

# **Round Lake High School Theatre**

## **Stage Management Handbook**

**Originally Compiled By Dean Panttaja, Ph.D. for the  
University of Idaho Stage Management Program.**

**Modified for use by RLHS Theatre**

## Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Definition	3
Process Timeline	4
Call Board	5
<b>Production Policies</b>	
General Rehearsal Rules and Guidelines	6
Rehearsal Policy	6
Technical and Dress Rehearsal Policy	7
Crew Day Policy	7
House Management and Usher Policies	7
Photo Call Policies	7
Step-by-Step Emergency Procedures	8
<b>The Process</b>	
The Audition Process	10
Production Meetings	10
The Rehearsal Process	10
Step-by-Step Rehearsals	11
Paper Tech	12
Cue to Cue	12
Tech Rehearsals	12
Dress Rehearsal	12
Production Run	12
Strike	13
<b>Useful Information</b>	
House Announcement Prompts	14
Prompt Book Basics	15
Stage Manager Kit	16
Suggested Books	16

## Purpose

Supplied in this booklet are commonly used forms from several different theatrical sources and donated by several previous Stage Managers. Adherence to the processes, policies, and procedures outlined here will ensure a smooth and efficient production and pleasurable experience for the Stage Manager.

## Definition

“Stage managers are responsible and adaptable communicators who have the ability to handle and coordinate diverse groups of artistic personalities with tactful discipline and a sense of humor. They establish a creative environment by combining the ability to prioritize and anticipate and solve problems, with the calm sensitivity and grace under pressure. Their ability to do the above stems from organizational ability, acquired technical knowledge (sound, music, lights, design and construction, typing, use of computers, and so on), familiarity with union requirements, and an inspirational personality that creates positive energy”.

*A job description from Thomas Kelly's book on stage management from his class at Rutgers  
Mason School of the Arts.*

This document was compiled from the work of: Angie Renaldo, Elanie Walwrath, Kim Crawley, Kate Parker, Ginnie Sutfin, Persephone Slichter, Ester Emory, and Ellen Bredehoft; as well as other past Stage Managers at the University of Idaho and solid theatre practitioners.

## Process Timeline

### **Week One: (two weeks before Rehearsals begin)**

Meet with Director

Discuss:

- Audition Dates & Requirements
- Rehearsal Schedule
- S.M.'s Responsibilities
- Production Meetings
- Scripts (Copies / Availability)

Obtain and read script

Make prop plot (list)

Make light & sound plot

Note any potential technical pitfalls

Make a Prompt Book

- See Prompt Book Basic

Arrange the Call Board

Find an Assistant Stage Manager & Delegate Work

### **Week Two**

Keep in Contact with Production Staff

- Set up meetings with the Director & others as needed
- Establish yourself as the communications link.
- Ask questions & find out answers

Locate brooms, flashlights, first aid, fire extinguishers, phone, tools, etc

### **Week Three**

Auditions

- Arrive early & set up space
- Hand out audition forms
- Control scripts
- Be organized & take up all tasks so the Director can concentrate on the Actors & their auditions.
- Give opinions when asked for, never volunteer an opinion.

Make Phone List

Do not post in a public space especially a public callboard.

Tape out the stage with floor plan

Begin Rehearsals

- See Rehearsal Responsibilities

### **Week Four through Tech**

General Duties

- Update Call Board
- Go to rehearsals

- Attend production meetings
- Collect and report program information
- Check on publicity

### **Tech**

- The Stage Manager will work with the Director to organize the tech
- Schedule the day realistically
- Technical rehearsals are for technical considerations; it is not a rehearsal for crafting or blocking.
- Actors should be alert to where props are placed, light cues happen, etc.
- The Stage Manager calls go and stop.
- The Stage Manager and Light Head will be on headset for communication purposes.
- Use an ASM to help control the actors and backstage activities, props, flying scenery, etc.

### **The Run of the Show**

- The SM works with the House Manager decide when the show is going to begin.
- The SM calls the cues & keeps the show in hand

### **Strike**

- Work with the director to create a work assignment list.
- Individuals should be assigned tasks based on their crew and abilities.

## **Process Timeline**

During tech and the run of the production, attendance will be done through the use of a Callboard. Actors and tech are required to sign themselves in on those days so attendance can easily be taken. This is the responsibility of the cast and crew. The Stage Manager is responsible for making a periodic check of the board, with a final check 5 minutes before start time. At this time, the SM or designee will begin calling those who have not checked in.

# Production Policies

## General Rehearsal Rules and Guidelines

- Rehearsals will begin and end on time.
- Be on time for all costume fittings as well. Do not miss them. Actors will be notified by email as well as a posting on the call board of any costume fittings
- All scheduling or schedule changes must be notified to the Stage Manager and Director
- Check the callboard and email daily for rehearsal schedules, changes, fittings, etc. The callboard is located outside the Shoup Conference Room
- Shoes are required at all times in any rehearsal or work area
- Actors and crew are responsible for keeping any of the stages and the green rooms clean during rehearsals, technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and performances. Before the company goes home the areas must be neutralized. The Stage Manager will enforce this policy
- Please avoid offstage noises and talking. It is distracting to those rehearsing, as well as being inconsiderate and disrespectful
- Be aware of what is going on onstage. You are responsible for entering on cue. Stage Management is not responsible for finding you
- There is absolutely no eating or drinking (other than water) in costume.

## Rehearsal Policy

Enforcement of the following policy is the responsibility of the Stage Manager and the Director. These regulations are modeled after the Actors Equity guidelines. This policy applies to all departmental productions during the rehearsal process. Technical rehearsals have a separate policy.

- Rehearsals will end no later than 10:30pm for all company members for each night of rehearsals
- Weekday rehearsals will be no longer than three and one-half hours and include a 5-minute break every hour or a 15-minute break after an hour and a half of rehearsal.
- Weekend calls may be extended for selected members of the company.
- Rehearsal calls, which include dress parades, photo shoots, or other associated production activities, are part of the three and one-half rehearsal period.
- Under normal circumstances, dress parades shall not exceed one hour.

## Technical and Dress Rehearsal Policy

- Technical and dress rehearsals will run no later than 10:30 each night from the first designated day through opening.
- Stage Managers are required to be present one-half hour before an actor call when feasible.

## Crew Day Policy

- All calls and strikes will have the shop supervisor of that area in attendance.
- Students MAY NOT work alone...there are no exceptions to this rule.

## House Management and Usher Policies

- The House Manager and Ushers are required to wear clean shirts, slacks, and shoes, and be well groomed. Hats are not allowed.
- Both the House Manager and Ushers are called at 6:30pm for evening performances and 1:00pm for matinees. The House opens at 7:00pm and 1:30pm respectively.
- Pre-show duties include cleaning up the house, preparing programs, and preparing to receive ticket stubs.
- During the show, Ushers are expected to provide programs and ensure the comfort of the audience members.
- During emergencies, it is the Usher's job to help the audience out of the exits.
- Ushers must stay until released by the House Manager
- The House Manager is responsible to organize and train the Ushers and resolve, or refer to the Director, all patron problems. The House Manager will report to the Stage Manager on the ability to start the production five minutes to the expected "Go" time. The House Manager needs to predict the actual starting time and report that to the Stage Manager. When the House is ready, the House Manager will signal the Stage Manager from the House Left entrance or by the provided communication device.

## Photo Call Policies

- This policy covers publicity photos and cast photography concerns.
- The standard day for cast pictures are Wednesday afternoon during the week of production run.
- Lighting may not be adjusted without the permission of the director.

## Step-by-Step Emergency Procedures

### In case of injury on the stage or in the audience (fall, heart attack, seizure, etc.)

- Use the prompt to address the audience over the public address system.
- Ask the audience to adjourn to the Lobby for further instructions.
- Assess the victim's situation.
- Seek qualified help from medical professionals in the house..."Is there a doctor in the house?"
- Send a runner to phone medical assistance 911 and notify the director immediately.
- Move the victim if applicable or necessary.
- Never leave either the phone or the victim.
- Use as many information runners as you need.
- If the injury is a "show stopper" use a runner to inform the audience of the cancellation. Ushers should take names of attendees in order to allow them to return for a free show.

### In case of power outage

- The emergency lighting should "kick on" immediately. If it does no, use the ushers to guide the audience using their flashlights
- Use the prompt to address the audience over the public address system.
- Ask the audience to remain seated and await further instructions.
- If the power outage is a "show stopper" use a runner to inform the audience of the cancellation and when the remaining performance dates and times are.
- The audience will be asked to provide their name to ushers on their way out in order to come back for a free performance.

### In case of fire

- Use the prompt to address the audience over the public address system.
- Ask the audience to move safely outside for further instructions.
- Pull the alarms and have a runner call 911.
- Use the ushers to get everyone outside.
- If the fire is a manageable on stage fire, the crew should use extinguishers and other applicable fire fighting techniques to quench the fire...if not...get out...No Heroics.
- The emergency lighting should "kick on" immediately. If it does not, use the ushers to guide the audience using their flashlights.
- If the fire is a "show stopper" use a runner to inform the audience of the cancellation and when the remaining performance dates and times are.
- The audience will be asked to provide their name to ushers on their way out in order to come back for a free performance.





# The Process

## The Audition Process

It is up to the Director to determine the type of auditions to hold. You need to discuss with the Director what your exact responsibilities are. You are responsible to make sure that the auditions run smoothly as possible. Collect audition forms so that the Director may write comments on them. Having an ASM with you is very helpful to act as crowd control especially if the Director chooses to send people out of the room to prepare. The ASM can gather the next auditioner so that you can quickly move people through auditions. It also allows you to be inside the auditions with the Director.

## Production Meetings

This meeting is an opportunity for you to have everyone in one room to discuss problems and solutions. Take full advantage of this meeting. Make sure that you have an agenda. Be organized and use the time effectively. Don't waste people's time. Always keep the meeting to a half hour.

These are organizational meetings.

- ¶ Discuss potential design ideas.
- ¶ Establish properties request deadlines & due dates.
- ¶ Establish production & technical rehearsal schedule.
- ¶ Discuss audition times & dates.
- ¶ Discuss rehearsal space guidelines.
- ¶ Discuss potential pitfalls.
- ¶ Establish date of next Production Meeting

Following the meeting, reports should be made and posted on the callboard.

## The Rehearsal Process

- The Stage Manager is responsible for knowing the show better than anyone in throughout the process.
- Always arrive to rehearsal as early as possible and write everything down. Be organized and prepared.
- Start rehearsals on time and end on time. Be firm with latecomers. Start the process with a set plan to enforce people being on time.
- Make sure you take breaks at regular intervals. This helps to keep everyone focused. Equity requires break times at 5 minutes every hour or 10 minutes every hour and a half. Try to keep the Director to these breaks.
- Create a Rehearsal Report as often as possible. A copy of the report should be posted on the Callboard and sent out to all cast.
- During rehearsals, make sure that you (or ASM) are always on book and ready to give a line. Nothing stops a rehearsal faster than an actor calling for a line and no one able to give it to them.

Things you will need to bring to each rehearsal:

- Rehearsal Schedule
- Prompt Book
- Stop Watch
- Pencils
- Stage Manager Kit

## Step-by-Step Rehearsals

### The First Rehearsal

- Start on time – show cast being late is unacceptable behavior from the beginning.
- Your attitude at this rehearsal sets the tone for the rest of the process. Show your professionalism.
- Check everyone's name to see that it's spelled correctly for program information.

### Pre-Rehearsal

- Sweep floor and remove all hazards
- Set rehearsal furniture, costumes, and props
- Call anybody who has not shown up by five minutes before rehearsal begins
  - Tardiness should be dealt with firmly and efficiently
- Start warm ups if Director is late

### During Rehearsal

- Establish routine
- Aid Director
- Write down blocking
- Ride book and take line notes
- Read roles of absent actors

### Post-Rehearsal

- Announce upcoming scheduled costume fittings
- Announce calendar changes
- Announce upcoming activities
- Announce remaining schedule of the week
- Clean up

## **Paper Tech or “Dry Tech”**

This is usually a paper only Tech Rehearsal. This is where you sit down with the director and any designers and get all the cues in the Prompt Script. This includes all cues for set movement, lights, sound, special effects, spots, regular and quick costume changes, and cues to actors, anything that happens to be applicable to the production. This is where you start to learn the sequencing of everything.

Do not forget to write in the cues for the Actors (“5 till go,” “Places,” etc.), house lights, “Welcome Announcement” cues and others not commonly thought about until Tech. It is to your advantage to do this now so the first Tech Rehearsal is not slowed down by you writing in cues. Also, make sure that you leave yourself enough time between Dry Tech and the first Technical Rehearsal to go through the cues by yourself. This will help to solidify the show in your head.

## **Cue to Cue**

Cue to Cues are orderly rehearsals in which, the cues are progressively gone through, one by one, in a sequential order. Actors are told on what line to begin and are usually stopped after the successful completion of the cue. Sometimes these are referred to as “stop and go’s”.

## **Tech Rehearsals**

Technical Rehearsals seem to be a time when nerves run raw and tempers tend to flare. This is crunch time and you need to be calm to be an example of acceptable behavior to all others. The most important part of the Technical Rehearsal is to keep it moving. Solve problems as quickly as you can and move on. Everyone needs to be focused and listening. The faster and more focused the Rehearsal, the easier it is to achieve a successful Technical Rehearsal.

## **Production Run**

You are responsible to arrive at the theatre early. An important aspect of opening night is your communication with the House Manager. The House Manager will let you know of any problems that arise in the front of house. The House Manager also has the final say on when the go for the top of the show will be each night. If anything goes wrong during the performance with sound or lights the first person to contact is the Director. The Stage Manager will be the last one to leave the building (with the director) and you are responsible to make sure that the space has been neutralized and everything has been locked and cleaned up.

## Strike

- Every person in the production and crew is required to attend strike. Strike will happen with every production right after the last performance and during the following week.
- The strike assignments will be made by the Director and Stage Manager. These should be posted 48 hours prior to strike.
- All cast and crew on a production will attend and contribute to strike. It is the Stage Manager's responsibility to enforce attendance. Only physically and health challenged students will be excused with the Stage Managers permission. The Stage Manager and Stage Crew Head will monitor participation.
- All strikes will have the shop supervisor of that area in attendance.
- The Stage Manager will be the last one to leave the building and you are responsible to make sure that the space has been neutralized and everything has been locked and cleaned up.

# Useful Information

## House Announcement Prompts

### **Pre-Show:**

Welcome to the Round Lake High School Theatre's Production of \_\_\_\_\_. For the safety of the actors and as a courtesy those around you, we ask you to refrain from flash photography. Please also take this opportunity to turn off all watch alarms, beepers, and cell phones as a courtesy to the performers and your neighbors. Please enjoy the show.

### **Casting Change:**

Ladies and Gentlemen. May I have your attention please. Welcome to \_\_\_\_\_ In this evening's performance the role of \_\_\_\_\_ usually played by \_\_\_\_\_ will be played by \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you and enjoy the show.

### **Technical Problem:**

*(Requiring a Brief Stop)*

Ladies and Gentlemen. May I have your attention please. We are currently experiencing some technical difficulties on stage. Please bear with us and the performance will continue in just a short moment. Thank you for your patience.

*(Requiring an Intermission)*

Ladies and Gentlemen. May I have your attention please. We are currently experiencing some technical difficulties on stage. At this time, we will take an early intermission. Please feel free to leave your seats, and we will blink the lobby lights when we are ready to continue the performance. Thank you for your patience.

### **Power Failure (without exit):**

Ladies and Gentlemen. We are experiencing a building power failure. At this time, we ask that you remain in your seats. For your safety, and the safety of those around you, remain in your seat. If you have an emergency, please notify and usher or our House Manager Once again, please remain seated. Thank you for your cooperation.

### **Power Failure (with exit):**

Ladies and Gentlemen. We are experiencing a building power failure. At this time, we need you to exit the theatre building. For your safety, and the safety of those around you, please stand and calmly exit to the door nearest you. Once again, please stand and calmly exit to the door nearest you. The Ushers will be available to assist you and direct you to a safe gathering point. Thank you for your cooperation.

### **Possible Fire:**

Ladies and Gentlemen. May I have your attention please. We have been notified of a potential fire somewhere in our building. For your safety, and the safety of those around you, we are

going to evacuate the theatre until the fire department tells us that it is safe to resume the performance. Please stand and calmly exit to the door nearest you. Please notify an usher if assistance is needed. Move away from the building to a safe distance, and we will notify you when it is safe to return to your seats. Thank you.

### **Noticeable Fire**

Ladies and Gentlemen, at this time, we need you to exit the theatre building. For your safety, and the safety of those around you, please stand and calmly exit to the door nearest you. Once again, please stand and calmly exit to the door nearest you. Move away from the building to a safe distance, and we will notify you when it is safe to return to your seats. Thank you.

### **Tornado:**

Ladies and Gentlemen. We have been notified of a tornado in the vicinity. Please crouch down as low as you can in your seat and cover your head with your hands. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LEAVE YOUR SEATS AT THIS TIME.** Actors, please return to the dressing rooms and maintain cover. Once again, please crouch down as low as you can in your seat and cover your head with your hands. Please remain calm and remain in your seats.

## **Prompt Book Basics**

The primary purpose of a Prompt Book is to function as a solid and complete record of the production. The Prompt Book should contain most importantly a prompt script with cues and blocking, as well as all contact information, completed forms and reports, calendars, and production notes.

### **The Book**

- Use a sturdy three-ring binder with several tabs
- Include a copy of the script, all paperwork regarding any aspect of the production

### **Blocking**

- Be sure to note all movement of actors and set pieces, as well as prop and costume pieces.
- If you choose to use blocking notation (symbols, abbreviations, etc.) provide a key at the front of the Prompt Book.

### **Cues**

- Cue placement can change numerous times throughout the production process – never write in ink in your book, use PENCIL. Another option is to use small post-it tabs.

**Tabs** – use those that can be written on directly...

- One per scene change - - - scene number on front side, page numbers on back side
- Contacts
- Calendar

- Various Reports (rehearsal, show, etc)
- Costume
- Scenic
- Props
- Makeup Needs

## Stage Manager Kit

Band-Aids	Stopwatch
Ace bandage	Pencils and pencil sharpener
Ice pack	Erasers
Peroxide or antiseptic spray	Highlighters
First aid ointment	Calculator
Antiseptic wipes	Scale rule
Eyewash	Stapler
Contact lens solution	Notebook
Contact lens case	3-hole punch
	Scissors
Feminine hygiene products	Pushpins
Q-tips	Scotch tape
Fingernail clippers	Gaff tape
Tweezers	Glow tape
Needle and thread	

## Suggested Books

The Backstage Guide to Stage Management By Thomas A. Kelly  
 The Stage Management Handbook By Daniel A. Ionazzi  
 Stage Management By Barbara Diker  
 Stage Management, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. By Lawrence Stern