

A (very brief!) summary of Stage Management

“The show must go on” is a common phrase in the theatre world, and a stage manager is one of the crucial people who ensures that the show does go on. The stage manager works side by side with the director and artistic team to ensure that rehearsals and performances run smoothly. Often, this role is assigned to a senior student as this is a great way to learn and develop leadership skills. But what does a stage manager do, anyway? Let’s take a look at some common duties and responsibilities of the stage manager.

Assist with administrative and preparatory tasks

The stage manager must be an organized soul, as they are in charge of keeping track of lots of important administrative information. They maintain a company roster (a contact information list for all cast and crew members) as well as keeping track of attendance and calling cast and crew members when they are late for or missing from rehearsals. Stage managers keep track of any pre-scheduled conflicts and assist with creating schedules as they will know what has been rehearsed already, what needs to still be rehearsed, and who will be at each rehearsal. The stage manager is frequently the first one to arrive at rehearsals and among the last to leave. They help to set up the room at the beginning of rehearsals and help to tidy up at the end.

Communication

Stage managers are the communications centre for productions. They will often give announcements at the beginning of rehearsals, pass along messages to and from the cast and crew, and email rehearsal schedules. The stage manager is the person who everyone can go to when they need answers to questions or help solving problems.

Take notes in rehearsal

The stage manager works closely with the director and artistic staff during rehearsals, recording all blocking, entrances, exits, changes, etc., so the director can focus on actually directing. The stage manager must observe and listen carefully to ensure that no detail is neglected.

The stage manager is responsible for creating a master copy of the script – called the prompt book – that contains everything pertaining to the show. The prompt book is kept in such a manner that in the case of an emergency anyone could pick up the book and run the show. The prompt book contains blocking notes, any changes that have been made, and all technical cues, in a tidy and easy-to-read style. Stage managers also use this master script to prompt actors if they forget lines during rehearsal.

Call the show

During the actual performances of the show, the stage manager will be in the booth, on a headset, and “calling” the show. That means telling the various operators (lights, sound, microphones, spotlights, running crew, and assistant stage managers) when to make their various cues happen. It takes an immense amount of care and focus to make sure that every cue is called and executed with correct timing. This is particularly true when stage managers get few chances to practice calling the cues before the actual run of the show (often as few as three times – a cue-to-cue rehearsal, a technical run, and a dress rehearsal). How’s that for pressure?

“Other duties as assigned”

The stage manager is truly the unsung hero of any production. They are usually the go-to person for any additional tasks that need to be done. At the very least, they are responsible of delegating these tasks to others. A student who wishes to be a stage manager needs to be confident, mature, hard-working, and organized.

So the next time you see your stage manager, be sure to let them know how much you appreciate them. They are the glue that holds the show together!

Teacher's Name _____

Student's Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

(If you are handwriting this, you will need to use a separate piece of paper.) Reflecting on the what you read, and thinking about your experiences this year with shows and stage managers, write ½ page – 1 page reflection on the following:

1. In your opinion, what are the three most important responsibilities of a stage manager? Why?
2. What are 3 traits or qualities that a stage manager should possess? Why?
3. Would you ever, or have you ever, taken on the role of stage manager for a show? Why or why not?
4. How could you show appreciation to a stage manager for all the work they do?