

The set should:

- suggest the style and tone of the whole production
- create mood and atmosphere
- give clues as to the specific time and place of the action
- offer creative possibilities for the movement and grouping of the actors

The set may also need to be designed so the backstage areas used by the actors and stage crew are kept out of sight from the audience. This will depend on the effect the director wants to create with the staging and on the type of stage the production uses.

All the things appearing on the stage other than the scenery are called stage properties, or props. Set props like furniture, draperies and decorations are the types of things that complete the set and they need to be part of the set design.

The set designer will normally read the script many times, both to get a feel for the flavor and spirit of the script and to list its specific requirements for scenery, furnishings and props. The time of day, location, season, historical period and any set changes called for in the script are noted. The set designer's focus here is on figuring out everything that may be needed based on the dialogue in the script. Stage directions tend to be ignored at this point in the process.

Collaboration

The set designer will meet with the director and the design team (set, costume, lighting and sound designers), to discuss the details of the set and the director's interpretation of the play. The set, costume and lighting designers also meet and work together to ensure the creation of a unified look and feel for the production. A lively exchange of initial ideas and first impressions helps clarify the steps that each person needs to take in this intensely collaborative process.

Designer's tools

Set designers use several tools to communicate their ideas to the director and the other designers. These include:

- a rough sketch of the set in the preliminary phase
- floor plans drawn to scale showing from above the general layout of each set and the placement of the furniture and large props
- front elevations giving a view of the elements of the set from the front and showing details like windows or platforms
- miniature three-dimensional models showing how each set will look when finished.

These visual aids help to ensure that all the theatre artists involved in the production understand each other.

Once a show has completed, it is the set designer's responsibility to strike and coordinate the return of all set pieces to the Center Stage Theatre storage warehouse. After a production, the Center Stage Theatre warehouse should be left as it was found or better.

LIGHTING DESIGNERS

Many Center Stage Theatre productions do not have dedicated Lighting Designers due to the availability of Lighting Technicians at the venues that are used. When not using a dedicated Lighting Designer, be sure to learn who your technicians are and communicate your needs to them.

Lighting designers know how to make the best use of the subtle and powerful medium of light, creating effects that can be changed at will to match the mood of the action. At its most basic, stage lighting functions to make the actors and their environs visible to the audience. But it can also be used to:

- Evoke the appropriate mood
- Indicate time of day and location
- Shift emphasis from one stage area to another
- Reinforce the style of the production
- Make objects on stage appear flat or three dimensional
- Blend the visual elements on stage into a unified whole

The Designer's Work:

The lighting designer begins by reading the script to be produced noting the type of light it calls for in each scene. Designer and director share their ideas about how light could be used to enhance the production concept at their first meeting. Early meetings with the set designer are also important because the set and lighting designers must collaborate on how to achieve the desired "look" for the play. The plan for the set may influence the placement and direction of the necessary lighting instruments, so flagging any potential problems in this area as early as possible makes sense.

There are four properties lighting designers can control to create a vast array of effects:

- **Intensity:** The brightness of light. Everything in the range from the faintest dim glow to the most blinding glare can be created with stage lighting. Contrast has a great impact on how bright a light will appear to be to the audience, with a single flashlight on an otherwise dark stage appearing to be bright, while a strong spotlight shining on an already brightly lit stage may appear dim.
- **Color:** The color an object on stage appears to be is determined both by its actual hue and by the color of the light that illuminates it. Filters or gels on lighting instruments make it possible for designers to tint stage lighting in colors that flatter the actors' faces, cast a warm glow over an entire set or heighten the colors of scenery and costumes.
- **Distribution.** Light can be distributed in different ways on stage. The form of light may vary from a soft unfocused glow to a sharply defined beam that casts dramatic shadows. The beam of light from an instrument may be directed through a piece of metal called a gobo that shapes it into a pattern such as the broken effect of light coming through the leaves of trees. Light may also be directed at an object from any angle, giving rise to an infinite variety of light and shadow combinations, each with a different look and feel.
- **Movement.** The intensity, color and distribution of light can be noticeably altered as quickly or slowly as the lighting designer and director deem fit while the play is being performed. For example, a scene that starts in the diffuse and rosy light of dawn can end in the brilliant golden beams of full morning light. This capacity for change over time is called the movement of light. It offers a kind of flexible expressiveness that is unmatched by any of the other visual elements of production.

Collaboration

The lighting designer will meet with the director and the design team (set, costume, lighting and sound designers), to discuss the details of the set and the director's interpretation of the play. The set, costume and lighting designers also meet and work together to ensure the creation of a unified look and feel for the production. A lively exchange of initial ideas and first impressions helps clarify the steps that each person needs to take in this intensely collaborative process.

Once the show opens, the designer's work is essentially complete. Now it's normally the job of the stage manager and light technician to make sure that every aspect of the production runs just as the designer intended, time after time, until the production closes.

SOUND DESIGNER

Many Center Stage Theatre productions do not have dedicated Sound Designers due to the availability of Sound Technicians at the venues that are used. When not using a dedicated Sound Designer, be sure to learn who your technicians are and communicate your needs to them.

The sound designer plans and provides the sound effects in the play. The composer writes any original music the show may require. All the music and/or effects in a play considered as a whole make up the "soundscape."

In addition to the sounds of the words spoken by the actors, a play may also call for sound effects to recreate lifelike noises or use music or abstract and unidentifiable sounds to support the drama.

The Designer's Work

Sound designers and composers begin their work by studying the script, gathering as much information as they can about any sound or music it calls for. As in all other aspects of design, an early meeting with the director and the design team is essential to get a clear understanding of the production concept.

Some directors will already have very clear ideas about what the sound effects and/or music should sound like, while others may request that the sound designer/composer sit in on rehearsals to assist with developing effects and music to fit the specific contexts in which they will be used. Once they have a precise sense of what the production needs out of the music or sound, the composer begins composing the necessary musical pieces and the sound designer begins to gather and create the necessary sounds.

Sounds and music in the theatre can:

- motivate actions onstage and indicate events taking place offstage
- establish the time of day, season and weather
- locate the action in a specific place
- create mood and changes in mood
- stimulate audience expectations of what is to come
- provide information about the characters
- build transitions between scenes
- offer shortcuts that rapidly advance the plot or recall past events

Planning tools of sound designers and composers:

- **Plot:** A list of all the music and sound cues for each act/scene. It indicates where the sound or music occurs, the page number of the script where it appears, precisely when it begins and ends, and the equipment that will be used to produce it.
- **System layout:** A system layout shows the type and location of speakers on stage, on the set and in the auditorium. The system layout may also include a layout of how all of the sound equipment will be interconnected.
- **Cue sheet:** A version of the sound plot to be used by the sound technicians who will run the equipment during the performance.

Sound and music cues are often dependent on the precise timing of the onstage action and can only be set after the play's blocking has been determined. Ideally, the director, cast and crew will have several opportunities to fine tune the timing of the completed music/sound design during technical rehearsals.

Collaboration

The sound designer will meet with the director and the design team (set, costume, lighting and sound designers), to discuss the details of the set and the director's interpretation of the play. The set, costume and lighting designers also meet and work together to ensure the creation of a unified look and feel for the production. A lively exchange of initial ideas and first impressions helps clarify the steps that each person needs to take in this intensely collaborative process.

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COMMON THEATRE TERMS

Below you will find some common terms used in theatre. You can find more on the American Association of Community Theatres website at www.aact.org/resources/terms.html

ACT - 1) One of the principal structural divisions of a dramatic work, usually, in a play, from one to five in number.
2) To perform, to represent a character in a dramatic production. Hence acting.
3) A solo performance created and/or presented by the performer, as in 'a Las Vegas act.'

ACTOR-PROOF - Said of a role or script that is certain to be effective even if badly acted.

ACT WARNING - A stage manager's call to actors and crew to announce the timing remaining before the beginning of an act, or scene.

AD LIB - To add lines or business not in the script, or songs or music not in the score, especially as improvisation.

AMATEUR - A theater company whose participants (particularly actors) work without salary (Center Stage Theatre is an amateur theatre company).

APRON - Section of the stage floor which projects towards or into the auditorium. In proscenium theatres, the part of the stage in front of the house tabs, or in front of the proscenium arch.

ARE YOU DECENT? - "Are you dressed to receive visitors?" Query made at a dressing room door before entering.

AUDITORIUM - The part of the theatre accommodating the audience during the performance. Sometimes known as the "house."

BACK DROP - A large curtain, usually painted to represent the sky, a landscape, or some other background, dropped upstage to form the back of a wing set and to mask the backstage space; now commonly supplanted by a cyclorama.

BACK STAGE - Collectively, the parts of the theatre that lie behind the proscenium arch (or behind the back wall of the stage setting), including the stage, the workshops, the dressing rooms, and the areas and spaces beside, above, or under the stage. Sometimes used only to refer to the dressing rooms and green rooms, or even just the off-stage areas.

BATTEN - A narrow strip of wood used to make or reinforce the frame of a flat, to fasten flats together, to stiffen a drop, to suspend a hanging piece of scenery or equipment. A length of metal pipe is sometimes used for the latter purpose, called a batten or pipe batten.

BLACKOUT - Complete absence of stage lighting. Blue working lights backstage should remain on and are not usually under the control of the board, except during a Dead Blackout (DBO), when there is no onstage light. Exit signs and other emergency lighting must remain on at all times.

BLOCKING - The director's work of positioning actors onstage and setting their entrances, exits, and other movement, as in "to block a scene." The director usually does this by making notations in a working script, then uses these notes to work with the actors early in the rehearsal period. Blocking provides the framework for the movement in a scene, and is recorded in the prompt book by the stage manager, assistant director, or even the director him/herself.

BOOK - 1) Script. One is said to be "off book" when a script is no longer permitted onstage during rehearsal.
2) The spoken lines in a musical, as distinguished from the music and lyrics.

BREAK A LEG - A superstitious and widely accepted alternative to "Good Luck" (which is considered bad luck in the theatre). "Break a leg" has many different origins, one of which being from vaudeville theatre; many vaudeville events booked more acts than they could actually have perform during one event, so only those that made it onto stage past the stage borders (also called legs) got paid, so they would have to break the leg passing onto the stage in order to be paid.

BREAK CHARACTER - In acting, saying or doing something that is not in keeping with the character one is portraying. Most often this is accidental, as when an actor forgets a line or bit of business, or when distracted by an occurrence in the audience or offstage.

CALL - 1) A notification of a working session, such as a rehearsal call.
2) The period of time to which the above call refers--for example, "Your call for tomorrow night's show is 7:00 p.m."
3) A stage manager's announcement to summon actors to the stage. A request for an actor to come to the stage because an entrance is imminent is a courtesy call and should not be relied on by actors - e.g. "This is your call for the finale Mr. Smith and Miss Jones")
4) A technical staff person with the script (book) is said to be "calling the cues," especially in terms of stage lighting cues.

CATWALK - An access walkway to equipment. Unlike a bridge, not necessarily across a void.

CENTER LINE - Imaginary line running down the stage through the exact center of the proscenium opening. Often marked as CL on stage plans. Normally marked on the stage floor and used as a reference when marking out or assembling a set.

CHARACTER - 1) One of the characters in a play.
2) A type of personality portrayed on the stage, as in "I need to get into character," or "Please, stay in character."

CHORUS - 1) A group of singers and/or dancers performing as a unit; group singing or dancing; a song or part of a song to be sung by more than one person.
2) A group or even a single actor who provides commentary on the action of a play, as in a Greek tragedy.
3) In musical theatre, songs traditionally were constructed in verse-chorus format. The verse sets up the song and is often particular to character and situation; the chorus is the main tune and the one most people remember. For example, in "The Surry With the Fringe On Top," the verse begins "When I take you out tonight with me..." and the chorus begins "Chicks and ducks and geese better scurry" and continues to the end of the song.

COMMUNITY THEATRE - generally refers to a nonprofit theatre company that serves a locality, relies heavily on volunteers, and does not use Equity (union) actors on a regular basis. Community theatres tend to be operated for local recreation, education, and commonly seek to obtain the patronage and production participation of the community as a whole. Center Stage Theatre is a 501(c)3 nonprofit community theatre.

COMPANY - 1) The cast, crew and other staff associated with a show.
2) The theatre organization, a theatre company.
3) A group of actors appearing together in one or more dramatic performances

COMPLIMENTARY - A seat or ticket that is provided free, as to a reviewer, parents of a cast member, a contributor or other supporter.

COPYRIGHT - A legal privilege enabling the owner of a dramatic piece to control its performance and publication during a fixed period of time. Also to register work for copyright. Playwrights protect their ownership of their work by copyrighting it. This allows them or their representatives to decide who may perform the show, where it may be performed, how it may be performed, and how much will be charged for licensing the work. Copyright also allows the author to demand that you present the play as written, with no changes, unless granted by the playwright or representative. Without prior permission your actions will subject you to legal action for breaching the terms of your license. If you feel you must experiment with re-conceiving a show, there are many already in the public domain (Shakespeare, Gilbert and Sullivan, Oscar Wilde) that are no longer protected by copyright.

CUE - 1) The last words of one actor's spoken dialogue, which the next actor to speak needs as a signal to begin. When actors leave dead space before beginning their lines of dialogue, a director may ask them to "Pick up your cues."
2) The spoken or written command given to technical staff to carry out a particular operation during a performance. A cue may indicate a change in lighting levels, run a sound effect, or close the main drape. Normally given by stage management, but may be taken directly from the action (i.e. a Visual Cue).

CUE TO CUE - Cutting out action and dialogue between cues during a technical rehearsal, to save time.

CURTAIN CALL - The appearance of the actors at the end of a performance, to accept the applause of the audience.

CURTAIN TIME - The time when a performance is scheduled to begin. Often shortened to "curtain," as in "What time is curtain?"

CUT - 1) To omit lines or business provided in the script, usually intentionally. Also, such an omission. Thus, "This version of 'The Taming of the Shrew' cut the prologue." And "I checked, and the cuts in the first act were significant."
2) To shut off lights or sound, as in "Cut the spot!"

CYCLORAMA - Usually just "cyc" (rhymes with 'bike'). A plain cloth or plastered wall filling the rear of the stage. The term is often loosely applied to a blue skydrop, or any flattage at the rear of the stage. May be curved at the ends--and indeed the original sense of the word was a curving or u-shaped curtain. Typical made of canvas or heavyweight cotton duck, suspended from the grid, and reaching to the floor.

DOUBLE - To play two parts in one production; an actor who does so. Thus, doubling.

DOUBLE-CAST - To cast two actors in each part, either to provide an understudy, or to permit their appearance in alternate performances. Thus, double-casting.

DOWN STAGE -1) The part of the stage nearest to the audience (so-named from the lowest part of a raked stage).
2) A movement towards the audience (in a proscenium theatre).
3) The entire front half of the stage. Thus, 'downstage wall,' 'downstage entrance.'
4) Any part of the stage considered as a position in relation to something or someone farther back, as in "Mark moves right, downstage of Mary."
5) Also see UP STAGE

DRESS REHEARSAL - A full rehearsal, with all technical elements brought together. The performance as it will be on opening night.

FEED - To help another actor get full effect from significant speech or action through the one's own preparatory speech or action. Thus a "feed line."

FLAT - A lightweight timber frame covered with scenic canvas. Now usually covered with plywood or hardboard, and consequently not so lightweight. Most theatres have a range of stack flattage made to a standard size, and re-used many times. A Rail is a horizontal batten within a flat. A Stile is a side or vertical piece within a flat. A Sill is the bottom rail of a flat.

FLY BARS - The metal bars to which scenery and lamps are attached for flying above the stage.

FOLLOW SPOT - A spotlight mounted so that it can turn to follow an actor moving across the stage.

FOURTH WALL - From the observation that the traditional box set has three walls (left, right, back) and an invisible fourth wall--the proscenium through which the audience views the action. Thus "Breaking the Fourth Wall," when a fictional character shows awareness of the play in which they "exist" and the audience watching that play.

FREEZE - In acting, to keep motionless, especially while the audience laughs, or to create a stage picture at the start or end of a scene.

GAFFER'S TAPE - Sticky cloth tape, not to be confused with duct tape. Most common widths are .5" for marking out areas and 2" (usually black) for everything else. Used for temporarily securing almost anything. Originally named for the Gaffer (Master Electrician) on a film set.

GREEN ROOM - Room close to the stage for the actors to meet and relax. According to the 1894 edition of Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable the common waiting room for performers is so called "because at one time the walls were colored green to relieve the eyes affected by the glare of the stage lights." However, the Oxford English Dictionary cites the earliest usage of the term as 1701, a period when stages were lighted by candles and oil lamps (the English did not develop limelight until the late 1830s), so Brewer's supposition seems misplaced. The term was also used to denote a room where undried pottery was stored before being fired. It's possible that by extension this meaning was applied to the backstage room for actors waiting to go onstage.

HEADS UP - A shouted warning (often just "Heads!") for staff to be aware of activity above them. Also used when an object is being dropped from above.

HOLD - In acting, to pause, as for an audience's laughter or applause.

HOUSE -
1) The auditorium (e.g. "The house is now open, please do not cross the stage")
2) The audience (e.g. "How big is the house tonight?")

LEGS - Drape set as masking piece at the side of the acting area. Usually set up in pairs across the stage and used in conjunction with borders to frame the audiences' view.

LINE -
1) A rope or wire used to hang scenery, etc.
2) A portion of dialogue, usually a sentence, but also a single row in the script (thus the origin of the word). Thus, to be up on one's lines, or to ask, "What's my next line?" or simply "Line?"

LOAD-IN - The process of, or time-period for, moving sets, props, etc, into a theatre before a production.

LOAD-OUT - The process of, or time-period for, moving sets, props, etc, out of a theatre after a production.

MAIN STAGE - The principal performance space for a theatre company.

MASKING - Neutral material or designed scenery which defines the performance area and conceals the technical areas. (e.g. Masking flat)

OFF BOOK - An actor or cast who have memorized their lines is said to be "off book." Often given as a reminder in a rehearsal schedule ("We will be off-book July 1.")

OFFSTAGE -
1) Towards the nearest side of the stage from the center. (e.g. "Focus that spot offstage a bit, please")
2) The area out of sight of the audience (e.g. "Get that couch offstage !")

ON BOOK -
1) To serve as prompter.
2) An actor who has not yet memorized his/her lines is said to be "on book."

ONSTAGE -
1) The stage area visible from the audience. Thus, an onstage chair.
2) A command from a stage manager, as in "Cast onstage!"

OPEN THE HOUSE - Clearance given to Front of House staff by stage management that the stage is set and the audience can begin to take their seats. When this clearance is given, the backstage call "The House is now open, please do not cross the stage" is made.

PACE - The speed at which a dramatic performance, or any part of it, is played. Pacing may involve speaking the lines more quickly, but often is improved by reducing pauses between lines. Often used to describe a show: "The pacing was off."

PANTOMIME - In acting, expressive movement of the body, without words. Often shortened to "mime." In Britain, pantomime refers to a spectacular entertainment with songs and dances, and a plot drawn from nursery rhymes or fairy tales, often performed during the Christmas season.

PROMPT - To tell an actor what speech or action is required next of him, especially if he forgets during rehearsal or performance.

PROP - Short for "property." Furnishings, set dressings, and all items large and small which cannot be classified as scenery, electrics or wardrobe. Props handled by actors are known as hand props, props which are kept in an actor's costume are known as personal props.

PROPS TABLE - Table in convenient offstage area on which properties are prepared prior to a performance and to which they should be returned after use.

PROSCENIUM - The opening in the wall that stands between stage and auditorium in some theatres; the picture frame through which the audience sees the play. The "fourth wall."

RIGGING - Collectively, the ropes, wires, blocks, pulleys, pins, counterweights, and other pieces of equipment needed in the manipulation of scenery and stage drapery. A simple counterweight system is based on the principle of establishing a balanced set of weights that allow a stagehand to raise and lower various loads with minimal effort. Complete rigging systems consist of one or more counterweight sets. Each is comprised of a pipe batten suspended from lifting cables which pass over loft block sheaves, then over the head block at one side of the stage and down to the counterweight arbor.

SCENE -

- 1) A full-length play normally is divided into acts, and each act is divided into scenes. Typically a new scene depicts a different location or different day or time. The term also is used to describe any portion of a dramatic work taken by itself as a unit of action.
- 2) Scenery, a stage setting.
- 3) The location in which a dramatic action is supposed to occur.
- 4) Location or situation, as in "to set the scene."

SCRIM - A coarse gauze-like material used as a drop. When lighted from the front only, the scrim appears opaque. As light is brought up behind, it becomes more transparent--totally so when front light is cut off.

SET -

- 1) To prepare the stage for action. (verb)
- 2) The complete stage setting for a scene or act, usually referring to the combination of flats, platforms, doors, windows, furniture and accessories. (noun)
- 3) To fix, through rehearsal, the general pattern of lines and movements to be followed by the actors, as in "This section is set, but we need to work on the final moments of act two."

SIGHTLINES - A series of lines drawn on plan and section to indicate the limits of the audience vision from extreme seats, including side seats and front and back rows. Often marked in the wings as a guide to the actors and crew, so as not to be seen by members of the audience.

SOUND CUE - A cue for the commencement of a sound effect.

STAGE DIRECTIONS - The printed instructions to actors and/or directors found in published plays, as in "John pauses and considers Mary's words, then walks to the window and peers out."

STAGE LEFT - Actor's left when facing the audience.

STAGE RIGHT - Actor's right when facing the audience.

STEP ON THE LAUGHS - To proceed to another line too soon after a joke or punch line, cutting short an expected laugh.

STRIKE - To take down a set after a production has closed. It is usual to strike a set directly after the final performance, and there is good reason for doing so--a full complement of workers, both cast and crew.

TECHNICAL REHEARSAL - Usually the first time the show is rehearsed in the venue, with lighting, scenery and sound. Costumes are sometimes used where they may cause technical problems (e.g. Quick changes). Often a very lengthy process. Often abbreviated to "the tech."

UNDERSTUDY - To learn the role of another actor so that if necessary one may take his place. Also, an actor who so prepares himself.

UP STAGE - The part of the stage furthest from the audience. Also see **DOWN STAGE**. Stages were originally designed with an incline instead of flat to help with sound amplification with the stage angle up at the back and down at the front. Hence the stage directions of "up stage" or "down stage."

UPSTAGE or UPSTAGING - An actor's seizure of the attention of the audience when he has no right to it, as by unfairly moving upstage center so that he commands the best position, forcing other actors to turn their backs to the audience.

WAGON - Wheeled platform on which a scene or part of a scene is built to facilitate scene changing.