

A HANDBOOK FOR DRAMA GROUPS

*DEFINITIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF
THE PRODUCTION TEAM*

*by
Maverick Musicals*

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This handy booklet has been designed to assist any amateur drama group, whether a community group or school drama club, to define who does what.....great info for new members, your committee and everyone involved in a theatrical production.

PRODUCER

The Producer's role is that of overall organiser who brings all the aspects together for opening night. The Producer has the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that the show is ready to open on the night scheduled!!

The onus is on the Producer to:

- * fund (or find funding) by providing a budget for the production and to keep a check on all expenses. In professional theatre, the Producer also finds the backers for the show and then has a responsibility to them to make sure that their money is a safe investment.
- * know exactly how much is spent on the production and how much is made or lost on the performances.
- * make all necessary bookings for rehearsal space and performances
- * arrange for the purchasing or photocopying of scripts
- * arrange copyright permission from the agent or publisher - before rehearsals start!
- * if required, help the Director to find a Stage Manager, a Lighting Operator, a Sound Technician and Set Designer; a pre-production meeting should then be called with all or any of these people present
- * if required, help the Director to find a publicity/artwork person or persons
- * keep the production crew on track in their designated roles
- * keep an eye on all publicity, double check that tickets and programmes are ready
- * draw up a seating plan that is acceptable to the Director. One plan for each performance
- * organise that all tickets are sold from and marked on this plan
- * work out with committee and Director any complimentary tickets to be

given - these should be kept to a minimum; after all, everyone has worked hard to bring any production to fruition and there are many bills to be paid!

- * allocate front-of house staff and ensure they know what they have to do
- * designate workers well in advance for any other activities related to a production (such as the preparation and selling of food or drink, raffles etc.)
- * keep the committee up to date on progress and any problems encountered
- * attend any relevant committee meetings during rehearsals

DIRECTOR

The Director is responsible for everything that happens on the stage. It is important that the Director works closely with the Producer. A Director's responsibilities include:

- * organising advertising the audition date well in advance
- * auditioning and casting
- * drawing up and handing out a rehearsal schedule
- * having plans for the sets ready before rehearsals begin
- * keeping the Producer up to date on progress of show and of any difficulties that may arise
- * selecting and working with the stage manager, choreographer, musical director costume person, set designer, sound and lighting operators
- * checking any artwork to be used in connection with the show
- * checking with the Producer regularly that all related activities are being covered
- * maintaining a firm grasp on the cast and the rehearsal schedule
- * shouldering complete responsibility for the the production itself
- * being unafraid to make decisions regarding the performance
- * being available to cast members for discussion or problems

Please note! Any dissension between the group and outside forces (i e: Hall

committee) should be dealt with by the Producer and not the Director.

Any dissension within the cast should be dealt with by the Director.

STAGE MANAGER

The Stage Manager takes over responsibility for the stage from the Director after the opening performance. Stage Manager's duties include:

- * the measuring of the stage area that will be used before the first rehearsal begins and letting the Director know this measurement
- * checking that everything on or relating to the stage is in working order prior to dress rehearsals. Making note of anything that is not and letting the Director know
- * choosing an efficient stage crew
- * working out a Stage Manager's rehearsal timetable in conjunction with the Director
- * if required by Director, recording all stage directions, moves, sound and lighting cues on the Director's definitive script
- * knowing the positioning of the stage settings/props on stage and where they are to be placed when not on stage
- * checking props on the props table before each performance
- * working in harmony with the actors as well as with the stage crew
- * ensuring that all stage crew know exactly what to do and does it efficiently and swiftly. This requires rehearsal with and without the cast
- * checking that all stage lights are out after the show and the stage re-set for the next performance.
- * checking with the front-of-house staff that the theatre is left clean and tidy
- * checking that all dressing rooms and actors' toilets are left clean and tidy
- * supervising the bumping out after last performance
- * collecting the keys and accepting responsibility of unlocking and locking the doors to the theatre. Returning of keys

* making out a Stage Manager's Report at the end of the season regarding any problems, breakages, recommendations. This report to go to the committee.

FRONT-OF-HOUSE WORKER

Front-of-house workers need to be as well organised as everyone else connected with the show. They should not be a last minute appointment. They should:

- * check with the Director/Producer if there is a theme which requires outfits worn by front-of-house staff
- * check with the Director/Producer if there is a display or a theme to be set up in the theatre itself
- * mark and allocate all seats in accordance with the seating plan
- * set up Front of House early on the day of performance
- * arrive at the theatre at least thirty minutes before the doors open
- * make sure that a ticket table is set up in the entrance. This table should be manned at all times after the audience starts to come in. Stay at the table for a little time after the show starts to accomodate late-comers
- * have a decent float in the till before the doors open (the Treasurer of any group is responsible for this). Have a receptacle for the money
- * ensure that programmes are the responsibility of one particular person. Any programme money to be kept separate.
- * hand money taken to Producer each night unless otherwise instructed
- * reflect the professionalism that has gone into the show. Ushers should be responsible and well groomed.
- * avoid having a cluster of 'friends' around the ticket table. It is not necessary and they get in the way
- * check with the Stage Manager if and when houselights need switching on and off
- * check that the front of house is left clean and tidy after the show. A roster made out earlier can avoid any misunderstanding.

* assume responsibility for leaving front of house clean and, if necessary, helping to stack away chairs and tables.

* quickly sort out any kind of distraction in the audience or in the hall itself, either before or during performance. A more serious situation should be referred to a member of the committee or the Producer

PUBLICITY AGENT

This is an extremely important role and should not be undertaken lightly. The aim of the person doing publicity is to ensure that the performances are well attended. The publicity agent's duties include:

* appreciating the audience at which the show is aimed (a serious social drama may not appeal to the same audience who would want to see an old time music hall). Adapt the publicity accordingly

* getting the publicity out early; a ***minimum*** of three weeks before the show!

* feeding more information out weekly to build up the excitement and keeping the forthcoming production in the minds of the public over a period

* finding a particular angle to push

* getting the posters out about three weeks before the show and making them simple and eye-catching. Research shows that posters only re-enforce. They are not enough by themselves.

* getting someone from the show on local radio, if possible

* working in conjunction with the Director, consider using colourful street theatre, shopping centre parades (in costume) or other gimmicks to sell the characters from the show

* getting the show talked about. Word of mouth is the most effective advertising. Ask all cast members to sell a number of tickets each!

* distributing a few comp tickets (in conj. with Producer) to strategic people

* collating the programmes, working with the Director and the art person

* perhaps finding sponsors for programmes

* keeping the Producer aware of all advertising done

PERFORMERS

Performers are the backbone of any theatre group but do not work in isolation. They should be prepared to assist, when required, with other tasks which are necessary to mount a production.

A performer should:

- * (for drama groups) have his/her subscription paid before mid rehearsals. A performer must be a financial member before opening night.
- * Ascertain **at the audition** that the rehearsal times, dress rehearsals and scheduled performance dates are suitable and can be 100% committed to.
- * be committed to attending all rehearsals. Very few excuses justify a missed rehearsal but if it is unavoidable, let the Director know early so that the schedule may be adjusted.
- * make every effort to learn all lines by the appointed time set by the Director
- * work with the Director and others in the cast as part of a team
- * be punctual for all rehearsals and performances. Usually every minute counts when putting on a show.
- * be prepared to sit quietly when others are rehearsing
- * accept responsibility for own make-up unless the show demands special make up (such as Children's Theatre or a fantasy play). It is not hygienic to share make up
- * accept responsibility for the presentation (washing, ironing or airing) of own costumes during run of play and note, they should never be worn outside the theatre to attend private functions
- * notify the costume person if any major repairs are necessary. Minor repairs to be effected by the individual.
- * ensure that all costumes are returned at end of play. Costume person will indicate if they are to be washed or not.
- * ensure that all props are returned at end of production
- * undertake to return all professional scripts to the group

- * make every effort to be quiet backstage during performance. Backstage noise carries to audience
- * avoid being seen in costume by audience before a show unless specifically directed
- * present any paid receipts for personal expenditure for production to Producer before the last night of production!
- * appreciate that any gift/cards to the Director or production team are of a personal nature and, as such, are paid for by the cast, not the group.
- * be prepared to help fellow actors, physically and emotionally

SOUND AND LIGHTING TECHNICIANS

The sound and light people are a very important unit of any production and need to work closely with the Producer of a show. The technical crew should

- * ensure they have the most up-to-date copy of the script available from the director
- * attend any pre-production meetings necessary; the producer should advise this
- * arrange the best time to set-up the lighting and sound before the production and arrange for any assistance needed for getting the equipment in place
- * attend the last rehearsal prior to the dress rehearsal and technical set-up, so that they are completely familiar with the script entrances, exits, music and effects
- * Liase with the Producer and Director about any particular effects required
- * be responsible for the safety of all sound and lighting equipment
- * liase with the musical director or conductor if a band is used
- * at the end of the last show, carefully pack up all of the equipment and ensure any hired equipment is ready to go back to the hirers
- * at the conclusion of a show, report any breakages, blown bulbs etc. or malfunction of equipment to a committee member member or the Producer.

BUMP OUT

After any show has finished, it's vital that the venue is left clean and tidy, with all scenery, props, costumes, sound and lighting equipment returned to the group's storage area (if renting another venue or working in another theatre). Some groups and schools are lucky enough to have their own venues and all that is required is for rubbish and personal belongings of actors and crew to be removed, props and costumes (after cleaning) to be stored away and any food and drink sold during the production to be stored or thrown away.

In amateur theatre, everyone in the show, whether cast or crew, should get involved in this process under direction from the Stage Manager - there is no Magic Clean Up Fairy! For adult groups, whilst everyone is keen to attend the after show party, it's wise to finish the bump out before the partying begins.....