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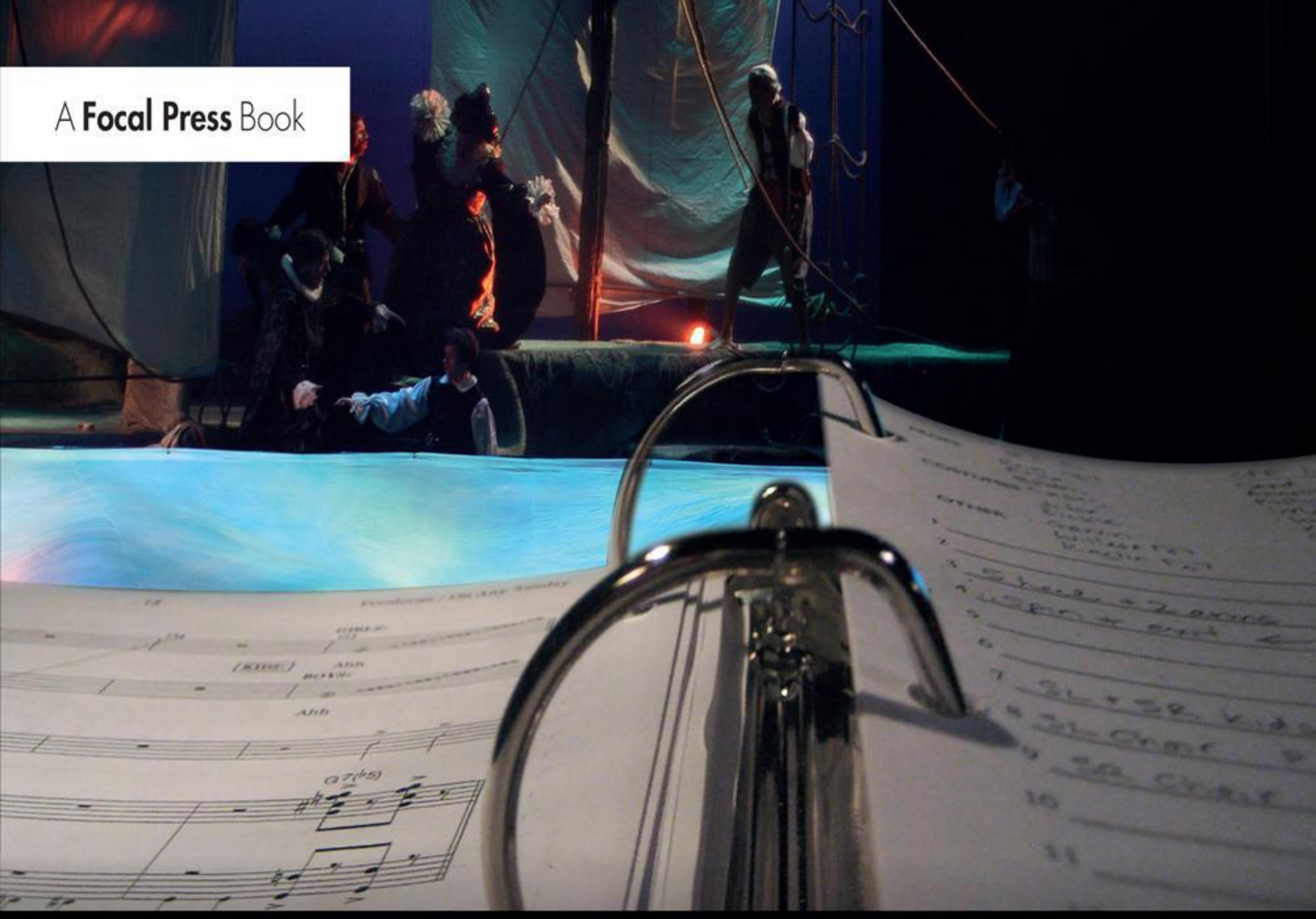

THE STAGE MANAGER'S TOOLKIT

3RD EDITION

TEMPLATES AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES TO GUIDE YOUR THEATRE PRODUCTION FROM FIRST MEETING TO FINAL PERFORMANCE

LAURIE KINCMAN

COMPANION @ WEBSITE

ROUTLEDGE

The Stage Manager's Toolkit

The Stage Manager's Toolkit, Third Edition provides a comprehensive account of the role of the stage manager for live theatre with a focus on both written and verbal communication best practices.

The book outlines the duties of the stage manager and assistant stage manager throughout a production, discussing not only what to do but why. It also identifies communication objectives for each phase of production, paperwork to be created, and the necessary questions to be answered in order to ensure success. This third edition includes:

- an updated look at digital stage management tools including script apps, cloud storage, and social media practices;
- a new discussion on creating a healthy and safe rehearsal space;
- updated paperwork examples;
- new information on Equity practices for the student and early career stage managers.

Written for the stage management student and early career stage manager, this book is a perfect addition to any university Stage Management course.

A companion website hosts customizable paperwork templates, instructional video, links to additional information, teacher tools for each individual chapter, and a bonus chapter on teaching stage management.

Laurie Kincman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, heading the undergraduate emphases in stage management and arts administration. She also serves as the department's production manager. Her professional credits as a stage manager and production manager include work with the Old Globe Theatre, Malashock Dance & Company, Shakespeare Festival/LA, Opera Pacific, the California Ballet Company, American Stage Festival, and for choreographers Jessica Iwanson and Donald McKayle. Laurie is a member of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, the Production Manager's Forum, the Stage Manager's Association, and Actors' Equity Association.

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The Stage Manager's Toolkit

Templates and Communication Techniques to Guide Your Theatre Production from First Meeting to Final Performance

Third edition

Laurie Kincman

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Third edition published 2021
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published by Focal Press 2013
Second edition published by Routledge 2017

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-40638-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-40637-0 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-80816-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman and Helvetica
by Newgen Publishing UK
Visit the companion website: www.routledge.com/cw/kincman

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Foreword

All stage managers believe they are good communicators. Yet, every stage manager can recount at least one instance when failed personal communication had an impact upon his or her work. Communication is the cornerstone of a collaborative production, and the stage manager is the keystone holding the various parts of communication together.

As a professional stage manager, you must adapt and learn quickly not only how to communicate with cast, crew, and production team but also how to decipher the pertinent information from a myriad of communication styles these people present to you. This is a skill that many will argue is innate, and excellent stage managers simply hone their ability to discern information. But even those who have great communication skills are constantly striving to improve their ability to relay and exchange information.

As a university educator, it became my job to help young stage managers find these skills within themselves. There are a plethora of books about stage managing and forums that professional stage managers and educators can turn to for foundational support. Some of these books are considered seminal to the education of stage managers today. Yet none of them tackles in depth the materials you are about to read.

The Stage Manager's Toolkit explores not only the information stage managers must discern and communicate but also the psychology behind its presentation. By considering not only what you are telling people but also the various audiences you tell, Laurie Kincman has filled a void in the education of managers in live performance.

This book, while aimed at stage managers, gives thought to presenting identical information to various people or departments in different manners that make the information clear to those people's specific needs. Something as "simple" as a weekly schedule holds vast amounts of information, so much so that it may need to be distributed in multiple versions, ensuring information important to one department is not lost in other information, which, while important to some, is cacophony to others.

The positive and negative sides of technology are discussed as we become more and more an instant-information society. The desire to communicate quickly must be tempered by taking the time to consider what information you are sharing and how it will be received in the form you are choosing to communicate. *The Stage Manager's Toolkit* discusses not only the types of communication but also the psychology of humans and how they respond to information. It also looks at the practical side of these choices. For example, while the brain responds well to color, theatre budgets and the cost of color printing do not always allow for such expense. These types of pro and con considerations give this text a practical approach in every way.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of what is contained in this book is that the author does not advocate a one-size-fits-all approach. While the information to be shared in a production lifespan is generally similar from show to show, the manner in which it must be presented can vary from production to production and company to company. By sharing not only techniques but also the necessary questions to ensure the use of the technique is appropriate to the moment, Laurie Kincman has given us a truly useful and practical text that applies to the art of management across all live-performance disciplines.

David Grindle
Executive Director
USITT

Acknowledgments

The spirit of theatrical collaboration is alive and well in this book. I would first like to thank the theatre artists who shared their work and thoughts with me: stage managers Keith Michael, Heather Sopel, Alexis Wells, Quinn Masterson, Erica Bush, Cara Cook, Kristen Harris, and Nicole Smith; designers Megan Morey, Mandy Kolbe, and Sean Michael Smallman; production managers Al Franklin and Susan Threadgill; and musical directors Kathryn Skemp Moran and Gary Walth. I am also grateful to my "on-scene photographers," David Hartig and Chris Anaya-Gorman and my newest "Mac Translator" Hannah Steele.

The support I received from the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse made the first edition of this book possible. I extend thanks to former deans of the College of Liberal Studies (now the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities) Julia Johnson and Ruthann Benson, and Joe Anderson and Beth Cherne, current and past chairs of the Department of Theatre Arts.

This book would not have come together without the expertise of the team at Focal Press. I am grateful to the editorial and production teams, including please add Kris Lucia, Meagan, Meredith, and Emma. Amber Bielinski offered thoughtful feedback. And most importantly, I offer a very special thanks to Stacey Walker for her ongoing support of my work and for shepherding it once again to the finished product in your hands.

This book is designed for student and early-career stage managers and is an outgrowth of my love of teaching. That love has come from a number of wonderful young stage managers I have had the pleasure to mentor in my career. I celebrate your ongoing successes (and continue to put pins in the map). I also owe a debt of gratitude to those who have inspired me to be both a better stage manager and a better teacher—my parents; teachers Maggie Kline and Michael Van Dyke; colleagues Mary Leonard, Greg Parmeter, Michael McNamara, and Jerry Dickey; and stage managers Julie Haber, Mary Yankee Peters, and Peter Van Dyke.

I am grateful for all the opportunities I have had both to practice the art and craft of stage management and to share that love with many groups of students. I can express that gratitude no better than the inimitable Katharine Graham did, when featured in the October 1974 issue of *Ms*. magazine. "To love what you do and feel that it matters—how could anything be more fun?"

Preface to the Third Edition

I have been truly honored by both the public and critical response to the first two editions of *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*. This book was a project that sat in my head for several years, and to have the excitement I felt in putting my thoughts on the page met with warmth and enthusiasm made the effort that much more worthwhile. And as happened with the inquiry about a second edition, the email initiating this third incarnation of this book renewed my excitement to share ideas, experiences, and tips with stage managers newly entering the field.

This third edition of *The Stage Manager's Toolkit* builds on my updates to the book in the second edition with new production examples, additional perspectives from young stage managers now making their way in the world, and the expanded exploration of the role of the Assistant Stage Manager. My passion for stage managing dance continues to be reflected in the book—both on its own and as a language useful for approaching either musical theatre or the movement-intense play. I have also included new sections about safety in rehearsals and how to create a healthy rehearsal atmosphere.

I maintain my premise that successful communication is the most important responsibility of the stage manager, so the written and verbal communication techniques and examples in the book are complemented by an as-promised expansion of the computer-based tools available to stage managers today. I will forever be an "old school" SM who takes blocking with a pencil in a hard-copy prompt book and values the feel of a stopwatch in my hand, but the improvements in collaborative platforms such as Dropbox and Google Drive, digital approaches to line notes and other paperwork, and worthy updates to the concept of a digital prompt script can and should be part of the conversation. I have enjoyed exploring these tools and am happy to share them with you.

The third edition also tightens the focus of the book on student and early-career stage managers by providing an expanded look at Actors' Equity Association and the guidelines which promote safety on our stages and dictate the conditions under which we work. In addition to the general stage management sidebars in the book, a new series of Equity Tips focuses on specific provisions relevant to each stage of the production process.

Although not found in these pages, the companion website for *The Stage Manager's Toolkit* has also undergone some changes. The templates and sample forms, video examples of cue calling, and web links are joined by the second edition material on how to teach stage management—where I've been able to add additional project ideas and offer comments about how or why I take a specific approach in my classrooms.

During a very cold week in January 2014 I had the great honor of spending time with Tom Kelly, a legendary stage manager and stage management author, during a workshop in Chicago about stage combat. We had the chance to chat about the fact that I had also endeavored to capture the world of stage management on the page. And while I in no way attempt to promote myself to similar legend status—and fully admit to being too star-struck to remember his words exactly—what I cannot forget is our mutual love of the job and the gratitude we seemed to share for the chance to write it all down.

And with that, places please for the top of Edition Three!

Introduction: The Stage Manager as Communicator

One of the most important roles in any theatrical production is that of the stage manager. A clearinghouse for information, the stage manager is responsible for organizing rehearsals and running performances. The requirements for the job include confidence, strong organizational and management skills, understanding and compassion, a sense of humor, and the motivation to initiate tasks and follow them through to completion. The stage manager works as a team with the director, production manager, designers, technicians, and actors, facilitating a process in which creativity can flourish.

In less official terms, the stage manager might be thought of as the "air-traffic controller" of a theatrical production, coordinating the flow of information into and out of the theatre and guiding the participants to a finished product that reflects the artistic considerations of all.

Professionally, many theatrical stage managers belong to Actors' Equity Association, the union of actors and stage managers first formed in 1913. Men and women can find themselves working under one of several contracts on Broadway, in regional theatres, or in a variety of other companies around the United States. The union seeks to promote successful productions of all scales, and therefore provides guidelines on topics ranging from pay to the number of hours in a work day to the incline of a stage floor and the date by which dancers must be provided the shoes which will be part of their costumes. Stage managers are armed with questions and tips addressing the use of firearms and special effects, the taping of rehearsals for promotional use, emergency information, and avenues for reporting concerns about a specific individual or a theatre as a whole. In order to make hiring Equity members possible for the broadest range of companies, AEA guidelines are formulated for over fifty different categories of production ranging from Broadway to university guest appearances. Some guidelines are identical from contract to contract and others are scaled to appropriately reflect the size of the company and the length of the project. The appendix of this book provides an overview of those categories and a sampling of the theatres whose employees it represents.

One of those largely identical components of Equity regulations is the definition of a stage manager. A look at just a portion of that definition makes clear the wide variety of skills and experiences necessary to execute the job.

A Stage Manager:

- *Shall be responsible for the calling of all rehearsals, whether before or after opening.*
- *Shall assemble and maintain the Prompt Book, which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production.*
- *Shall work with the Director and the heads of all other departments, during rehearsal and after opening, schedule rehearsal, and outside calls, in accordance with Equity regulations.*
- *Assume active responsibility for the form and discipline of rehearsal and performance, and be the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance.*
- *Maintain the artistic intentions of the Director and the Producer after opening, to the best of his/her ability, including calling correctional rehearsals of the company when necessary and preparation of the Understudies, Replacements, Extras, and Supers.*
- *Keep such records as are necessary to advise the Producer on matters of attendance, time, health benefits, or other matters relating to the rights of Equity members.*
- *Maintain discipline as provided in the Equity Constitution, By-Laws, and Rules where required, appealable in every case to Equity.*

Actors' Equity Association[1]

In order to meet this set of requirements, perhaps the most important characteristic of a successful stage manager is their communication skills. In his book *Essentials of Stage Management,* author Peter Maccoy defines the creation of a theatrical production as a "dynamic and evolutionary process" and identifies the stage manager as the conduit through which information flows. The rehearsal room serves as a laboratory of sorts, and the results of the director's experimentations need to be shared in a precise and timely manner with the other creative artists working on the project, so that the vision for the show develops collectively and respects both aesthetic considerations and practical safety and logistical issues.[2]

The combination of the AEA definition and Maccoy's explanation highlights several ways in which a stage manager communicates: in person, during meetings and rehearsals; in writing, through reports, lists, and other documents; and electronically, through emails and postings to show websites. Depending on the nature of the information and its intended audience, a stage manager will use one or more of these methods to share details on a daily basis. It is, therefore, very important to understand how to use a variety of communication techniques.

COMMUNICATION VERSUS SELF-EXPRESSION

It is easy to think that any time we are imparting information to another person we are communicating. In actuality, the term *communication* reflects a very specific relationship between you and the people with whom you are talking or writing.

In her book *It's the Way You Say It*, Carol A. Fleming offers a terrific clarification of what communication is and is not. And although not written specifically about the stage manager or theatre artists at all, it reinforces the point of view through which the SM must interact with every director, actor, designer, and technician.

> *What is* self-expression? *It means that you say what you want to say in the manner that comes to you naturally. It will be your take on the matter, in the words you normally use, perhaps with the narrative flow of your experience. It's a solo performance in front of people with 100 percent of your attention on finding and speaking* your *thoughts, as opposed to* communication *where the listener is foremost in your mind as you speak. You speak their language, you speak to their concerns, and you get to the point insofar as it concerns* them.[3]

A successful stage manager does not just deliver facts or ask questions; they *communicate*. Our concern is for the show as a whole. We avoid personal opinions and invite conversation. We invest time to learn the right terms, pay attention to how individual elements affect the big picture, and present information through paperwork and conversations that unite individual collaborators in a way that respects them as both artists and people.

FORMAT OF THIS BOOK

This book sets out to provide the stage manager with a road map to discovering and sharing show information with that perspective in mind. It is organized on the chronology of a typical theatrical production: pre-production work, rehearsals, the tech period, performances, and post-production duties. In each of these major sections, the book will outline the objectives for the stage manager and the communication techniques that can ensure success. We will take a look at what is to be done and how to approach the task—whether that is how to record character entrances and exits and prepare for your first meeting with the director, or how to organize the backstage tasks of your crew and prepare for understudy rehearsals.

Explanation of the process is combined with samples from several theatre productions, allowing the reader to see both what to do and why it works. Basic verbal communication strategies are discussed, paired with suggestions and checklists for meetings. And as a major element of the stage manager's communication is paperwork, the book explores that in detail as well. Throughout the chapters you will find samples of many of the key documents to be created. The book includes variations for plays and musicals, shortcuts for shows on an abbreviated timetable, and strategies for maintaining consistency and legibility. The book notes differences which the stage manager may

encounter when working on professional and academic productions, with key components of the Actors' Equity Association rules highlighted throughout the book.

The paperwork showcased in this book and the related software references primarily address the Microsoft Office suite for PC—largely due to the author's preference and available equipment. That is not, however, the only way to approach these documents. The Macintosh platform has word processing and spreadsheet programs that function virtually identically, and many additional software suites can be found both for free and for purchase. This book is also not intended to be a software tutorial. Tips are provided on occasion, but a quick trip to the Internet or the bookstore will provide readers with a host of how-to manuals for their preferred software, which will provide details on the intricacies of working with a specific program.

The final component of the book provides the reader with templates for his or her own production use. Located online in *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*'s companion website, this will allow you to put the ideas presented in this book to work for you. Whether professional or academic, every theatre has specific needs. And even within a single company, shows can vary widely. A well-laid-out starting point allows the stage manager to insert theatre logos, make personal font choices, add and delete color, and meet other administrative requirements.

You can also adapt the template so that the principles can apply to both the four-character one-act and the multiset ensemble musical with relative ease. As stage managers, we all look for ways to make time spent doing paperwork more efficient. This book endeavors to provide you with just that.

CHAPTER 1

Avenues of Communication

Early in my teaching career, I asked a group of students to identify the images that to them best represented a stage manager. Responses included a headset, an unending pile of paper, a roll of spike tape, and a stopwatch. Each of these objects symbolizes information with which the stage manager interacts and items through which he or she communicates.

But this list also demonstrates a second truth: communication is not limited to a single method. The stage manager receives information through a variety of channels and employs multiple techniques to share those details. One of our most important jobs is to combine many facts into a single point of information—what the scenic design drawings tell you about the stairs to your set's second floor, what the director asks an actor to do during scene three, and what the costume shop shares about the length of the skirt that actor is wearing at the time. Just as you rely on more than once source to formulate the big picture of that moment, you will use a combination of written and verbal communication strategies to ensure the cast and production team members not only understand all the facts but also how those facts impact one another. A rehearsal note is valuable but so is facilitating a conversation that allows designers to discuss and coordinate their efforts. As more people become involved, especially if compromise will be needed, the stage manager should consider whether the chart or the chat best serves the production as a whole.

In other instances, successful communication occurs by reframing the information for different audiences—what the production team needs to know versus the actors or the publicity office. The stage manager's goal is to provide actionable information, which means it must be accessible. Facts should be consistent and accurate, but, as we will see in many instances throughout this book, the style of delivery and level of detail vary based both on the recipient and the method of exchange. Throughout this chapter, important points are presented in the context of the stage manager, but can apply to assistant stage managers on the team as well.

TACTFUL, TIMELY, AND SPECIFIC

The author offers these three words as the key elements of successful communication, whether it is in person or in writing. They demonstrate respect for both the production and its personnel, and will enable the stage manager to facilitate creativity and collaboration in a highly successful manner.

FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

The stage manager does a lot of talking. This includes everything from the job interview to the production meeting. Being able to choose your words carefully, convey details concisely, and maintain a spirit of collaboration is important. Our role in the process is a neutral one—we are not on the "side" of any one part of the team. As such, there are many things to consider.

Numerous books have been written about communication theory and techniques for successful interaction in the workplace. On the day I first began to revise this chapter, I typed the words *face-to-face communication* into the search engine on Amazon.com and received a list of nearly nine hundred books available for purchase on the subject (an increase from my inquiry for the second edition). Typing the same phrase into Google generated over five million links. If you are a stage manager who wants to devote time to in-depth study of the topic, the options seem endless. But here are a few basic points to get you started:

Clarity. Word choice, pronunciation, and grammar will get you far. You may not have all the information you need about a particular subject, but knowing how to ask questions and speak thoughtfully with others will generate much better answers.

Precision. A successful stage manager will gain at least a basic understanding of appropriate terminology in the production areas, as well as the common vocabulary around a particular show. This includes basics such as a director's preferred method for noting acts and scenes (II-1 or Act Two, Scene 1), being able to note that a lighting instrument needs a new "lamp" and not a new "light bulb," and referring to scenic units by the team's adopted vernacular. More information about naming scenic units can be found in Chapter 5. Precision also includes personal information like preferred names and pronouns for your cast and production team. The thoughtful SM will collect this information when assembling other contact details like telephone numbers and email addresses and make it available to the rest of the company.

Pace. If it takes five minutes to explain a problem, you are unlikely to get a good solution. You have probably lost your conversation partners along the way. Similarly, meandering around a note because you perceive it might be received as bad news does not actually "soften the blow."

Tone. If every sentence you utter ends with an upward inflection, it will sound like a question even if you are presenting confirmed facts, thereby undermining perceptions about your knowledge or authority. Because a stage manager is at their best when information is conveyed neutrally and professionally, it is also important not to sound confrontational or accusatory due to an unnecessarily loud voice or by always emphasizing words like "need" or "no." Conversely, someone who is too soft-spoken or always mumbling might be categorized as weak and not up to the task at hand.

Timing. The companion to what you say is when you say it. Consider the environment in which you initiate the conversation. Are you delivering news from the director that they are dissatisfied with a sound cue? Team members will inevitably be less receptive to negative information if delivered in front of others. Despite your intentions, it can easily come across as an implication they have done poor work. Are you asking for help understanding how a scenic unit functions? Interrupting the Technical Director in the middle of a busy work call will at best earn you a truncated explanation, and at worst a brusk postponement to another time. You would be better served by simply asking when you might meet with the TD to pose your series of questions. This shows respect for them and the tasks at hand. You will also gain much more information when your questions can be the focus rather than the intrusion.

ASSERTIVE OR AGGRESSIVE?

These are two similar words, but with quite different meanings. An assertive stage manager is self-confident and capable of communicating details with the right blend of urgency and diplomacy. An aggressive stage manager does so with an air of hostility, as if he or she has to fight the production team in order to achieve what is best for the show. This stage manager is not a successful collaborator. Especially if you are a young stage manager working with older or more experienced directors and designers, be sure that you do not allow fear or self-doubt to translate into aggressiveness.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Believe it or not, the actual words we use in conversation are only a small component of face-to-face communication. Our posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact all contribute to the exchange of information. This collection of nonverbal cues is known as body language. According to a well-respected researcher of nonverbal communication, 55 percent of a message is delivered through facial and body expressions. The other 45 percent is composed of the words themselves and the tone in which they are conveyed.[1] If this seems implausible, consider the images found in Figures 1.1 through 1.6.

Figure 1.1–1.7 Only slight variations in facial expressions and gestures are required to convey very different messages. (Source: Shutterstock)

Some of the expressions and gestures in these images may feel exaggerated, but that is intentional for this exercise. Can you identify which girl is skeptical? Ashamed? Up to something sneaky? Think about how you arrived at your answers, and how quickly you did so.

Your demeanor will say as much as your words, if not more. Standing with your arms crossed over your chest may imply you are not open to help or information. Hands placed on your hips can signal hostility. An inability to make eye contact might suggest a lack of confidence or trust. Successful stage managers learn to be aware of their nonverbal cues and to read them in others. Figure 1.7 provides you with common interpretations of some additional gestures and postures.

Nonverbal behavior	Interpretation
Standing with hands on hips	Readiness, aggression
Sitting with legs crossed, foot kicking slightly	Boredom
Sitting with legs apart	Open, relaxed
Sitting with hands clasped behind head, legs crossed	Confidence, superiority
Hands clasped behind back	Anger, frustration, apprehension
Arms crossed on chest	Defensiveness
Hand to cheek	Evaluation, thinking
Rubbing hands	Anticipation
Touching, slightly rubbing the nose	Rejection, doubt, lying
Stroking chin	Trying to make a decision
Rubbing the eye	Doubt, disbelief
Head resting in hand, eyes downcast	Boredom

Pinching bridge of nose, eyes closed	Negative evaluation
Tapping fingers	Impatience
Steepling fingers	Authoritative
Tilted head	Interest
Looking down, face turned away	Disbelief

Figure 1.7 Common nonverbal behavior and what it means.[2]

Body language is not an exact science, however. When you turned to this page, it is likely that you began assigning meaning and emotion to the images above even before reading the corresponding text. Humans rely heavily on visual cues to process information. But those cues are not ironclad. In her book *The Silent Language of Leaders*, author Carol Kinsey Goman points out several mistakes people often make reading body language. As you consider how body language can help you to deliver and receive information as a stage manager, also consider some of her caveats.

Context. Location and even time of day can alter the meaning of a gesture. Are you yawning because you are bored in rehearsal? Because you had an early morning production meeting and now find yourself still in rehearsal at 7.00 p.m.? Because you just took cold medicine? Others in the room may have difficulty telling the difference. Relying on a single verbal cue to provide an overall sense of someone's mood or interest can be as inaccurate as a single word or the answer to a single question. Moreover, each person has a different baseline or default mode. Not knowing if someone is generally quite gregarious or painfully shy can make it difficult to discern meaning in the way he or she is standing. Do those crossed arms stem from an unconscious need for self-protection rather than one of disinterest?

Biases. Does that actor remind you of your best friend from college? Does the crew head have a vocal pattern nearly identical to that of the girl who broke your heart? Without even realizing it, you might be ascribing positive or negative traits to someone simply because of those past relationships, and unintentionally behaving according to those traits. Similarly, cultural biases can be found in our unconscious expectations of how a person will interact based on their status (your boss versus your peer) or even nationality. Consider the perception, albeit stereotypical, of Italians and their animated hand gestures as opposed to the more reserved and still physical presence of someone from Japan or China.

By keeping the above principles in mind, face-to-face communication can work in your favor: (1) The exchange is immediate. You can get a response right away. (2) Information comes through more than one channel. You can monitor how the information is received by reading body language while you are talking, and adjust your speed or tactic if necessary. (3) The process is flexible. You can clarify yourself to correct a misunderstanding instantly and can ask additional questions right away if an answer is unclear. (4) The scope of the exchange is specific. You can choose how public to make a comment, opting for a group discussion or a one-on-one conversation. (5) The tone of the exchange is personal. You can speak either formally or informally, based on the information and the people to whom you are speaking—and can make adjustments if the situation changes.

But face-to-face communication also comes with challenges. (1) The immediacy of the conversation brings constraints. You don't have time to consider every word before you say it, and repeatedly going back to correct yourself can hamper your credibility. (2) The conversation is in real time. You can't take it back. If this turns out to be the wrong moment to pose a question or make a comment, it may be impossible to ask someone to forget that you

spoke. (3) The multichannel nature of the exchange works both ways. Just as you can read the body language of your colleagues, they can read yours. (4) People are subject to emotional influence, intentional or not. You can be drawn into the state of your conversation partners and inadvertently alter what you are saying or how you are saying it if you get caught up in their anger or excitement. (5) Even if you are not influenced, working in the "emotion zone" can be tricky. In the moment, it can be tough to recognize the difference between someone who is venting—yelling toward you—and someone actually yelling at you.

These constraints by no means undercut the value of a meeting or an in-person conversation. Rather, the stage manager must simply be aware of these factors when interacting with others. We are all prone to form impressions of others based on observations and short exchanges. The perception of you as someone who is approachable and engaged will be informed by all of the factors highlighted in this chapter—which can collectively be thought of as your "**personal curb appeal**," to borrow another phrase from Goman and other sociologists.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Common sense and a solid understanding of theatrical terminology are important tools of the successful stage manager. But so is a different kind of knowledge—Emotional Intelligence. Often referred to as EQ, this term was first used by psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in 1990 to describe the capacity to recognize and understand our feelings and those of others, and to manage those feelings to be empathetic, resilient in the face of problems, and successful at relationship building. The term was further popularized by Daniel Goleman, whose published research on the subject remains one of the leaders in the field. He and other experts have identified five basic competencies of EQ: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.

Self-awareness refers to your ability to recognize how feelings impact you and others around you. It can also include an awareness of how personal values shape our actions and decisions. A self-aware stage manager might understand that fast-approaching deadlines make them prone to frustration, leading to unnecessary outbursts or poor decisions as that deadline looms. He or she could look at the list of 300 light cues to be booked before the first day of tech and actively choose to start writing them into the prompt script early to avoid that situation.

Self-regulation determines how you react to others. If you trusted your ASM to finish and update the rehearsal call and the next day discovered that an actor had been inadvertently omitted without enough time to get her to the theatre before rehearsals were impacted, you might be tempted to yell or to forbid the assistant to take on that type of responsibility in the future. Self-regulation is the ability to "breathe through it," working to solve the problem and prevent its recurrence while still maintaining a calm demeanor.

No stage manager can be successful without a team—including assistant stage managers and crew. A good leader is adept at **motivating** a team, and helping members to find value and reward in a job well done and their contribution to the larger effort. When the world premiere play on which you are working undergoes a major rewrite which leads to redoing nearly all of the props tracking and costume changes, it will be up to the stage manager to move beyond feeling aggravated by the extra work and help the team to recognize how beneficial these script changes will be for the cast and the audience. That does not mean that surprise chocolate is unwelcome, but action that only results from external motivation and some sort of "prize" is short-lived.

Empathy is also important. This refers to your ability to recognize the emotions of others and take them into account when making decisions. The ASM having a bad day may be better suited to stay at the table and take line notes rather than walking the role of an absent cast member, spending hours on their feet running around.

Social skill has been called "friendship with a purpose." I am not suggesting that you need ulterior motives to strike up a conversation with others, but that you focus on creating relationships. Recognize the value in building rapport and finding common ground. This can be as simple as visiting the costume shop just to say hello and not because you need something. Invest in people—not just their work.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Just as some information is best shared in person, other details are more appropriately communicated in writing. It is quicker to post the change to next week's rehearsal schedule on the callboard than to call each actor in your cast. It is more effective to share an update with the entire production team in an email rather than to wait a week and announce it during the next meeting, and certainly more practical if the production team is spread across the country—or even just across the city. It is more efficient to compile large amounts of detailed information in a chart or list rather than to explain each fact over the period of an hour. And if the idea of thinking about inflection and body language is daunting, it may seem safer to deliver news in writing. It inevitably feels easier to convey a director's dislike of a new prop or the unavailability of an actor for a costume fitting when there is no chance of an immediate in-person negative response.

Written communication provides a level of personal control over the information. You can rewrite a rehearsal note several times before actually printing or emailing a report to make sure it is "just right." You can use font and color to draw attention to updates on a document, whether posted or sent electronically.

Throughout this book you will discover the how and why for creating individual forms and reports. Once created, it is the method of distribution that becomes important. Each avenue that is available for sharing written communication comes with a set of considerations a successful stage manager should keep in mind.

EMAIL

It is almost impossible today to imagine a world without email. Whether for personal or professional communication, email provides us the opportunity to share information at any time—whether or not the recipient is available at that moment. It also makes communicating across distance easier. A stage manager can pose a question to an out-of-town designer, share a schedule update with the director after they have left for the day, or deliver a note simultaneously to the entire cast. The introduction of email was a major step forward in the process to streamline the flow of information.

Email also provides a targeted avenue for communication. Details can be specifically sent to individual personnel, lessening the chance important information will be missed because your coworker's route out of the building at the end of the day did not include a trip past the callboard or your office. Email is timelier than distributing hard copies of reports, even for local personnel. If your costume designer is considering whether or not to go shopping before arriving at the theatre, receiving a rehearsal report at home and knowing the first fitting will take place at 1:00 p.m. rather than 10:00 a.m. will make a difference. And although it may be obvious in most situations, include the "a.m. or p.m." If the company is working a long day during technical rehearsals, you might schedule fittings in an unusual time slot.

But despite the conveniences of email, in many ways it can be as public as a callboard. The stage manager cannot send out a report or an individual message and put a "do not forward" blocker on it. This means that any message sent electronically can be subsequently sent to anyone else—even those for whom it was not intended. For these reasons it is best to anticipate that anything put into writing will become public information, and to approach email with a set of guidelines similar to those in place for face-to-face conversations.

Clarity and precision revisited. Word choice and grammar are back, and are even more important now than they were during our face-to-face encounters. Taking the time to write in complete sentences, with correctly spelled words, greatly improves the odds that your message will be understood. Most word-processing programs have proofreading tools built into them to check spelling and grammar. Take the time to use them! Not every theatrical term is catalogued in Microsoft Word's library, but in general those red and green squiggly lines that appear under your typing are an indicator that something did not translate quite right from your head to the page. But don't rely solely on software—it won't catch content errors. Is that fitting at 1:00 or 1:30? Make sure to check your own work for accuracy with names, dates, or times.

Formality and professionalism. Written communication is generally considered to be a more formal method of communication than talking in person. This is again due to the distance factor and the reader's lack of access to the context in which something was written. The stage manager does not need to write notes in paragraphs, but should take the time to be thorough and professional. "Text-speak" has no place in a work-related email.

Tone. Aggressive or accusatory tones can find their way into writing as well. Look for opportunities to phrase notes as questions that invite answers rather than as demands to be met. Avoid using words and phrases such as "forgot," "wrong," or "should have" whenever possible. If a new prop is not working successfully in the scene for which it was provided, clarify the specifics of its use in writing or ask for a chance to talk in person about it. These choices position everyone involved to make a satisfactory adjustment and clear up any previous misunderstandings.

Context becomes fluid. Email may facilitate the immediate delivery of information, but it doesn't transport the stage manager along with the message to explain it. The SM loses control of a message as soon as the "Send" button is clicked. Not only should written communication be grammatically correct and professionally composed, it also should be neutral and objective. You may think your sarcastic sense of humor is worthy of a Mark Twain Prize, but not everyone does. The stage manager has no way to predict if the recipient of a report has just stubbed a toe on the comer of a desk, received bad news from a family member, or forgotten to pick up extra diapers and had to go back out in the rain. If your information is read as unclear or inappropriate, you may inadvertently alienate a key member of your team.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Email is no longer the only electronic method for sending a message. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools surround us constantly and can provide us with nearly instant ways to share information—sometimes even faster than email. These conveniences can be quite beneficial in our personal lives and are becoming a staple in theatrical marketing, but they are not always appropriate for professional communication from the stage manager.

Twitter is the easiest tool to evaluate. If all of the members of your cast or production team have accounts, then it might be an efficient way to send a meeting reminder or an announcement. The 280-character limit will preclude a detailed schedule update but could be a successful way to direct a large group to the same information all that the same time. Expect, though, to compromise a professional style to make the message fit. From a practical standpoint, a stage manager will need to have their own account and also know that everyone else in the group has one as well. Imagine that all but one of your cast members is on Twitter, and you decide that you can simply supplement each cast tweet with an email or text message to the person left out of the loop. But what happens if you forget? And do you really want an important schedule change buried in someone's ever-expanding feed of celebrity updates or quotes of the day?

Instagram began as a photo sharing platform, but is now capable of hosting photos, videos, and live events, and has a direct messaging feature. Even if your library contains only cute puppies and gourmet dinners, separating your accounts is still advisable.

At first glance there might seem little downside to establishing a Facebook group for a production. It can provide the SM with a single message board accessible to an entire cast or production team, and it provides a method for posting files. But if you are most accustomed to using the site for sharing cat videos or the latest gossip with your friends, then switching into the appropriately professional tone as you click from a personal page to your work group may be more difficult than you expect. Another aspect to consider is personal boundaries. Are you positive that your settings are such that you are sharing that photo with only your friends and not your group members? Is everyone in your group that savvy? If the group is public, then it can be found by a search engine, and you may need to reevaluate what you post. (Sometimes even the basics of a private account can be found in a search. As you move into the professional world, be sure that keywords that might appear on photo tags or nicknames will not lead your cast members or potential employer to material that is embarrassing at best, disqualifying at worst.) Consider this related scenario. As a college professor I recognize that most of my students are devoted Facebook users, and each fall semester I find myself giving the same response to new friend requests: "As soon as you graduate I'm happy to expand our relationship to that more personal level, but until then I don't want to know why your paper is actually late—and you probably don't really want me to know that either!" Of course not all professors feel this way, and even I have made exceptions, but the blending of personal and work communication streams has the potential for regrettable overlaps. If this is the online method you choose, be sure to think through how to keep the page both useful and professional.

Facebook offers several options for creating groups. A “closed” group can be viewed by anyone on the platform, even if they cannot post or comment. A “private” group theoretically avoids search algorithms and is visible only to Facebook users specifically invited to join. A stage manager opting to use Facebook as an information hub should assess these differences. As you will read below in the discussion of callboards, making rehearsal reports available to cast members is tricky because it can be easy to read notes out of context. If an entire production team and cast are members of the same group then everyone has access to everything posted, even if it is a private group hidden from the rest of the internet. The SM could opt to create two separate groups, double-posting information like costume fittings that would be of interest to both constituencies, or to maintain a single group and transmit reports and other similar documents only via email. That could eliminate the chance for a note to be misread, but it also eliminates the opportunity for storing reports in a backup location that a designer might want to check if they are seeking a note from a past report but cannot find the correct one within a giant email inbox.

Privacy is also a concern. Much has been written and broadcast in the past several years about privacy breaches on Facebook, where user information is inappropriately accessed by an outsider, or where it is inadvertently exposed by Facebook itself. It is entirely possible to have an actor or team member who prefers to avoid the platform entirely. Even if that company member is asked to join only for work, and the information associated with that account is limited to an email address, this could still open that user up to spam and phishing messages. A respectful SM cannot just dismiss those concerns and insist it is Facebook or nothing. The stage manager will again face that challenge of simultaneous communication so that Facebook and non-Facebook users are equally informed and up to date.

THE CALLBOARD

The theatre callboard is the most traditional and most public means of disseminating information. It is particularly useful for sharing details with a large group, especially if its members will not all be in the same place at the same time. It is also a recognizable location that can house permanent materials that may not be constantly needed.

Just as there are things that belong on a callboard, there are also things that do not. Actors’ Equity Association prohibits posting contact sheets containing personal information, and in an academic theatre department, this may even be a violation of federal student-privacy laws. Even when not facing these restrictions, such postings are still a poor choice for basic privacy reasons.

Some theatres have preferences about posting rehearsal reports or meeting minutes. Typically this has less to do with personal privacy and more to do with the location of the callboard and the opportunity for outsiders to read and misunderstand the notes. A theatre may also have more than one callboard, and the content of postings is related to location—rehearsal reports on the board outside the shops, daily schedules outside the rehearsal rooms, and so on. The theatre company or academic department in which you are working may have official guidelines or more informal traditions that can help you determine what should be posted.

Figure 1.8 A callboard outside a rehearsal room at the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. Photo by David Hartig.

Originally the callboard was solely a physical entity: a large corkboard mounted in the theatre or rehearsal hall. Actors and production team members can check it whenever they need to. It is an ideal location for the rehearsal schedule, announcements, and archival copies of some lists and breakdowns. When working on an Equity production,

the union provides the theatre with specific information to be made publicly available to the cast. It is typically not time-sensitive, and sometimes not even specific to an individual show—perfect for posting. If the callboard is close enough to the rehearsal hall, it is also an efficient location for the sign-in sheet. The actors can report to a central location to note they have arrived for the day, and the SM team can look in a single place to determine if everyone is present.

THE AEA CALLBOARD

In addition to convenience items like sign-in sheets and schedules, Actors' Equity Association specifies several pieces of information that must be posted for the actors. While the list varies slightly from contract to contract, several of the common items include:

- Procedures for handling work-sustained injuries;
- Worker's Compensation carrier and carrier number;
- Names and contact details for doctors, dentists, and hospitals in the area;
- Member of the producer's staff whom the actors can contact in case of emergency;
- The theatre's policies on the safekeeping of valuables;
- Details about filming and taping rehearsals;
- The AEA form outlining the responsibilities of the actor;
- Production-specific casting or schedule concessions;
- Requirements related to stunts, fog and haze, or the rental terms for using an item from an actor's personal wardrobe in the show.

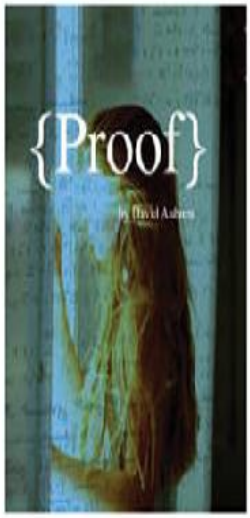
When evaluating the best size and location for a callboard on an Equity show, the SM must ensure that all required notices are posted. Several of the items above are provided in the information packet the stage manager receives from Equity. Under AEA rules, actors must receive details about the next rehearsal day at least twelve hours in advance. So while posting a copy of Thursday's schedule on your callboard will be convenient throughout that day, it will not qualify as notice if posted on Wednesday unless all of your cast members are still at rehearsal and can be directed to the document.

In today's technological age, the callboard is not restricted to physical form. Many theatres have adopted electronic callboards—a website devoted to a single production or season of shows—on which similar information is posted and archived.

The electronic callboard provides several advantages over its hard-copy predecessor. An infinite number of documents can be uploaded and linked. When all that is required on the page is the name of the document, it is a cleaner way to post many more items than could successfully be pinned to a board. The callboard for a production at the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre shown in Figure 1.8 makes good use of its available space, combining show-specific notices and folders for that Equity paperwork, and even finding a home for area menus for out-of-town actors unfamiliar with lunch or dinner options. But the space is nearly full, and could not easily accommodate many more items. An electronic callboard can hold more information and can be subdivided so that actors and production team members visit separate spots to find the details most pertinent to them.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

CALLBOARD



Horrible Harry in Room 2B

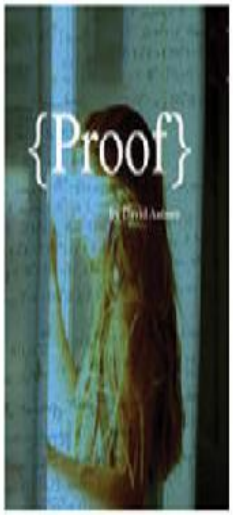
Figure 1.9 The home page of the UWL Theatre Callboard.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

CALLBOARD

PROOF

Toland Theatre: October 16-25



PRODUCTION TEAM INFORMATION

CAST INFORMATION

CALENDAR

Figure 1.10 The home page for the production of *Proof*.

PROOF - PRODUCTION TEAM PAGE

Director- Walter Elder
Scenic Designer-Ron Stoffregen
Costume Designer- Ali Filipovich
Lighting Designer- Derrick Falkowski
Sound Designer- THA 342
Technical Director- Megan Morey
Stage Manager- Laurie Kincman

Proof
Come Back
A Streetcar Named Desire
Singin' in the Rain
Horrible Harry in Room 28
One Man Two Guvnors

Chicago
Happy Rain Company
15-16 Production Calendar
General Production Info
Kinetis Dance Theatre
UWL Theatre Department
Home

DOCUMENTS

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule Fittings
Cast List Character/Scene Breakdown Prop List

REPORTS (click on date to access report)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sept 13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Oct 1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24

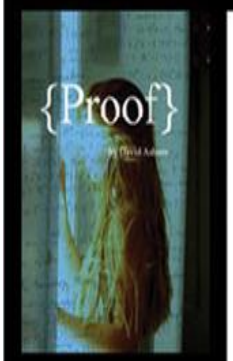
25						

MINUTES

Concept Meeting

Design Meeting- September 4

PROOF - CAST PAGE



Proof

Come Back

A Streetcar Named Desire

Singin' in the Rain

Horrible Harry in Room 28

One Man Two Guvnors

Chicago

Happy Rain Company

15-16 Production Calendar

General Production Info

Kinesis Dance Theatre

UWL Theatre Department

Home

FITTINGS

Tuesday September 15
1:30 pm- Calahan Skogman
1:45 pm- Aamer Mian

Thursday September 17
1:45 pm- Olivia Dubiel

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE (PDF copy HERE)

Wednesday September 16: Toland Theatre

6:30-9:30 pm	Block II-4 and I-1 to p. 13	Robert, Catherine

Thursday September 17: Toland Theatre

6:30-9:30 pm	Continue Blocking I-1 from p. 13	Catherine, Hal

Friday September 18: Toland Theatre

6:30-8:30 pm	Block I-2	Catherine, Claire
8:30-9:30 pm	Continue Blocking I-2	ADD Hal

Monday September 21: Toland Theatre

6:30-9:30 pm	Block I-3	Catherine, Hal

Tuesday September 22: Toland Theatre

6:30-8:00 pm	Block I-4	Catherine, Hal
8:00-9:30 pm	Continue Blocking I-4	ADD Claire

Wednesday September 23: Toland Theatre

6:30-9:30 pm	Block II-2 and II-3	Catherine, Claire, Hal
Thursday September 24: Toland Theatre		
6:30-7:30 pm	Block II-5	Catherine, Claire
7:30-9:30 pm	Continue Blocking II-5	ADD Hal
Friday September 25: Toland Theatre		
6:30-9:30 pm	Work Through Show	Full Company

Figure 1.11–1.12 The cast and production team subpages for *Proof*.

The image in Figure 1.9 shows the electronic callboard for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Department of Theatre Arts. The home page includes both written and graphic identifiers of each production in the season, either of which can be clicked to deliver personnel to the correct show pages. The overall template for the site is simple and neutral. But within this template, the content on individual pages is specific to each individual production.

As seen in Figures 1.10 through 1.12, clicking on the *Proof* icon will take actors and team members to a subset of pages devoted to this show. And following the next set of links will deliver users to the information specific to their needs. It is easy to see that this callboard contains more documents than the "old school" version and contains both items that may be needed on a daily basis and archival copies of paperwork that has previously been distributed. Actors or designers can obtain duplicates for themselves at any time should a piece of information be misplaced.

In instances where both the actors and designers require the same information, web programming allows the stage manager to type in one place but reference that information in multiple locations. The first two entries under the "Documents" heading on the production team page are the weekly schedule and the current costume fittings. But although these appear to be links to paperwork like the other items in this section, they are in fact bookmarks to the spot on the actor page where that information is typed out. This allows designers to quickly access the details if they need to, and allows the stage manager to update them only once.

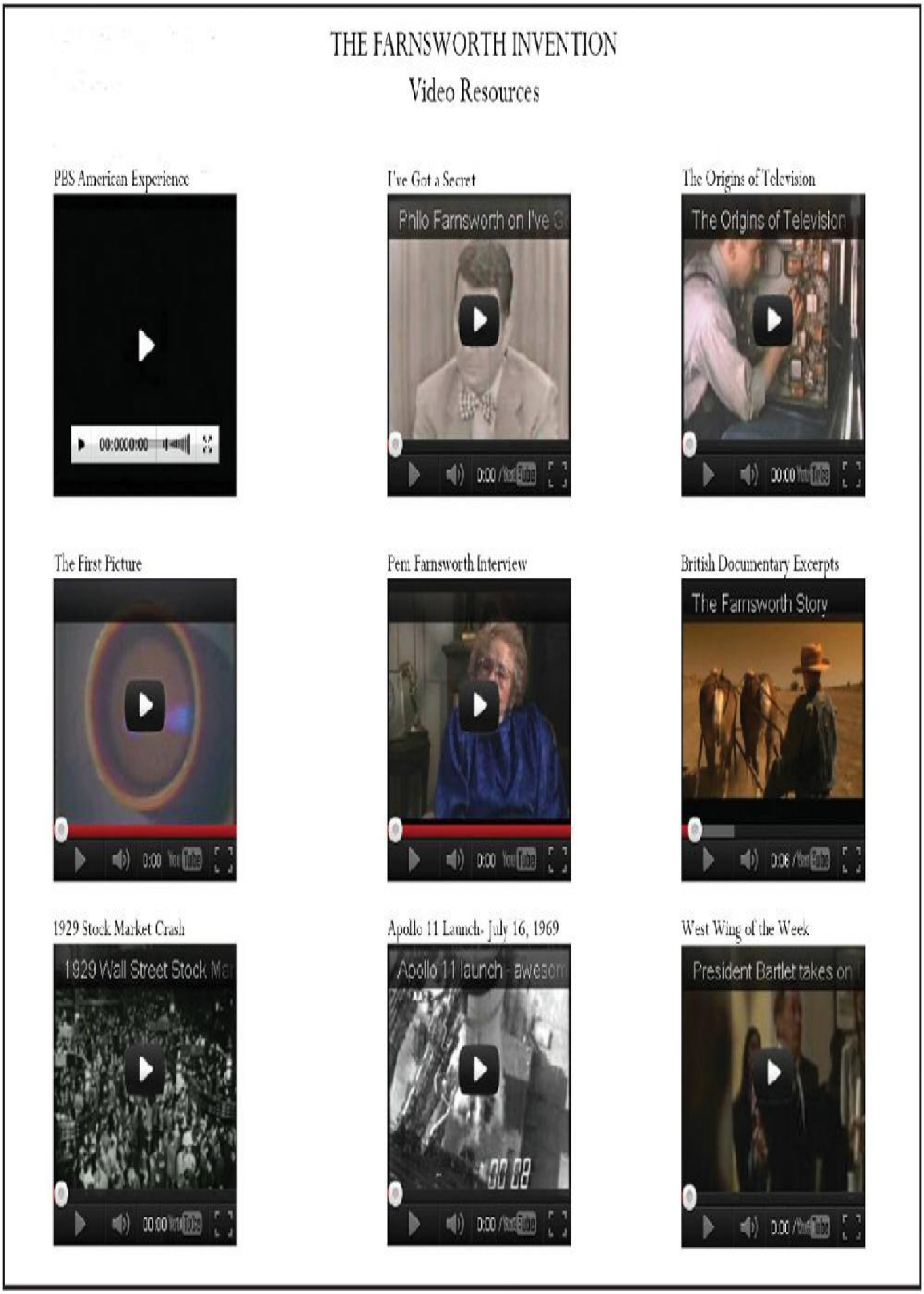


Figure 1.13 The video resource page for *The Farnsworth Invention*.

The electronic callboard also makes possible the posting of information that is not specifically paperwork. For a production of *The Farnsworth Invention* in a previous season, the stage manager was asked to help collect a series of video resources for the show. An additional page was added to that show's section of the website on which nine separate video files were catalogued and made available (Figure 1.13). No other show in the season required that type of information, but the electronic callboard allows for customization by show as required. It would also be impossible to post anything as useful on a traditional callboard. A typed page with web addresses of the various video sources would be the most feasible option, but hardly as useful. Here the video can be directly embedded and immediately available. And there is even room for a little fun—because the play is written by Aaron Sorkin, a "*West Wing* of the Week" slot existed in the bottom corner. This might be useful as indirect research for actors on how to deliver lines in Sorkin's writing style, but it also provided some humor to the many fans of the television series who were working on the production. No one was required to view it, but the stage manager was able to maintain this bit of enjoyment for interested viewers throughout the rehearsal period.

This online callboard is a solid alternative to the Facebook group, and thanks to that internet explosion, a stage manager does not need to be a programming expert to create a website. Platforms such as WordPress, Weebly, and Wix come with dozens of ready-made templates and online tutorials.

FILE STORAGE AND SHARING

A third component of the move online can be found in the options for storing and sharing information. If the stage manager only needs to transmit details, then sending the information through email or as a document posted on a website will suffice. But if the information is fluid, meaning that multiple users will contribute to and edit a document, then identifying a single location for that file is ideal.

Before the birth of cloud-based storage, the stage manager would create a prop list, email it to the director for comments and additions, and then email it out to appropriate members of the production team. On a regular schedule, new copies could be sent out in this same fashion. But this requires users to keep track of which version is the most up to date, and if the prop master made notes in the prop list, then he or she would need to send it back to the SM before creating the next version so that those notes were incorporated. Today it is possible for stage managers to put a single copy of the prop list in an online location so that all relevant parties can edit the same version, and it can always be up to date. Two of the most popular cloud-based storage platforms are Dropbox and Google Drive.

Dropbox is essentially an online hard drive. Uploaded files remain in the software with which they are created, and anyone with whom a file or folder has been shared can view or edit the file based on settings put in place by the creator. This means that if you create a list in Microsoft Word, then it will remain a Microsoft Word document (which is different from the Google protocol as we will see in a moment). A user must sign up for a Dropbox account, but the basic setup provides 2GB for storage. "Referring" friends will earn you extra space (which happens any time you share a file with someone who does not have the software and subsequently installs it), and you can also pay for additional capacity.

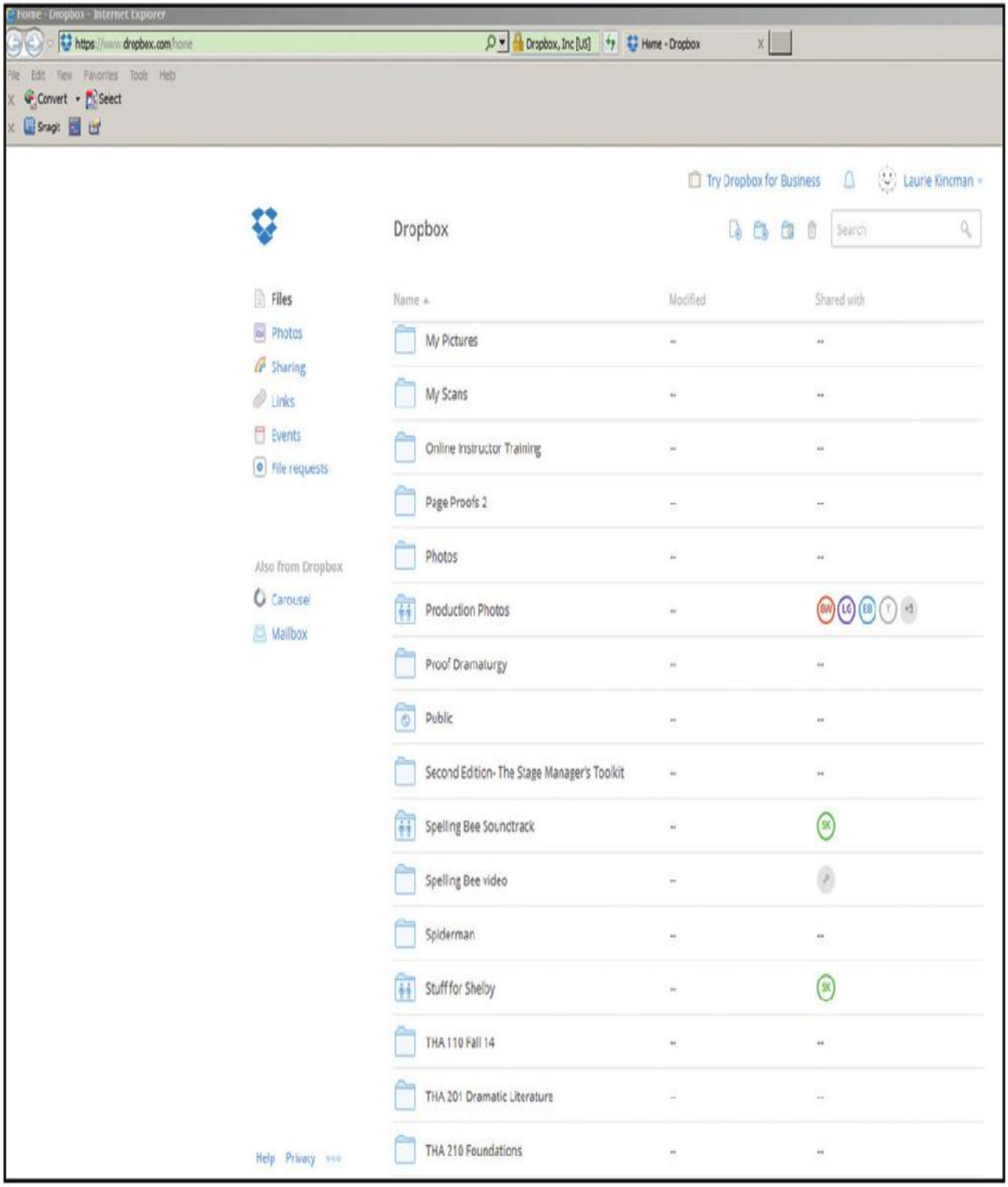


Figure 1.14 A screenshot of a Dropbox account with both personal and shared files.

In this scenario, the stage manager could upload the prop list to a Dropbox account and share the document with the prop master and anyone else appropriate on the team. Each one could open and edit the document, and when it is opened by the next person all of the changes will automatically appear. In situations where the development of an online callboard is daunting or the Facebook group undesirable, a Dropbox folder for your production with a series of subfolders for individual design areas or types of information could serve as a useful and still web-based location for collecting details.

Even without sharing a document, Dropbox provides benefits to the SM. If the stage manager uploaded the list but did not share it, the document would be accessible from anywhere—the office, the rehearsal room, or even at home—

with no need to carry around a portable drive.

Dropbox may provide an answer to the previously raised questions about access. The creator of a Dropbox folder can set permissions for each subfolder, and even for individual files—something the platform calls "granular permission." In this scenario, rehearsal reports could live in one subfolder and schedules and fittings in another. Cast members could be given view-only permission for that set of files only.

Google Drive shares some similar properties with Dropbox, but is ultimately designed to facilitate the creation of shared documents, not just their storage. As was true for Dropbox, users can create folders, upload files, and share both. If you have Gmail, then you have Google Drive. It will track documents you upload, that you upload and share, and those shared with you. The "low-tech callboard" of folders is also quite easy to set up on this platform.

Drive

My Drive

NEW

Folder

File upload

Folder upload

Google Docs

Google Sheets

Google Slides

More

Name

Proof

ative Imperatives 2016

ative Imperatives 2015

cago Choreography

cago

nting & Sound Candidates for Interview

a 2015

nting/Sound Search & Screen 14-15

tudents 2015

sible Video for CI

ch Me If You Can

ative Imperative-Students

Man Who

8 Video

old budget sheets

Creative Imperatives 2014

Drive

My Drive > Proof

NEW

Creative Imperatives 2016

Drowsy Chaperone

Farnsworth

Gala 2015

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Google Tips

Hollywood

Kinesis 2016

old budget sheets

One Man Two Guvnors (Spring

Director

Dramaturgy

Lighting

Name

PROOF Dramaturgy

PROOF Lighting

PROOF Scenery

Proof 2015 - Cue Snopsis.xlsx

Proof Costume Plot

Proof prop list

PROOF Sound Cue Sheet.docx

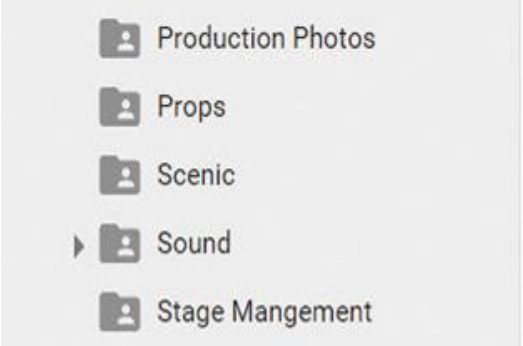

Figure 1.15–1.16 Screen shots of Google Drive.

But Google offers a secondary option. If the file is created in a common word processing, spreadsheet, or presentation program, then the uploader will have the option to convert the file to a related version of that software. A chart created in Microsoft Excel can be converted into a "Google Sheet," or a Word document into a "Google Doc." The benefit of the conversion is that anyone with whom the file is shared can open it, no matter what software is on their computer. If a file is unrecognizable or untranslatable, however, then it will stay as is and only be available for download from the shared location. A groundplan created in Vectorworks, for example, will not be converted to anything else. It cannot be opened online, but any shared user of the folder can download the file. Drive users can also create documents, spreadsheets, and other files from scratch.

The most significant drawback to the Google programs is the limitation in formatting. Only a handful of fonts are available, cells cannot always be merged, and many specialized options we take for granted are missing. As we will see in the next chapter and throughout this book, format is very important to comprehension. But we will also see that some documents do not require a lot of formatting. For the purposes of keeping many people up to date on a constantly changing document, there are times this will be your best option. You can also compromise. My stage management teams routinely find Google Sheets to be a great way to create the early version of the Shift Plot for the crew (see Chapter 6), allowing all of us to enter and revise details as we work through the initial blocking of the show. Once we approach the time to print and distribute, we can download the document, turn it into an Excel worksheet, and format away!

Stage managers who have access to Drive are likely working in theatre departments or companies that make use of other components of the Google suite. This includes email, a web-page builder called Sites, and the Google calendar —another shared file that can be utilized for easy distribution of deadlines as well as ways to find common availability when scheduling meetings.

Beyond Dropbox and Google, several independent companies have created software suites designed to provide stage managers with messaging, scheduling, and file storage capabilities. If you are working in a place that does not already make use of a cloud-based option, you may wish to explore Virtual Callboard, Callboard and Co. or one of the other online products available.

BLENDING METHODS

In the end, determining the best avenue for sharing information comes down to the stage manager's judgment. Consider the three communication basic principles again: *be tactful, be timely, and be specific*. Is there too much room for misinterpretation about a note to put it in writing? That may lead you to an in-person conversation. Is there not enough time to deliver a piece of information personally to several people? This could argue for email distribution. Is this general information requiring little or no action? Perhaps it is a candidate for the callboard.

There are times when you will resort to more than one method. Early blocking rehearsals are notorious for generating a large number of prop notes. A morning visit to the shop provides the opportunity for in-person clarification of the report from the night before. A multi-area question can be posed at a production meeting, with notes from the discussion and subsequent decision reflected in the meeting's minutes. The next day's rehearsal call is typically announced at the end of the day, but then also posted on an online callboard or telephone hotline. As these examples show, some duplication can be helpful—especially if it is mixing the active and passive distribution of

information. But use caution not to put every piece of information in every possible location. This can lead to distribution overload and cause members of your cast or production team to start ignoring callboards and emails by thinking, "I've been told everything already."

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE THEATRE HIERARCHY

As with any organization, a theatre company—even a single theatre production—has an inherent hierarchy at play. The director is responsible for guiding the overall vision of the show, the designers employ their creative skills to provide a visual and aural language, the actors bring the characters to life, and the stage manager wrangles them all—tracking details and facilitating the flow of information. Sometimes you will see this relationship expressed as a pyramid, and at other times a series of intersecting circles. No matter the form, the stage manager will inevitably face those moments where they need to point out that someone has incorrect information, is out of time, or has arrived late. Whether you are at an equivalent professional level with the rest of your team or are a student, utilizing professional communication will help you succeed.

This is probably most difficult for the student stage manager. Your cast members are your peers, and possibly also close friends. Your director is your teacher—maybe even for a class you are currently taking. So how do you get your best friend to take her call time seriously? Or tell your theatre history professor that he is wrong and the scenic unit cannot come onstage from that spot? Tact, timeliness, and specificity serve you well here too. Make it clear to your friend that your actor/stage manager relationship is in *addition* to your personal relationship. In order to best serve the show, you need to call her when she is late just as you would anyone else, and note it in your rehearsal report if absences are documented. That friend would be wrong to expect any special treatment. Think about some of our face-to-face guidelines. Find a private moment to speak with your friend so that you do not embarrass her in front of others. Succinctly explain how her behavior is impacting others in the cast. Maintain a bit of professional distance by demonstrating empathy if a personal problem is causing the tardiness, but focus on how you can help the actor arrive on time and not what flavor of ice cream you'll both wallow in later that night. By respecting both your friend and the job, you can create an enticement for your friend to rise up to your work ethic. In an opposite situation where the challenging actor is far from a friend, the same rules apply. While you are at rehearsal, it does not matter if he or she caused a personal affront in the past. It may not be easy, but if you make the effort, then so can they.

The same is true when the dynamic is one of power. Being concerned that your professor will get mad at you upon hearing that the sofa will not fit through the doorway does not make the doorway any larger. I would still avoid using the word "wrong," but pointing out the spatial challenge is what allows a conversation with the designer or technical director to take place—or at least a reblocking of the transition sooner rather than later. The director really does want the information. And it will not have any impact on how your exam is graded!

I acknowledge that this is easier to write than to practice, but you are not alone. I was a student SM myself once, and can assure you these scenarios are not specific to students. As a stage manager you will work with a wide variety of people throughout your career, many of whom will have more years of experience or flashier credits in their bio. If you take the job seriously and respect both the process and your colleagues, it will become very unimportant that you are a sophomore, a new AEA member, or a first-timer for that company.

In the next chapter we will consider some general principles for written communication of any kind—looking at how format affects the understanding of information, no matter which avenue you choose for delivery and to whom you are conveying details.

CHAPTER 2

Principles of Document Design

You may arrive at this chapter thinking to yourself, "Why should I care about something like this? My job is to present substance—not worry about style." And while document design does not appear in the bulleted list of a stage manager's duties, style has a very significant impact on that substance for which we are responsible.

In their book *White Space is Not Your Enemy*, authors Rebecca Hagen and Kim Golombisky offer a very apt definition of good graphic design. "It *captures* attention, *controls* they eye's movement across the page or screen, *conveys* information, and *evokes* emotion."[1] The SM is not concerned with item four in the list, but should give all due consideration to the first three. If the recipient of a schedule or chart cannot understand the information you have provided, it is as if you haven't provided it at all. By understanding some basic concepts about layout, font, and continuity, the stage manager can ensure that the time spent preparing and sharing paperwork is not wasted effort.

Anyone who has written a paper for a high school or college course should remember formatting instructions accompanying the assignment prompt. The wording resembled the following: "Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, references presented in a Works Cited page at the end of the paper. Names should be typed in the upper-left corner of the page, and page numbers centered within the bottom margin."

The instructor included these requirements not to hamper your creativity but to provide some commonality among the submissions and to keep the focus on the content of the paper. Savvy students receiving less-detailed guidelines, perhaps only a minimum or maximum page length, learn how to game the system: adjusting margins to be a quarter of an inch larger or smaller than the standard one inch, or writing in a font of 11.5 or 12.5 size—all intended to make a paper appear longer or shorter without adjusting the amount of written material. (Truth be told, instructors can see this trick at work, so it does not actually work to a student's advantage as much as they might hope.)

This is, in fact, a form of document design! The overall visual style may not be the student's choosing, but he or she is using typography and layout, however subtly, to affect the organization of information on the page.

This is the same principle at play for the stage manager when creating lists, charts, and reports. Document design in our case is intended to maximize the accessibility of the content by providing structure to the way in which the information is presented. By guiding the reader's eye, the stage manager helps them to understand details, identify changes, and prepare for actions.

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE

The stage manager's first pair of considerations in designing a document are the audience to whom it will be distributed and the avenue of communication to be used. These factors can help you to determine the relative importance of the other design choices you will face. A list posted on the callboard may require a larger font size in order to be legible from a distance. A chart of duties distributed to the crew can afford a smaller font, since each technician will have a copy, but will need additional organization to identify what is done, when it is done, and specifically by whom. Formatting a web page is different from formatting a page to be printed. The screen size will vary in proportion to the size of the monitor, so margins and tabs are more relative—and less useful for placing items in a specific location. Details sent simply in the body of an email will not need formatting at all, but will instead rely on our clear written communication tips from the previous chapter, along with an appropriate subject line so that the recipient can immediately identify what information the message contains.

INFORMATIVE OR INTERACTIVE

The next consideration for the stage manager is how the recipient will use the document. An **informative** document filled with detail probably requires more assistance to guide the reader's eye, and therefore more of the formatting techniques. Calendars and shift plots are examples of informative documents. A prop list is an **interactive** document—one in which multiple users enter information. Interactive documents still need some organizational principles, but the stage manager wants to make sure the formatting is simple enough to prevent the prop master from adding details differently from the ASM simply because the prop master did not understand where they belonged on the page. And as discussed in Chapter 1, if that prop list resides in a cloud-based storage folder, your formatting options may be limited anyway.

PAGE LAYOUT

With these clarifications in mind, layout becomes the first design decision. How much information needs to be presented? Is it narrative or a series of categories? How many individual entries are required? Particularly if it will take more than one page to present all the details, the stage manager should give thought to how one page will relate to the next, and how that will improve or hamper the accessibility of the information—known as **pagination**.

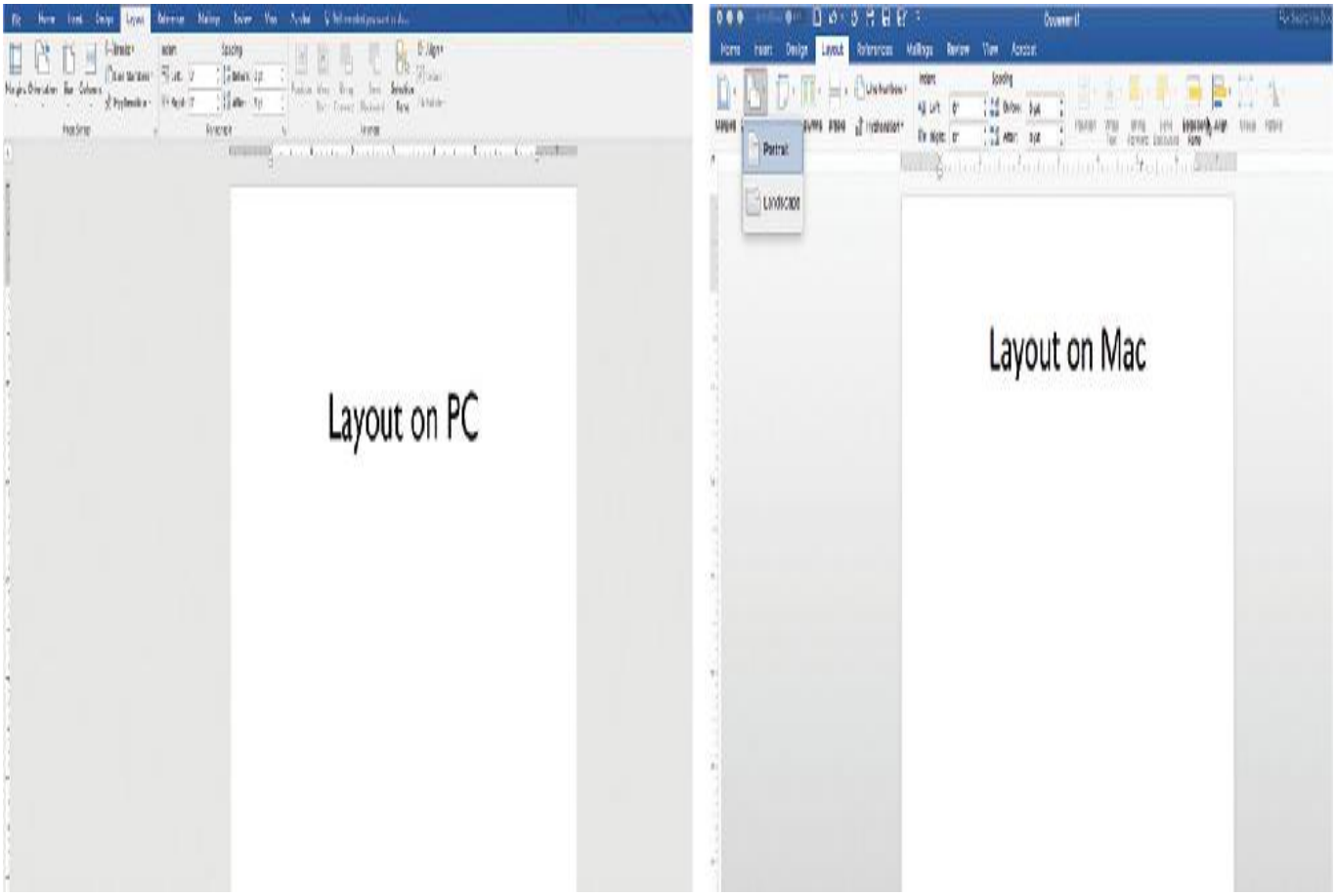

Figure 2.1 The page layout selection tab in Microsoft Word for the PC and the Mac, showing portrait and landscape options.

The first component of layout is page orientation. This selection, available in every word-processing and spreadsheet program, provides a choice between using either the height or the width of the page as the primary determinant of how much information will fit (see Figure 2.1).

Even something as simple as a cast list can require thought, as seen in Figures 2.2 and 2.3. A large cast where most actors portray a single character can successfully be presented in a traditional portrait orientation. But when documenting a show in which a smaller ensemble plays a multitude of roles, it may be clearer to change to landscape orientation so that all roles for a single actor can fit on a single line without compromising font size or available margin space.

When you are faced with that complex casting scenario, the stage manager may have to choose between a smaller font size to fit everything on a single page and splitting the information across two pages. In this instance, the primary concern would be to keep all roles for a single actor together to minimize potential confusion. Continuing the cast list on page two will be less confusing if it begins with Actor 20 than if it starts with the leftover roles for Actor 19 that did not fit on page one. Use the page-break function (also available in all word-processing and spreadsheet programs) to control how information is grouped together.

Twelfth Night

Cast List

ORSINO, *Duke of Illyria*	Justin Cooke
SEBASTIAN, *brother of Viola*	Matthew Matuseski
ANTONIO, *a sea captain, friend to Sebastian*	Kevin Fanshaw
SEA CAPTAIN, A PRIEST	Jacob Voss
VALENTINE, SAILOR 3, OFFICER 1	Austin P. Hernandez
CURIO, SAILOR 1, OFFICER 2	Luke Prescott
SIR TOBY BELCH, *Olivia's kinsman*	Jacob Gustine
SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK	Tim McCarren
MALVOLIO,*steward to Olivia*	Andrew Kelly
FABIAN, *servant to Olivia*	Donnie Mezera
FESTE, *Olivia's jester*	Alden Hedges
OLIVIA, *a countess*	Allyssa Dunn
VIOLA, *sister to Sebastian*	Claire Ganshert
MARIA, *Olivia's gentlewoman-in-waiting*	Amy Nelson
LORD 1, SAILOR 2, OFFICER 3	Brian Coffin
LORD 2, OFFICER 4	Don Hart
ATTENDANT to OLIVIA 1	Emily Ware
ATTENDANT to OLIVIA 2	Lindsay Van Norman

MUSICIAN 1	Suzanne Clum
MUSICIAN 2	Shelby Krarup

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
CAST LIST

Kevin Fanshaw	Philo T. Farnsworth
Austin Hernandez	David Sarnoff
Lindsay Van Norman	Pem Farnsworth
Amy Nelson	Lizette
Jake Voss	Officer, Pem's Father, Cliff Gardner, Trader, Broker,
Cody Wesner	Man 1, Atkins, Gifford, Douglas Fairbanks, Solomon
Seth Steidl	Young Philo, Police Officer, Photographer, Howard, Schenck,
Lewis Youngren	Student, Crowd, Wilkins, Analyst, Ridley, Man, Usher, Bartender
Nick Brandt	Officer, Everson, Zworkin,
David Holmes	Young Sarnoff, Executive/James, Doctor 2
Sean Mason	Man 2, Crowd, Stan Willis, Advisor
Bryce Wilson	Man 3, Gorrell, Maitre D/Waiter, Sales Rep, Louis, Judge
Quinn Masterson	Justin Tolman, RCA Chair, Jim Harbord, Doctor, Fed Chair
Ryan Vodnik	Sarnoff's Father, Simms, Lippincott, Houston Control, Banker
Natalie Goodman	Student, Sexy Woman, Betty
Brian Coffin	Student, Crowd, Harlan Honn, Radio Announcer, Lennox,
Andrew Kelly	Russian Officer, William Crocker, Banker, Crowd
Colleen Schulz	Sarnoff's Mother, Woman in Crowd, Pem's Mother, Agnes Farnsworth, Mina Edison

Douglas Nogrady	Wachtel, Banker, Lawyer
Kaylyn Forkey	Student, Sexy Woman, Mary Pickford, Speakeasy Woman, Lippincott's Secretary, Stenographer

Figure 2.2–2.3 Formatting options for a cast list.

The quantity of information will be determined by the nature of the document itself. A cast list is complete with only character and actor names. In contrast, a schedule needs to communicate day, time, pages to be rehearsed, actors called, and, if variable, location. As the number of categories increases, so does the need for providing visual distinction. The relationship of actor names to roles can be achieved by placing the two lists in columns opposite one another. The reader can negotiate the space between lists with no assistance. The schedule, which has five kinds of details to be included, will require more groupings.

As the information becomes more detailed, the stage manager can choose between two tools to help the page remain accessible—lines or white space. **White space** refers to blank room on the page, and it is useful because it gives the reader's eye a chance to rest and to distinguish one set of details from another. The sample weekly schedule from *Twelfth Night* found in Figure 2.4 demonstrates how white space can assist the actors in distinguishing one day's work from another, as well as locating the individual components of each day—when they are called and what will be accomplished.

When white space is not enough, the stage manager can choose to format information in a chart. This can be done by using a word-processing table or a spreadsheet. Rows and columns, with lines and clear headings, help the reader to find each entry and understand the individual components of that entry. Consider our second sample schedule, this time from the musical *Chicago*, seen in Figure 2.5. Although the cast size is similar, the calls are much more complex: working in multiple rooms at overlapping times. The additional formatting provided by the rows and columns makes it much simpler for the actors to navigate the information. The horizontal lines match up all across the page only when the rehearsal blocks do, providing an additional visual indicator of the time differences for the cast.

It is also worth noting, though, that there is a bit of white space at work even here. The bottom line in each row has been adjusted to provide additional space between entries. This is helpful because several boxes contain large blocks of text, and, even with the lines, the page could become overwhelming.

Twelfth Night

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule

November 8–12

Monday November 8

6:30–7:30 pm	Finish I-5	Olivia, Viola

7:30–8:00 pm	II-2 ring speech	Viola
8:00–9:30 pm	II-1 and III-3	Antonio, Sebastian

Tuesday November 9

6:30 7:30 pm	Work I-2	Viola, Sea Captain (no sailors needed tonight)
Also 6:30 7:30 pm	Music Rehearsal	Alden, Shelby, Suzanne
7:30–8:30 pm	Work I-3	Toby, Andrew, Maria
8:30–9:30 pm	Put Tim into IV-1	Sebastian, Toby, Andrew, Fabian, Olivia, Feste

Wednesday November 10

6:30 7:30 pm	Block III-2	Toby, Andrew, Fabian, Maria
7:30 9:30 pm	Block III-4	Toby, Andrew, Malvolio, Fabian, Olivia, Maria, Lindsay, Emily, Antonio, Viola, Officers 1–4

Thursday November 11

6:30–8:00 pm	Work I-1, I-4, II-4	Orsino, Valentine, Curio, Lord 1 & 2, Viola, Feste, Suzanne, Shelby
8:00–8:30 pm	Review II-3	Toby, Andrew, Malvolio, Feste, Maria
8:30–9:30 pm	Work IV-2	Toby, Malvolio, Maria, Feste

Friday November 12

6:30–9:30 pm	Stumble Through Show	Full Company

Figure 2.4 A simple weekly schedule.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE: June 1–5

Monday June 1			Beth L at 7:45
6:30–9:30 pm Toland	DANCE: Razzle Dazzle	6:30–7:45 pm Rehearsal Room	MUSIC: Roxie and Velma

Toland	Andreska, Black, Divney, Dubiel, Fitzgerald, Gassner, Gray, Maltinski, Mian, Moilanen, Skogman, Walker, Whalen, Youngren	Rehearsal Room	Cornwell, Schultz
		7:45–8:15 pm Rehearsal Room	MUSIC: Class Lakmann, Schultz
		8:15–9:15 pm Rehearsal Room	STAGING: Class Lakmann, Schultz
Tuesday June 2 (note earlier start time today)			
6:00–6:30 pm Toland	DANCE: Velma lift in All That Jazz Black, Mian, Schultz, Youngren		
6:30–7:30 pm Toland	DANCE/STAGING: I-1/ All That Jazz Full Company except Divney, Goodner, Lakmann, Masterson	6:30–7:30 pm Kat's Office	MUSIC: Billy Flynn Divney
7:30–8:30pm Toland	DANCE: Continue Cell Block Tango (in order below) Youngren & Moilanen, Gray & Ryan, Mian & Maltinski, Black & Dubiel		
8:30–9:30pm Toland	STAGING: I-2 and Funny Honey Andreska, Black, Cornwell, Dubiel, Fitzgerald, Gassner , Gray, Maltinski, Masterson, Mian, Moilanen, Ryan, Walker, Whalen, Youngren		
Wednesday June 3 (note later end time today)			Beth L and Kathy after 7:30, No Sophie
6:30 –7:30 pm Toland	STAGING: My Own Best Friend Cornwell, Shultz		
7:30 –9:00 pm Toland	STAGING: I-4 through I-6 and When You're Good to Mama Andreska, Black, Cornwell, Dubiel, Fitzgerald, Gassner, Gray, Lakmann, Maltinski, Masterson, Mian		

	Andreska, Black, Cornwell, Dubiel, Fitzgerald, Gassner, Gray, Lakmann, Maltinski, Masterson, Mian, Moilanen, Ryan, Schultz, Skogman, Walker, Whalen, Youngren		
9:00–10:00 pm Toland	DANCE: Cell Block Tango Black, Dubiel, Gray, Fitzgerald, Maltinski, Mian, Mo ilanen, Ryan, Skogman, Schultz, Walker, Youngren		
Thursday June 4			No Sophie
6:30–7:45 pm Toland	STAGING: 1-9 through 1-11 Full Company except Masterson	6:30–7:30 pm Rehearsal Room	DANCE: Mister Cellophane Masterson
7:45–9:30 pm Toland	DANCE: Roxie Black, Cornwell, Gray, Mian, Skogman, Youngren		
Friday June 5			No Sophie
6:30–8:00 pm Toland	DANCE: All I Care About Andreska, Black, Divney, Dubiel, Fitzgerald, Gassner, Gray, Maltinski, Mian, Moilanen, Ryan, Skogman, Walker, Whalen, Youngren		
8:00–9:30 pm Toland	DANCE: TBA/Review this Week ADD Cornwell, Schultz, possibly Masterson		

Figure 2.5 A complex weekly schedule.

THE SPREADSHEET AS ELECTRONIC GRAPH PAPER

Microsoft Excel and other similar spreadsheet programs are designed to be powerful analytical tools, capable of complex processing of numbers and other collections of data. The use to the stage manager, however, is much more basic. Because the basic setup of a spreadsheet page is a collection of cells, it is essentially always in table format. By adjusting the height of rows or widths of columns, you can convert the sheet into a piece of electronic graph paper, allowing you to create forms with relative ease. Text can be typed into individual cells, and the program's formatting capabilities allow the same insertion of colors, shading, and lines as a word-processing program does. As you progress through this book and visit the online templates, you will be able to see how this can work to your advantage.

A few final layout considerations include **justification, identification,** and **repetition**. Text can be justified—in other words, aligned—with either the left or right edge of a page, or it can be centered. Paperwork should always be identified at the top (in the header) with the name of the show and the title of the document, and at the bottom (in the footer) with the creation or revision date and page number. To ensure that multiple pages are kept together, this identification should be repeated on every page. When creating something that will inevitably be modified during the rehearsal process—such as an overall rehearsal schedule—it is advisable to include the note "subject to change" within that header or footer to alert readers to the possibility of more current information, and to help a production combat late-appearing conflicts that come with the explanation, "That wasn't on the calendar I got at the beginning."

It is always best to number the pages in a document so they can be kept in sequential order. But just noting "page 2" may not be enough. Identifying a sheet as "page 2 of 5" not only keeps the paperwork in order but also allows the readers to confirm they have all of it!

FONTS

As seen in our term-paper example, the font and its size will affect how much information can fit on a single page. But font choices are not based on quantity. The selection of typeface is a major contributor to overall legibility, both as a document to be printed and copied and as one to be shared by email.

Entire books have been written about fonts. For purposes of this tutorial, what is important is to have a general understanding of the basic stylistic groups and their use to the stage manager in creating paperwork. In her book *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, author Robin Williams presents six major categories.[2]

1. Oldstyle. These fonts are based on hand lettering. When looking at this category, you can imagine a pen making each stroke. Oldstyle fonts have what is known as a serif—a small end stroke on most letters.
2. Modern. These fonts evolved from oldstyle, and still have a serif, but one that is horizontal rather than diagonal.
3. Sans serif. As the name implies, this category has no end stroke. It appears a bit more modern, and is often used in presentations and web text.
4. Slab serif. A cousin of the sans serif fonts, this group is characterized by thick letters and can appear to always be in bold.
5. Script. These fonts resemble calligraphy or cursive writing, and often denote a sense of elegance. It is common to find script fonts on something like a wedding invitation.
6. Decorative. These are the "fun fonts." Their commonality is their uniqueness. These are fonts we often associate with logos.

Oldstyle	Goudy Old Style Palatino Times New Roman Perpetua
	Bodoni MT

Modern	Bodoni MT Minion Pro PERPETUA TITLING
Sans serif	Gil Sans MT Arial Calibri Verdana
Slab serif	**Cooper Black** **Myriad Pro Black** **Impact**
Script	Calligraph421 MT *Vladimir Script* Bradley Hand ITC
	Earwig Factory Chiller

Decorative	STENCIL Gallery

Figure 2.6 Popular variations of the six major font categories.

Graphic designers will spend a great deal of time making font choices. As stage managers, we should be concerned with two basic things—(1) does the font have too much "personality" and interfere with overall legibility, and (2) is the font common enough to exist on both your computer and those of the people who will be receiving your paperwork?

In general, fonts that fall into the first three categories above are the best options for the majority of your writing. They will be neutral and available. Beyond that, personal choice can come into play. When creating signs or announcements that need a larger size, you may find that sans serif fonts are easier to read. Some fonts are thinner than others by design, requiring slightly less room to fit text into the cells of a table.

The final three categories (slab serif, script, and decorative) are best reserved for titles. Injecting a little personality into your paperwork is not a bad thing—you just want to do so judiciously and without compromising the main details. If you remember the sample paperwork from *Twelfth Night*, you can recall that the name of the show appears in a different font from the rest of the page, one that falls into the script category. The stage manager chose the font in an effort to reflect the tone of the production and its design. Figures 2.7 through 2.9 demonstrate what happens when the same information is presented for different shows, changing only the title font. *Biloxi Blues* makes use of a font reminiscent of the lettering on military crates, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* employs one that pays tribute to the type in Dr. Seuss's books. All three are thematically appropriate. And yet, using that title font for all the written information would be a mistake in all three instances. The script font is light and could become illegible when it gets small or is photocopied; the slab font will be overwhelming if everything is in bold; the decorative font is larger and rounder than other choices and will require wider columns and more pages to communicate the same information.

Twelfth Night

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule
November 8-12

(title font is Caligraph421 BT)

BILOXI BLUES

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule

November 8-12

(title font is Stencil)

How the Grinch Stole Christmas

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule
November 8-12

(title font is Doctor Soos Bold)

Figure 2.7–2.9 How to make use of distinctive fonts in your paperwork.

FONT STYLE

Within a single font or family of fonts, variations exist. Size—the number of points—can be changed to distinguish between heading and body content. The **bold** variation is useful to make a title stand out or to denote changes on a revision. Important notes may be written in ALL CAPS to provide another version of emphasis. *Italics* are used for titles, but can also reflect a commentary *(that means a detail about the information separate from the information itself; a built-in explanation of sorts)*. Underlining text can be used for titles in some instances, but can also be used for emphasis. The ~~strikethrough~~ option is useful to denote something is no longer needed, especially when simply deleting it may cause confusion—the cutting of a prop on a prop list, for example, or a line in a script.

UNDERSTANDING TRENDS OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE

Although this book clearly advocates against the use of slang writing techniques for professional communications, the stage manager does need to be aware of them. One specific example is the use of writing in all capital letters. While it certainly emphasizes the words on the page, this indicates yelling in online communication. Even if that is not your intent, writing a message or note in all caps is likely to come across as hostile based on our common understanding of that convention. Remembering the cautions about the fluidity of context, you can see why it is better for the substance of a message to come through without an inadvertent tone.

COLOR AND SHADING

When more navigational assistance is required, the stage manager can employ color or shading to help provide emphasis or guide the eye. The update to a call time or addition of an actor to a rehearsal day may stand out more when placed in another color than if it is underlined or even in bold. The individual sections of a long chart will be more identifiable if headings are visually distinct.

But while these are both useful tools, there are some important things to keep in mind. Color is only useful if it is always present. Before investing time and effort into creating paperwork with a rainbow of hues, return to the decisions you made about distribution avenues. Placing an update in color and then sending the page through a black-and-white photocopier obviously negates its use.

Using color on a sign to be posted, or on a document for which you can reasonably print all necessary copies, is fine. It is equally useful on a website or a piece of paperwork that will be distributed electronically.

Shading is a good alternative to color when you need too many copies to print each one yourself. It can provide the same emphasis and visual break on a page. Just be certain that you find the correct level for your copier. Shading that is too light may disappear, and shading that is so dark it provides little contrast between the background and the text it is emphasizing is also wasted effort.

Let us take a look at a few successful examples of color and shading, shown in Figures 2.10 and 2.11. The first is a page of line changes (Figure 2.10). Instead of focusing on the table's content, note the use of blue text. Cumulative information, collected and amended throughout the rehearsal process, is more usefully presented as a single comprehensive list of changes rather than a series of separate documents. A designer may wait until the end of the rehearsal process—as they are preparing for tech and need to give the stage manager specific locations for cues—to input the changes. The designer can reference a single piece of paperwork that covers the entire script at once rather than opening five or six separate documents and returning to individual scenes multiple times to make edits. But the actors will want to double-check their scripts each week when the changes are published. By noting the revision date and the new entries in blue, they are able to focus on what has changed rather than what simply exists in print. This use of color makes the document work for multiple audiences at the same time with very little additional work on the part of the stage manager.

Figure 2.11 is a rehearsal schedule that has been changed midweek. Because many of the work sessions contain multiple pages and characters, the days themselves are separated and shaded for clarity. Also due to the density of information, the addition of a new call in the middle of Wednesday night is much easier to find when placed in red. The schedule revision was posted on both the traditional and electronic callboard, and a copy was printed for the stage manager's prompt book. Color is practical in this instance, since only two hard copies are needed.

Twelfth Night

Line Changes

Updated 11/18/10

Act	Scene	Page	Line(s)	Character	Action	Words	Notes
II	5	43	117–118	Fabian	CUT	Sowter will cry upon't for al this, though it be as rank as a fox	Malvolio's lines continue from "Softly, M.O.A.I" to his next speech beginning "M- Malvolio,..."
II	5	43	121	Toby	CUT	The cur is excellent at faults	Line now ends with ;... work it out?"
III	1	45	2	Viola	CHANGE	TABOR to MUSIC	
III	1	46	9–10	Viola	CUT	or, the church stands by thy tabor, if thy tabor stand by the church	Line now ends with "... dwell near him"
III	1	46	11 13	Feste	CUT	To see this age! A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit, How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!	Line now ends after "You have said, sir,"

III	2	52	29	Andrew	CUT	I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician	Line now ends after... "for policy I hate,"
III	2	53	42–43	Toby	CUT	although the sheet were big enough for the Bed of Ware in England,	Line now skips from "... lie in thy sheet of paper" to "set 'em down,"
III	2	53	48	Toby	CUT	at the cubiculo	Line now reads "We'll call thee, Go,"

Revised
WEEKLY REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

September 27-30

All Rehearsals in Toland Theatre

Tuesday September 27		
6:30–7:30 pm	**Work pp. 66–68, 95–11**	**Philo, Sarnoff**
7:30–7:45 pm	Work American Marconi: pp. 14 16	Philo, Sarnoff, Coffin, Douglas, Goodman, Holmes, Kelly, Mason, Masterson, Nelson, Nogrady, Novak, Schulz,Steidl, Vodnik, Youngren
7:45 9:30 pm	Work Meeting & Conference scenes: pp. 23 26, 44 49, 53 59	ADD Brandt, Voss, Wesner, Wilson

Wednesday September 28		
6:30 7:30 pm	Work Stock Market sequence: pp. 61–68	Philo, Sarnoff, Brandt, Coffin, Goodman, Holmes, Kelly, Mason, Masterson, Nogrady, Steidl, Vodnik, Voss, Wesner, Wilson, Youngren
7:30–8:30 pm	**Work all Lab Scenes: pp. 34–44, 69–73, 78–79**	**ADD Pem, Schulz, Novak** **RELEASE: Masterson, Nogrady**

8:30–9:30 pm	Work All Pem/Philo and Lizette/Sarnoff Scenes & Sarnoff Monologue	RELEASE all but Philo, Sarnoff, Pem, Schulz, Voss
	pp. 27 30, 32 34, 39 40, 81 84, 100	ADD: Nelson

Thursday September 29		
6:30–9:30 pm	Review Act One	Full Company

Friday September 30		
6:30 9:30 pm	Review Act Two	Full Company

Figures 2.10 and 2.11 Successful color and shading at work.

SELECTING COLORS

Color can be a very effective tool to grab a reader's attention, to group objects, or to create focal points. Setting printing considerations aside for the moment, what should a stage manager keep in mind when choosing color for documents?

A good place to begin is basic readability. Look at the color wheel in Figure 2.12 and notice where your eyes land. Even against a white background, some colors will contrast better than others. Text in yellow or light pink would be much more difficult to read than text in red, blue, or even orange.

Next, color theory tells us that our common associations with color will affect how our brain reads information presented in that hue. Just as the stage manager needed to be aware of biases resulting from unconscious associations with other people when talking face to face, the stage manager should consider briefly what a certain color may mean. Start with red. If asked to think of a red object, what comes to mind first? For many of us it is a stop sign or a stop light. That makes red a good choice for text when your intent is to say, "Hey, look at this. It has changed!" Blue is a calming color to view. It contrasts with black text well enough to easily see the difference, but not in an aggressive way. That is why I always choose it for updates to interactive documents like the line changes back in Figure 2.10. Green is similarly distinct and non-aggressive, though it would not be advisable to choose both red and green for updates in the same document. A color-blind actor or designer could tell both are different from black, but could not distinguish one from the other.

Figure 2.12 A color wheel especially for stage managers. (Source: Shutterstock.)

Even if you are creating documents solely for the web or electronic distribution, the stage manager should never use color everywhere. Doing so causes the color to lose its value as a tool—you are no longer highlighting or grouping, just playing. **This sentence is probably difficult to read.** Think about where shading, lines, or white space can work in combination with color.

And ultimately, the reality of printing almost always creeps back in. Even when you can afford the time and money to print in color, is that printer of a high-enough quality that red, dark pink, and orange will still look distinct? Or blue and dark purple? It is rare that the printer will deliver exactly what you see on screen, and not all printers match one another. If the document is something simple, perhaps you can get the impact of color in another way. Signs to help actors find an audition room may actually be easier to locate and read when they are black text on colored paper than when they are colored text on white. And backstage signs read in low light may be one of the few candidates for using a lot of ink in order to generate white text on a black background. (You might also wish to consider sticker-backed letters on black paper.)

ACCESSIBILITY

Not all documents need advanced formatting to be accessible. Figure 2.13, a sign-in sheet, makes good use of available space without many bells and whistles. Portrait view is appropriate because it allows for the listing of all names on a single page and all workdays during this week of technical rehearsals and performances. This is an interactive document. Each actor will initial upon arrival each day in the given week. And while it is still very simple, the layout needs a bit more help to be functional.

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION

CAST

PLEASE SIGN IN!

	Mon 10/10	Tues 10/11	Wed 10/12	Thur 10/13	Fri 10/14	Sat 10/15	Sun 10/16
Nick Brandt							
Brian Coffin							
Kevin Fanshaw							

Natalie Goodman							
Austin Hernandez							
David Holmes							
Andrew Kelly							
Sean Mason							
Quinn Masterson							
Amy Nelson							
Douglas Nogrady							
Jandrea Novak							
Colleen Schulz							
Seth Steidl							
Lindsay Van Norman							
Ryan Vodnik							
Jake Voss							
Cody Wesner							
Bryce Wilson							

Lewis Youngren							

Figure 2.13 A simple sign-in sheet.

The stage manager could post a list of actor names each day and ask actors to initial next to their name. But because the column of names takes up only a small amount of the available room on the page, it would be a waste of paper to produce seven documents instead of one (and how often do we really get to do something eco-friendly where paperwork is concerned?!). Additionally, by day five it becomes difficult to take attendance without the grid lines. As presented, the stage manager simply looks for empty boxes when checking arrivals at call time. Without the grid, the stage manager might have to count the number of initials next to actors' names to determine who has arrived on day five as opposed to day four—not a complicated task, but also not an efficient use of time.

ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY

When working online, accessibility also includes the idea that posted information is now viewed on a variety of devices, not just a computer. As the popularity of smart phones continues to explode, the stage manager has something else to consider. You might need to think about making your layout "**mobile-friendly**" in order to keep the details accessible. Today's web designers are trained in specific optimization techniques as well as the process of developing sub-sites specifically intended for the mobile viewer. But not to fear—the intrepid stage manager does not need advanced training in order to survive in this environment. If you built your online callboard using WordPress or one of the other available hosts, a mobile-friendly conversion may be included at no extra cost. And since it is unlikely that your online callboard will need to be overly robust, there are some simple tricks you can use to keep your information accessible. Make sure that you type out the rehearsal call on the page instead of simply providing a link to the schedule document. It is terrific that modern-day actors can check upcoming call times on their phone from anywhere, but the stage manager does not really want to think about how download speed plays into that event, or what happens if the actor cannot find or open the attachment. You can include a link to a PDF copy of the schedule on the site to allow someone to print out a copy for the refrigerator, but it is not necessary to open that PDF in order to get the information. Other easy tips include using a slightly larger font size than you might normally select to counteract the small screen, keeping important information at the top of the page, and being cognizant about multiple columns and long sentences to limit how much scrolling the reader needs to do.

If you happen to have more advanced programming knowledge, then you can consider optimizing images and video, resizing your navigation bars so they can be tapped with a finger, and avoiding fixed widths or positions. But if the previous sentence sounds like a foreign language, you will still be fine!

CONTINUITY

Our final consideration for the visual appearance of paperwork is continuity. It is first defined as a commonality among all documents created for an individual show or theatre—in essence, sticking to your choices once you have made them.

If you select a title font for paperwork, use it on everything. If you have decided that your show logo is an aesthetically pleasing addition to your header and is not subject to photocopier decay, keep it as well. This will help the items belonging to your show to be instantly recognizable as such. Theatre companies or departments producing several shows in a season may have a general format for lists or reports. This level of document design may not be up to you. If your company has determined that effort is better spent finding the details in a document rather than understanding a new style of presenting those details for each show, you should accept the form given to you. But if your prop list is one of five identical documents on someone's desk, then that may not be in your best interest either. Simple identifying factors such as that title font or logo can help keep these similar documents separate.

It is also advisable to keep the same body font for all paperwork on a given production and present revision dates and page numbers in the same location and in the same style for them all as well.

The second definition for continuity—and one that is perhaps more important than the first—is that the paperwork looks the same no matter who opens it and prints it. After spending time and effort to choose a legible font, adjust margins to make everything fit, and employ shading or color to guide the eye, it would be a shame for that work to be lost.

Every computer that is connected to a printer will recognize that printer's settings as the best default format for a document. Laser and inkjet printers have different capacities for printing close to the edges of a page; a Mac computer and a PC will have slightly different sets of fonts in their factory options.

In order to combat these differences, the stage manager has two lines of defense. First, when originally generating the paperwork, **choose common fonts that are universal rather than ones that are special to you**. If you had to purchase it, probably not everyone has it. It would be possible to email that font to all the members of your cast or production team and ask them to install it as well, but it is unlikely everyone will do that.

But while that could solve your font problem, it won't help page-layout changes. In that case, your best option is to **turn the document into a PDF**. First created by Adobe Software Systems in 1995, the Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) finds its usefulness in its ability to "preserve source file information — text, drawings, multimedia, video, 3D, maps, full-color graphics, photos, and even business logic— regardless of the application used to create them and even when compiled from multiple formats."[3]

Essentially, the PDF is a snapshot of the document as you created it, with content and format that will be unchanged when opened on any computer or mobile device. Acrobat Reader is a free program, downloadable onto any computer, to allow the user to open any PDF document. Translating a document into a PDF can be done with a full version of the Adobe Acrobat program, with several freeware versions, or within nearly all office software suites. For example, as of the 2007 version, Microsoft Office provides conversion to PDF as a standard task in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other programs either as a print function, a save function, or a plug-in providing an Acrobat tab with a "create PDF'" button, as seen in Figure 2.14. PCs and Macintosh computers accomplish the task differently, but both do so.

The PDF can be printed, emailed, or uploaded to the web. This makes it an ideal format for preserving your document-design efforts. It also provides a minimal amount of protection for the file itself. Although not difficult to acquire, a user will need to own the full version of the Adobe Acrobat software in order to modify a PDF document. If you are distributing something that should not be changed by others, the PDF provides a level of discouragement.

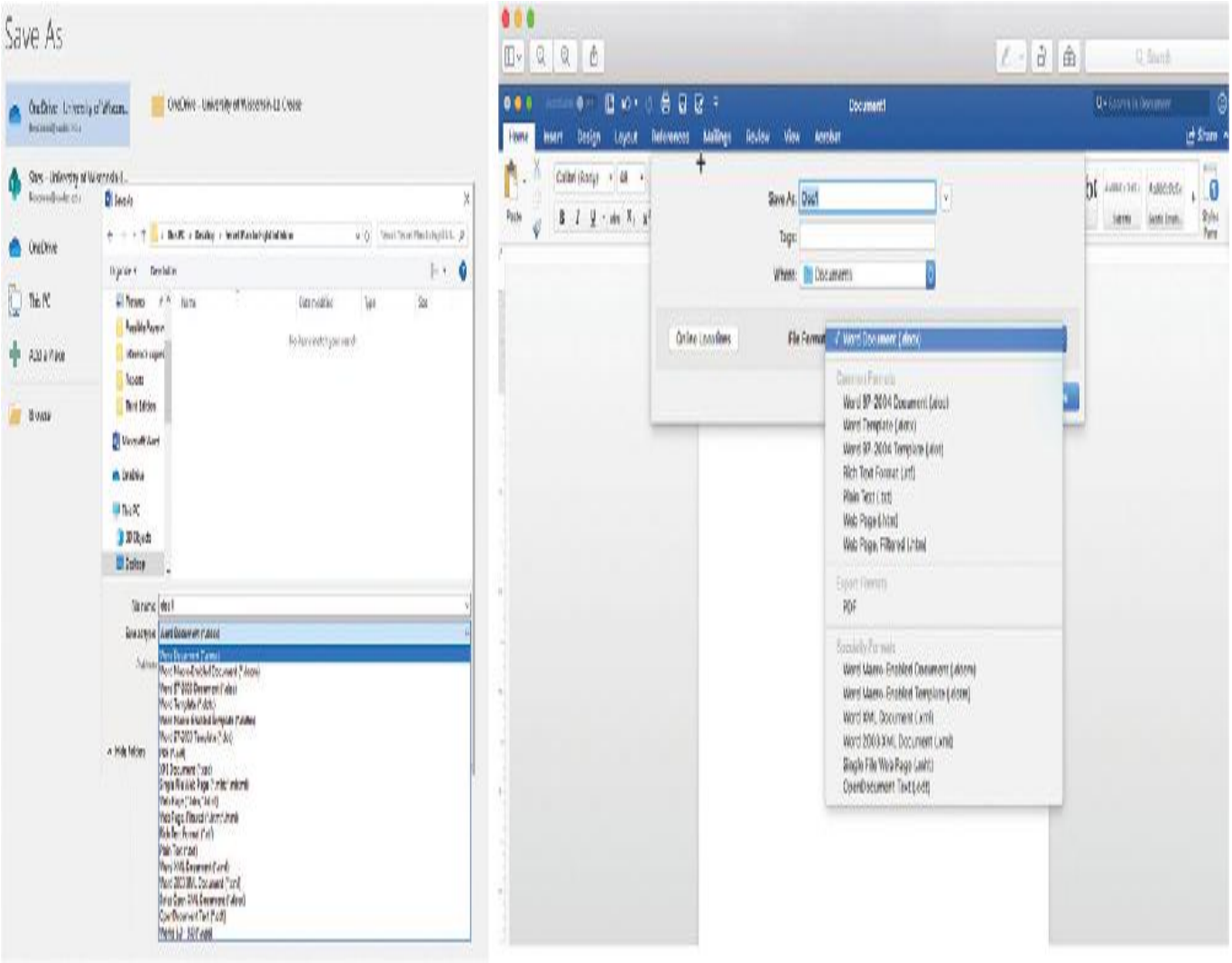

Figure 2.14 The PDF creator built into Microsoft Word for the PC and the Mac.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

An easy-to-overlook component of creating paperwork is the actual title of the document. You might only be stage managing a single production, but most theatres produce multiple shows in a season, some of which will overlap. Your theatre department likely mounts at least one production each semester. Just like the PDF ensures your formatting work remains consistent, effectively naming a document ensures it can be found.

Emailing the prop list for your show simply named "prop list" is asking for it to get lost in the prop master's computer. Always include the name of the show. If a document is sent out multiple times, you should also reference the edition attached—either by including the version number or the date. This is particularly important for items like the rehearsal report, which you will send out every day. Each report should be uniquely identifiable by title. The paperwork entitled "*Twelfth Night* RR 907" or "*Young Frankenstein* Prop List Version 2" will not easily be mistaken for something else. If your department or theatre company does not have a naming protocol for files, the successful stage manager will develop one and use it consistently throughout the process.

READY TO BEGIN

With these principles in mind, this book now turns its focus to the stage manager's path through a production. In each section we will consider the tasks to be completed and discuss the substance and the style of the communication that will help guide your show to a successful and collaborative conclusion.

CHAPTER 3

Pre-Production

The stage manager's work on a production begins with a self-orientation to the script, the physical production, and the team with whom they will be working. In order to most successfully facilitate discoveries during rehearsal, it is important that the stage manager collect as much information as possible in advance. This work will allow you both to provide answers and to know what additional questions need to be asked.

PRE-PRODUCTION TASKS

- Read and analyze the script
- Participate in auditions (some productions)
- Collect information on the production
- Prepare initial lists and breakdowns
- Create a prompt book
- Meet with the director
- Prepare the rehearsal room

In an academic theatre department, the stage manager may receive an assignment at the end of one year for a show that will happen the following year. Despite the upcoming vacation, you will inevitably be around your future team members and may be asked to perform some preliminary duties for the show right away. This might be a simple task such as script distribution, or it might be some of the detailed prep work contained in this chapter. Although much of your work will take place nearer to the start of rehearsals, be sure that you understand what is expected of you and when you should perform these tasks. Not every academic theatre department has a faculty member specifically devoted to stage management training. If it is unclear where to go, start with the person who assigned you to the production. He or she should at least be able to get you started and point you toward other resources as needed.

A professional stage manager is traditionally hired much closer to the project's start date. An Equity stage manager will have a contractually defined prep week (the week before rehearsals begin) for analyzing the script and preparing initial paperwork. But if you are a member of a resident team for a theatre, you may be hired for a slate of shows in a season and may similarly be asked questions or given information before it is "time." It will be up to your discretion and availability if you choose to get involved prior to your official start date.

No matter when your assignment is determined, this first set of information-collecting tasks is among your most important.

NEW, BUT NOT A NOVICE

As a young stage manager, it is particularly important that you balance how much you ask versus how much you learn. There are certain questions only a director can answer: how they like to organize rehearsals, preferences about visitors or breaks, deadlines for memorizing lines, and so forth. (An outline for a first conversation with the director can be found later in this chapter.) But the director may not be the best person to ask *everything.* Present yourself as someone capable of finding answers, not just asking questions. If you cannot locate the restrooms in the building, for example, or are uncertain of the procedures for locking up the rehearsal space, look for other

information sources. This might be a fellow stage manager, your advisor in an academic setting, or the production manager. Your theatre or department might also have a handbook in which such details are already documented.

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

If you have worked at this theatre or with these team members before, you will have some basic information about logistics and the working styles of the participants. If not, you will need to begin your investigation of the project with those basics before diving into the script itself. The production manager is typically the best place to start. This is the person who coordinates the artistic and production details for all of the shows in a theatre's season and will have many answers for you. In an academic setting, you should again start with your faculty advisor.

PERSONNEL

Question: Who is the director? Have you worked with this person before? Has the theatre?
Question: Who are the designers? Have you worked with any of these people before? Have they worked together? For this theatre? With this director?

If you are new to this company or department, it will be helpful to be aware of existing relationships. If your director is familiar with the company's procedures, you will be able to focus on communicating reminders of deadlines rather than explaining why they exist. If they have worked in the theatre before, blocking in a rehearsal room can be developed with a better understanding of available backstage space. Designers who are resident to the theatre or are frequent guests will also have expectations about what is possible, what exists in stock, or other considerations.

But in addition to pre-existing knowledge about the logistics, prior working relationships will affect how the players communicate with one another and, therefore, how you can best facilitate this dialogue. Team members with many successful shows together may have developed shortcuts in their pattern of information exchange—nicknames for people or units, and discussions filled with references to past shows. If you are the newcomer, it will be important to do some homework so that you can better understand this vernacular. This might mean looking at photos or paperwork of these past productions, getting background from a third party, or at times asking specifically for clarification. You won't want to assume you know what someone means and then transmit this information to someone else, only to find you've misunderstood a reference. Conversely, team members may feel they worked together so well in the past that they know what one another is thinking and do not need to convey details or ask as many questions. The stage manager needs to remain the conduit for consistent, clear information, despite this familiarity, to help avoid problems later on.

These prior relationships, however, may not necessarily have been positive ones. Negative past experiences, if allowed to fester, can easily taint this new production. Without engaging in gossip, see what you can learn. A designer who missed many of the deadlines set by the theatre in the past may have been given earlier due dates for drawings or paperwork this time around to build in a buffer. And while this might seem unimportant to you, if meeting those deadlines requires seeing a run-through of the show prior to a certain date, for example, it will be helpful to know this at the beginning so the rehearsal schedule can accommodate this need. If your director was unhappy with the execution of a design element in the past, he or she may make comments during rehearsal and ask that these dictates be included in a rehearsal report in a very specific way. As the stage manager, you will need to focus on separating information from the tone in which you received it.

LOCATION

Question: Where will the show perform? Where will it rehearse? If these are two different locations, will there be rehearsals on the set prior to tech?

If you are unfamiliar with your rehearsal space or the theatre itself, go see them! If the rehearsal space is smaller than the theatre, you may have to make some compromises when marking the groundplan of the set in tape on the rehearsal

room floor. You will want to ask the director about this before you begin, so that you don't find yourself re-taping the set at the end of the first rehearsal. It will also be important to know if the SM team can leave tables and furniture set up overnight, if there is a sound system in place for rehearsal cues, if there is a green-room space for actors, and other such details.

Groundplan: A bird's-eye view of the set and theatre architecture, drawn in scale by the scenic designer.

Taping the set: Replicating the groundplan on the floor of your rehearsal room by measuring the scale drawing and using tape to indicate where walls, platforms, and other scenic units are located. (The process of taping a set is discussed in Chapter 5.)

Once you have some basics under your belt, turn your focus to the show itself. This will have two parts—dates and details related to the production, and information contained in the script.

THE CALENDAR

The production's calendar is an important source of information. In some instances you may be handed a calendar and tasked with seeing that deadlines are met. In other instances you may be collecting information from multiple sources and creating a calendar yourself.

Our earlier definition of the stage manager as seen in the task list created by Actors' Equity Association identifies three separate parts of the job related to this one item: calling rehearsals, facilitating outside activities, and maintaining records. From the perspective of the actors, the stage manager needs to create a document that clearly and succinctly identifies the overall rehearsal and performance dates, when individual members of the cast will be needed during the rehearsal process, how outside activities such as costume fittings and publicity events fit into the mix, and where important milestones such as running the show or line-memorization deadlines will fall.

These details are all essential to the actors and yet bear minimal overlap with the needs of the other users who will depend on the calendar. Designers and other members of the production team will be concerned with overall rehearsal and performance dates, but only occasionally with information about actor milestones. A specific charting of the acting work is of little use to them. This second group does have their own distinct needs as well, which include design deadlines, the load-in dates, and any unavailable time in the theatre due to outside events or maintenance issues—which are of no specific concern to the actors.

And actors and production team members are not the only interested parties. The crew members who will join the production to execute the technical elements care nothing about the events that precede their employment, nor do they care what happens in the building when they are not there. The business office is typically more concerned with overall hours and weeks worked in order to process payroll than with the content of that work time. A director will be interested in seeing that all the actor specifics they generated have been correctly outlined. They will want to know when to expect work from the designers, and will likely need an additional set of publicity deadlines which may require the director's time and attention but not affect any of these other players.

Our simple calendar has now become an extremely complex item, and the stage manager faces the challenge of collecting and presenting this information in the most useful way to all of these groups.

So where do you begin?

The theatre is likely to have an overall production calendar that shows how multiple productions fit together into a single season. Unless you hold a supervisory position in your stage management department, you may play no role in creating this calendar. But you will most certainly want a copy.

THE PRODUCTION CALENDAR VERSUS THE ACTOR CALENDAR

Take a look at the page from a season calendar presented in Figure 3.1. It contains production information for two overlapping shows in two different theatres. As the stage manager for *Twelfth Night*, you are most concerned with the

details for that show. But if you share personnel with the production of *Galoshes* running at the beginning of the month, you can identify this as a time when those designers and technicians will have a decidedly split focus—and your show is probably not the priority. You do not need to do anything with this information now, but will want to remember it as that time approaches. (Note: *Galoshes* refers to a children's production of *Galoshes of Fortune* performed in the theatre's other performance space.)

The calendar outlines for you many important production details in your direct purview: deadlines for adding props and sound cues, crew meetings, and pre-scheduled runs of the show. If everyone on your production team has this general calendar, you may not need to recreate one for them. But make a note of these details so that you can help your team meet these deadlines.

Even if you could get access to the original file and delete the items not specific to your show, this would not be a good version of the calendar to distribute to your cast, however. It does not contain specifics about rehearsal. And simply replacing the *Galoshes* details with your rehearsal schedule will not create a usable document. You would end up with a calendar so overloaded with information that it would be difficult to navigate. It may be possible to make your font size small enough to fit everything in, but at what cost? If the calendar is too difficult to read, many won't invest time to do so. Instead, take the relevant details from this production calendar and create a version better suited for the actors.

Toland Theatre
FREDERICK THEATRE
Department of Theatre Arts
UW-L

UWL THEATRE
PRODUCTION CALENDAR 2010 2011

NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 12:05 Dept Mtg Galoshes Sound Load In Galoshes Hang	2	3 12:05 Twelfth Night Prod Mtg Galoshes Focus	4 Galoshes Focus	5 12:05 Galoshes Paper Tech 6pm Senior Show Galoshes Focus	6 Galoshes Cueing
7 Galoshes SM Load In	8 Frederick Theatre- Limited or No Class Availability	9	10	11	12	13

Galoshes Cueing *Daylight Savings* *Clocks 1 hour back*	12:05 Dept Mtg Galoshes Tech	Galoshes Dress	9:00, 11:00, 1:00 Galoshes 12:05 Twelfth Night Prod Mtg Twelfth Night Prelim Light Plot	9:00, 11:00, 1:00 Galoshes *Veterans Day*	9:00, 11:00, 1:00 Galoshes Photocall	11:00, 1:00 Galoshes Strike
14	15 12:05 Dept Mtg Twelfth Night Hang 5:00 Twelfth Night Crew Meeting Twelfth Night Run for LX	16 Twelfth Night Hang	17 12:05 Twelfth Night Prod Mtg Twelfth Night Final Light Plot Prop & Sound Add Deadline	18 Twelfth Night Early Reservations	19 6pm Senior Show	20
21	22 12:05 Dept Mtg Twelfth Night Focus	23 Twelfth Night Focus	24 Twelfth Night Paper Tech Twelfth Night Focus	25 Thanksgiving Break	26	27 Twelfth Night Cueing
28	29	30				

Twelfth Night SM Load In Twelfth Night Cueing	12:05 Dept Mtg Twelfth Night Box Office Opens Twelfth Night Tech	Twelfth Night Tech				

As of 8/19/10

Figure 3.1 A month from the UWL Theatre's production calendar.

Twelfth Night

Preliminary Rehearsal Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
October 24	25 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	26 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	27 Workshop 6:30–8:30 pm (cast required to attend – open to all majors/minors)	28 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	29 **6:00 pm Allyssa Senior Show** Rehearsal 7–10 pm	30
31	November 1 Rehearsal	2 Rehearsal	3 Rehearsal	4 Rehearsal	5 Rehearsal	6

	Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	
7 *Daylight Savings* *Clocks 1 hour back!*	8 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	9 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	10 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	11 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	12 Rehearsal 6:30–9:30 pm	13
14	15 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm Run through for Lights	16 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm OFF BOOK PART ONE	17 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	18 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm OFF BOOK PART TWO	19 **6:00 pm Tim & Donnie Senior Shows** Rehearsal 7:30 10 pm	20
21	15 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	15 Rehearsal 6:30 9:30 pm	24 Thanksgiving Break	25 Thanksgiving Break	26 Thanksgiving Break	27 Thanksgiving Break
28	29 **6–10 pm** **TECH REHEARSAL**	30 **6–10 pm** **TECH REHEARSAL**	December 1 **6–10 pm** **TECH REHEARSAL**	2 **10:00 am MATINEE** **Photo Call**	3 **7:30 pm Performance**	4 **Afternoon Put-in Rehearsal** **7:30 pm Performance**

						(Understudies)
5 2:00 pm Matinee	6	7	8	9 7:30 pm Performance	10 7:30 pm Performance	11 7:30 pm Performance
12 2:00 pm Matinee Strike						

As of 10/22/10

Specific Rehearsal Times are Subject to Change
Afternoon Calls for Costume Fittings, etc to be arranged

Figure 3.2 The rehearsal calendar for *Twelfth Night.*

Now evaluate actor calendar in Figure 3.2. You will notice several differences right from the start. First, this calendar has been set up to include the entire rehearsal and performance period on a single page, from mid-October to mid-December. Second, each rehearsal has a specific time. Items such as the Senior Shows, seemingly unrelated to *Twelfth Night* on the production calendar, do in fact impact rehearsal times. You will be scheduling around them. So they are worth including. The designer run on November 15 is an important landmark for the actors because it will be the first full run of the show, so it is transferred, as are notations of holidays and daylight-savings time. But you also want to include dates not appropriate for the general production calendar such as the off-book deadlines on November 16 and 18, which you learned from the director.

This is an ideal amount of information to provide actors at the beginning of the process, starting at auditions. Obviously, it does not have enough specifics to guide the work for individual nights of rehearsal. It is not attempting to do so. Once rehearsals begin, the stage manager will create subsequent weekly or daily rehearsal calls to communicate those specifics. Even if you have them at this point, they are not necessary inclusions.

FORMATTING THE CALENDAR

It may seem obvious, but the most important formatting consideration for a calendar is that it looks like a calendar! This means clearly identified months, weeks, and days. Whether you are creating a single page for each month or a multi-month calendar for your entire production process, both calendars make this information available and clear. To help denote that our sample actor calendar contains multiple months, simple shading has been used.

A typical Equity work week is six days, traditionally Tuesday through Sunday, with Monday as the day off. It may be tempting to move the Monday column to the far left so that each row of the calendar is a single work week for your show. But what happens when an actor takes your calendar and compares it to a work calendar or even a personal

calendar? Ultimately this will create more confusion than you intend. Visually the two will not line up, and the difference between an activity happening on a Tuesday versus a Wednesday could be quite problematic if misread.

DESIGNATED DAY OFF

Although the specific language varies slightly from contract to contract, Equity actors and stage managers are required to have a 24-hour period free from rehearsals or performances, in addition to any time specified between the end of one work day and the beginning of the next. If no day off is provided, overtime pay will be due. Aside from details related to handling the days around Thanksgiving and Christmas, when theatres might wish to schedule additional performances to take advantage of holiday crowds, Equity does not identify a specific day of the week that must be used for that day off. The Monday tradition relates to a pre-internet era when actors and stage managers were provided not just with time off, but time during which they could conduct personal business—going to the bank or a doctor's appointment, renewing a driver's license, and the like—that was often not possible on a weekend. Additionally, Saturdays and Sundays are popular days for patrons to attend theatre performances. It is far more common to see two shows on a weekend day than to see it as the regular day off.

Another visual aid is at play in the actor calendar, particularly during the performance weeks. Activities occur during two major blocks of time—during the day and at night. Evening performances are lined up lower in the cells than matinee performances, with the morning high school matinee placed above them all. Deadlines are listed above call times to keep them separate, also distinguished by one of the few uses of all capital letters. Italics are also used for other things of note that are important but not about the production.

The stage manager will find that the calendar is one of the most frequently needed items. You will print or copy it often. And because of this, color is often a poor formatting choice. At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the production calendar is primarily distributed electronically and is uploaded to two different theatre websites. It is printed and officially posted in only two locations. The calendar contains information for seven different productions as well as department events and holidays. The volume of information, and the fact that it is not routinely sent through a copier, makes the use of color appropriate to help differentiate the categories. Were this document primarily duplicated and distributed in hard copy, the color distinctions would be less effective. The department would either make different choices to separate individual categories of information or reluctantly accept that the printed version will always be less accessible than the electronic copy. In contrast, the actor calendar—almost exclusively shared in printed form—utilizes font style for emphasis. This is appropriate based on its distribution method.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CALENDAR PROGRAMS

A wide variety of computer programs exist today for creating and maintaining calendars. We can synchronize them across multiple computers or even with our phones, set up a series of reminders, and input recurring events by typing them once and clicking a series of boxes. But while these are all useful tools, it does not mean that calendar software is best for theatre productions.

The stage manager's primary concern is not how the calendar functions within a computer, but how well it works in its shared or printed-out form. If the computer program does not let you control the order in which events are listed on a day or doesn't like text-only details without a specific time, you might find that you are changing what you want to include in order to make it conform to what the calendar program thinks you need. Or what if the program limits how many events can be seen on a single day? When the stage manager is looking at a calendar on a computer and sees "plus 4 more" while in month view, it is easy enough to click that link and have the calendar transform itself to a week or day view to access those additional details. But in print, that link is useless and the additional information is lost.

I have personally tried and evaluated many different calendar programs over the course of my career, and despite many promises of ease, I find that control over both format and content is best found not in a calendar program at all. I create my calendars in either Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel, making use of templates I set up that can be

tweaked and customized to fit the needs of any production. Sample templates appear on this book's companion website, allowing you to spend time looking at how they are set up and adapt them for your own use.

ANALYZING THE PRODUCTION

After mining the calendar for details relevant to your show, the stage manager's next set of tasks during this pre-production time is related to the script itself. Before you can begin to understand what will make this particular production of the show unique, it is important to understand the basics presented on the page.

The stage manager should begin each project by simply reading the script. As difficult as it can be to turn off the part of the brain accustomed to seeking out details, start by absorbing the story and getting an overall sense of the show. With these general observations in hand, return to the script and now look for the specifics provided in the dialogue and stage directions, taking careful notes as you go.

It is essential for the stage manager to understand what the script dictates in order to accurately assess information about your production of it. It is helpful to have a consistent method for taking notes and a common format for recording your discoveries, but this is a tool not necessarily intended for distribution.

The chart in Figure 3.3 provides one method for capturing this information. In this setup, the stage manager can enter each fact as a separate row, noting it in the column or columns most appropriate. It is important to remember that you are simply cataloging your discoveries, not making decisions about them. Consider the following invented dialogue:

Mary: Gosh it's cold in here.
John: You can borrow that sweater if you want.
Mary: Thanks! I feel much better now.

From this dialogue we can infer that there is a sweater belonging to John somewhere on the stage and that Mary puts it on. The stage manager records this information. But all you know is that there is a sweater—not its color, fabrication, or style. Noting that John has a blue cardigan on your chart would be filling in details not provided by the script.

In other instances, it may not be clear to whom a certain detail belongs. When working on a production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, the stage manager will discover a stage direction in Act Two that details Treplev's entrance "carrying a gun and a dead seagull." The gun itself can be entered on the chart as a prop in the show. A subsequent stage direction in Act Four tells the stage manager that the "sound of a shot offstage" is heard. This effect should also be noted. But does this sound come from the gun you noted in Act Two, a starter pistol fired in the wings, or a recorded sound effect played through a location-specific speaker? Because the stage manager may not know which method will be used, it is best to record the gunshot as both a possible sound effect and a possible functional weapon for now, because two separate production areas would be responsible for executing this effect.

The Tempest

Production Analysis

Act/Scene	Page	Character/Costume	Set/Dressing	Lights	Props	Sound	Other/Questions
					Antonio and *Sebastian*	*Ariel* sings another	

2.1	38				take out their swords	song to the men	
2.2	39				Pile of wood that *Caliban* carries in	A noise of thunder heard	
	40	*Trinculo* enters and covers himself with his cloak	Stated that there are no bushes or shrubs on the island			Wind whistling; another noise of thunder is heard	*Trinculo* states he can see a huge black cloud
	41	*Trinculo* crawls under *Caliban's* garment; *Stephano* enters			*Stephano's* wine bottle		
3.1	46		A possible pile of logs that *Ferdinand* has stacked up already?		*Ferdinand* carries a log		
3.2	52	*Stephano* strikes *Trinculo*					
	54					*Ariel* plays a tune on a drum and a pipe	
3.3	56	*Several strange Shapes* enter and dance silently	A banquet appears			Solemn and stage music	*Prospero* invisible How will the banquet appear?
	58	*Ariel* is stated having wings	The banquet disappears	Lightning	Swords are drawn by all onstage in fear of *Ariel*	Thunder and lightning	How will the banquet disappear?
	59	*Strange Shapes* appear again and dance				Thunder for exit	*Ariel* vanishes
4.1	62					Soft music plays	
	63	*Iris* enters; *Juno* enters; *Ceres* enters	*Juno's* chariot appears from above and descends				*Juno* enters from above? Will *Ceres* be played by *Ariel*
	64					*Juno* and *Ceres* sing	
	66	*Nymphs* enter; *Reapers* enter				*Nymphs* and *Reapers* share a dance	Music to the dance? How many *Reapers* and *Nymphs*?

Figure 3.3 An excerpt of a Production Analysis for *The Tempest* created by stage manager Quinn Masterson.

This completed analysis serves as an excellent reference tool for the stage manager's early meetings with the production team. In an academic setting the stage manager may be in attendance for design discussions, while in a professional setting he or she may join the process much later on. Regardless of the scenario, the stage manager can refer to these notes during meetings. If the gun is discussed, for example, with no mention of how the shot will be handled, the stage manager has created a reminder to ask if a decision has been made about the cue. And while this may be an obvious question to ask on a production of this particular play, the stage manager should not expect to memorize every detail of every element in the show. Using the notes helps ensure that details are not forgotten—or not forgotten to be shared with you.

Once your analysis is supplemented with answers either from formal meetings or informal conversations with the director or designers, you will be ready to create paperwork for your full production team based on this chart. It is unlikely that you will be asked to make a preliminary light cue list based on the information the script contains, but the stage manager is very involved in the creation and maintenance of the prop list, and, in some theatres, may create the initial version of the sound cue sheet. The stage manager's specific responsibility for such paperwork will differ from theatre to theatre, so be sure that you are clear on what is expected of you.

Twelfth Night

Character/Scene Breakdown

		1-1 Orsino's Palace first day, early morning			1-2 Illyrian Coast simultaneous with 1-1			1-3 Inside Olivia's House simultaneous with 1-1 and 1-2					1-4 Orsino's Palace early morning 3 days after Orsino & Cesario meet		
		3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	13	14
Justin Cooke	Orsino	+X	X	X-									+X	X	X-
Matthew Matuseski	Sebastian														
Kevin Tanshaw	Antonio														
Jacob Gustine	Sir Toby Belch							+X	X	X	X	X-			
Tim McCarren	Sir Andrew Aguecheek								+X	X	X	X-			
Andrew Kelly	Malvolio														
Donnie Mezera	Fabian														

Alden Hedges	Feste														
Allyssa Dunn	Olivia														
Claire Ganshert	Viola				+X	X	X						+X	X	X
Amy Nelson	Maria							+X	X	X	X	X-			
Jacob Voss	Sea Captain, Priest				(SC)	SC	SC-								
Austin Hernandez	Valentine Sailor 3, Officer 1		+V	V-		+S	S-						+V	V	V-
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2	+C	C	C-		+S	S-						+C	C	C-
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	+L	L-		+S	S	S-						+L	L	L-
Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4	+L	L	L-									+L	L	L-
Emily Ware	Olivia Attendant 1														
Lindsay Van Normar	Olivia Attendant 2														
Suzanne Clum	Musician 1	+X	X												
Shelby Krarup	Musician 2	+X	X-												

X Onstage, +X Enter, X- Exit, +X- Enter/ Exit, (X) Onstage "hiding"
Other initials indicate ensemble character

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Figure 3.4 The character/scene breakdown for *Twelfth Night.*

THE CHARACTER/SCENE BREAKDOWN

KEY USERS

- Director and stage management team
- Cast
- Costume designer
- Sound designer/engineer on a musical

WHAT IT CONTAINS

- The actors in the show and the roles they play
- The scenes in the play broken down by page
- Scene nicknames or descriptions developed by the director or SM
- Songs and references to score pages (for a musical)

WHY DO IT?

- To develop a more specific rehearsal schedule
- To identify who may have fast costume changes
- To identify who might be available to help with scene changes
- To discover any incidental characters not yet cast

CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS

Much like the full production calendar, the character/scene breakdown is a detailed document. It is intended to present a comprehensive look at when the actors will appear on stage. Your key challenge as a stage manager is to make the breakdown easy to navigate, since you will intentionally include a great deal of information.

The breakdown is best organized as a chart. The use of defined rows and columns will enable you to be consistent in how you enter the specifics. This is not a case where you are striving for someone to quickly glance at the paperwork and learn what they need to know—here you are trying to consolidate many facts in a single location.

Listing Your Cast

If you are stage managing a play or musical in which each actor plays only a single role for the entire production, you could limit your name listing to a single column of only the character names. If, however, some or all of your actors play multiple roles, you will need to list both actor names and character names. One of the goals of this document is to help identify when costume changes will occur, and if characters are not consolidated by actor, you will miss out on this.

Take a look at the two-column name listing in the *Twelfth Night* breakdown in Figure 3.4. It is organized with principal actors at the top and ensemble members below. Although only half the cast plays multiple roles, the breakdown is set up based on the most complex casting, not the least.

Scenes Versus Pages

It would, of course, save you both time and paper to include only columns for the individual scenes rather than a page-by-page listing. But as was true for listing only character names, this would require you to omit some information.

Observe the detail provided in the *Twelfth Night* breakdown for the five male ensemble cast members excerpted in Figure 3.5. All five appear in Scene One, Scene Two, or both. A breakdown organized by scene would provide the bare minimum of information. The stage manager might guess that fast costume changes would be required but would not know exactly when.

The page-by-page listing shows us that Austin and Luke are on stage at the end of Scene One, entering late into Scene Two after a potential costume change. In contrast, Brian exits early from the first scene and appears at the top of Scene Two. We can now tell that any costume changes will take place very close to one another as well as very quickly (a single page each) but not all simultaneously. The stage management team can see it will need to spend time asking questions about this part of the show early in the rehearsal process and work with the costume shop to prepare the actors and backstage areas.

In this production, the actors helped to transform the stage by moving scenic pieces on and off the stage. The breakdown also facilitates identifying the most logical actor to help strike scenery (Don) or bring on new pieces (Jacob). Although both actors play multiple roles, neither will be involved in a costume change during this shift. And while it is not your job to dictate these decisions to the production team, you need to be prepared to answer questions about available actors when the director or scenic designer asks.

The stage manager virtually never has input into the crew hired for a show, but is sometimes asked about the production's needs while that crew is assembled by the technical director or production manager. If we continue to follow the rows across the page, we can see that three of the ensemble men will need to change back before reappearing on stage in Scene Four. But unlike the first change, they now have an entire scene five pages long to do

so. The costume crew will need to efficiently reset the costumes after the fast changes, but may not need to provide assistance this time—freeing them for other duties that may be required and impacting the potential number of technicians.

		I-1 Orsino's Palace: first day, early morning			I-2 Illyrian Coast: simultaneous with I-1			I-3 Inside Olivia's House: simultaneous with I-1 and I-2					I-4 Orsino's Palace: early morning 3 days after Orsino & Cesario meet		
		3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	13	14
Jacob Voss	Sea Captain, Priest				+SC	SC	SC-								
Austin Hernandez	Valentine Sailor 3, Officer 1		+V	V-		+S	S-						+V	V	V-
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2	+C	C	C-		+S	S-						+C	C	C-
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	+L	L-		+S	S	S-						+L	L	L-
Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4	+L	L	L-									+L	L	L-

Figure 3.5 A close-up of the male ensemble actors.

Page Numbers

If you look carefully at the row including the script page numbers, you will notice that numbers occasionally repeat. It is rare to find a script where the scene break never falls in the middle of a page. By repeating the page numbers that have scene splits on them, you are prepping yourself for easier formatting. More about that later.

Identifying Scenes and Locations

The case has been made for listing out all page numbers. However, this does not mean that individual scenes should not also be detailed. We still need to know where we are in the play! Insert a row to contain scene names and numbers immediately above the page listing.

In this production, time was of great importance to the director; this sample breakdown goes a step further. A significant portion of the first design meeting was devoted to discussions about when the individual scenes occur. Although these notes were included in the meeting minutes, the stage manager repeated this information into the breakdown so that the designers could look in a single place and know when and where we are, along with who is on stage.

Key

Organizing the breakdown by page means that the stage manager can detail not only who is in a scene but also when they enter and exit, if they appear on stage but do not speak, if they sing from the wings, and other specific details. The character/scene breakdown can be thought of as a map of the script and, as such, needs a key (Figure 3.6). This ensures that everyone reading the document can understand it.

A simple X will suffice for making entries for principal characters playing a single role—we need to know only if the character is present. Our multi-role ensemble members need a bit more detail. The simplest way to achieve this is to replace the X with a role-specific letter abbreviation (one that should coordinate with your blocking key).

X Onstage, +X Enter, X- Exit, +X- Enter/ Exit, (X) Onstage "hiding"

Other initials indicate ensemble character

Figure 3.6 The breakdown key.

Why note something like "hiding"? To ensure that no one is omitted from a rehearsal call. When flipping quickly through the script, it might be possible to forget that someone is onstage if the character has not spoken for several pages. That character may, however, still have an important function in the scene. By noting the actor is present but silent, the stage manager is prepared to ask the director if the actor should be called for a particular rehearsal. The focus of that day—blocking versus text work, for example—may prompt different answers from the director.

As you gain experience, you will develop a method to transition with you from show to show, but be ready to address each production's new requirements, and be willing to add or adapt your previous documentation.

FORMATTING THE BREAKDOWN

As mentioned earlier, this breakdown is best formatted as a chart. Depending on the stage manager's software savvy, it can be done in either a spreadsheet or word-processing table. Both provide the separation into rows and columns necessary to navigate the details.

This chart is laid out in landscape format, providing the stage manager sufficient room for the scene details, the two-column cast listing, and a reasonable number of script pages to be laid out horizontally. There is also room for the key, page numbers, and version information while still maintaining enough white space so the document is not overwhelming.

Look at the difference were the document to be set up in portrait format as seen in Figure 3.7. By the time the chart heading information is repeated, the page has become crowded and more difficult to read. It might be possible to squeeze a few more individual pages of the script onto this page of the chart, but the stage manager does so at the expense of accessibility.

To make enough room for the necessary number of rows, their height has been decreased, crowding the text. In order to maintain minimal margins on right and left, Scene Five no longer fits on a single page. This would mean either repeating the scene heading information on the next page or paginating the document such that all of Scene Five falls on page two, leaving a large empty space at the bottom of page one. For shows with cast sizes similar to ours, there is little benefit to choosing the portrait orientation.

That does not mean that the portrait-oriented breakdown will never be the best choice. For a show with a much larger cast like the musical *Big Fish*, maintaining landscape orientation would mean that you could not fit all of the characters on a single page. Remember what we saw with our calendar—if the information is not accessible, it is like you haven't provided it at all.

Twelfth Night

Character/Scene Breakdown

	1-1 Orsino's Palace	1-2 Illyrian Coast	1-3 Inside Olivia's House

		first day, early morning			simultaneous with 1-1			simultaneous with 1-1 and 1-2				
		3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Justin Cooke	Orsino	+X	X	X-								
Matthew Matuseski	Sebastian											
Kevin Fanshaw	Antonio											
Jacob Gustine	Sir Toby Belch							+X	X	X	X	X-
Tim McCarren	Sir Andrew Aguecheek								+X	X	X	X-
Andrew Kelly	Malvolio											
Dominic Mezera	Fabian											
Alden Hedges	Feste											
Allyssa Dunn	Olivia											
Claire Ganshert	Viola				+X	X	X-					
Amy Nelson	Maria							+X	X	X	X	X-
Jacob Voss	Sea Captain, Priest				+SC	SC	SC-					
Austin Hernandez	Valentine Sailor 3, Officer 1		+V	V-		+S	S-					
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2	+C	C	C-		+S	S-					
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	+L	L		+S	S	S-					
Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4	+L	L	L-								
Emily Ware	Olivia Attendant 1											
Lindsay Van Norman	Olivia Attendant 2											
Suzanne Clum	Musician 1	+X	X-									
Shelby Krarup	Musician 2	+X	X-									

		1-4 Orsino's Palace early morning 3 days after Orsino & Cesario meet			1-5 Inside Olivia's House one hour after 1-4 *(scene continues on next page)*							
		12	13	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

Justin Cooke	Orsino	+X	X	X-								
Matthew Matuseski	Sebastian											
Kevin Fanshaw	Antonio											
Jacob Gustine	Sir Toby Belch								+X-			
Tim McCarren	Sir Andrew Aguecheek											
Andrew Kelly	Malvolio					+X	X	X-	+X	X-		
Donnie Mezera	Fabian											
Alden Hedges	Feste				+X	X-	X	X-	X-			
Allyssa Dunn	Olivia					+X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Claire Ganshert	Viola	+X	X	X-						+X	X	X
Amy Nelson	Maria				+X	X-		+X-		+X	X	X-
Jacob Voss	Sea Captain, Priest											
Austin Hernandez	Valentine Sailor 3, Officer 1	+V	V	V-								
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2	+C	C	C-								
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	+L	L	L-								
Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4	+L	L	L-								
Emily Ware	Olivia Attendant 1					+X	X	X	X	X	X	X-
Lindsay Van Norman	Olivia Attendant 2					+X	X	X	X	X	X	X-
Suzanne Clum	Musician 1											
Shelby Krarup	Musician 2											

X Onstage, +X Enter, X- Exit, +X- Enter/ Exit, (X) Onstage "hiding"

Other initials indicate ensemble character

Figure 3.7 The breakdown set up in portrait view.

Whenever you are creating a document intentionally filled with detail, it is essential to help the reader navigate it. An unshaded chart is devoid of focus, and people receiving this breakdown will have to work to find the information they are looking for. Simply by introducing shading, you help focus the reader's eye.

This breakdown uses vertical shading to help distinguish individual scenes. The reader can easily find the relevant scene and then locate the actor in question. You can now see why we repeated the page numbers. Because the duplicates fall into different shading zones, it is not distracting. But we have avoided having to do one more formatting step by splitting those cells and trying to line up the outside margins.

Consider the alternative offered by the chart in Figure 3.8. In this case, the shading separates individual actors. And while it may be simpler to follow the rows across the page, it is more difficult to find where scenes begin and end. And overall, the "striped" version is busier. We haven't helped the reader's eye—we have added a layer of distraction.

Twelfth Night

Character/Scene Breakdown

		1-1 Orsino's Palace first day, early morning			1-2 Illyrian Coast simultaneous with 1-1			1-3 Inside Olivia's House simultaneous with 1-1 and 1-2					1-4 Orsino's Palace early morning 3 days after Orsino & Cesario meet		
		3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	13	14
Justin Cooke	Orsino	+X	X	X-									+X	X	X-
Matthew Matuszski	Sebastian														
Kevin Tanshaw	Antonio														
Jacob Gustine	Sir Toby Belch							+X	X	X	X	X-			
Tim McCarren	Sir Andrew Aguecheek								+X	X	X	X-			
Andrew Kelly	Malvolio														
Donnie Mezera	Fabian														
Alden Hedges	Feste														
Allyssa Dunn	Olivia														
Claire Ganshert	Viola				+X	X	X-						+X	X	X-
Amy Nelson	Maria							+X	X	X	X	X-			
[illegible]	[illegible]				[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]								

Jacob Voss	Sea Captain, Priest				+SC	SC	SC-								
Austin Hernandez	Valentine Sailor 3, Officer 1		+V	V-		+S	S-						+V	V	V-
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2	+C	C	C-		+S	S-						+C	C	C-
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	+L	L-		+S	S	S-						+L	L	L-
Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4	+L	L	L-									+L	L	L-
Emily Ware	Olivia Attendant 1														
Lindsay Van Norman	Olivia Attendant 2														
Suzanne Clum	Musician 1	+X	X-												
Shelby Krarup	Musician 2	+X	X-												

X Onstage, +X Enter, X- Exit, +X- Enter / Exit, (X) Onstage "hiding"

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Figure 3.8 The breakdown with horizontal shading.

The scene distinction is further reinforced by merging cells at the top of the page. Notice that the cells above pages three through five are merged into one. This instantly identifies them as a single scene, and, as a bonus, gives you a bit of extra room for your text.

Shading Versus Color

Ultimately the same visual help could be achieved by the subtle introduction of colored columns. As long as the color is not too dark to interfere with the text itself, it can be successful. Choosing between shading and color is determined by distribution format. For example, this breakdown will be distributed to all of the cast members, as well as the SM team, the director, and the costume shop—at this theatre just shy of thirty individuals.

Remember the practicalities of document design first introduced in Chapter 2. Do you have a color photocopier? Does your theatre or department allow unlimited copies? If both answers are yes, then color might be a reasonable option. But if either answer is no, consider how you will produce all the copies. If you print one in color and then copy it in black and white, you've defeated the purpose of using color in the first place. And if the color is too light to copy, then you will end up with an unshaded document.

Does the SM team have a color printer? How much ink will you waste trying to print thirty copies of a seven-page chart? And what happens when changes are made and you need to distribute an updated version?

It is easy, as a new stage manager, to think that color is the answer—that it makes your paperwork look pretty and, therefore, more professional. But stylish does not always mean practical. Remember that one of the stage manager's goals is to work efficiently to communicate the information they have. Wasting time and money is not efficient.

That being said, you will notice the introduction of a color logo on the *Big Fish* breakdown in Figure 3.9. For this production, most of the information was distributed electronically to the design team. This meant no major drain on color ink cartridges.

The logo was also tested on the copier and was minimally impacted by grayscale. The breakdown could be distributed in hard copy to the actors. The color was also used only as an accent rather than as an essential

navigational tool. It helped to provide continuity among all the pieces of production paperwork, but the loss of color in the logo, when printed in black and white, did not hamper the accessibility of the document.

What does this mean? Know the rules but also when it is okay to break them!

EXTRA CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MUSICAL

When stage managing a musical, the stage manager will have two "scripts" to consider—the libretto and the score. No matter what form the script in your prompt book takes, it is essential that you are able to communicate with everyone. You will need to know both scenes and songs, and page numbers in both of these books.

Big Fish

Character/Scene Breakdown Version 3

ACT ONE		1-3 The Swamp										1-4 Near Banks of River			
		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
John Divney	Edward Bloom	x	x-+	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x-	x	x	x-	
Grant Latus	Will Bloom										+x	x	x	x	x
Jenna Moilanen	Sandra Bloom												+x	x	x
Owen Scott	Young Will	x-						+x	x	x	x-				
Megan Roddy	Josephine Bloom (S2)														
Willie Pearson	Karl					(o)	(o)	(o)							
Gabe Ross	Amos Calloway					(o)	(o)	(o)							
Shane Flaningam	Don Price	+x	x-+	x	x	x-									
Violet Englebert	Witch (S2)		+x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x-				
Alexis Cimoch	Jenny Hill, Young Jenny														
Sarah Coppenbarger	Girl in the Water (S3)														
Morgan Gates	Dr. Bennett, Judge														

Gabe Burdette	Zacky Price	+x	x-+	x	x	x-	(o)	(o)							
Reed Schwender	Mayor, Wedding Guest, NY Doctor, Don's Buddy, Soldier, Cowboy														
Isaac Eugster	Fisherman, New Yorker, Farmer, Acrobat, Don's Buddy, Gen.Patterson, Cowboy					(o)	(o)	(o)							
Cullen Gaffy	Red Fang, Wedding Guest, Barber, Tiny Tux guy, Cowboy														
Oliver Olson	Scout, Will's Son, NY Kid														
Evan Medd	Wedding Guest, New Yorker, Milkman, Soldier, Cowboy													+WG-	
Delaney Scudella	Alabama Lamb, Wedding Guest, USO Singer, Saloon Girl, Nurse														
Maddie Stoffel	Alabama Lamb, Wedding Guest, USO Dancer, Saloon Girl, New Yorker ($1)														
Sarah Lambert	Teacher, Witch, Redhead,USO Dancer, Prairie Girl		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				
Leah Williams	Witch, Girl with Cat, Redhead, Farm Girl, USO Singer, Prairie Girl		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				
Megan Gunderson	Hilbilly, Witch, USO Singer, Prairie Girl		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				
Carly Boles	Cheerleader, Witch, Waitress, New Yorker, Hula Hoop, Saloon Girl		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				
Caitlyn Nettesheim	Wedding Guest, Cheerleader, Redhead, USO Dancer, Prairie Girl ($3)														
Katie Piper	New Yorker, Arabian, USO Dancer, Prairie Girl, Wedding Date														
Tess Douty	Witch, Aunt Bea, Prairie Girl		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				
Emma Henry	Circus Doll, Witch, Cheerleader, Prairie Girl ($1)		+W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W-				

	Girl (31)														
Matt Rightmire	Juggler														
						#3 I Know What You Want			#3A					#4 AL Wedding	
	score pages					41-51			52-3					60-66	

x Onstage, +x Enter, x- Exit, +x- Enter/ Exit, (x) "Frozen" onstage, (o) Sing/speak offstage
Ensemble Characters denoted by initials, (S#) is mic swap

Figure 3.9 The character/scene breakdown for *Big Fish*—a musical with designated scenes.

The **prompt book** is the stage manager's binder, which contains copies of all paperwork for an individual production, along with the copy of the script in which you will record blocking and cues. Chapter 4 discusses the prompt book and prompt script in detail.

The *Big Fish* character/scene breakdown shows you how to incorporate this additional information. It will affect both content and format. Because the actors and director work primarily from the libretto, those page numbers are located on the top. And because this musical has defined scenes, they are clearly delineated with the same cell merging and shading we saw in the play breakdown.

Music-specific information is found at the bottom of the chart. Just as we did for scene details, cells are merged to help distinguish individual songs, identified both by song number and title. Score pages are included, and, by placing them below the song titles, they are easy to read and not lost in the chart.

Notice what happens when a song is short. A single cell is far too small to say "#3A I Know What You Want Reprise." Rather than repeating the libretto page numbers or increasing the width of the column solely for the sake of making room for the full title, the stage manager has opted to include only the song number. It is short enough to fit, and logical because the composer's numbering automatically implies a relationship to the previous song.

MULTITASKING TIP

The SM can use the character/scene breakdown to make rehearsals more efficient for all. The chart makes it clear that several actors will not be needed when the early pages of the script are rehearsed, and also points out actors with smaller blocks of time.

If you are spending a rehearsal day on Act One, Scene Three, then a request from the costume shop to see the actress playing Josephine Bloom would be easily accommodated. But what about a request for Amos Calloway? The breakdown makes it clear that he is offstage for the entire scene, but he sings offstage during the song. If you will be choreographing the song on that day, then it might be reasonable to schedule him for a fitting as well—learning choreography is a complex process that takes more time than blocking and will not involve offstage character. But if you are working through the scene and the song, then the four pages when he is offstage will pass quickly, and he probably does not have time to go anywhere other than the green room until you reach Scene 4.

RENT

Revised Character /Scene Breakdown

Act One		1 - Tune Up A		1a - Voice Mail #1		2 - Tune Up B				3- Rent						4 - Xxmas Bells #1	5 - You Okay, Honey?		6 - Tune Up Reprise
	Score Pages	1–2		3		4–7				8–25						26	27–31		32–33
	Libretto Page	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	6	6	7	8	9	10	11	11	11	12	13
Justin Cooke	Mark	+X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(X)	(X)	(X)	X-
Zachary Keenan	Roger	+X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(X)	(X)	(X)	X
Brandon Harris	Tom Collins					+X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X-
Paul Hibbard	Angel									+X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X-
Lance Newton	Benny						+X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X-				
Samantha Pauley	Mimi									+X	X	X	X	X	X-				
Hope Parow	Joanne										+X	X	X	X	X-				
Katie Bakalars	Maureen									+X	X	X	X	X	X-				
Mark Sopchyk	Gordon/Rent Man/Season Solo/Cop/Ens									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Sarah Shervey	Ali/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Lindsay Van Norman	Pam/Seasons Solo/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Elizabeth Metz	Sue/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Austin Hernandez	Steve/The Man/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Jake Voss	Homeless/Junkie/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Laura Tracy	Homeless/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Donnie Mezera	Blanket Person/Junkie/Ensemble						+H-			E	E	E	E	E	E				
Margaret Teshner	Homeless/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Dan Liska	Homeless/Bells Solo/Ensemble						+H-			E	E	E	E	E	E	+H-			

Matthew Matuseski	Paul/Vendor 1/Pastor/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Shannon McDonald	Vendor 2/Mrs. J/Moon Backup/Ens									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Christine Walth	Coat Vendor/Mrs. Cohen/Ensemble			+MC	MC-					E	E	E	E	E	E				
Nicky Hilsen	Alexi D/Moon Backup/Mimi Mom/Ens									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Andrew Kelly	Mr. Jefferson/Cop/Mr. Grey/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				
Amy Nelson	Roger's Mom/Cop/Ensemble									E	E	E	E	E	E				

X Onstage, +X Enter, X- Exit, +X- Enter/ Exit, (X) Onstage no lines

Version 2: 6/21/10 Other initials indicate ensemble character Ensemble may be added to additional scenes Page 1 of 5

Figure 3.10 A musical with no formal scenes. In this instance, songs are the most logical division markers.

Not all musicals have the traditional book format. Consider a musical like *Rent* with no formal scenes within the acts. In this case, the script divisions—and likely the rehearsal schedule—will be based on songs. The *Rent* example in Figure 3.10 shows the songs now in a place of prominence at the top of the chart.

Because there is only one row devoted to text-based subdivisions of the play, the page numbers in libretto and score have also been placed closer together. Separating them at the top and bottom of the page isn't necessary in this instance. But there are formatting tricks still at work. The score page line is in italics, giving it visual distinction from the libretto page line. And further clarity comes from centering the page numbers so that they are not directly in line with the row below.

DISTRIBUTION

The character/scene breakdown is a document you are likely to distribute both electronically and in hard copy. This means you will need to keep both sets of distribution rules in mind.

Production team members are overrun with paper, and, while the breakdown will be a useful document, it is not something they will look at every day. Sending it out via email or posting it on a show website will help ensure they can find it when they need it. So remember the electronic rules and consider the following:

- You've put a lot of time into finding the proper balance between text and white space, and between a title font with personality and a body font with legibility. But what if the recipients don't have your fonts installed? Will the document still be legible?
- Every computer will default to its own printer settings, not the settings of the printer attached to the document's creator. Your formatting work can easily get lost. Will the accessibility of the information be affected by a change in the available print area?

The PDF is the best choice for this document. You can guarantee that everyone will receive the information as you intend. And as a bonus, it doesn't matter if the computer is Mac or PC, new or old.

A third factor supporting the PDF is its *usability*. The character/scene breakdown is not an interactive document. You don't actually want anyone other than the SM team to make changes on their own. It's too complex a document to have multiple versions being independently edited. The PDF (with version number and date) creates a snapshot of what you know on the day it is created. Once changes have happened in rehearsal, you can update the document and email or post a new version.

But remember that your actors are much more likely to read something you put in their hands. They will want a printed version. This makes it much easier for them to study it in conjunction with their script. So once you are done

with the chart and think you have found a good font at a good size, appropriate shading, and well-balanced rows and columns, print out a page and send it through the copier. If it still communicates the information as effectively as the original, you have found a winning combination.

MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR

Once the stage manager has completed the first round of theatre and script investigation, it is time to meet with the director. You are now ready to ask show-specific questions and find out about the director's preferences and rehearsal needs. Even if you have a prior working relationship with the director of your show, it is advisable to carve out time for this meeting. You will always have a few questions to ask, and this also provides an opportunity to discuss if anything should be handled differently from previous productions.

If you have not worked with this director before, then this, in a way, is a second job interview. The director may not have been involved in your selection. You have the job—and you want to keep it! Beginning the working relationship with clear communication and mutual understanding will pave the way for successful interaction as things get more complicated.

With that in mind, review your notes and prioritize the information you need right now. Over the course of your career, you will develop a standard list of questions to be answered, which can serve as your starting point. If you do not have such a list yet, use the following information to create one.

SHOW INFORMATION

General thoughts. Before launching into your list of questions, allow the director to talk about the show in general terms. The focus of the director's comments can tell you which characters, scenic elements, or moments in the play they consider the most important. This can guide you later on as you schedule time for rehearsing that scene or consider how to word a note in a report.

Specific details. Get clarification about the questions in your production analysis. Now is when you can discover if the gunshot should be live or recorded, and if that has been discussed with the production team yet. Are there aspects of the show that will be different from other productions and necessitate rehearsal time, or items not immediately clear when reading the script? Do you need information to help you complete your character/scene breakdown? Do you need information about audition materials?

Current needs. Is the director waiting for information from any member of the production team that you can help acquire? Which pieces of your preliminary paperwork would the director like to see? To see before distributed to others?

Rehearsal hours. In an academic setting, this would be the general rehearsal hours (if not standardized) and any planned deviations from that schedule. In an Equity setting, this would include preferences for the short or long day, if allowed under your contract.

Overall plan for rehearsals. Will the director begin with a read-through of the show? Will there be any days devoted to table work? How does the director approach blocking—putting a show quickly up on its feet or taking time for exploration before setting the movement? When should the actors be off-book? When does the director hope to see actors working with props? If this is a musical, how will the need for music, staging, and choreography rehearsal time be balanced?

Breaks and time. Will the director create a detailed schedule for the process or communicate priorities and let you work out the details? Does the director have a preference for five- or ten-minute breaks? How should you notify him or her when the break is due: a reminder slightly in advance or stopping rehearsal and calling it on your own? If a scheduled rehearsal is running past its allotted time, should you let the rehearsal continue or alert the director?

BREAKS

Actors' Equity Association specifies the length of the breaks given to actors while in rehearsal—five minutes after 55 minutes of work or ten minutes after 80 minutes of work. An exception exists when running the show. Performers may complete a full act before stopping, receiving a 15-minute break if the act exceeded 80 minutes long. Many academic theatres use these breaks as a guideline for handling stops in their own rehearsals as part of their efforts to train actors and stage managers for professional work.

The room. Does the director have preferences for how the room is set up? If the complete groundplan cannot be taped on the floor, is there an area best omitted or condensed?

Guests and visitors. Are rehearsals closed? Are there any specific periods of time when even production team members might be asked not to stop by?

Special needs. Are there specific items the director likes to have in rehearsal? This could range from dramaturgical reference materials to a favorite snack food on stressful days.

Allow yourself sufficient time for the meeting and choose a location free from distraction. You hope to receive the director's full attention as you ask questions, and you certainly don't want to be distracted yourself by the surroundings. At the end of the meeting, be clear about your next steps. If you promise to get information for the director or provide copies of your paperwork, do so promptly. If the director needs to provide things for you, determine if a reminder is warranted. Some directors may request a call or email—especially if they are working on multiple shows. Others may find this just a bit too micromanaging. And if you cannot tell what is needed, there is never harm in sending a quick email after the meeting to thank the director for making time for you and reiterating how much you are looking forward to the show. Even without listing the things you are waiting for, this may be enough of a reminder!

MEETING THE PRODUCTION TEAM

If the director does not have all the answers you need, or if there are details requiring input or clarification from the designers, you can repeat the aforementioned scenario and request time to meet with members of your production team. Be sure to find out if there is a production meeting scheduled in the near future. If so, these questions can simply become agenda items or follow-up questions after the meeting ends.

If there is no production meeting scheduled soon, and you get the sense that important decisions still need to be made, check with the production manager or your supervisor/advisor. You might need to call for a meeting, send a group email, or take other actions to unite the players sooner than was intended.

THE PROP LIST

After meeting with the director and designers, the stage manager should have answers to the show-specific questions generated during analysis of the script and can now generate and distribute paperwork to the team. First up is the prop list. Your prop list should contain both the relevant information from the script and the details about this individual production, so it is worth waiting until you can satisfy both of these objectives before sending it out.

KEY USERS

- Director and SM team
- Scenic designer and assistants
- Props master
- Costume designer or assistant if there are relevant items

WHAT IT CONTAINS

- Page number

- Item
- Details about who uses it and what happens to it

WHY DO IT?

- To provide a complete listing of the furniture and actor-handled items in the show
- To identify overlap items (such as umbrellas) so they can be claimed by the correct department
- To facilitate budgeting in the props department by noting consumables or specialty items
- To set up a method for updating these details throughout the rehearsal process

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Before setting out to create the prop list, the stage manager should find out if the theatre has a preferred format for the document. In a department or company with multiple productions at a time, the props personnel may find it simpler to have all lists conform to a single setup, so that their work can focus on seeing the details and not learning how to navigate the page. If this is the case, you are wise to use the provided format. If none is provided for you, or if that sort of consistency is not relevant, then the organization of the information is up to you.

In either case, this is both a detail document and an interactive one. The stage manager's goal is to provide a comprehensive accounting of the items needed for the show. The list will be updated regularly throughout the process, so that it always contains the most up-to-date information.

The simple format shown in Figure 3.11 provides a method for recording all of the needs of the production. It contains a few theatre-specific columns, but ones that are worth considering as good general additions. Column three provides a place for a quick reference as to whether or not a prop is consumable. This can aid a props department in accurately budgeting for the item, and the SM team in making sure there are adequate quantities available.

A **consumable** prop is one that will be used up during a single performance. This may refer to food or drink eaten each night, but can also identify a piece of paper that is ripped up, a candle that is lit on stage and may not survive the entire run, or anything else that would need to be restocked.

The theatre for which this prop list was developed also likes to be able to track progress on the document. The R and A columns provide check boxes to mark when a suitable rehearsal item is provided, as well as when the actual show prop is acquired. The "source" column allows for noting a specific location in the prop storage room or details about a rental. The stage manager may never enter information here, but an interactive document should be set up for all users. I have also worked for theatres that like to include budget information on the prop list as well, foregoing the need for a second sheet to track costs.

For a show with multiple locations, it may be useful to provide some further subdivision on the prop list as shown in Figure 3.12. While a show like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* takes place in a single locale, *Twelfth Night* features several settings. Rather than including the setting to which each prop belongs in the notes column, a location subheading provides that information for a set of props, allowing that notes column to contain other information.

It is also important to note that the choice to work in this level of scene-related specificity necessitates being consistent. Although II-2 has no prop requirements initially, in this instance it is clearer to list the scene with no props than to skip over it and leave the props personnel wondering if the scene is prop-free or was inadvertently omitted. Similarly, because the furniture pieces were repeated for each location—but not identically—it was worth clarifying that. The use of italics draws attention to the fact that these are repeat items and not additional requirements.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

PRELIMINARY PROP LIST

Page	*Prop*	*C*	*Character*	*Notes*	*R*	*A*	*Source*
FURNITURE/SCENIC ITEMS							
	Trash cans/garbage barrel			Multiple, possibly danced on			
	Outdoor bench						
	Refrigerator						
	Antique dentist's chair						
	(3) Stools			2 work table, 1 counter			
	Counter						
	Work table			Old			
	Coat rack						
	Shiny new work table						
	Sign		On door	"open" "closed"			

18	Dust pan		Audrey				
18	Broken flowerpots		Audrey	In pan- "terracotta" pieces			
21	Food TBD		Wino #1	Will eat from trash can			
21	Roses		Audrey	Limp, lifeless			
22	Pod #1		Seymour	Large, but sickly; expandable			
24	Cobweb		Set Dressing	On register			
24	Roses		Audrey	Dead			
24	Monster movie magazine		Crystal	Oversized			
26	Plant food		Seymour				
26	Spray/spritzer bottle		Seymour	For watering plants			
27	Blood	*	Seymour	Pricks finger, and feeds Audrey II			
28	Transistor Radio		Mushnik				

Version 1: 5/22/13 NOTE: "C" denotes consumable- props with asterisk will need replenishing Page 1 of 2

Figure 3.11 The preliminary prop list for *Little Shop of Horrors*

Twelfth Night

Twelfth Night

Preliminary Prop List

Page	*Prop*	*C*	*Character*	*Notes*	*R*	*A*
I-1 Orsino's Palace						
3	(2) lounge chairs and side table		furniture			
3	Musical instruments		TBD	Depends on casting		
4	Letter		Valentine	From Olivia to Orsino		
I-2 Illyrian Coast						
5	Coins (gold)		Viola	Gives to Captain		
I-3 Inside Olivia's House						
8	Table		furniture	To set down food and wine		
8	(1) wooden chair with no arms		furniture			
8	Food	?	Toby, Andrew	TBD may not be eaten		
8	Wine	*	Toby, Andrew			
8	Cups or Mugs		Toby, Andrew			
I-4Orsino's Palace						
	Repeat lounge chairs and table					
I-5 Inside Olivia's House						
14	(2) high-backed chairs with arms		furniture			

14	shrine		furniture	To Olivia's deceased brother		
14	Photo		dressing	On shrine – Olivia's brother		
14	Candles	*	dressing	On shrine – lit		
14	Flowers		dressing	On shrine		
24	Ring		Olivia	Given to Viola – costumes?		
II-1 A Lodging in Illyria						
24	Bench		furniture			
24	Coat Rack		furniture			
II-2 A Street Near Olivia's House						
II-3 Inside Olivia's House						
	Repeat table, wine and cups (no chair)					
27	Food	*	TBD	Set on table with wine		
28	Sixpence		Toby	Given to Clown		
II-4 Orsino'sPalace						
	Repeat lounge chairs and table					
34	Towel		Orsino	Comes out of pool		

Version 1; 10/17/10 NOTE: * denotes consumable- props with asterisk will need replenishing Page 1 of 2

Figure 3.12 The preliminary prop list for *Twelfth Night.*

WORKING WITH THE PROP LIST

The samples here are preliminary versions of a prop list, prepared before rehearsals begin. Given the range of personnel who will need a copy, neutral choices in font and layout are made to maximize readability on any computer. But because this is also an interactive document, it is not shared in PDF form. Doing so would preserve the formatting details as this technique did for the character/scene breakdown, but it would make it more difficult for others to update it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the prop list is one of the best candidates for a Google Doc, or to live in a Dropbox folder.

SPECIALTY CHARTS

If you are working on a production with effects or other specialty needs, it may be helpful to take time during the pre-production phase to assist in the summarizing and distributing of this information as well. A production of *Dracula* will inevitably feature a great deal of blood, along with special effects to accomplish mysterious appearances and exits. A production of *The Tempest* will not be complete without some manifestation of Prospero's magic. You may only start out with a list of where effects will be needed, with no specific departmental assignment or method of implementation. A show in a restaurant or kitchen is likely to have much more food—real or fake—than another play, and it could be beneficial to highlight those items, and the preparation needed—separate from the prop list. Working again from your production analysis and supplementing the details with the results of your initial meetings with the director and designers, the SM might opt to create a second interactive chart to live in a shared location so that it can be updated throughout the process.

AUDITIONS

Although presented at the end of this chapter due to their relationship to the final pieces of paperwork to be discussed, auditions typically precede the designated prep week. For a student stage manager this could be at the end of the previous semester or at the start of the semester in which the production will occur.

An Equity stage manager almost never runs the auditions for a show taking place weeks or months later. Part of this is related to required logistics about when and where around the country a company may need to hold auditions for the season. Large professional companies might employ a casting director, often working out of New York, and choose to hold auditions in the midst of that large pool of acting talent. Even when union rules dictate the presence of an Equity stage manager, it would be impractical to fly one from Saint Louis to New York when many talented SMs are available locally. A New York based stage manager might even have a small-but-steady portion of their income flow from working auditions for a wide range of companies.

Auditions for a show are a period of both information distribution and discovery for the stage manager. This is true both in an academic environment where you will continue with the production and the professional environment where you strive to represent the production and the future stage manager as best you can. The SM relays key production details to the potential cast and collects information both formally and informally about them. Often this is the stage manager's first simultaneous test of verbal and written communication skills on a production. Many of the key traits of a successful stage manager will be needed—organization, flexibility, clarity, and quick thinking.

The stage manager's concerns regarding auditions can be broken down into three major groups: the space, the show, and the schedule. The checklist in Figure 3.13 provides a starting point for planning successful auditions. While not every question will apply to every show, it is a good reference.

It is important to note that some of the checklist questions require action on your part, and others may require answers or assistance from other theatre personnel. Of course you will need the director to provide you with information about the sides or to answer questions related to the setup of the room and the ideal flow of the day. But

other questions, especially space-related ones, are equally important to be asked in advance. Never wait until the day of auditions to go exploring. It is always better to know in advance that signs can be affixed to the wall only with a specific kind of tape, or that it requires calling a security guard to open rooms.

At my university, safety concerns have caused a dramatic decrease in the number of days on which the building is unlocked. Two years ago, students could access our fine arts center on a weekend even if no performances were scheduled; now it is locked up tight as a drum. Student stage managers should plan ahead and check in with the faculty member responsible for requesting building access to avoid any problems on audition day. Professional stage managers working in commercial buildings that include rehearsal and audition spaces may have similar questions about access to investigate.

Sides: Excerpts of the script chosen by the director for the actors to read at auditions. Typically one to two pages in length, the SM will label the sides with the appropriate character names and make enough copies so that one group of actors can read them in the audition room for the director and other groups can practice the material outside. Because the side is only an excerpt of a scene or song, it is helpful to clearly mark where actors should begin and where they will end. If possible, make the sides available to the actors in advance. This may be at a library or main office on a college campus, via an electronic callboard, or through an agent or AEA office in the professional world. This book's companion website contains examples of how to prepare and mark sides.

As you collect and create information to be posted at the audition site, be sure that you are communicating approved details. There might be a reason the director prefers your calendar to list a more general time for rehearsals rather than specific adjustments for individual days; there could be someone pre-cast whose name has not been released because the contract is not yet finalized; there might be an important question to be posed to actors that will help solidify a pending costume question. The student stage manager has the opportunity to pose such questions in that first meeting with the director; the AEA stage manager not otherwise attached to the production may be asking these questions of whoever at the theatre company transmitted the audition material to them.

AEA AUDITIONS

When working on an Equity show, the stage manager will encounter additional rules regarding principal and chorus auditions, handling of non-union actors, and specific requirements for the spaces themselves and the way notices are posted. Guidelines can be found in the agreements governing each category of AEA contracts. Remember the stage manager of an Equity production is rarely part of the audition process for their show. Another stage manager may have been hired for those auditions, especially if they take place in another city or several months before rehearsals begin.

THE AUDITION FORM

The stage manager's primary tool for capturing information about the potential cast is the audition form. Like the prop list, many theatres have specific documents they prefer to use. In an academic setting, this is often standardized paperwork that may include releases you are required by the university to collect. In a professional setting, actors represented by agents who schedule auditions for them may not fill out a form at all but simply provide a resume and headshot.

If you are creating the audition form, focus on collecting several necessary types of information: basic contact and descriptive information about the actor, answers to show-specific questions, and details about schedule and potential conflicts. Figures 3.14 and 3.15 demonstrate a way to capture the necessary facts in a two-sided form. The stage manager may not have much time to review the forms during the audition day, but, if possible, you should get them back from the director prior to callbacks. That way you can determine if any of the information provided was unclear —or omitted—and get a second chance to obtain those details before casting begins and missing information is problematic.

AUDITIONS CHECKLIST

THE SPACE

- [ ] What is the procedure for locking/unlocking the audition space? Will you have keys?
- [ ] Are there special considerations for accessing the room in the evening or on weekends?
- [ ] Does the space have adequate signage to help actors find the room?
- [ ] Can you post additional signs?
- [ ] Is there an area which can serve as a check-in spot?
- [ ] Is there an area for actors to wait? To warm up?
- [ ] Is the lighting sufficient in the rooms?
- [ ] Is the temperature of the rooms comfortable? Adjustable?
- [ ] What is the floor surface of the audition room? Is this acceptable for what you need to accomplish?
- [ ] Does the room have mirrors?
- [ ] Does the room have a piano or a CD player?
- [ ] Are there sufficient tables and chairs?
- [ ] Does the director have preferences about how the room is set up?
- [ ] Can you leave the rooms set up from one day to the next?
- [ ] Are basic office supplies available to you (pencils, staplers, tape, etc.)? A copier if we run low on forms?
- [ ] Will you have access to any basic first-aid supplies in case of injury?

THE SHOW

- [ ] Does the theatre have a standard audition form?
- [ ] Are there show-specific questions to be added?
- [ ] Does your theatre require any additional paperwork?
- [ ] Do you have a basic summary of the show and available roles? If not, is this something you should create?
- [ ] Do you have your basic overview calendar?
- [ ] Do you have information about the scenes/songs actors have been asked to prepare?
- [ ] Will there be additional sides for callbacks?
- [ ] Is there a camera available for actors who may not bring headshots?
- [ ] What are the components of this audition process? In what order will they happen?
- [ ] Will you be asked to read with the actors?
- [ ] Who will be in the room with the director?
- [ ] Does the theatre or director have policies regarding youth auditions?

THE SCHEDULE

- [ ] What is the overall time for the auditions?
- [ ] How long will individual slots be?
- [ ] Will actors sign up in advance or upon arrival?
- [ ] Does the director have preferences for building breaks into the process?
- [ ] If the audition spans meal time, are there considerations for scheduling around and/or acquiring food?
- [ ] What are the date, time, and location of the callbacks?

When will casting decisions be made?

How will actors be notified?

Figure 3.13 A basic checklist for any set of auditions.

The formatting needs of the audition form are simple: present the information requests clearly and provide sufficient room for the replies. Actors should know what is being asked, and the director should easily find the answers. The concept of white space is perhaps the most important formatting principle in this situation. Take a second look at the section of the sample form where show-specific details for *Big Fish* are sought. The two questions to be answered may be in bold, but the space around the questions contributes to the legibility as well. Reducing the white space might make room for the résumé information at the bottom of the front side, leaving a larger area on the back for the director's comment box. That could seem like a useful choice. But consider the importance of those show-specific questions. One is related to the start date of rehearsals, and the other to a remount of the show. The answers to both of these questions will impact many more people than just you and the director, and obtaining clear and accurate information up front is a priority.

If a single show is holding auditions, then the stage manager is done thinking about the form at this point. But if multiple shows will audition at once—common in academic settings—then the participating stage managers should consider the best way to get forms to all directors involved. Each will want to review the actor's details, and record notes on the form. It is impractical for them to share, or to wait until the end of the night to receive paperwork. One choice would be to photocopy each form as it is turned in to create a set for each show. Alternately, you could consider multiple forms. This is a bit more work for the actors as they will fill out information twice, but might be the most feasible option if copier access is limited. In the case of multiple forms, it is advisable to make only one set on plain white paper. By using colored paper for the other show, the SM teams can easily sort forms and lessen the chance of having two copies of Actor B's information end up in one pile and none in the other. If the theatre is working with a digital audition form submitted by the actors, the SM team may be able to set up the collection folder to be accessible to multiple directors simultaneously.

WHAT THE STAGE MANAGER CAN LEARN

Over the course of the auditions, the stage manager will learn a great deal. Of course you will meet the potential cast, but you will discover not just who they might be but also how they work. Actors who are early, prepared, and specific with their questions will strike a contrast to those who arrive late, forget their sides or music, or ask the same question multiple times. This does not tell you anything about the quality of their performance but may be an indicator of necessary strategies for assisting those actors with memorizing lines or remembering rehearsal call times.

The stage manager can also learn about the director. If you have not worked together before, this is perhaps even more valuable information than you acquire about the actors. Does the director hold to the set schedule? What is the response to a gentle reminder that the day is running behind? Did you receive very little information up front and are now asked to prepare multiple sides on the spot? What happens if you are running ahead?

If the SM is continuing with the production, then this information will be key to your future planning. If the SM is involved for these auditions only, the information can still be valuable, and you may be able to relay it to the theatre's company manger or production manager—whoever sent you the packet of audition information.

AUDITION INFORMATION FORM

NAME	Pronouns
Local Address	
Phone	Email

FOR EXPERIENCE ONLY

I am auditioning solely for the experience and do not wish to be cast in this production YES NO

I have spoken with a member of the theatre faculty about the circumstances which make me ineligible to be cast YES NO

Academic Status (circle one) 1st Year 2nd Year 3rd Year 4th Year Other		
Major	Minor	
Height	Weight	Hair Color

Are you willing toalter your physical appearance (i.e. color or cut your hair) for a specific role? YES NO

If "no", please explain.

Do you currently have a full or part - time job (including campus employment) ? YES NO

If "yes" how many hours per week do you work _____

Are you willing /able to re-arrange your schedule to accommodate rehearsal? YES NO

If "no" please explain:

Do you have any acrobatic or gymnastic skills or experience (juggling, walking on hands, etc.)? YES NO

If yes, please describe:

Big Fish will hold early music and dance rehearsals during **the week of January 15**—the week before spring semester classes begin. Would you be available for these rehearsals?

YES NO

NOTE: Answering no does not disqualify you from casting! This is for planning purposes

Are you a member of any UWL musical ensembles? (choir, orchestra, etc) YES NO

If yes, please list both the groups you are in and any details you have about rehearsals/performances from January 16-March 4.

Please **attach resume** or provide a brief history of previous roles.

ROLE PLAY THEATRE

SUMMER SCHEDULE INFORMATION

Please mark out any class or work commitments that you will have.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8am							
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							

5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

Please list ANY potential conflicts with summer/fall evening rehearsals (job, weddings, etc.). This does not disqualify you automatically from casting! But it is much easier to work around a conflict that we know about in advance.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Callback for:

Cast as

Figures 3.14 and 3.15 A sample audition form.

ANOTHER FIRST IMPRESSION

The stage manager should recognize that auditions also provide the actors and director with their first opportunity to see stage management in action. Your ability to organize the day will be seen as an indicator of how rehearsals will go. And while it is important to be friendly and helpful, it is equally important to be neutral and professional. Can you answer questions while still maintaining confidentiality about details not yet released? Can you respond effectively to schedule changes, whether prompted by whimsy or genuine necessity? Can you troubleshoot unanticipated problems? Can you display empathy for a disappointed performer without taking sides?

Particularly as a new student stage manager, it can be easy to get pulled into the chaos of a large cattle call or to let your excitement about being "in the know" affect your comments. Your efforts to set the right tone now will pay off throughout the production.

If the stage management team is assembled, the audition process is a great opportunity for the stage manager and assistant stage managers to begin working together. If the director requests the SM's presence inside the audition room, you will need someone outside to handle the crowd. And even if you are not in the room, having someone to help set up, locate an actor who has wandered away, or make an emergency run to the photocopier if you are running low on sides or forms can be invaluable. If the ASM is new to you, then any lulls in the day's activities will give you time to get acquainted with your new teammate and to discover how they will best fit into the mix.

ORGANIZING THE AUDITIONS

The stage management team will need an organized table for the auditions. You will need blank audition forms, basic supplies including pens, highlighters, blank notepads, and a stapler to attach headshots to the forms; a work space for writing down who has arrived and what time they will be seen; and space for laying out other show information. This might include a very preliminary version of the actor calendar and descriptions of the characters. Individual schools or theatres might have additional release forms or standard documentation which need to be available as well.

If your audition process extends over multiple sessions, the initial day of introductory auditions, which could be either monologues/songs actors prepare in advance or cold readings from the script, will be followed by sessions for the director to call back specific actors for specific roles. Particularly in an academic or community-based setting, more actors will be called for this evening than will end up in the cast, and actors may be under consideration for more than one part in the show. Figure 3.16 shows a typical callback list. (**Important note:** If the stage manager is given the information and asked to prepare the callback list, it is very useful to organize the individual actors for a role in alphabetical order. It will make it quicker to check them in at the callback session, and removes any perception that there is a "ranking" from the initial night. There are no politics in the alphabet!)

John Divney
Isaac Eugster
Willie Pearson

Sarah Lambert
Jenna Moilanen
Leah Williams

Will

Isaac Eugster
Grant Latus

Karl

John Divney
Willie Pearson
Reed Schwender

Amos

Morgan Gates
Gabe Ross

Josephine

Sarah Lambert
Jenna Moilanen
Megan Roddy
Maddie Stoffel
Leah Williams

Jenny Hill/Young Jenny

Carly Boles
Alexis Cimoch
Megan Roddy
Maddie Stoffel

The Witch

Violet Englebert

Megan Gunderson

Don Price

Isaac Eugster

Shane Flaningam

Reed Schwender

Zacky Price

Gabe Burdette

Evan Medd

SONGS AND SCENES ARE POSTED ON THE CAST INFORMATION PAGE FOR BIG FISH ON THE ONLINE CALLBOARD!

Figure 3.16 The callback list for *Big Fish.*

Big Fish

CALLBACK MATRIX

SONGS

Edward: How It Ends

Edward/Sandra: Time Stops

SCENES

Zacky Price, Don Price, Witch–page 15

Young Jenny Hill, Edward–page 44

Figure 3.17 An excerpt from the callback matrix.

Once the stage manager is in possession of that callback list, they can make that next round of auditions run much more smoothly by doing a bit of preparation. Callbacks are typically based on show-specific material. This is the time

you will be using the sides you prepared. If multiple actors are under consideration for a role, then each will need to read that side. And the director will have an opinion about who reads with whom. In addition to general suitability for a role, a director will be looking for chemistry between actors. So it will not be up to you to decide on the pairings. You will need to communicate to the actors how the readings will progress and to ensure that everyone who has been called back is accounted for. Often you will not receive the specific pairing information until just before the session begins. Of course you have a notepad with you on which you can write down all the details, but can you be better prepared.

My personal strategy is to create a callback matrix. It requires very minimal formatting, and allows me to capture the director's wishes much more clearly than scribbles on a notepad. Figure 3.17 is a brief example of how it works. The table format provides specific cells for writing. The number of columns is determined by the number of characters in a particular scene or song, and the number of rows is determined by the number of actors needed—always based on the maximum number of actors who will need to be seen for a given role. Each table is created independently so that it can be adjusted to the appropriate number or rows or columns for that portion of the audition. Because three actors have been called back for the role of Don Price, that side will be read three times. But because only two actors each are called for Zacky Price and the Witch, someone will read the scene twice. The matrix can easily capture all combinations of the scene, and in the order in which the director wishes them to enter the audition room. Even though an identical number of actors have been called back for the roles of Edward and Sandra, the director and musical director are likely to have preferred pairings. If you have more roles to consider, or more uneven numbers of actors called back for those roles, the pairings will get more complex. Because the matrix is simple itself, likely only a twenty- or thirty-minute project, I have found it to be one that pays off immensely.

If the stage manager receives information from the director in advance of the callbacks, they can invest the time to type up the matrix. But if not, then the completed hand-written matrix could be quickly run through a photocopier and posted, or at a minimum kept at the check-in table. Both the actors and the stage managers have legible information at their fingertips to make sure that each group is ready in the correct order and that an actor reading in multiple pairings is working with the right group at the right time.

THE CONTACT SHEET

The cast information collected through the audition process permits the stage manager to create the final set of paperwork during this pre-production time: the contact sheets. You will develop separate lists for the cast and production team, ensuring easy communication with these personnel throughout the rest of the show. When working in an academic environment the stage manager can take the necessary information directly from the audition forms. If the stage manager was not involved in the auditions, that information is typically conveyed by the company manager or production manager.

Next to the calendar, the contact sheet is perhaps the most-distributed piece of paperwork. Certainly everyone whose name appears on it will need a copy. But distribution is likely to extend beyond the immediate participants. The costume shop may want a copy for contacting an actor to cancel a fitting outside of rehearsal time, or the publicity office may wish to email participants of an interview or other PR events. Most of the time such requests and scheduling will pass through stage management, but occasionally there is a reason for independent communication. In non-academic theatre the business office may need the information for handling contract and payroll details

When collecting information for the contact sheet, consider what will be most needed. Mailing addresses, for example, might be useful at the conclusion of a show, but you are unlikely to contact people by mail during rehearsals. An exception to this may be actors staying in company-provided housing at a professional theatre. But although addresses may be useful in this case, it would be temporary local information rather than permanent details. If the stage manager creates the contact sheet using spreadsheet software, information might be recorded now but then hidden when printed and distributed if not currently relevant.

Privacy will also be a factor in the inclusion of information. In an academic setting, a faculty director may wish to have only an office phone number in print. The director can always decide to share a home number or cell phone number with specific individuals. Actors who have a need to maintain privacy for personal reasons or a celebrity

status might provide the stage manager with a phone number but request that the stage manager list his or her own number opposite that actor's name on a contact sheet. Attempts to reach the actor could still be successful, with the stage manager passing along messages or providing that number on a case-by-case basis, depending on the actor's situation. Use your discretion and respect the needs of your company members.

TO POST OR NOT TO POST?

For reasons of privacy discussed in Chapter One, it is rarely advisable to post a contact sheet with personal information online or on callboards in the theatre even if you are not subject to Equity policies or academic regulations. Once this information is public, it is impossible to control who has access to the numbers or to keep someone from using them inappropriately. Consider distributing only in hard copy or to a very limited list via email, or posting such documents to a show website only when password-protected access is possible. This can lessen the chance for information to be misused.

FORMATTING THE CONTACT SHEET

As was true for the prop list, a simple chart or table format serves the contact sheet best. This keeps information organized and gives you control over individual cells. Similar to the callback list for auditions, it is this author's preference to list personnel in alphabetical order by last name, thereby removing any implied hierarchy. (Why is the assistant lighting designer listed above the costume designer? Why is Ensemble Member C listed before Ensemble Member B?) I also prefer to order the columns so that name, role, phone number, and email address appear in that order.

Twelfth Night	CAST CONTACT SHEET Version 3 11/2/10 *Unless Noted, Area Code 608

Suzanne Clum	Musician	333-555-1212	actor1@provider.net
Brian Coffin	Lord 1, Sailor 2, Officer 3	555-1212	actor2@provider.net
Justin Cooke	Orsino		
Allyssa Dunn	Olivia		
Kevin Fanshaw	Antonio, Feste understudy		

Claire Ganshert	Viola		
Jacob Gustine	Sir Toby Belch		
Donald Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4		
Alden Hedges	Feste		
Austin Hernandez	Valentine, Sailor 3, Officer 1		
Andrew Kelly	Malvolio		
Shelby Krarup	Musician		
Matthew Matuseski	Sebastian		
Tim McCarren	Sir Andrew Aguecheek		
Donnie Mezera	Fabian		
Amy Nelson	Maria		
Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2		
Lindsay Van Norman	Olivia Attendant 2		
Jake Voss	Sea Captain, Priest, Antonio understudy		
Emily Ware	Olivia Attendant 1		
Walter Elder	Director		
Laurie Kincman	Stage Manager		
Melissa Heller	Assistant Stage Manager		
Quinn Masterson	Assistant Stage Manager		
COSTUME SHOP			

BOX OFFICE			

Electronic callboard: http://www.uwlax.edu/theatrecallboard/twelfth_night.htm

Page 1 of 1

Figure 3.18 A sample actor contact sheet. Note that phone numbers and email addresses have been removed for privacy reasons.

Because you are less likely to update a contact sheet than other paperwork, take extra care to proofread it before distributing it to anyone. Make sure you have not transposed digits in phone numbers or listed an email address as a ".com" if it is a ".edu." Double check the spelling of names. If an actor prefers to go by a nickname but needs his or her paycheck addressed to a given name, include both. If a cast or team member's name is commonly mispronounced, consider how you might include that information. This might also be an ideal location to provide information on preferred gender pronouns. If this feels awkward to include on the contact sheet, be sure to identify a method to share that detail with your company or inquire how it has been previously handled in your department or theatre.

EQUITY NAMES

AEA only allows one actor or stage manager to have a specific name. If the Susan Jones in your cast was the third so-named person to join the union, she may actually be known as "Susan Andrea Jones" or "S. Jones" for official contracting and publicity purposes, no matter what she asks to be called in rehearsal.

The sample contact sheet provides a basic layout and also identifies another specific formatting preference of this author. Although three of the four columns are left-justified, the phone number column is right-justified. Observing the two sample phone numbers demonstrates why. If only a few members of a company have an out-of-town area code, this formatting allows that area code to be slightly more prominent in this setup. This can be especially helpful if the stage manager's office phone requires dialing a variety of access numbers. (My current office phone requires one method for internal calls, a second for off-campus and local cellular calls, and a third for long-distance numbers.) As a stage manager, if it is your preference to always include the area code, or if your phone is less convoluted than mine, this detail will be less essential for you.

Another important consideration is the need to include additional numbers beyond the cast or staff. The sample is a contact sheet distributed to the cast. For their convenience, the costume shop and box office phone numbers have been included at the bottom along with contact information for the director and SM team. On a production contact sheet, the stage manager might include shop numbers, fax numbers, or even the theatre's mailing address if that will be necessary for nonresident staff arranging for equipment to be mailed or shipped.

Because this theatre maintains an online callboard, the web address is also included at the bottom. And as with all other paperwork, a version number and date can be found.

THINKING ABOUT THE SM TEAM

As an exercise in multitasking, try the following task:

1. Pull out your favorite *Where's Waldo?* cartoon and find all the Waldo images in five minutes.
2. While doing that, turn on the *Rent* soundtrack and accurately sing along to "La Vie Bohème."

3. And because you are the ambitious sort, do this in a restaurant, and also count how many times the server in your area refills someone's glass of water.

Sounds crazy, right?

Well, it's not much crazier than trying to write down blocking, follow along with the script, keep an eye on where the props are going, and help the actress in the next scene lace up her corset all at once. Both sets of tasks are much easier when undertaken by a team.

If you are lucky enough to be working with one or more assistant stage managers, it will be crucial to the show's success to use your ASMs wisely and empower them to help document everything that is going on. As you reach the end of your prep period, you will know which aspects of your production might be the trickiest or the most complex. Use that as a guideline to develop a "divide and conquer" approach for the SM team so that all the necessary tasks get done each day, and no one goes too crazy in the process. Of course the stage manager needs to keep on top of everything and to check in with all production areas. Delegating responsibility is not the same as abdicating it.

By sharing focus on the show, each member of the team can accept responsibility for tracking one set of details and following up on questions in that area. The team as a whole can tackle large projects and the daily setup, and meet regularly outside of rehearsals to share information. By the time you reach the theatre, everyone needs to be an expert in all parts of the show. But during rehearsals, it is very difficult for one person to learn it all at the same time. And if you ever need to work simultaneously in more than one room, each member of the SM team should be knowledgeable enough to be effective.

Particularly in academic theatres, it can be easy to see the ASM as someone with little experience who can be relegated to sweeping the floor and setting out props. You are the senior entrusted with the "big job," and your ASM is a freshman who doesn't know anything yet. That attitude is a big mistake. The assistant stage manager is your ally in this process. Working with a new assistant provides the stage manager with the opportunity to pass along knowledge accumulated over past shows, serving as a mentor as well as the leader of this small group. Before rehearsals begin, the SM should get the entire team together to talk about the production and to divide responsibilities. It often makes sense to ask one ASM to focus on prop details and another to concentrate on costumes. They can be on the lookout for rehearsal report notes specific to that area and take the lead in creating paperwork for those technicians. Once you move into the theatre, the ASMs will assume responsibility for running the deck and overseeing the crew; the calling location for the SM may well be on another floor. Take the advice of Ed Catmull, founder of Pixar, to "(f)ind, develop, and support good people, and they in turn will find, develop, and own good ideas."[1] Getting your team solidly involved in the show from the beginning ensures they will be invested in the production, ready to answer questions, and help with problem solving when the time arises.

Twelfth Night

SM Team Assignments

STAGE MANAGER	ASM #1	ASM #2
Lights/Sound/Projections	Costumes	Scenery& Props
Projections Cue Sheet	Costume Plot/Shift Plot	Preset List/Shift Plot
Prompting/Line Notes	Prompting/Line Notes	Prompting/Line Notes
Booth	SR	SL

ASM #1

1) Help to set up the theatre each night for rehearsal.
2) Make sure SM and actors know what rehearsal costumes are available, and that we're using them.
3) Update Character/Scene Breakdown as needed.
4) Track all costume changes.
5) Check in with the costume shop outside of production meetings as needed.
6) Create costume plot/quick change plot.

7) Work with ASM #2 to create shift plot.

8) Once cast is off book, share responsibility for prompting and line notes during rehearsals.

ASM #2

1) Help to set up the theatre each night for rehearsal.

2) Know what rehearsal props we have, and what will be needed for each night's rehearsal.

3) Update Props List as needed.

4) Track all hand props and furniture.

5) Check in with the scene shop and prop shop outside of production meetings as needed.

6) Create Preset List.

7) Work with ASM #1 to create shift plot.

8) One the cast is off-book, share responsibility for prompting and line notes during rehearsals.

Figure 3.19 The stage management team assignments for *Big Fish*.

Figure 3.19 demonstrates one method for organizing that shared focus. For this production, each of the two assistant stage managers received specific assignments for tracking and note-taking. Even from the start, it is clear that tasks are interrelated, and that group effort will be necessary for overall SM team success.

Note that some of the tasks initially begun by the stage manager are now passed along to an assistant. The stage manager initially created the character/scene breakdown, but it makes sense for the ASM who will be tracking costume changes to keep that document up to date as it will overlap with their notes about those changes. Similarly, another assistant oversees managing the props list once it is created and uploaded. Based on the focus each one will have during rehearsals, the stage manager has also articulated primary responsibility for starting various pieces of paperwork that will be needed by the crew. This type of approach can keep a large show from feeling too overwhelming at first, and allows each member of the team to be efficient with his or her time.

THE EQUITY ASM DURING PRE-PRODUCTION WEEK

Due to the variety of Equity contracts and the scale of theatres they represent, AEA stage managers will have their ASMs working with them for varying amounts of time during pre-production week. This parallels the existence of ASMs at all (some situations do not mandate one), and whether or not they are allowed to work in the cast or as an understudy. A localized contract like the NEAT Contract (New England Area Theatres), requires one day of paid work for the ASM. The LORT Contract, which covers the major regional theatres across the country, generally mandates two days. A stage manager working under a Guest Artist contract at an otherwise non-union theatre is not guaranteed an ASM at all, and a Broadway stage manager—typically enjoying two weeks of paid pre-production time instead of one—will have the benefit of the First Assistant Stage Manager for a week and the Second Assistant Stage Manager for a day. And while nothing will stop a theatre from bringing the assistants in for additional paid pre-production work, even that single day gives the team the opportunity to learn one another's working styles, be universally informed on the production details, and create a plan for the show.

NEXT STEPS

In addition to the meetings and documents featured in this chapter, the stage management team will typically undertake several other tasks during this phase of the process. These include taping out the groundplan on the rehearsal room floor, setting up the room itself to best facilitate the work, collecting rehearsal props and costume pieces, and preparing the prompt book. (These items are discussed in detail in the next chapters.)

At the conclusion of the stage manager's pre-production time, he or she should be prepared to enter rehearsals and begin capturing and sharing the details of the show.

CHAPTER 4

The Prompt Book

Maintaining the script and all documentation of your production in a single location is not just a good idea; it is a primary responsibility of the stage manager, and one specifically articulated by Actors' Equity Association. The following language is excerpted from the Council of Resident Stock Theatres (CORST) Agreement, but nearly every rule book contains a similar paragraph within the section outlining the duties of the stage manager:

> *Assemble and maintain the Prompt Book, which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production.*[1]

The prompt book contains the official production script along with charts and lists both created by and distributed to the stage manager—everything necessary to run the show. In a professional setting, the book is the property of the theatre after the production closes, either as an archival reference for other shows or as the primary resource for future productions of the play done at this theatre or by this director.

ORGANIZING THE PROMPT BOOK

In order to keep all of this paperwork accessible, the book benefits from good organization. Investing in a sturdy binder and several sets of dividers allows you to quickly flip to a piece of information (Figure 4.1). Another rationale for detailed subdivisions is to ensure the show could happen without you. Whether the absence is due to vacation, illness, or transfer, a second stage manager should be able to pick up your prompt book and find everything necessary to understand the production. Omitting paperwork because you have a copy on your laptop or clumping all scenery, props, and costumes information together in a single "technical stuff" section of the binder can make extra work for someone else.

Figure 4.1 Labels and scene tabs.

When organizing your prompt book, think about how often you might need access to the information while in the rehearsal hall. You will frequently be asked questions about the upcoming schedule, or need to phone an actor who is running late. Keep those sections near the front of the book. Archival copies of rehearsal reports or meeting minutes can be filed in the back.

When I create a prompt book, I think about the information in three groups: quick-access details including the script, production information for each department, and archival documents. Within those three groups, I separate individual categories.

AN ARCHIVE, BUT NOT A HISTORY

Keeping on top of the details of your show will mean updating many pieces of paperwork over the life of the production. There is no need to keep every version of every document in your binder. During the rehearsal period, I typically keep the current and immediately previous versions accessible in hard copy. That allows me to quickly look back should there be a problem with an update or if the team suddenly has to revert to the "old" way of doing something. Once performances begin, the binder needs only the most up-to-date documents. If your theatre policy or personal preference is to hold on to more than that, I recommend retaining the other versions in a folder on your computer.

WORKING WITH MULTIPLE BOOKS

A complex show will require a lot of documentation, and a four-hour play can have a very long script. I have seen many new stage managers lugging a five-inch binder in and out of the rehearsal hall—some sort of physical manifestation of all the work they have to do! But unless you are desperate to build an upper-arm workout into your day, there is no need for this. When setting up the prompt book, the stage manager can separate some information into its own binder. Often it makes sense to keep the script on its own—along with copies of key documents from the front of the single-book setup such as the contact sheets and Character/Scene Breakdown. When I work in two books, I prefer to have those documents in both locations, so that the paperwork book is complete on its own but I can still access phone numbers or entrance information quickly. For a musical, you will have a secondary script that can be several hundred pages by itself: the score. In most instances, the score can also live in a separate binder.

PROMPT BOOK TABS

My books include the following sections in the order shown here. If a production does not include a particular component, I don't print a tab for it for that show.

Contact Sheets
Cast Information
Schedules
Character/Scene Breakdown
Blocking and Calling Keys
Script
Run Sheet
Show Paperwork (Preset List, Shift Plot, Costume Plot)
Scenery
Props
Costumes
Lights
Sound
Video/Projections
Publicity
Dramaturgy
ASM Information
Crew Information
Meeting Agendas & Minutes
Rehearsal Reports
Performance Reports
Fittings
Dialect Sessions
Blank Forms

Some stage managers prefer to create separate blocking and calling scripts. One script serves as the ultimate reference during rehearsal, and the other catalogs all of the cues called during performances. Although I most often work from a single script for the entire production because I prefer to have blocking and cues in the same place, I have found good reason to work in two scripts several times. One such example was working as the stage manager for *A Christmas Carol*, a repeatedly remounted production that came with a full set of sound cues on day one. In order to successfully facilitate rehearsals, I needed to annotate my script with the track numbers and other rehearsal-only sound details, using up the space I normally utilize for writing in cues for the actual show. Knowing the production would be back, it seemed ill-advised to erase that information only to rewrite it again next time. Having both scripts will allow me, or another stage manager, to be fully prepared for every first rehearsal of this production.

PREPARING THE PROMPT SCRIPT

The small, bound edition of the script distributed to the actors is very impractical for the stage manager. The text is tiny, and room for notes is extremely limited. During pre-production week the stage manager creates a more useful version, set up to capture the blocking and cueing information to come.

Unfortunately there is no magic trick to transforming the printed script into one that works for you. You will need some dedicated time at the photocopier. The process includes several steps: enlarging the script, setting the margins, and copying a sheet onto the back side for recording blocking.

1. Identify the ideal enlargement ratio by testing a full page of text. Acting editions are typically printed on a 5" x 7" page. An enlargement around 115 percent generally works well.
2. Position the enlarged text so that you have adequate margins on all four sides. This means centering the script between the top and bottom of the page and shifting it so there is approximately a one-half-inch margin on the side in which you will punch holes. This results in an enlarged margin on the opposite side that you can use for cues.
3. Copy the script. Make each page identical by using the automatic settings on the copier or by creating a mat to place on the glass into which you can lay each page from the original.
4. Select a backing sheet that will allow you to notate blocking and choreography. Include a small groundplan on this page.
5. Copy the backing sheet on the reverse side of each enlarged script page, making a few extras for the end of acts.

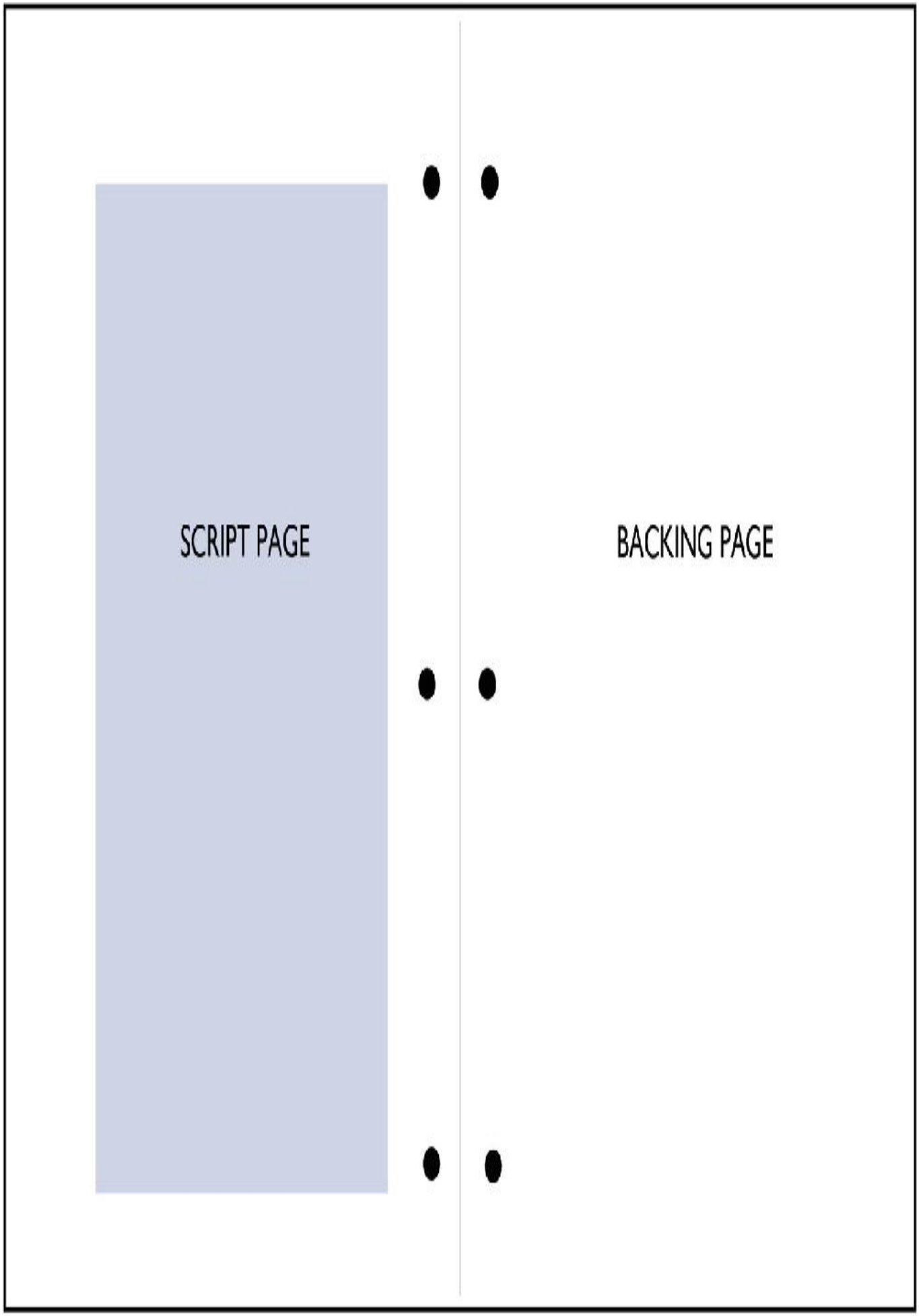


Figure 4.2 The script setup for a right-handed stage manager.

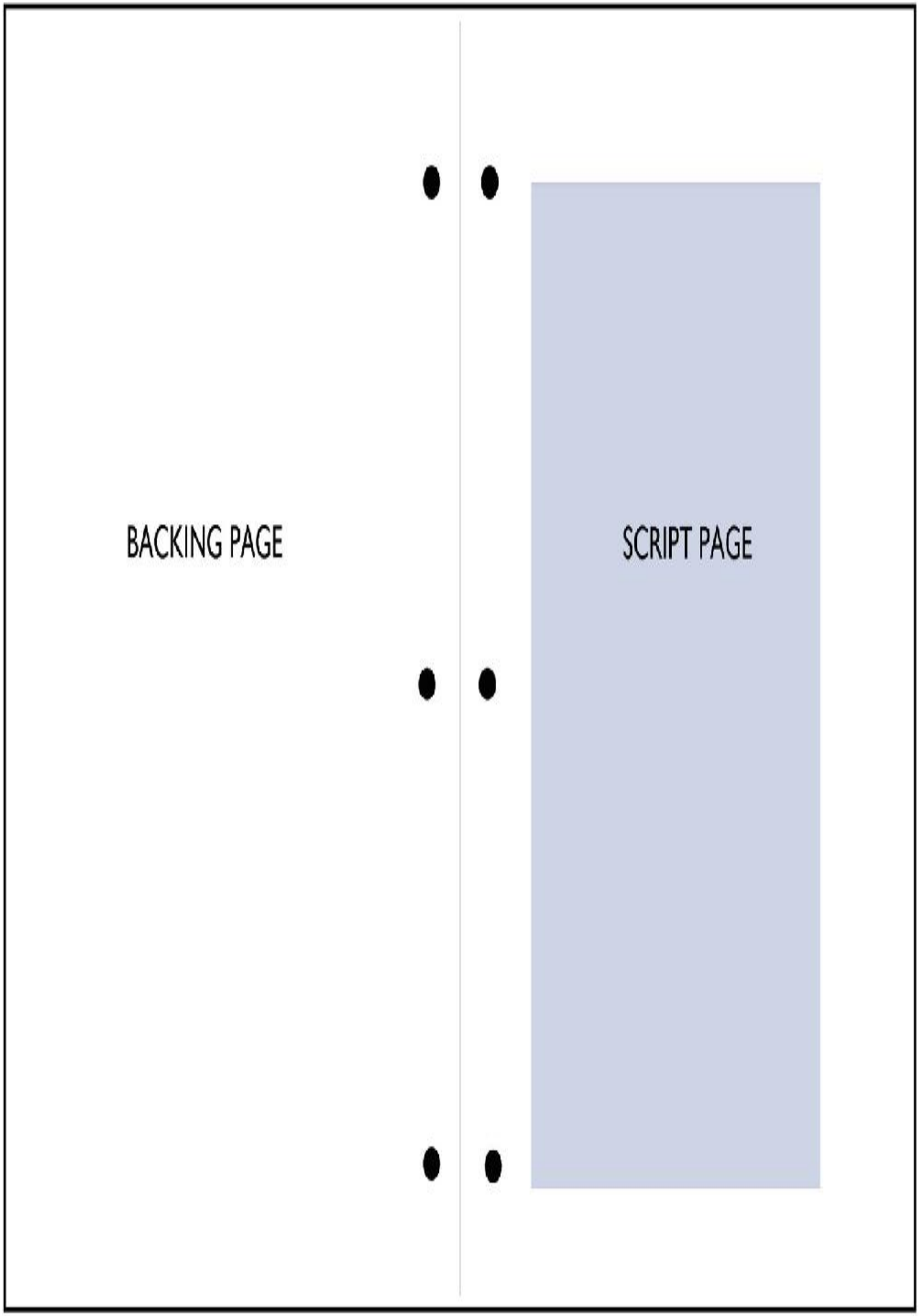


Figure 4.3 The script setup for a left-handed stage manager.

Although it might seem counterintuitive at first, the most effective setup for the prompt script is to place the backing page in relation to your dominant hand. This means a right-handed stage manager would place the script page on the left and the backing page on the right. The large cue margin falls on the outer left side. Such a setup allows the stage manager to quickly record blocking during rehearsals without having to reach across the binder rings while writing. The SM can use their left index finger to follow along with the dialogue. Most cue-placement work will occur outside of rehearsal time when the stage manager can easily shift the book over to avoid leaning on the rings. And reading cues on the left is just as easy as reading them on the right. A left-handed stage manager would select the opposite setup for the same reasons. These layouts are demonstrated in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

If you are working with an electronic copy of your script, or opt to scan it and create an electronic file, your formatting goals for the script page will be the same. You might accomplish this by adjusting the margins of the scanned document or by treating the scanned pages as images and placing them into a document so that the layout matches the examples shown.

THE BACKING PAGE

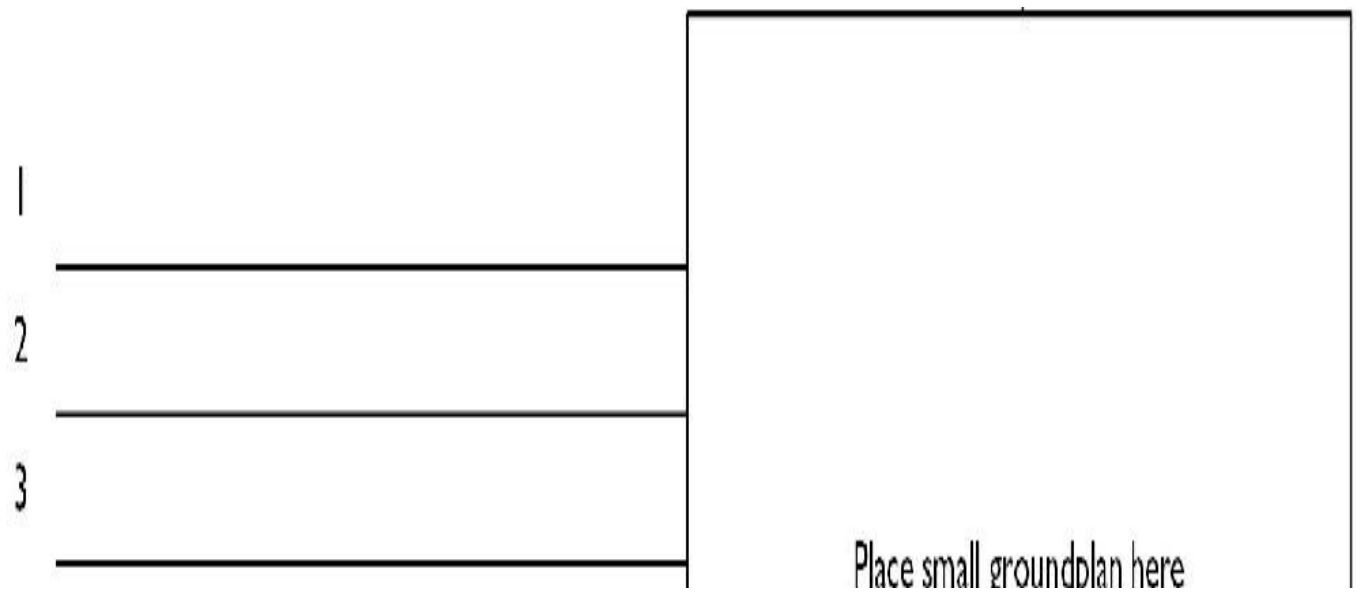
Using a backing page allows the stage manager to capture blocking details more efficiently than simply leaving the back side of the script page blank. It requires some additional work and another trip through the photocopier, but it is well worth the effort.

The two components of a backing page are numbered lines for recording movement and a small groundplan for noting the placement of scenic elements or large ensemble compositions. The backing sheet is a full-size document, taking up the entire reverse side of the script page. Figure 4.4 is the backing sheet I use when working on a play.

Having lines running the entire height of the page allows the stage manager to record the blocking immediately across from the line of text on which it occurs. The numbers enable you to specifically identify the spot where the action takes place by writing that number before, after, or directly above the appropriate word. Without lines, the default tendency is to start writing at the top of the page, eliminating this visual link between words and actions.

The stage manager could certainly number entries on the blank page and try to achieve a similar effect. But if the director adds blocking earlier on the page during a subsequent rehearsal, do you renumber? And if you have not left yourself adequate room for the new information, how do you squeeze it in? The backing sheet simplifies the process. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the enlarged script and its backing page in action.

The backing sheet is also set up with a small groundplan in the upper-right corner. A director and scenic designer might agree to allow furniture placement to develop organically during rehearsal, within the confines of a specific scene's location on the stage. Such an arrangement would preclude having a complete layout before rehearsals begin. The mini-groundplan provides the stage manager with a quick and visually effective place to record the location of tables, chairs, and other pieces. The SM can glance up at the stage during rehearsal and instantly know if everything is in the correct location without having to scan through the blocking notes for that information.



4

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12

13

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15

16

17

NOTES

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Figure 4.4 The prompt script backing page for a play.

ACT III.1 TWELFTH NIGHT ~ 45

FABIAN Here comes my noble gull-catcher. 178

TOBY [2]Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?

ANDREW Or o' mine either? *180*

TOBY Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip and become 181
thy bondslave?

ANDREW I' faith, or I either?

TOBY Why, thou hast put him in such a dream that, when the image of it leaves him,[8] he must run mad.

MARIA [9]Nay, but say true, does it work upon him?

TOBY Like aqua vitae with a midwife.[10] 187

MARIA If you will, then, see the fruits of the sport,[11] mark his first approach before my lady. He will come to her in yellow stockings, and 'tis a color she abhors, and *190* cross-gartered, a fashion she detests; and he will smile upon her, which will now be so unsuitable to her disposition, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt.[14] If you will see it, follow me.[16]

TOBY To the gates of Tartar, thou most excellent devil 196
of wit.[17]

ANDREW I'll make one too.[18] *Exeunt.*

*

20, 21

❧ III.1 *Enter Viola and Clown [with a tabor].*

VIOLA Save thee, friend, and thy music.[23] Dost thou live 1
by thy tabor? 2

CLOWN No, sir, I live by the church.

VIOLA Art thou a churchman?

CLOWN No such matter, sir. I do live by the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.

---

178 *gull-catcher* fool-catcher 181 *play* gamble; *tray-trip* a game of dice 187 *aqua vitae* any distilled liquor 196 *Tartar* Tartarus, the section of hell reserved for the most evil

III.1 Before the house of Olivia 1 *Save thee* God save thee 1–2 *live by* make a living with 2 *tabor* drum

2 T crawl → M

3

4

5 T ↑S, hug M knees

6

7

8 T ↑R, x R¢

9 M x T

10 T kiss M

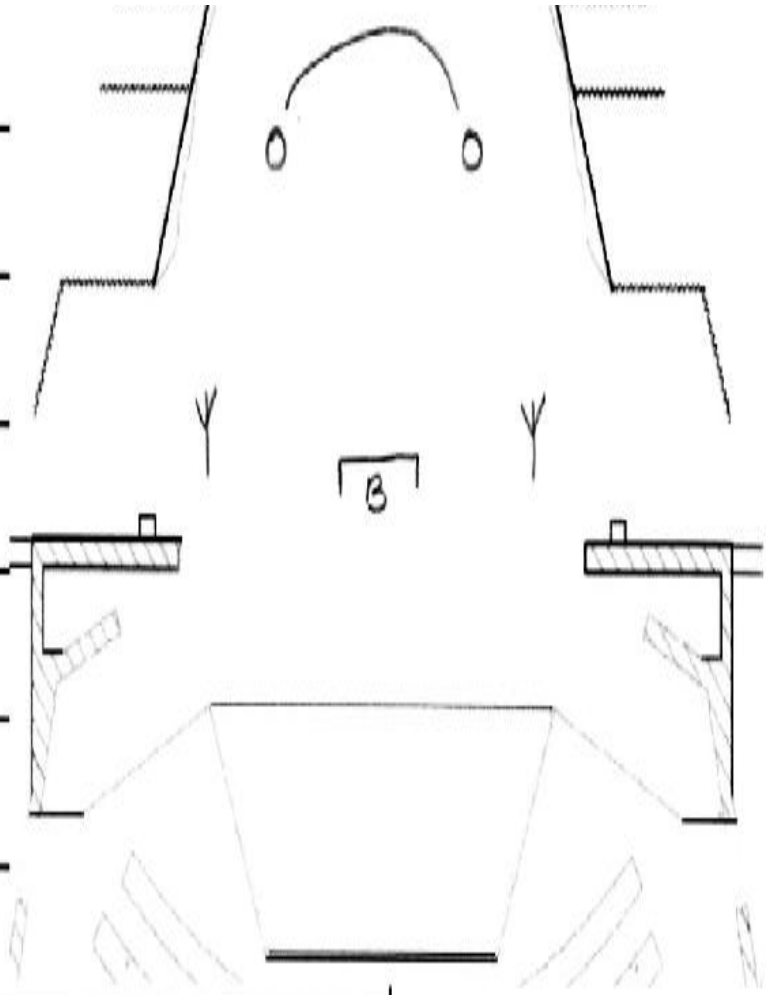
11 AA ↑R, x B

12

13

14 M x T↻ to DR

15



16	M ex DR	
17	FA, AA x T	
18	FA, AA, T ex DR	
19		SHIFT: COLONNADE OUT
20	FE en UC thru ⊙, ⇓, play	R urn + [B] off SR
21	V en DL, ⊣ onstage of ♀	L urn off SL
22		
23	V x to SL of FE, ⇓ coin in his hat	COIN
24		
25		IN CUE 35 → 36
26		Page 45
27		Date 12/1

Figures 4.5 and 4.6 The prompt script setup for blocking.

For plays with multiple locations that are defined in advance, the stage manager can customize the backing pages for individual scenes with the correct plan—or opt to use a blank plan and quickly sketch the items on stage in that scene. When creating your prompt script, choose the option that makes best use of your time and will be the most user-friendly in rehearsal.

The small groundplan is similarly useful for recording the positions of many cast members at once. Just as it was more efficient to draw the placement of a chair rather than to describe it, it is quicker to record the location of many actors at once by placing their initials on a ground-plan. The SM can answer blocking questions based on the picture just as effectively—and usually more quickly—than scanning for the uncertain actor's initials within the "blocking text."

Because the groundplan is small in size, it is helpful to have one as free of extra markings as possible. Ask the scenic designer or technical director for a blank or unlabeled version that you can reduce for the backing page, or temporarily delete those items if you have the appropriate drafting software and can open an electronic version. As a last resort, you can cover over unneeded information with a correction pen.

The "blank pages" tab in my prompt book always contains extra copies of the backing page for each show. If that moment should arise in rehearsal when the director chooses to start fresh on a scene and try completely new staging, insert a new backing sheet, affixing it to the appropriate page in the script. You will have plenty of room for new blocking but without the effort of erasing all of the prior notation. And if the new blocking proves unsatisfactory, you can remove the page just as easily and have the old notes instantly restored in your book. During rehearsals I will typically place a paperclip in the outside upper corner to join the pages together. As tech approaches, I replace the clip with clear tape, now placed at the top and bottom of the outside edge. This will allow me to turn the page smoothly when the show is running at pace, and eliminate the bulk of multiple clips all in approximately the same location.

It is worth noting that some stage managers prefer to work with a backing sheet but not copy it onto the script page. In order to keep page-turning efficient, the SM can cut off the top or bottom outside corner of the backing sheet at an angle, exposing the script page beneath it. This allows the stage manager to grasp just the corner to turn the page and ensure that both pages turn together. Personally I prefer the pages to be adhered to one another, but if this is not your preference, or you are working on a new script with frequent text changes, this may be an alternative that works well for you.

A TRICK FOR THE SPLIT PAGE

When acting editions are put together, little thought is given to pagination helpful to a stage manager. If one scene ends with sufficient room left on the page, the next scene often starts a few lines below. This scene might not be in the same location, however.

Once you have created the perfect mini-groundplan for your backing page, make a stack of additional copies the same size. This allows you to add a second, or even a third, plan onto any page where it is needed. My preferred method of attaching the extra drawings is with a stick of removable glue, essentially turning the plan into a Post-it. The glue will hold the drawing firmly in place but without making the page soggy—something you might not realize until you need to write cues on the script side of that page and have a bit of a mess on your hands.

These extra plans are also useful when there is more than one large blocking configuration on a page, and, although the revised groundplan will stay in place until removed, you can peel it off with no damage to the script if the blocking should change. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show another page from *Twelfth Night*, from a point in the show when documentation relied on that second groundplan on the page. This excerpt also contains the cues for this portion of the play. Cues are discussed further in Chapter 6.

Another option for script pages containing more than one scene is to separate them into two pages. Cover over the start of Scene Two on the bottom of the first page and the end of Scene One on the top of the next so you have a fresh mini groundplan and room for the wealth of cues that may accompany the transition from one page to another. Retain the page number, and simply label them "A" and "B." This way you will maintain the numbering of the scripts in use by the actors and director. It will not matter to them if you are technically looking at page 47B, but if the page does not have a number, or if you manually inserted a page break in a computer-printed script and you now appear to be on page 48, there will always be some confusion in the room if you call out a page number that does not match everyone

else's script. This is akin to the philosophy of repeating page numbers within shaded bands in your character/scene breakdown, discussed in the previous chapter.

S/B

LX 62+63

SQ 39.5-41

IMAGE 38+39

DOUSER CL/OP

SHIFT 19A

RED RAIL ↑

GREEN RAIL ↑

Enter Olivia and Priest.

OLIVIA

Blame not this haste of mine. If you mean well,
Now go with me and with this holy man
Into the chantry by. There, before him, 24
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith,
That my most jealous and too doubtful soul 27
May live at peace. He shall conceal it
Whiles you are willing it shall come to note, 29
What time we will our celebration keep 30
According to my birth. What do you say?

SEBASTIAN

I'll follow this good man and go with you

LX 62

SQ 39.5

IMAGE 38

DOUSER CLOSE

And having sworn truth, ever will be true.

OLIVIA

Then lead the way, good father, and heavens so shine
That they may fairly note this act of mine. *Exeunt.* 41:47

*

SHIFT 19A

RED RAIL ↓ A OUT

GREEN RAIL ↓ T IN

V.1 *Enter Clown and Fabian.*

LX 63 C COMPLETE

SQ 40 ♪ FADE

DOUSER OPEN

IMAGE 39

FABIAN Now as thou lov'st me, let me see his letter.

CLOWN Good Master Fabian, grant me another request.

FABIAN Anything.

CLOWN Do not desire to see this letter.

FABIAN This is to give a dog, and in recompense desire my dog again.

Enter Duke, Viola, Curio, and Lords.

SQ 41 RUMBLE

DUKE Belong you to the Lady Olivia, friends? 7

CLOWN Ay, sir, we are some of her trappings.

DUKE I know thee well. How dost thou, my good fellow? 10

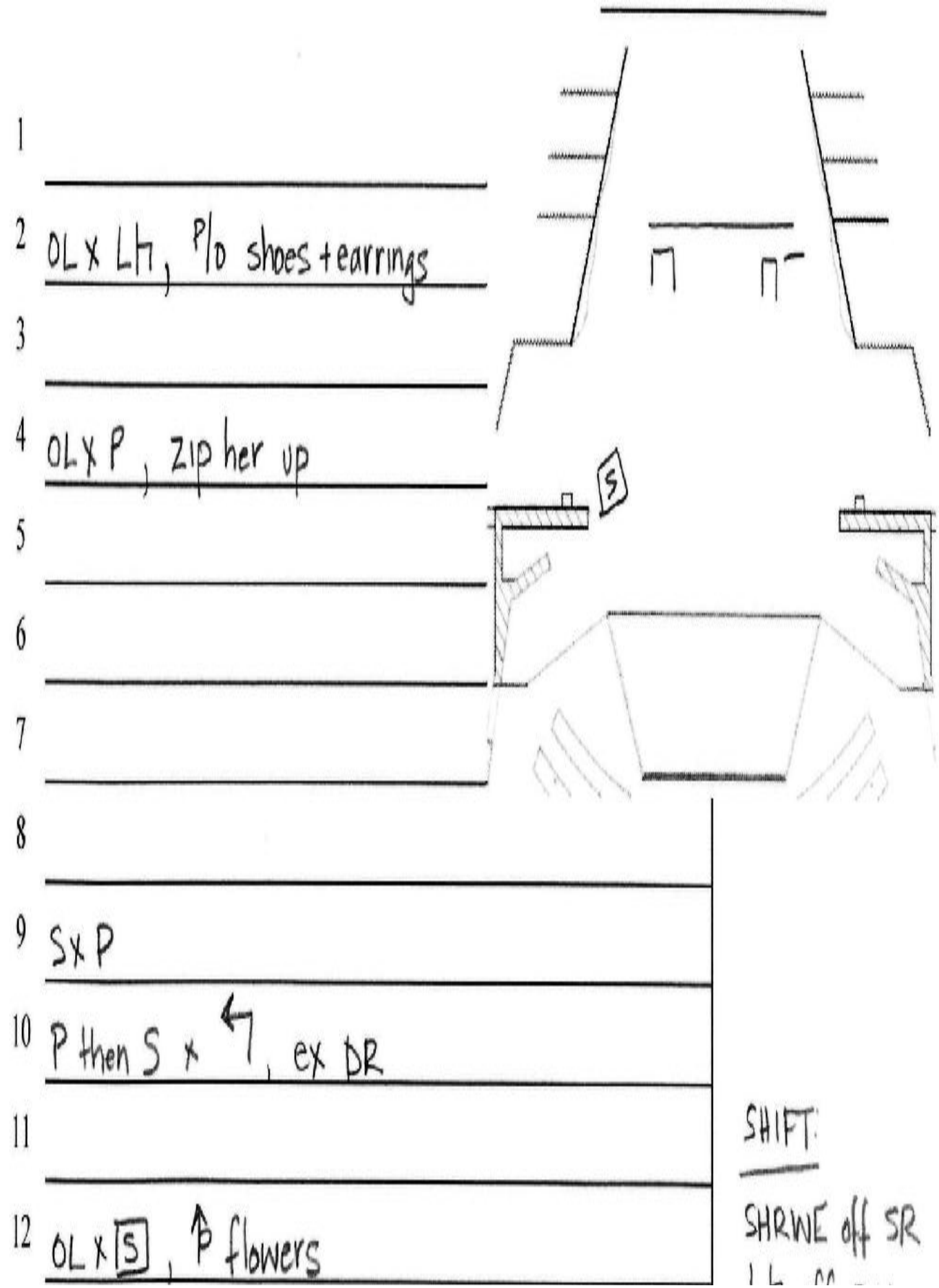
CLOWN Truly, sir, the better for my foes, and the worse for my friends.

---

24 *chantry by* chapel nearby 27 *jealous* anxious 29 *Whiles* until

V.1 Before Olivias house / *Belong you* i.e., are you in the service of

Figures 4.7 and 4.8 Utilizing a second groundplan for a prompt script page.



13 OL x ¢, ex ↖ thru arch

14

15

16 FA, FE en VL to ⌂

17 FE then FA x thru ⌂ to VR¢

18 FE waive letter

19 OR, V, C, LD en DL

20

21 FE x DS3, bow

22 FA ↓

23

24 FE x OR

25

26

LTT off R+L

LTT off L

ARCH out

TREES in

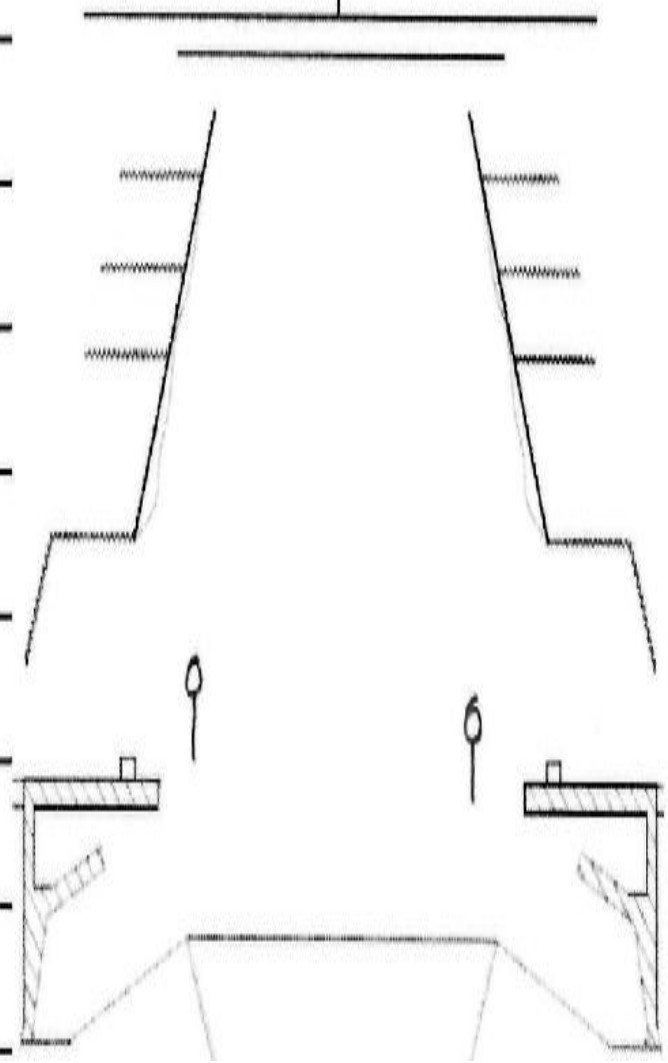
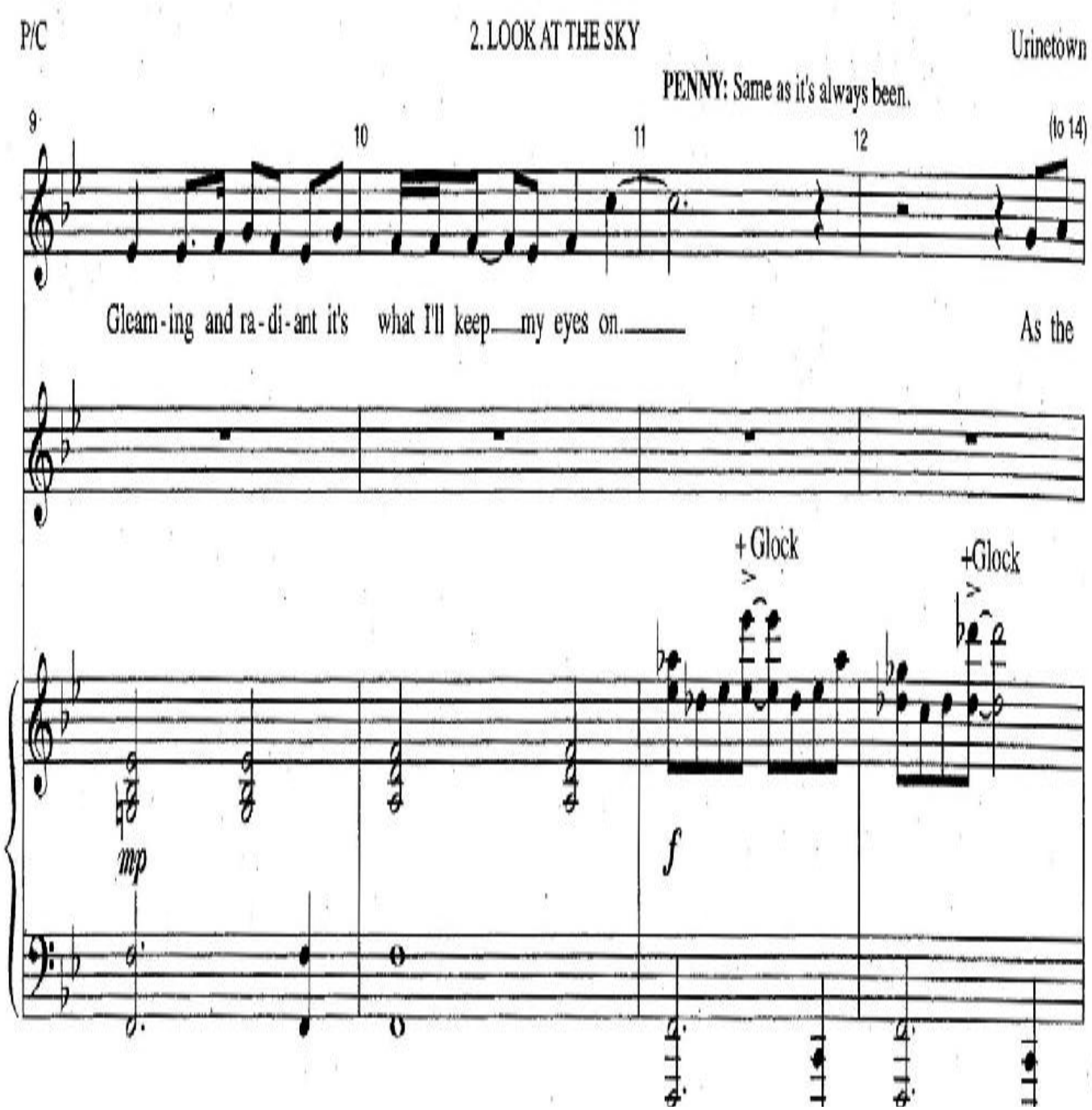


Figure 4.8

THE SCRIPT FOR THE MUSICAL

When working on a musical, the SM will have two script choices: the libretto and the score. In most instances, the libretto is a good choice and can be formatted exactly like the play script. The libretto offers the stage manager a streamlined version of the show. It contains all dialogue and lyrics, along with headings to note where each piece of music begins.



14 15 16

world turns to face the sun and start a - no - ther day, it sud - den - ly oc - curs to me that

Cl,Tbn

p

mf

mp

17 18

may - be we can find a - no - ther way.

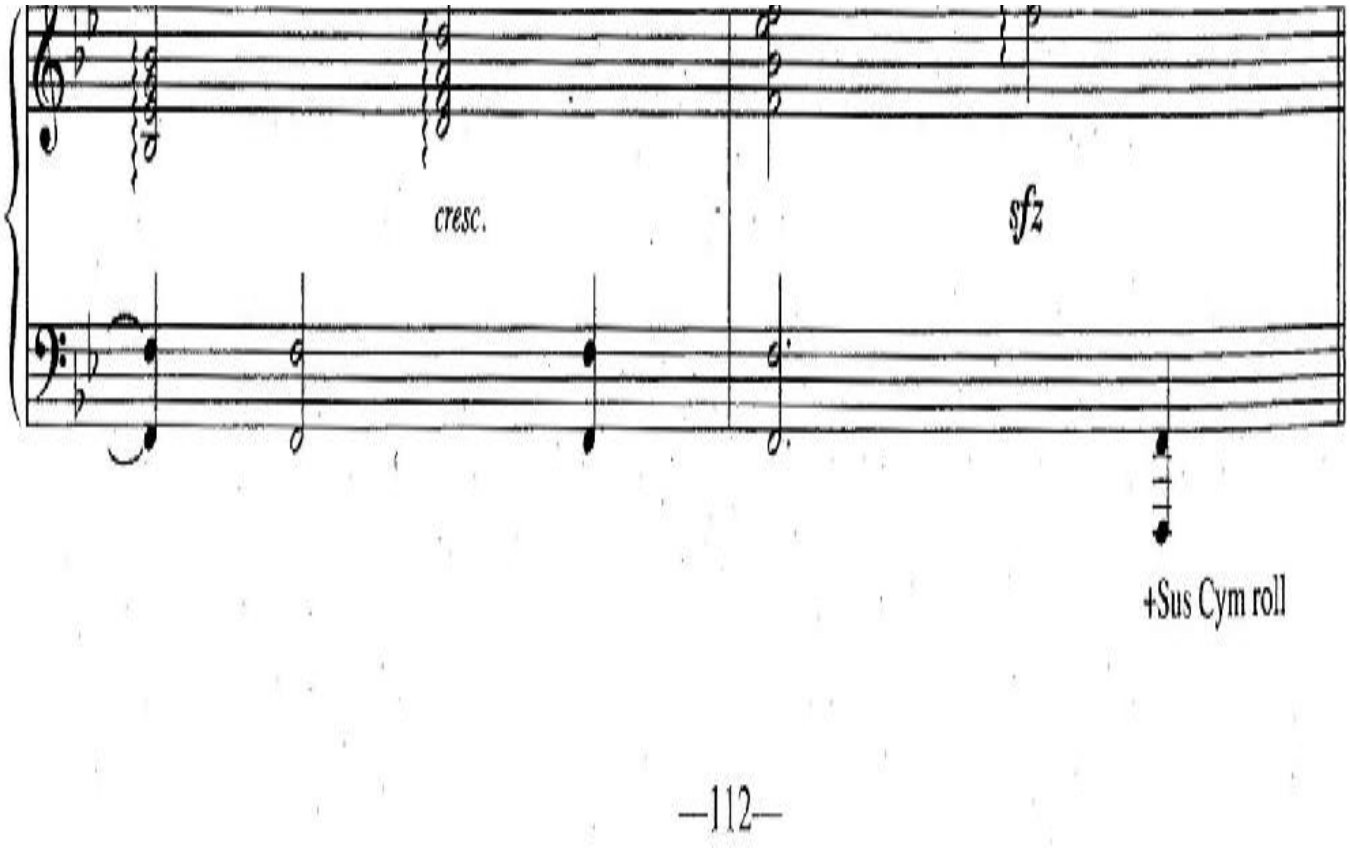


Figure 4.9 A page of the score for "Look at the Sky" from the musical *Urinetown.* Used with permission of the authors.

The score for a book musical, as seen in Figure 4.9, documents both the vocal and instrumental details of a song. If a singer is accompanied, then details for both the singers and the orchestra are present on the page. But if the song contains music without lyrics, that information would not be present in the libretto. Looking at our sample page, you will notice a place approximately two-thirds of the way across the top of the page (at measure 11) where there are no lyrics for a short period of time. If you allow your eye to travel down, you will notice, however, that there is still music—in this case two bars of piano and glockenspiel. Unlike the libretto, the score gives you ALL of the music, not just when someone is singing.

The score typically contains only the lines that lead into a song or that are spoken during a vamp. This makes it an incomplete document. The SM would not be able to place blocking in relation to specific dialogue, and would have a very difficult time prompting once the actors are no longer carrying scripts. And if the show contains action during a scene or transition without music, then the stage manager would not find a place to record these details.

If you are hired for a production of *Les Misérables* or *The Who's Tommy*, however, the libretto will be the one to fall short. The sung-through musical has no unaccompanied dialogue, and nearly every action will happen in conjunction with music. In order to have sufficient information on the page, you will find the score a better choice this time.

Because a score page is inherently more visually complex than a script, the SM should keep it at full size. In many instances, you will actually reduce the score to get it to fit on a standard sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper. You will also place cues in a different manner, so the large outside margin is not necessary.

PROPS

COSTUMES

OTHER

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

place small groundplan here

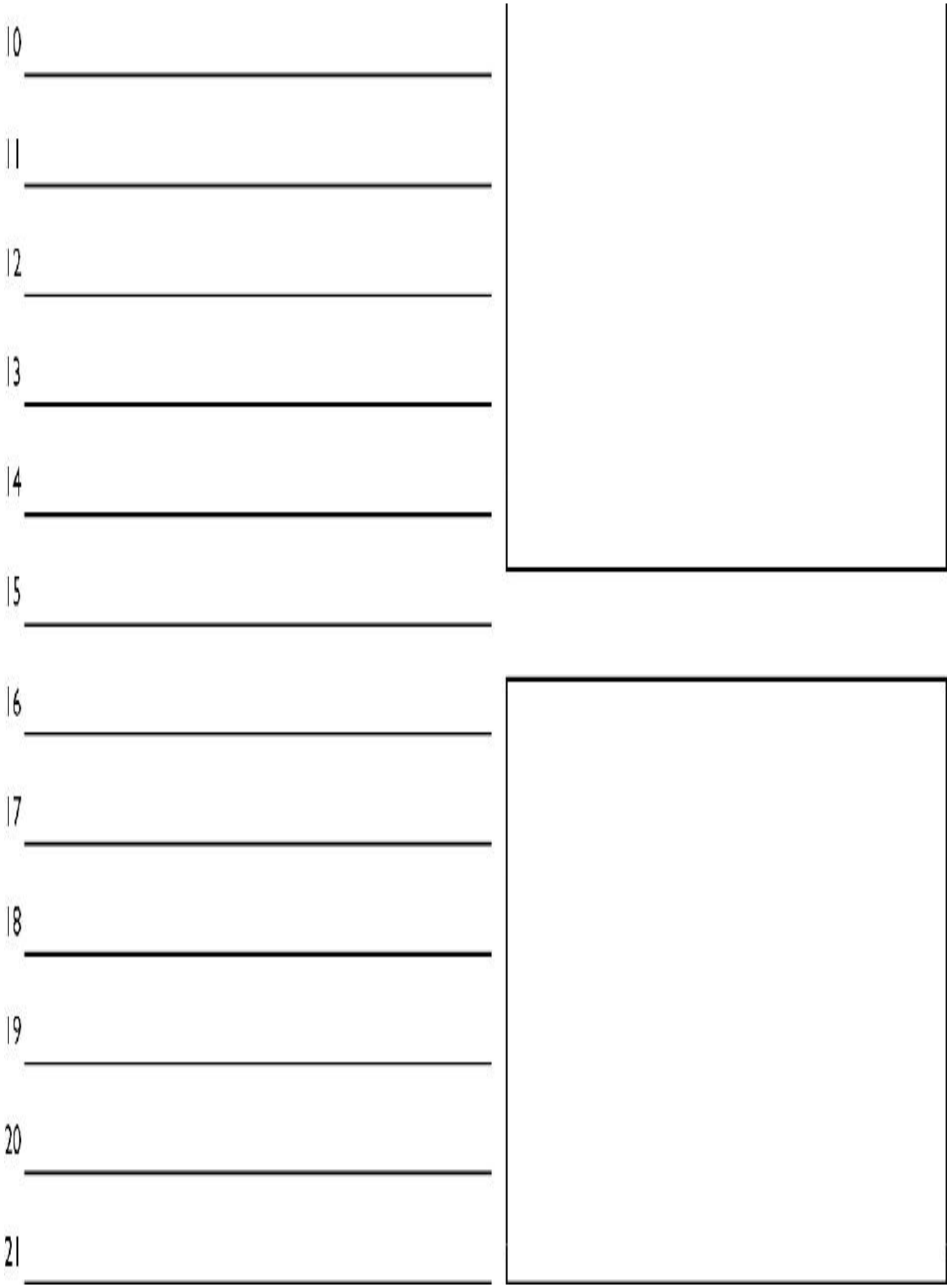


Figure 4.10 The backing page for a musical.

The musical stage manager will be noting both blocking and choreography, necessitating a backing sheet with a different format. Figure 4.10 is my starting place when working on a musical. Most productions have a dance captain

responsible for writing out individual steps and counts. The SM's choreography notes focus on formations and movement patterns, most effectively captured in visual form. I refer to these notes as "football diagrams" due to their resemblance to the on-screen sketches done by commentators as they analyze plays for the viewers with a set of Xs, Os, and arrows.

By reducing the width of the lines and adding a series of boxes, the backing sheet can capture this new information. A series of groundplans is not typically the best idea, because some of the configurations you are noting may not take up the full stage. A blank box gives you the flexibility to have a wide or narrow focus at any moment.

If you are placing the backing page opposite the score, you might want to reduce the number of lines and increase the space between them to better correspond to the number of systems on the page. Because the score provides both vocal and instrumental detail, an individual page makes less progress through the show. It is not uncommon for a single page of typed lyrics in the libretto to correspond to four or five pages in the score, if not more.

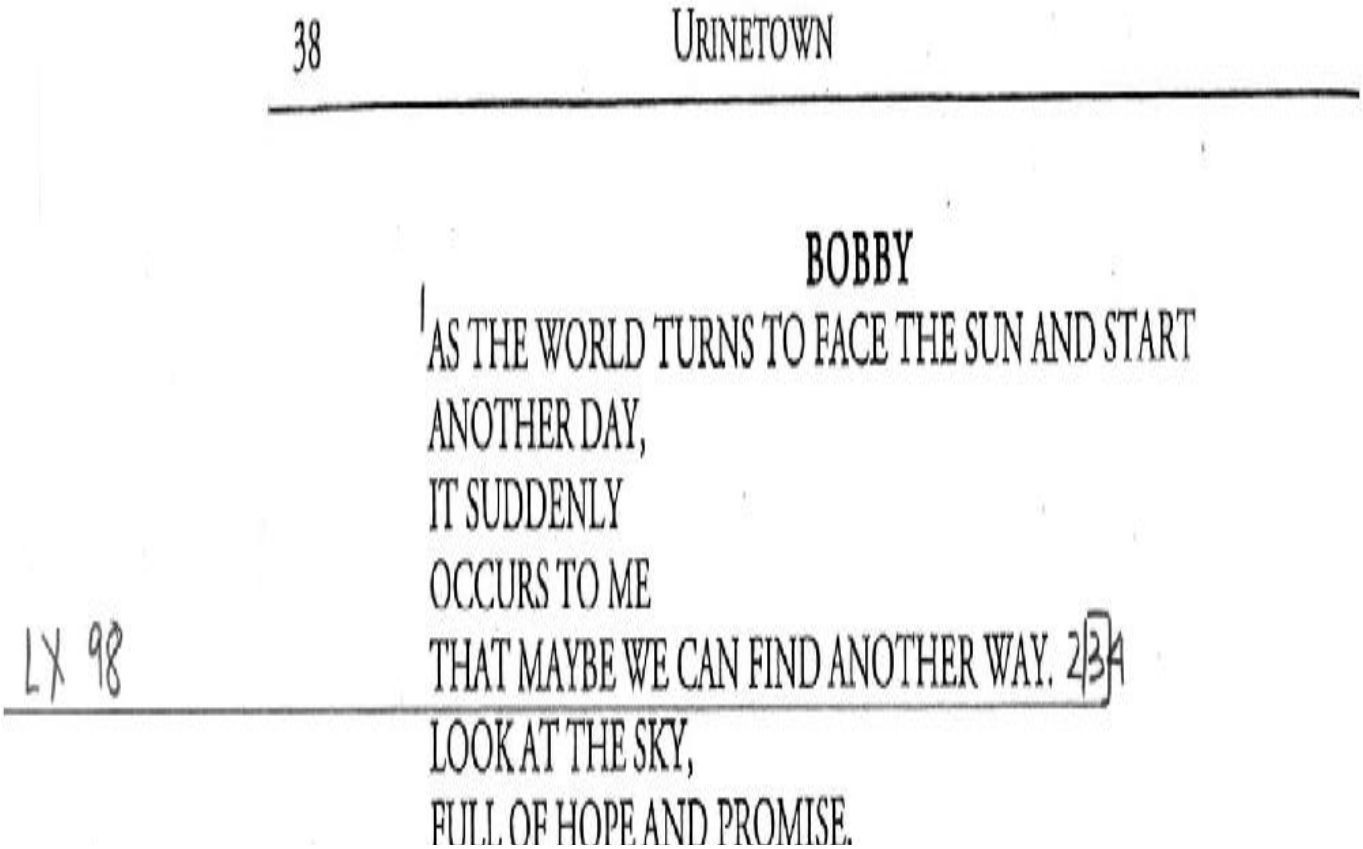
THE HYBRID SCRIPT

Unfortunately, the choice between libretto and score is not always so simple. Consider the song that contains several verses of lyrics and a dance break (one or more bars of instrumental music that is choreographed). The stage manager cannot skip taking dance notes simply because there is no accurate written accounting of that part of the song in the libretto.

The SM could use this as justification to work entirely from the score, but you end up with a much longer prompt script, many more page turns throughout the show, and constant visual complexity. A better option is to create hybrid script pages for these sections. By combining the libretto and score, you can accumulate all the information you need.

A hybrid script can take two forms—writing counts into the libretto to more accurately represent the music, or combining the libretto and score into a single script. "**Counts**" refers to the beats over which a single note or word is held.

Figure 4.11 is a page from "Look at the Sky" from the musical *Urinetown*. The song has no major dance break, but the words at the end of several lines are held for multiple counts, followed by additional bars of music, before singing resumes. The lighting designer for this production cued the song to follow the musicality, requiring the SM to anticipate the beginning of a new verse in order to call changes correctly.


38 URINETOWN

BOBBY

1 AS THE WORLD TURNS TO FACE THE SUN AND START
ANOTHER DAY,
IT SUDDENLY
OCCURS TO ME
LX 98 THAT MAYBE WE CAN FIND ANOTHER WAY. 2 3 4
LOOK AT THE SKY,
FULL OF HOPE AND PROMISE.

IT'S A SHINING IDEAL.
HOW I REEL
LX 99 WHEN I LOOK AT THE SKY 234 2234

PENNY

Now, who's first?

JOSEPHINE STRONG

I am!

BOBBY

Ma!

PENNY

LX 100 We'll take your fee, now, Mrs. Strong. The improved fee, that is.

BOBBY

DAILY WE MAKE THEM PAY THEIR NICKELS, DIMES, AND QUARTERS–

JOSEPHINE

But this is all I have, Ms. Pennywise.

BOBBY

DAILY WE BREAK THEM 'CAUSE WE HAVE TO FOLLOW ORDERS

DAILY WE BREAK THEM CAUSE WE HAVE TO FOLLOW ORDERS.

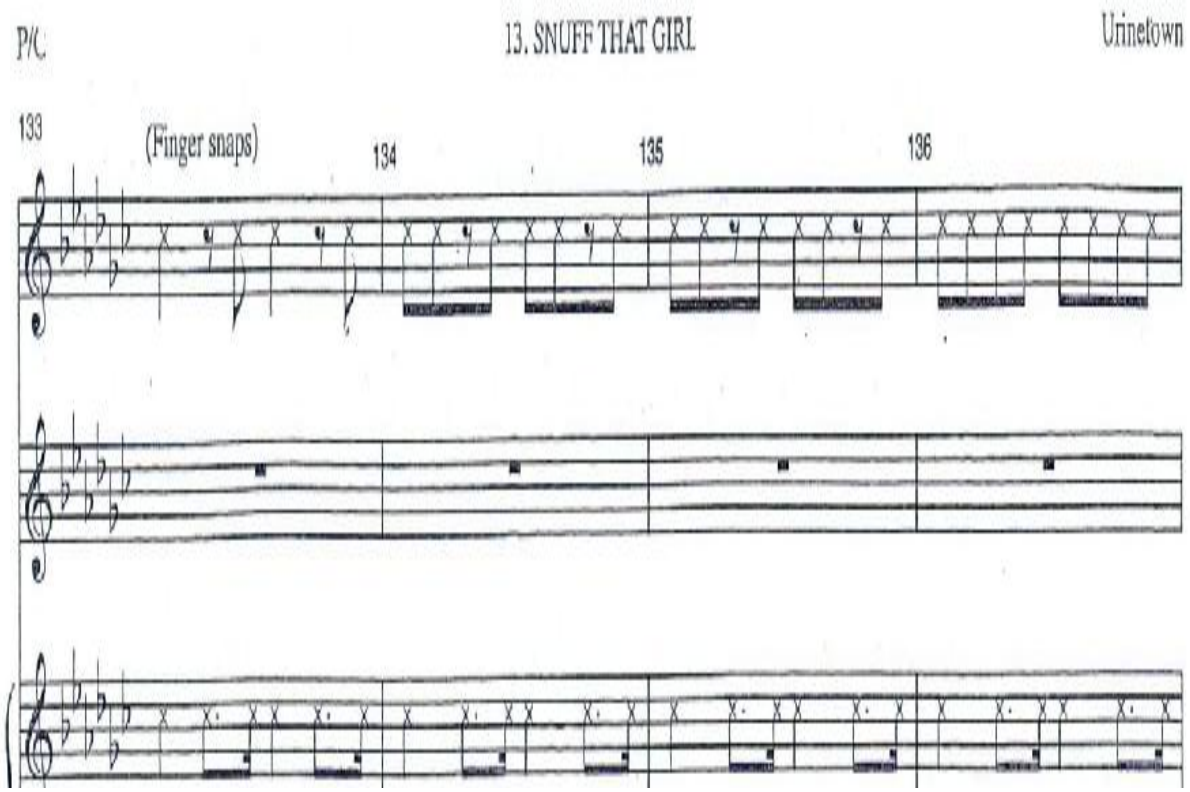
LITTLE SALLY

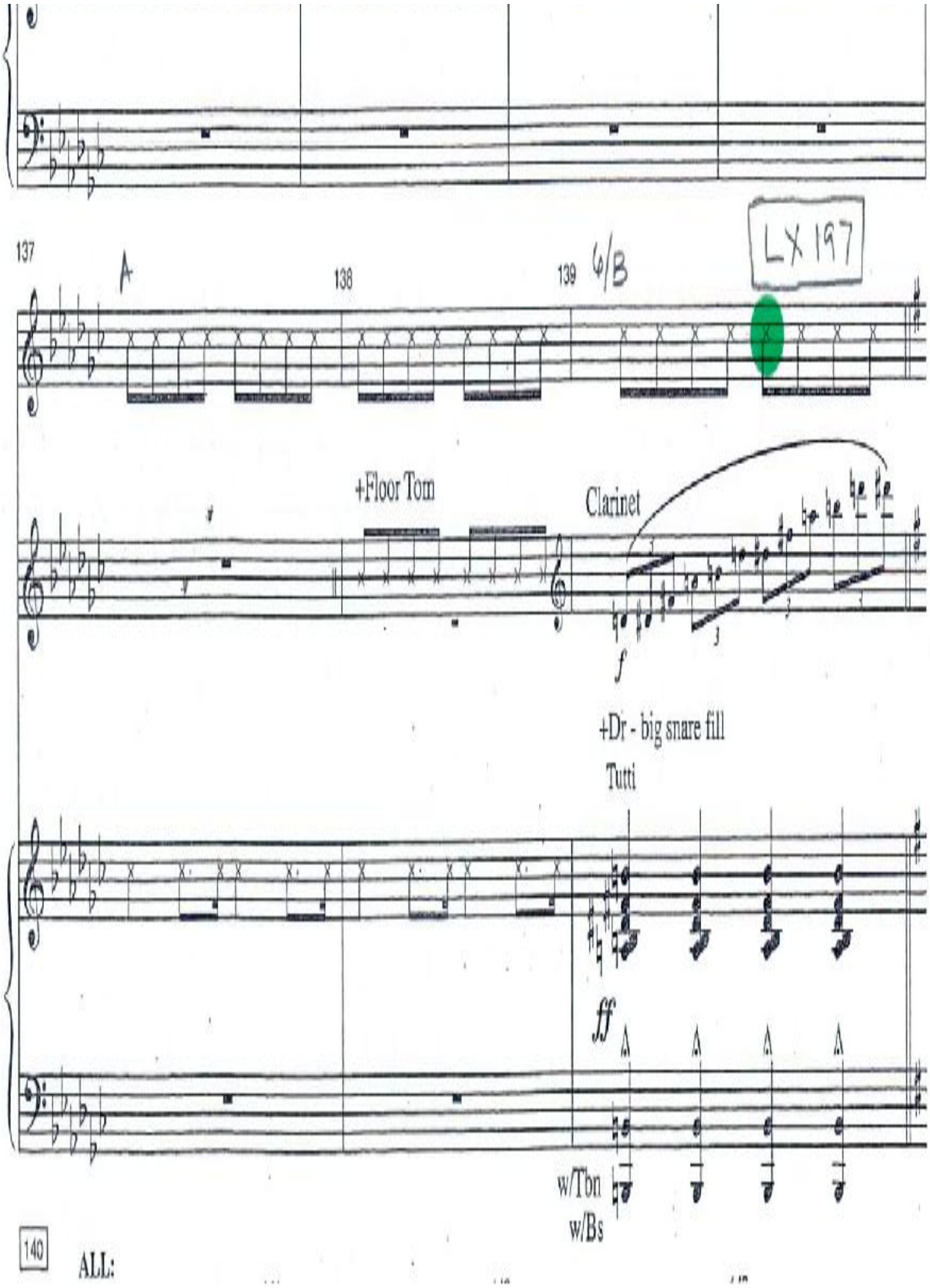
16 Haven't you enough Mrs. Strong?

BOBBY

17 AND WE KEEP FILLING MONEYBAGS WITH BROKEN
LIVES AND DREAMS,
BUT WHAT'S IT FOR?
I CAN'T IGNORE
LX 101 THESE BLACK, IMMORAL PROFIT-MAKING SCHEMES. 2 34
44 LOOK AT THE SKY,
HIGH ABOVE THIS MADNESS.
HERE BELOW, FEEL OUR SHAME.

Figure 4.11 A page of "Look at the Sky" from the musical *Urinetown* in the libretto. Used with permission of the authors.





(Dance break.)

13 THIS IS THE END.
ROLL THE DICE, PLACE YOUR BETS.
IN THIS MIS'RABLE WORLD.

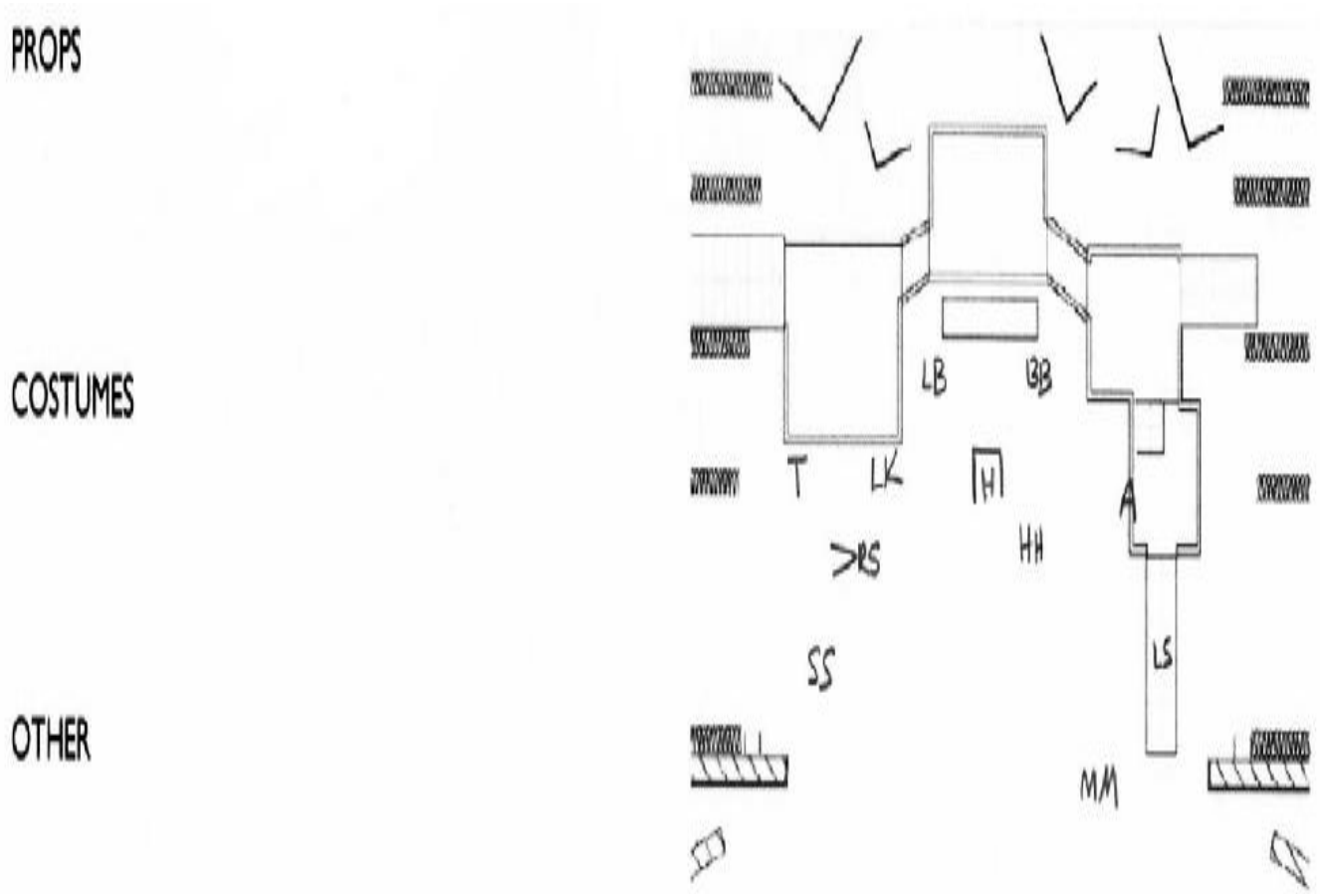
THAT'S AS GOOD AS IT GETS.[15]
SO NOW, LET'S LIVE IT UP.
EAT THE OYSTER AND THE PEARL.

AND LET'S GET THIS PARTY JUMPIN',[16] 1234 2234
REALLY GET IT PUMPIN'.[17] 1234 2234
[18]LET'S GET THIS PARTY JUMPIN'.
LX 199 pull down YEAH, LET'S SNUFF THAT.[20] 1234 2234 3234
SNUFF THAT GIRL.[21]
LX 201 bump + AF restore

TINY TOM

Let's bring our message of hate to the entire world!

Figures 4.12 and 4.13 Hybrid prompt script pages for "Snuff That Girl" from the musical *Urinetown.* Both libretto and score used with permission of the authors.



1

2

3

4

5

6 all to DS

7

8

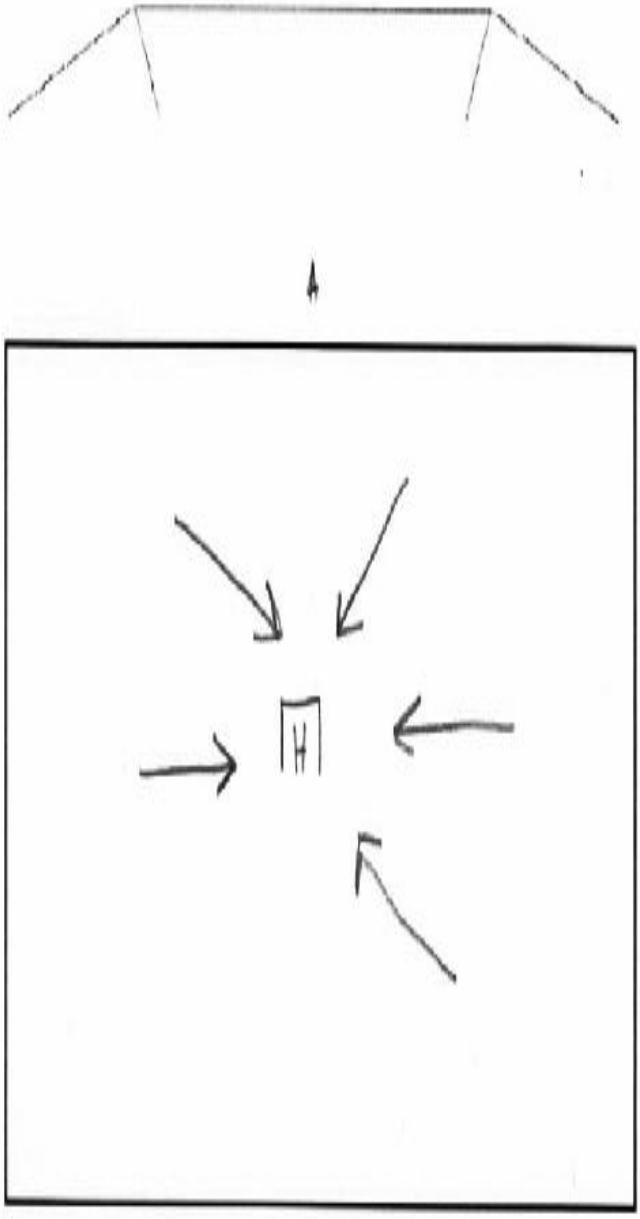
9

10

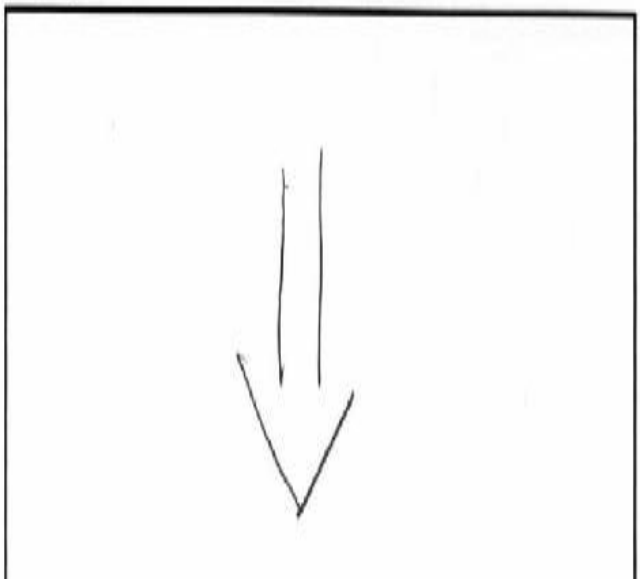
11

12

13 all ⊣



#6 B



14

15 all back up 3

16 step-step-step-heel x2

17 twist for 8

18 jazz square x2

19 lean + back

20 8 hops DS

21 point H

22

RS LK T SS LB LS HH MM A RS BB

C

Figure 4.13

If the stage manager has a strong musical sense, that anticipation might be instinctual. But keeping in mind the function of the prompt script to be a complete and accurate detailing of the show, instinct may not help another SM. And even an instinctual stage manager might try calling the cue in one or more slightly different locations during tech to achieve the exact effect intended by the designer.

By writing in counts, the SM can record the correct location as precisely as if it fell on an individual syllable of a word. The score provides the stage manager with the information about counts, and it can be easily transferred to the libretto page.

Long instrumental sections of music can get confusing when represented through only a series of numbers. The stage manager can get trapped into staring at those numbers to follow along, easily getting lost if he or she looks up at the stage. The song "Snuff That Girl," also from *Urinetown*, fits our original hybrid criteria by having several verses of lyrics along with a 56-bar dance break. That would require writing a lot of counts!

This time the SM opted to copy and insert several pages from the full score for the dance break, switching back to the libretto at the end of the choreography as seen in Figures 4.12 and 4.13. A split page provided a transition from the score to the libretto. Some additional quality time at the photocopier or your computer presents the final two verses in half of a page as opposed to five. The combined information facilitates accurate placement of cues in relation to both music and lyrics.

You can actually see both hybrid styles at work here. Within the bottom libretto section, the stage manager has written in counts at three different locations. Because each music-only section is short, there is no need to revert to the score. But because the music-only measures exist, the libretto is more accurate with this information. It is a good reminder for the stage manager, and a very helpful addition for a substitute or replacement.

When working on a book musical, the stage manager may start with the libretto, automatically recognizing the need for score pages only for the overture or entr'acte ahead of time. It is not always clear where other hybrid pages will be needed. Fortunately, you will rehearse every scene in the play more than once before tech! If you find that a libretto page is incomplete, try writing in counts or taking choreography notes on a separate page for the day. You can always take some time to grab your scissors or laptop and make a new page after the fact, transfer the information, and be ready to refine your notes at the next rehearsal.

CREATING A HYBRID SCRIPT PAGE

When working on a musical you will often find that the libretto does not give you enough information or room to write. You have dialogue and lyrics but no music, and only the words "dance break" to denote what could be several minutes of stage time. A solution can be found in the hybrid script page.

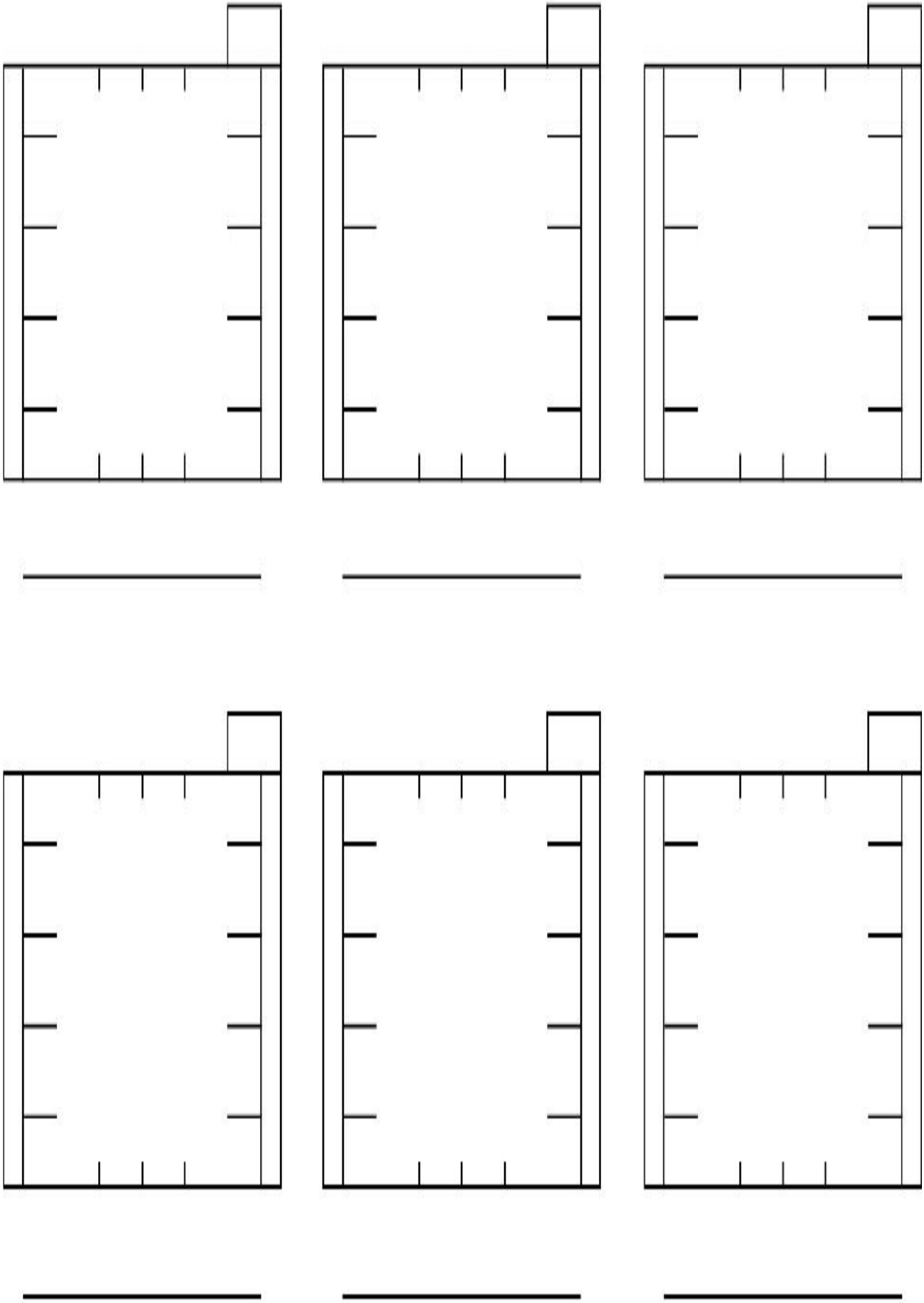
To create the blended script page, the SM can take one of two approaches. The "old school" method would be a literal cut and paste. Starting from master pages of the script, copy the sections to be combined—keeping the original so you could start over if you're unhappy with the end result. Resize the relevant sections, striking a balance between the size of the text elsewhere in your prompt script and the size needed to fit everything onto a single page. Adhere all of the individually resized sections to the same blank sheet of paper, keeping the margins as consistent as possible to the other pages. Copy the finished product and insert into your script.

If you have the ability to scan your pages, you can do the cutting and pasting on the computer. Trading scissors for the crop function, paste the sections into a Word document, again setting the size, location, and margins to match the other pages as closely as possible. As a tip, it is easier to work with image files than PDF files because you can get the text sharper. But a full version of Adobe Acrobat can convert a scanned PDF to a JPG, so you won't need additional software or outside help. You will also have a much easier time of tweaking the individual sections to achieve the match.

DANCE, DANCE, DANCE

When putting together a prompt book, I try to select a single backing page that will work for the entire script. The only exception I consider is for dance. Because my professional background includes work as a stage manager for modern and ballet companies, I can take dance notation quickly and with good detail—more than can fit into the three boxes on my musical backing sheet. Therefore I always have a set of dance-only sheets on hand (the same pages I use when working on a dance concert). Typically I will keep these pages in a separate section of my book—much like the fact that I will make prop notes in my script but still keep a separate props list. The sample is included here, as it might prove a useful template or a source for adapting your own backing sheets. During early choreography rehearsals I sometimes opt to use only the dance sheets for documentation, and then transfer this detail into the script at a later time.

SCENE/SONG _____ DATE _____



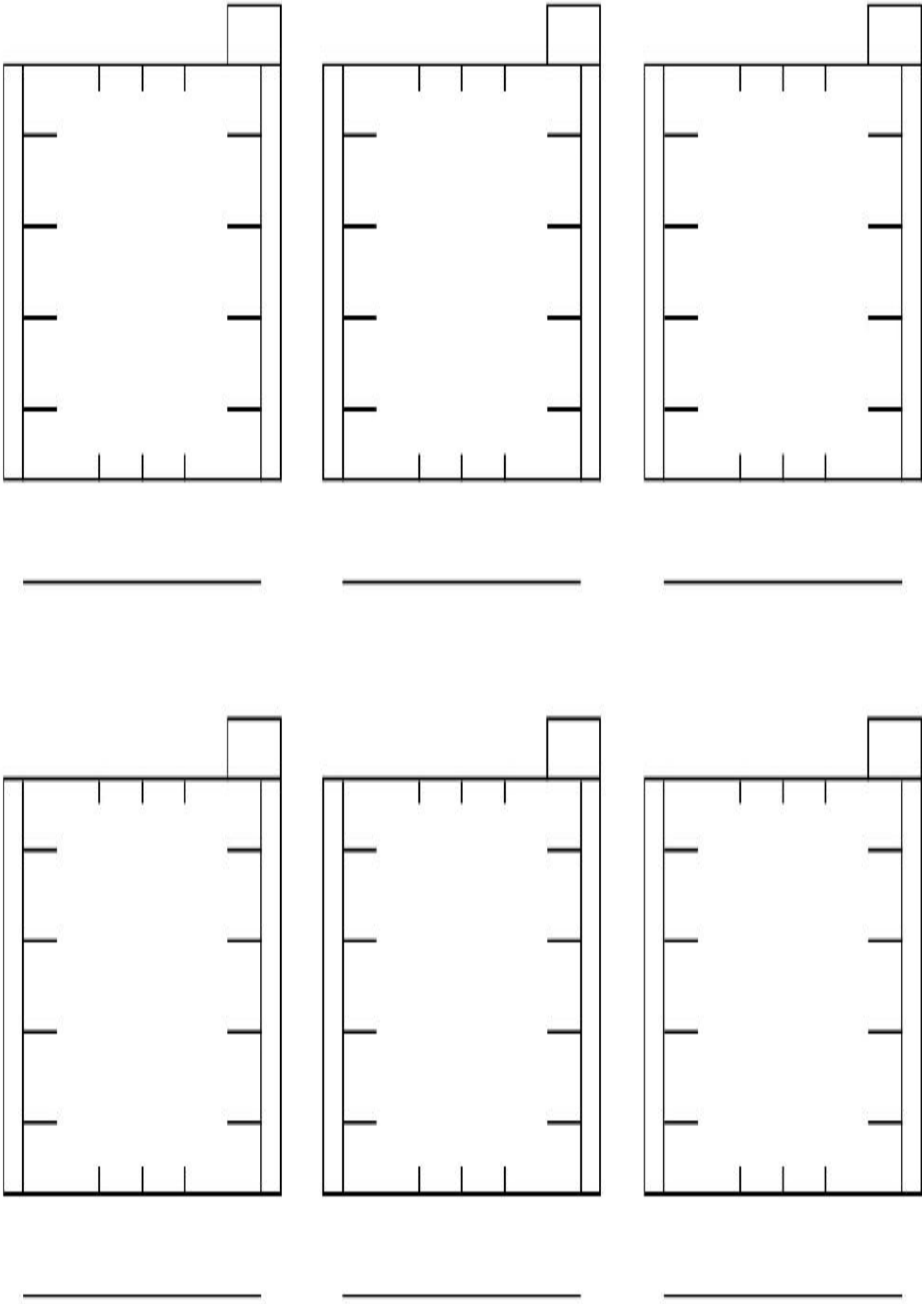
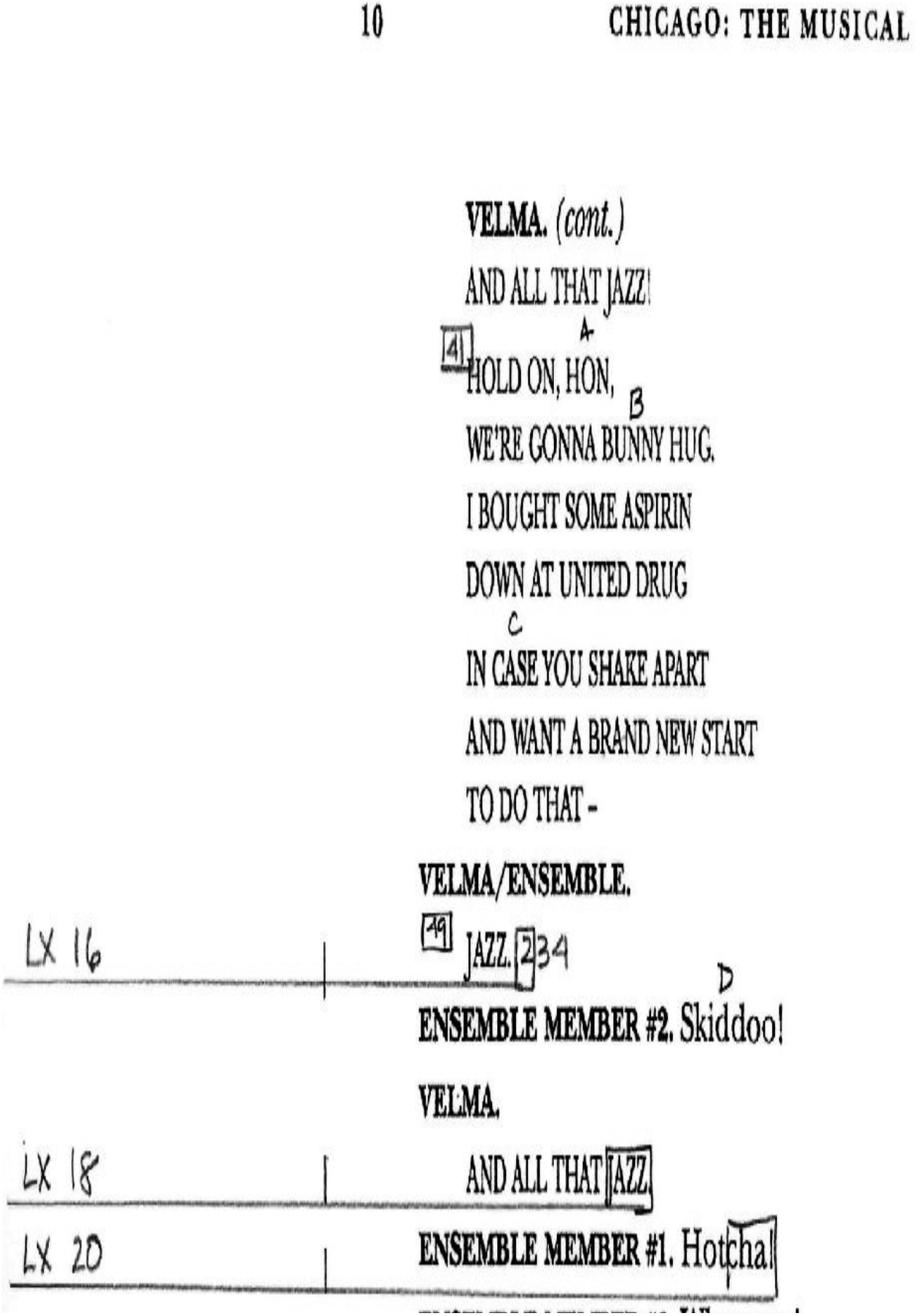


Figure 4.14 A dance blocking sheet. Adapted from a form originally created by Keith Michael, Dance Production Coordinator, The Julliard School, NY.



10 CHICAGO: THE MUSICAL

VELMA. *(cont.)*

AND ALL THAT JAZZ!

A

[4] HOLD ON, HON,

B

WE'RE GONNA BUNNY HUG.

I BOUGHT SOME ASPIRIN

DOWN AT UNITED DRUG

C

IN CASE YOU SHAKE APART

AND WANT A BRAND NEW START

TO DO THAT -

VELMA/ENSEMBLE.

LX 16 [29] JAZZ. [2] 34

D

ENSEMBLE MEMBER #2. Skiddoo!

VELMA.

LX 18 AND ALL THAT [JAZZ]

LX 20 **ENSEMBLE MEMBER #1.** Hotcha!

ENSEMBLE MEMBER #3. Whoopee!

VELMA. E

AND ALL THAT JAZZ. F

LX 22 | **ENSEMBLE.** *(whispered)* Hah! Hah! Hah!

VELMA. G

IT'S JUST A NOISY HALL

WHERE THERE'S A NIGHTLY BRAWL

AND

LX 24 | **VELMA/ENSEMBLE.**

12,13 14

H ALL THAT JAZZ. 234 2234 3234

LX 26 R almost to 3 | 68 *(**FRED CASELY** and **ROXIE HART** enter.)*

15

FRED. Listen, uh, your husband ain't home, is he?

VELMA. No, her husband is not at home.

16

LX 28 | *(**ENSEMBLE** laughs.)*

VELMA. I

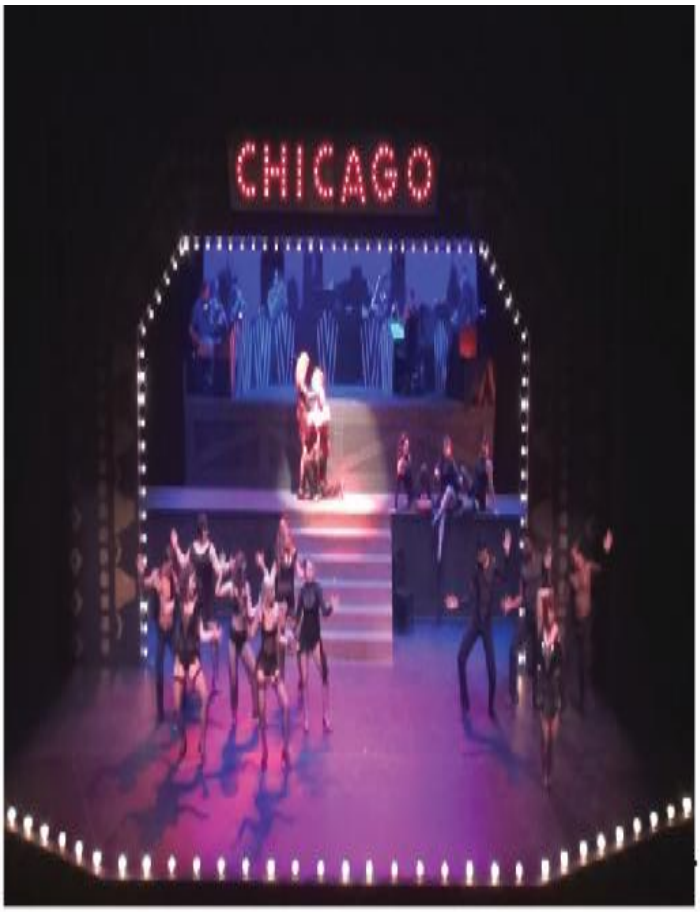
76 FIND A FLASK,

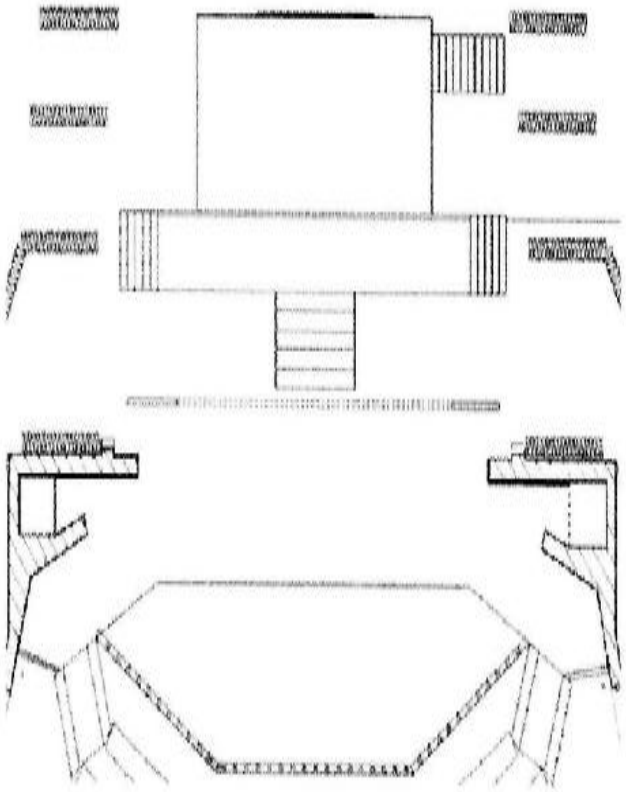
WE'RE PLAYING FAST AND LOOSE.

ENSEMBLE.

AND ALL THAT JAZZ.

[redacted]





2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

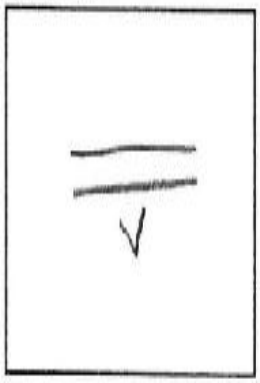
6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

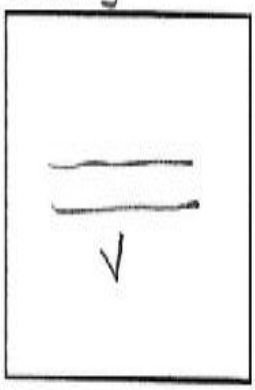
9 _____

A Hon



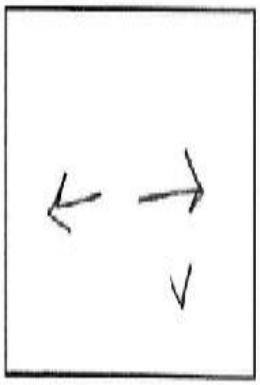
arms across chest

B Bunny



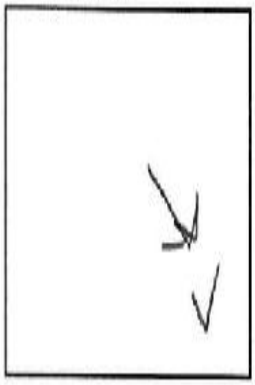
shake shoulders

C In case

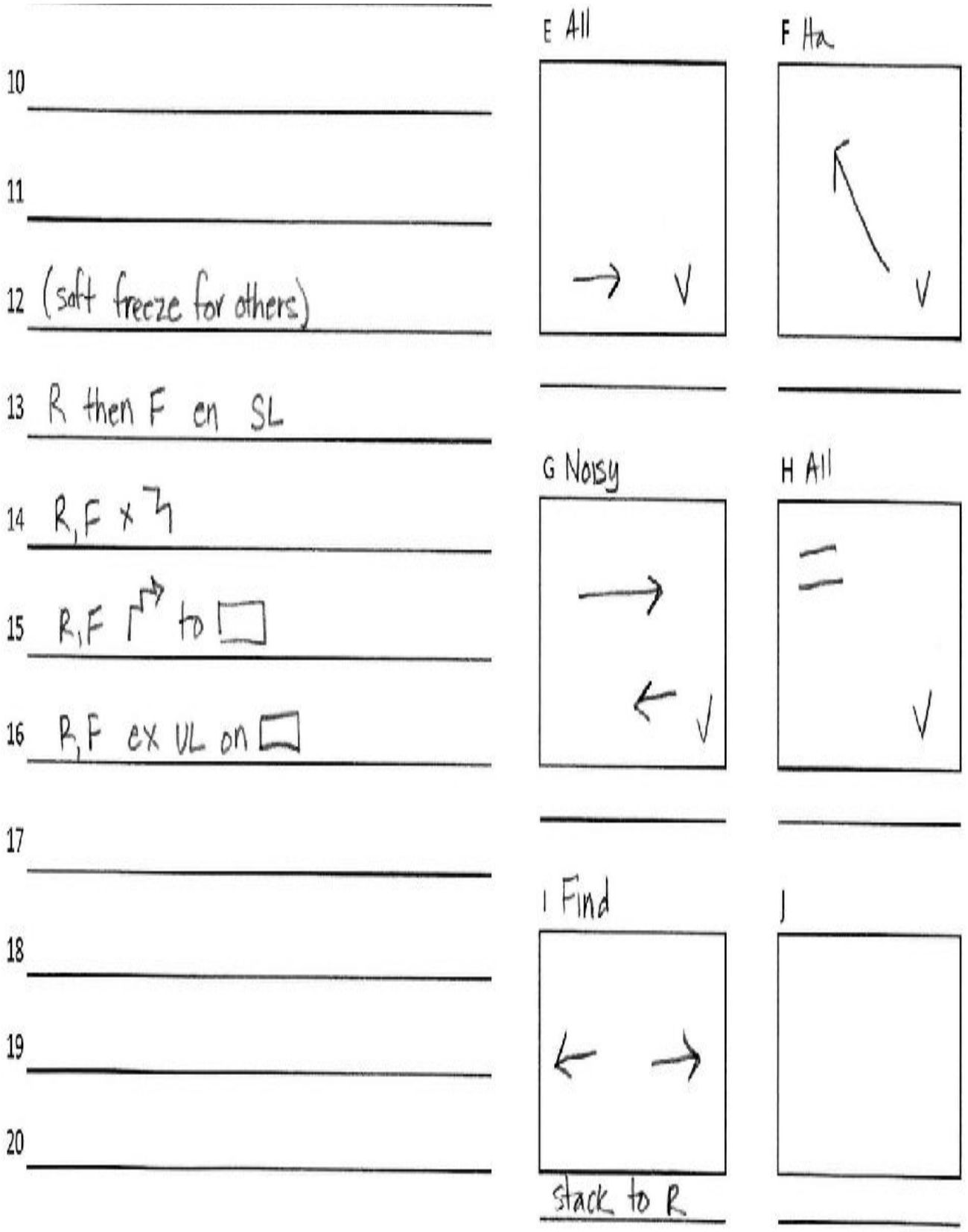


_____

D skidoo



_____



Figures 4.15 and 4.16 An excerpt from the prompt book for *Chicago*. Libretto used with permission of the authors.

The dance-only sheet in Figure 4.14 is constructed with a series of rectangular boxes. Lines along the right and left sides represent legs and allow notation of the wing through which a performer enters. Marks along the top and bottom indicate center and quarter lines. The small box above the top-right corner, a place for stopwatch times during a dance concert, makes an excellent location for rehearsal numbers from the score. A single line below the box provides a spot for a quick description or nickname for that portion of the choreography.

Ultimately it is information about cueing that helps to guide my script formatting decisions. If the libretto for the show is complete enough that I will be able to place my cues on that page but the choreography is too complex for only three boxes, then I may adapt the backing page to bring in more of the dance formatting. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 show a page from the libretto-based prompt script for Kander and Ebb's *Chicago* along with its backing page. You will note more boxes than are found in Figure 4.10. The boxes are kept empty, without the lines for "wings," because this choreography is not performed on an empty stage. The empty boxes also facilitate their use both for full-stage notation and zoomed-in detail of a specific configuration. The mini-groundplan in the upper right corner provides context. Were this a scene with additional furniture pieces onstage, they would be drawn onto the groundplan. And if needed, those furniture pieces would be included in the choreography boxes below. (*Note: to provide additional visual clarity for readers, a production shot of this moment in the show has been inserted into Figure 4.16. It obviously was not part of the original prompt script*.)

By adapting the prompt script layout for this song, I was able to record all of the choreography opposite the page on which the corresponding lyrics appeared. Because there were no major instrumental-only sections in this song, I anticipated relative ease calling from the libretto. I saw no need to switch to the score simply to have fewer lyrics on a page in order to document the choreography using the sheet with fewer boxes.

I ended up with a secondary benefit from this decision. Toward the bottom of the page, while Velma and company are dancing, Roxie and Fred enter. They exist in a separate world from the others, and do not interact with the dancers. By maintaining lines on the new backing page, albeit short ones, I provided myself with a space to record their blocking—and a bonus visual reinforcement of their separation by using the two different styles. The choice was also appropriate given the action: Roxie and Fred enter, travel up a flight of stairs to an upper platform, and ultimately exit. Since they are not dancing, there is no real need for boxes to document this movement. "Play-style" notation space works just fine. Following the conclusion of this song, I reverted to my standard musical backing page—although similarly busy songs elsewhere in the show prompted a return of the alternate page. The companion website for this book contains additional examples of those pages, complete with cues and choreography.

The stage manager may find that the musical theatre layouts are helpful for some play settings. If you are working on a production with a great deal of physical action or fight choreography, the additional space for visual notation may prove more efficient than written description or the pasting of bonus mini-groundplans on every page. As you prepare for a show, be sure that your preliminary investigation of the text and this production of it allow you to consider both the verbal and physical languages of the actors so that you can be prepared to document everything required.

THE DIGITAL PROMPT SCRIPT

Although I grew up with only hard-copy prompt books as an option, I would be remiss not to mention the growing fondness for creating and working from a digital prompt script. I have seen stage managers use the comment feature in order to insert cues on the page of a script created in Word or other similar software, and to set up the script in a sort of two-column format in order to type out blocking. The latter seems tedious to me. Perhaps it is because I have developed a notation style filled with symbols which would be difficult to recreate in letters and slower to paste in as pictures while documenting movement. Applications such as Stage Write continue to evolve as a solution for noting movement in a pictorial manner. Since its creation in 2012, the software has evolved from iPad-only to one that is web-based as well, and it now provides methods both for charting movement and noting a script. It remains an excellent resource for directors and choreographers. ASMs could make use of the charting for planning scene shifts and other deck moves.

Figure 4.17 and 4.18 Screen shots of the chart and script Stage Write features, reprinted with permission of Stage Write Software.

Figure 4.18

A digital calling script, however, seems more reasonable. The stage manager will book most of the cues into his or her script outside of rehearsal time, lessening the "need for speed" when typing and allowing the same kind of accuracy attainable with a good old-fashioned pencil and ruler. A finalized cue script could be converted to a PDF, and read from a laptop, tablet, or other device during performances.

Here, too, technology offers the SM new options. Stage Write's relatively new script feature is a welcome addition. At this point the chart and script features remain semi-autonomous. The stage manager can insert the link to a chart within the prompt script. Currently embedding is not an option—necessitating a second window to see that very useful detail simultaneously—but it is already common practice for shifts to be documented separately on a shift plot, and in the midst of calling cues the SM is less likely to need moment-by-moment choreography notes. A typed comment can reference the specific detail for the cue. The program also makes it easy to update pages when working on a new script.

A new company called Cuelist, created by a professional lighting designer, has introduced a digital script option that is also more elegant and more functional than the Word document with comments. Although the product has only been around since 2018, the creators have implemented repeated updates and expanded options. The program's growth has been impressive and appears to be a genuine green alternative to the printed calling script. And although they may be more useful to designers than stage managers, it includes features such as real-time updating, viewing the cues in spreadsheet form, bookmarking cues that need attention, and a fairly robust cue notes feature. The script can be shared with other collaborators, allowing the stage manager and designer to work from the same file.

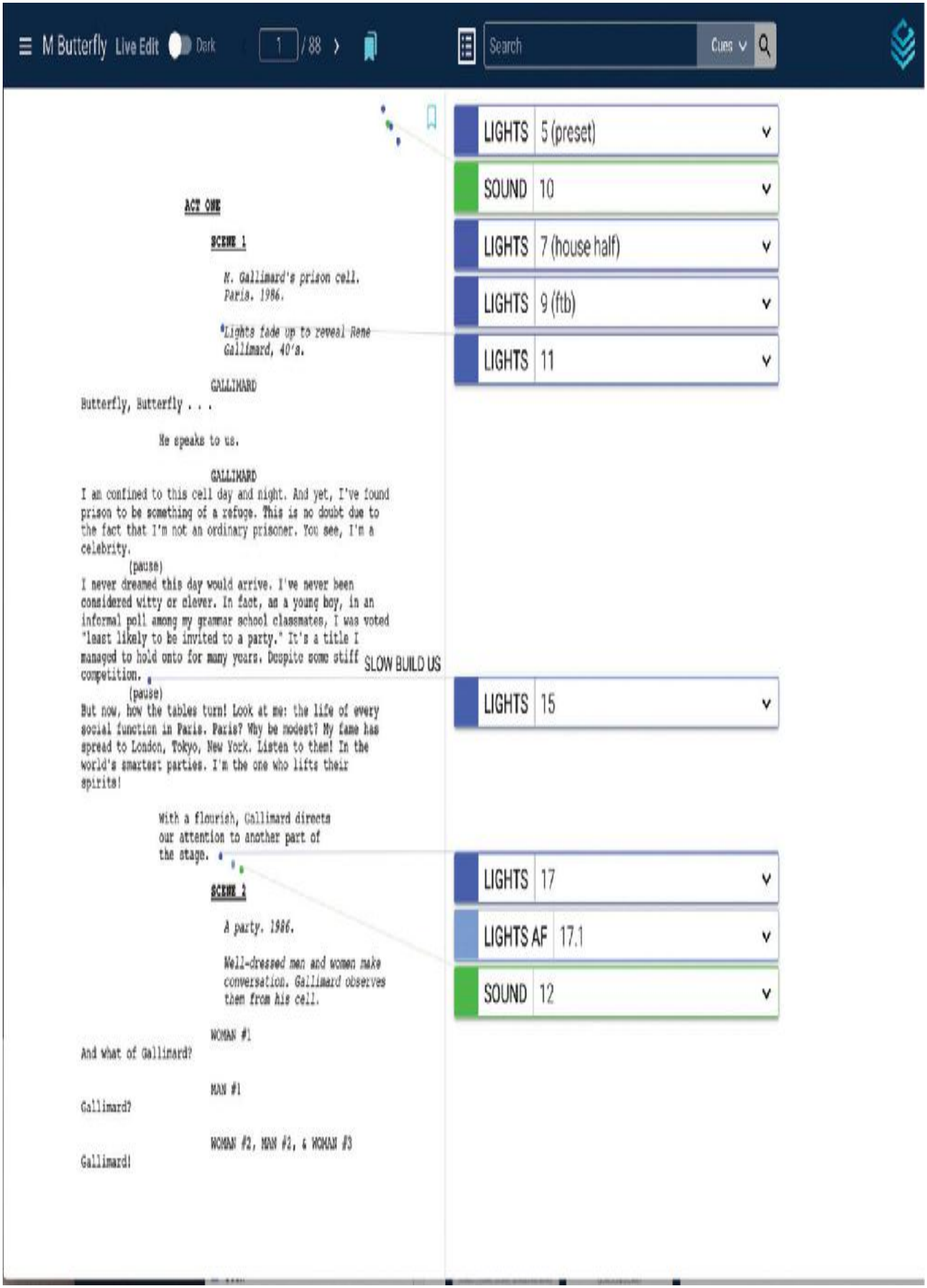


Figure 4.19 A look at the digital calling script available through the new company Cuelist, reprinted with permission of Cuelist Software.

Your humble author is undoubtedly more intrigued by the digital script than when writing the second edition of this book but is not yet a convert. My primary concerns remain potential delays in “turning the page” caused by the speed of a hard drive or an automatic backup setting, and the loss of the ability to look ahead in the same way at the cues coming up on the next page. Worst of all would be the day I forgot to charge my device and did not have a spare battery or power cord in the booth with me! But the progress in only a few short years is impressive, and both companies highlighted in this chapter have demonstrated sincere interest in developing a workable script for the SM and have been notably responsive to suggestions and comments from stage managers new and old. Many other software platforms and app developers are creating digital tools for theatre, including a few additional script options which could be future additions to this list.

READY FOR LAUNCH

The prompt book is the most important communication tool of the production. All of the charts the SM creates are designed to provide insight into a specific set of details. Lists of cues from the design team will reflect setup and changes for a single production area. The prompt book, and particularly the script, is the only location where a comprehensive look at the show is available. Taking the time to clearly organize your book, and to create a script in which you can quickly and accurately record blocking and cues, is a key component to your success on the show. Once that book is complete and stocked with the information you have collected and shared during the pre-production phase, you are ready for rehearsals to begin.

CHAPTER 5

Rehearsals

The adventure truly begins at the start of the rehearsal period. Your work organizing initial details and establishing rapport with actors and production team members will now pay off as the show comes to life. The stage manager's overarching goal is to keep everyone on the same page—facilitating discoveries in the rehearsal hall and sharing those discoveries with personnel not in attendance at the time.

REHEARSAL TASKS

- Prepare and distribute daily and weekly schedules.
- Record blocking in the prompt book.
- Help the director and actors understand specifics of the designs.
- Schedule costume fittings, dialect sessions, interviews, and other activities outside the rehearsal hall.
- Facilitate continual progress by acquiring rehearsal props and costumes, helping with line memorization, and shifting rehearsal scenery during runs of the show.
- Generate daily rehearsal reports.
- Update pre-production paperwork.
- Participate in production meetings.
- Begin creating paperwork for the crew.

FIRST REHEARSAL

The first day of work on a production will be part rehearsal and part business meeting. Reading through the play is combined with imparting information about the theatre, the specific rehearsal process, and the union, if you are working on an Equity production.

The day often begins with a meet-and-greet: an opportunity for cast members to get to know one another, members of the production team, and representatives of the theatre in an informal setting. This social time is typically followed by an introduction to the production. The director will share their thoughts about the script and vision for the show, and members of the design team present details of their work through renderings, models, or research images.

It is common to have guests at this first rehearsal. Personnel from the marketing department often wish to meet the actors to help personalize publicity requests later in the process. Senior staff such as a theatre's artistic director might attend to welcome the company to the theatre as a whole. Outside producers may even fly in from out of town, especially for a production with aspirations to travel beyond its home theatre after this run ends.

As part of the preparations for the first day, the stage manager should find out in advance who will be in attendance and what support they will need for presenting information. This can include a table for the model, display boards for drawings, or a surface onto which to project computer images. Designers who cannot attend this first rehearsal may send information to be shared on their behalf. The SM should also make sure there is adequate space for everyone, securing additional tables and chairs for the first day if necessary. Even though the guests may not be with you every day, it is important for them to feel welcome and included today.

The stage manager distributes many of the items created during prep week to the actors today. Cast members will need a copy of the contact sheet, the character/scene breakdown, and the preliminary rehearsal calendar. Depending

on the policies of your theatre, the SM may also hand out biography and emergency medical forms, details on parking, ticket policies, or general rehearsal guidelines if working in an academic theatre.

The SM will need an opportunity to review this information, collected into an actor packet, with the cast. When working on an AEA production, the stage manager can also use the time for conducting union business, including the election of a deputy and taking any necessary votes about breaks, span of day, or other work details required by your specific contract.

WHAT IS A DEPUTY?

The Equity deputy is a member of the cast elected by their fellow actors to ensure that the union rules are followed during the production. On a weekly basis, the deputy will report details regarding hours worked, safety conditions, filming activities, and any grievances filed by or about AEA members. Some of these details will simultaneously be reported by the stage manager or a staff member. The purpose of a deputy is to provide the union cast members with an avenue for sharing potential violations of union rules. The deputy will report work hours and overtime to Equity simultaneous to the theatre's reports, ensuring accuracy. The deputy also works with the stage manager to resolve those problems with or between actors, and to make sure that any safety concerns that have been raised are addressed.

On an Equity production, only union members are permitted to be in the room while discussions and elections take place. And even on a nonunion show, this actor information may be of little interest to other attendees at your first rehearsal. A thoughtful stage manager will arrange the day so that those not involved with this cast business can easily excuse themselves.

A sample first-day schedule might look like this:

1. Meet-and-Greet
2. Introductions, Director, and Designer Presentations
3. Read through Play
4. Cast Meeting
    - General Schedule
    - Theatre Callboard/Schedule Updates
    - Character/Scene Breakdown
    - Theatre Policies
    - AEA Business (if applicable)

Such a schedule allows everyone to participate in the show-related orientation without having to come and go from the room multiple times or sit through details not pertaining to their work. Specific times would be identified for each activity, and breaks would be inserted according to the director's preference or the AEA requirements.

An alternative could be placing the cast meeting after the design presentations, so that those who wish to hear the play read will have an identified time to return—using the business meeting time as a break to check in with their shops or offices, read emails, or enjoy a second cup of coffee (a rationale for having any meet-and-greet snacks set up outside the room!).

WHAT DO YOU LEARN FROM A READ-THROUGH?

The stage manager can collect several key pieces of information from the first trip through the script, including a preliminary running time and the pace of individual scenes. Pace is particularly important when considered in conjunction with your character/scene breakdown. You have already started identifying scenic and costume changes, with the available time quantified in pages. Pace will tell you how long you really have—which might be more or less than you anticipated.

TABLE WORK

Before getting the show up on its feet, it is important for the cast to understand the text. The second phase in your rehearsal process will focus on analyzing the script. This is certainly a necessity when working on Shakespeare or one of the Greeks, but even contemporary scripts benefit from this exploration of the words. If your production has a dramaturg, that team member will be present for these days to help the director and actors. The dramaturg serves as a production researcher of sorts, collecting background and source information for the company and often creating materials for the audience to help them understand the context of the show. On a new play, expect the playwright to be present.

The amount of time spent on table work will vary from show to show, depending on the wishes of your director. Some productions may devote several days to this type of exploration, while others may only schedule a brief discussion following the first read-through. The stage manager should ask about table work during the initial meetings with the director to know if this will be a part of the rehearsal process.

The stage manager's communication work during this time is about gathering information. You should make a note of tricky pronunciations to pass along to understudies and to use when prompting. And if you do not have a dramaturg, you can collect questions about script references that may be posed to the production team through the rehearsal reports.

To facilitate this process, the SM team should ask about acquiring reference aids—source materials, dictionaries, or lexicons. Depending on your production situation, this might be a question for the production manager, a faculty advisor, or a staff member in the literary or education department. It is also helpful for the SM to provide additional notepads, pencils, and highlighters for the actors, so they can successfully take notes during this time.

Table work may also be the start of cataloging script changes. An unedited performance of *Hamlet* can run up to four hours. Most modern productions do not include every word penned by Shakespeare. If the original script distributed to the cast and production team did not include the cuts for your show, the stage manager will need to document the changes as a starting point for further edits to come.

The sample page of line changes for this production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, reintroduced as Figure 5.1, shows how the stage manager can share both major and minor changes. We first saw this table in Chapter 2 when exploring color and white space. Now we can examine its content. The document provides very specific references to the act, scene, page, and line being altered. Line numbers are helpful for any show in verse. A contemporary text is unlikely to have this information, so the column can be eliminated. The affected text is identified and the change specifically called out. A notes column provides a place for narrative commentary on the edit.

When identifying a change, it is important to be both specific and consistent. You might opt to categorize text that has been removed with the term *cut, delete*, or even *omit*. Supplemental words might be an *add* or an *insert*. Your specific choice is less important than the use of the same term throughout the document.

The line-change document will be updated several times throughout the rehearsal process. As discussed in Chapter 2, the use of color can help identify new information in subsequent versions and allow you to record all notes in a single document organized in line order.

Twelfth Night

Line Changes

Updated 11/18/10

Act	Scene	Page	Line(s)	Character	Action	Words	Notes
II	5	43	117–118	Fabian	CUT	Sowter will cry upon't for al this.	Malvolio's lines continue from "Softly, M.O.A.I." to

						though it be as rank as a fox	his next speech beginning "M. Malvolio,..."
II	5	43	121	Toby	CUT	The cur is excellent at faults	Line now ends with ;... work it out?"
III	1	45	2	Viola	CHANGE	TABOR to MUSIC	
III	1	46	9–10	Viola	CUT	or, the church stands by thy tabor, if thy tabor stand by the church	Line now ends with "... dwell near him"
III	1	46	11 13	Feste	CUT	To see this age! A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!	Line now ends after "You have said, sir,"
III	2	52	29	Andrew	CUT	I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician	Line now ends after... "for policy I hate,"
III	2	53	42 43	Toby	CUT	although the sheet were big enough for the Bed of Ware in England,	Line now skips from "... lie in thy sheet of paper" to "set 'em down,"
III	2	53	48	Toby	CUT	at the cubiculo	Line now reads "We'll call thee, Go,"

Figure 5.1 A page of line changes for a production of *Twelfth Night.*

If you are working on a new play, line changes may lead to replacement pages in the script. This might be a task undertaken by the SM team, the assistant director, the dramaturg, or the playwright. The stage manager should determine where the responsibility for new pages lies before rehearsals begin. This ensures that once rehearsals are underway, there is a plan for who will keep track of the changes, who will type the updates, how new pages will be distributed, and on what timeline. When working on a new play or musical, expect to receive changes from the playwright or the composer/lyricist. Edits on an existing work may be generated by the director or dramaturg. In most instances the stage managers will be responsible for copying and distributing the new pages.

Don't forget that you will need to transform these new pages to match the rest of your prompt script. Try to arrange to receive updates so that you have time not only to send them through the copier as-is for the actors, but also to make the size and margin adjustments for your script. In the unlikely event that someone besides stage management is handling distribution of new pages, I recommend that you handle the prompt script's specialized formatting yourself.

MUSIC AND DANCE REHEARSALS

When working on a musical, the table-work phase is replaced or reduced by dedicated time for learning music and choreography. The stage manager can take advantage of this time to take dance blocking in smaller chunks and to become familiar with the score.

Not every stage manager has a background as a musician, but the music rehearsals give you a chance to pick up key details that will help you throughout rehearsals and performances. The SM can follow along to improve their own ability to read music. The musical director will often point out useful clues to help the singers find their notes and rhythm. These same clues can help you as well. Figures 5.2A and 5.2B introduce you to the essential information contained on a page of the score.

The stage manager can also take this time to transfer details such as rehearsal numbers from the score into the libretto. If you are primarily working from the libretto, having rehearsal numbers will allow you to communicate more effectively with the music personnel by speaking in their vernacular. During a subsequent rehearsal, the director might want to review the staging for a part of a song. Rather than providing a lyric or trying to hum a musical phrase, the SM with rehearsal numbers can ask the pianist to "start at bar 47."

NAVIGATING THE SCORE

Whether or not the stage manager knows how to play music, he or she can learn a great deal about how a song will sound by looking for clues in the score. On the opposite page is an excerpt from the Piano/Conductor score for the song "Look at the Sky" from the musical *Urinetown*. Follow the numbers to discover how much information is available.

OVERALL PAGE STRUCTURE

A sheet of music contains one or more groups of five-line staffs known as a SYSTEM (1). The system contains the vocal parts (1A), the orchestra parts (1B), and the piano parts (1C) that are played or sung simultaneously. If more than one person is singing, there will be

multiple vocal staffs. A complex song mught have so many individual staffs to include that only one system fits on a page.

Each staff is divided into MEASURES (1D). The construction of each measure is determined by the TIME SIGNATURE (3) printed at the beginning of the song. Our sample is page three of the song, but on page one we would find two numbers: 4/4. This tells us there are four beats in each measure and that a quarter note gets one beat. With this information we know how to count the music. The word "sky" will be held for 4 beats.

Measure numbers that appear in boxes are called REHEARSAL NUMBERS (1E). These indicators represent parts of the song where the music changes-- speeding up or slowing down, adding instruments or singers, or changing from accompaniment to underscoring, for example.

We can even find messages from the composer. V. S. (1F) stands for *volti subito*-- turn the page quickly!

WHO IS PLAYING

The score outlines which instruments play at which time. At the top of the page, the *clarinet and trombone* (5A) and the *bass* (5B) play with the piano. At measure 25, the *drums* join in (5C). The percussionist will play a *sustained roll on the cymbals* at measure 27 (5D). This helps the SM follow along by knowing what to listen for.

PITCH

The KEY SIGNATURE (2) tells the musicians whether notes should be played higher or lower than their normal value. The key can change throughout a song. At the beginning of the page we are in the key of *B flat major*. After measure 30, the song changes (2A) to *B major*. The SM can look for key signatures and recognize when the quality of the song will change, even if you do not know how to read the specific notation.

PACE

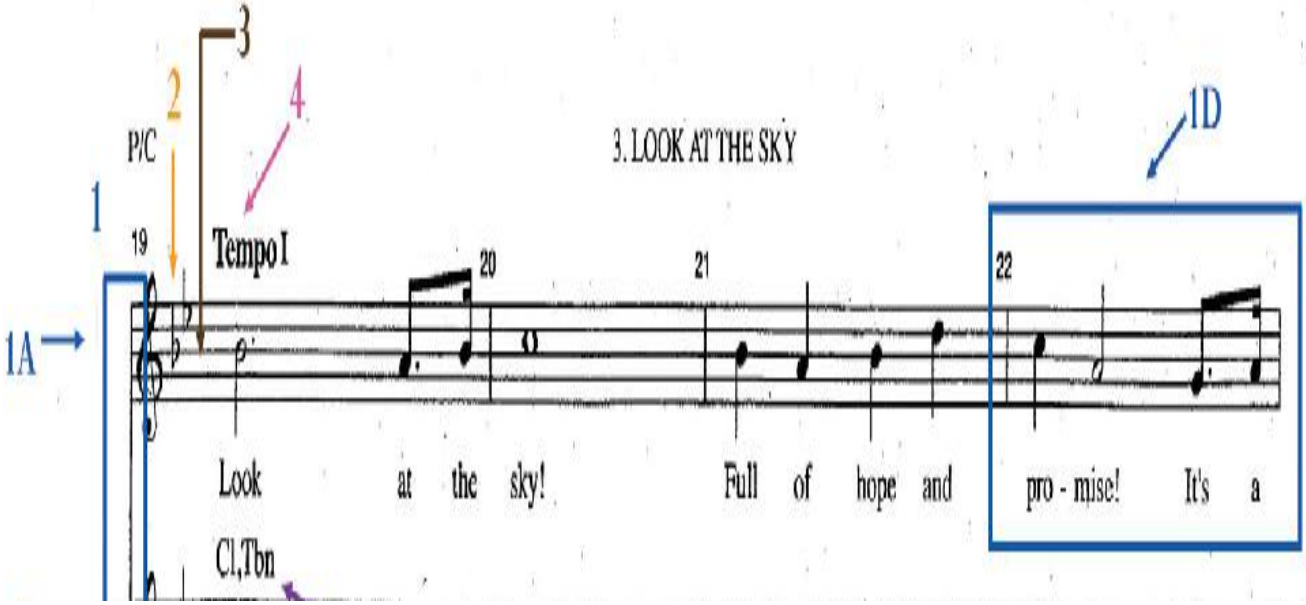
The speed of a piece of music is its TEMPO. Like the key, it can change throughout a song. As this page begins, the song returns to the original pace indicated by the notation *Tempo I* (4).

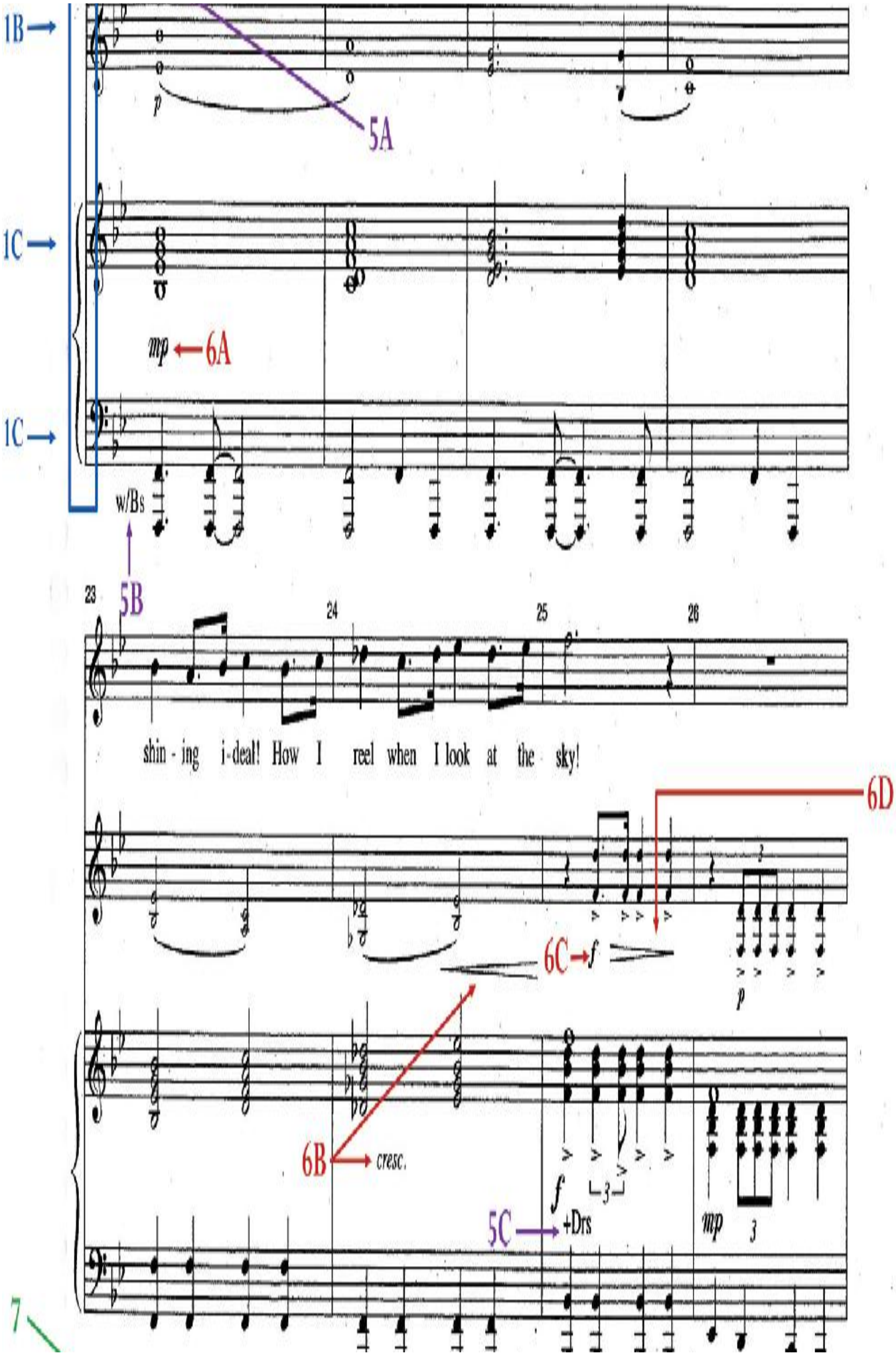
VOLUME

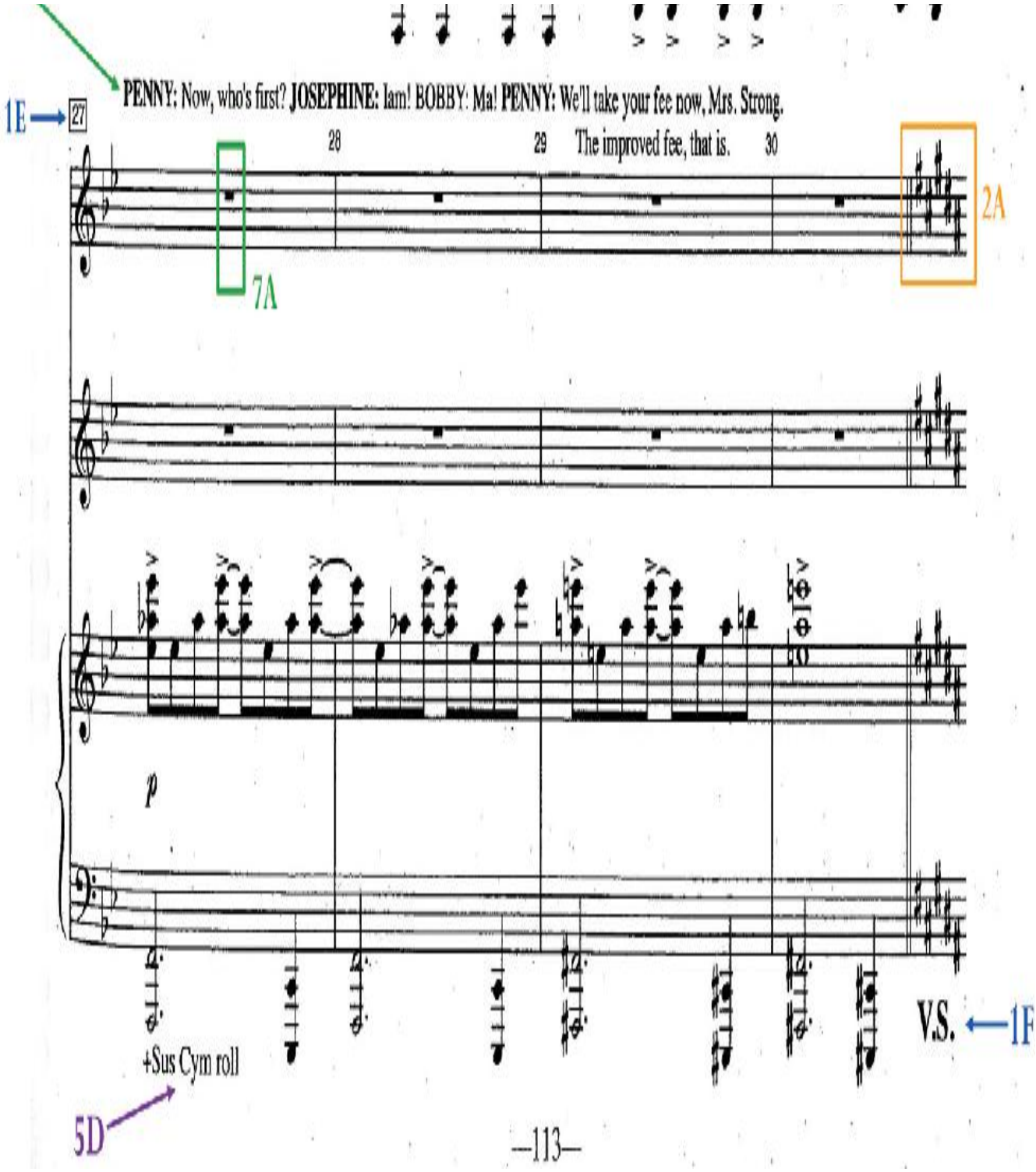
Clues about how loud or soft to play can be found in the DYNAMIC MARKINGS. (6A) *Mezzo piano* (*mp*) indicates this section is "medium soft." (6C) *Forte* (*f*) is "loud." Volume can gradually get louder with a *crescendo* (6B), or softer with a *decrescendo* (6D). Absent this kind of notation, the change would be instant.

WORDS VERSUS NOTES

When dialogue occurs during a song, the lines (7) will be printed above the vocal staff . The fact that these words are spoken rather than sung is reinforced by the fact that instead of notes, the vocal line contains only (7A) rests. These particular rests are *whole rests*, which last an entire measure each.




1B
5A
1C
mp
6A
1C
w/Bs
5B
23
24
25
26
shin - ing i - deal! How I reel when I look at the sky!
6D
6C
f
p
6B
cresc.
f
5C
+Drs
mp
7



Figures 5.2A and 5.2B "Look at the Sky" from *Urinetown* used with permission of the authors. Explanatory narrative created with Dr. Gary Walth.

BLOCKING

Once the cast has an understanding of the words on the page, it is time to put the show up on its feet. Blocking is a crucially important phase of the process. Defining the physical shape of the show will provide answers to many pre-rehearsal queries, and also generate new questions on a daily basis.

Blocking is defined as the movement of the actors on, off, and around the stage—interacting with one another and the elements of the set. The stage manager documents this movement in detail, noting both what happens and when it occurs.

PREPARING THE REHEARSAL ROOM

In both professional and academic settings, the rehearsal period typically overlaps with scenic construction. The actors work either in a separate room or, in some cases, in the theatre during non-build hours. In order to make this time productive, the stage manager communicates the details of the set by reproducing the groundplan on the floor of the rehearsal hall with special cloth spike tape and acquiring rehearsal furniture pieces. In conjunction with the model or renderings of the set posted in the room, this will help the actors and directors to understand the end product.

(A cautionary note: Exercise caution with masking tape, painters tape, or something else simply because it is less expensive. Painters tape is meant to peel off surfaces easily, so it will not withstand actors walking back and forth across it for very long. Masking tape may pass the traffic test, but it can prove exceptionally difficult to remove later and almost always leaves a very unwelcome residue on the floor.)

The SM will need to consider the size and setup of the rehearsal room when determining the best spot for taping out the set. Within the context of the director's preferences (learned during that early meeting during pre-production week), consider the following:

1. **Side-to-side location.** Ideally you will have enough room to tape out the entire set and still have room on both sides for actor entrances, prop tables, and furniture storage. If your room is not wide enough, think about how to position offstage items to lessen their visual presence while the director is watching the actors.
2. **Front-to-back location.** Downstage of the groundplan, you will need to set up tables for the director and SM team as well as chairs for others. If possible, you also want some empty space between the downstage edge of the tape and those tables and chairs so it doesn't feel like you are sitting on the set. The SM also strives to place the groundplan so that there is room upstage of it for actors to cross from stage right to stage left.
3. **Doors.** Doors are least distracting when located behind the director and SM so that actors entering the room aren't instantly "onstage."
4. **Architecture.** Do you have columns, air vents, or other structural room elements? You cannot move these items, so think about how they can be the least impactful—even if that means placing the groundplan slightly off-center in the room.

No room is perfect! Focus on minimizing obstacles and maximizing the working space. If your room is not wide enough, can you utilize the front corners of the room for the prop tables? If the room is not deep enough, take a look at your set. Is there space between the back of the set and an upstage curtain or cyclorama? If it is not an acting area, consider reducing this space to get adequate real estate at the front of the room. If you have multiple obstacles and may need to eliminate part of the set when taping it out, talk with the director after looking at the room so you can agree on a compromise.

One way to facilitate this conversation is to provide visual support. Get a piece of acetate or clear plastic and draw the outline of the rehearsal room on it (in the same scale as the groundplan), marking doors, columns, and other structural elements. Then you can slide the clear outline over the groundplan to find the most functional layout for the room. If you work regularly for the same theatre, you can save the acetate for future productions. What works for one show may not work for the next.

MEASURING THE GROUNDPLAN

In order to tape the groundplan onto the rehearsal room floor, the SM team takes specific measurements of the size and location of scenic elements and transfers those measurements to the rehearsal room floor. Depending on the configuration of your theatre, one of two methods will best suit your needs.

The X-Y Method

When working in a proscenium theatre, the stage manager begins by locating the **center line**—the imaginary line running upstage to downstage in the center of the theatre—and the **plaster line**—the imaginary line running stage right to stage left on the upstage side of the proscenium arch. Using these two lines as X and Y coordinate axes, the team can find the distance from the axes to the corners of platforms or edges of walls. Once measured, the SM team

can plot these points on the floor and connect the points with tape to mark out the location of both permanent and moving units.

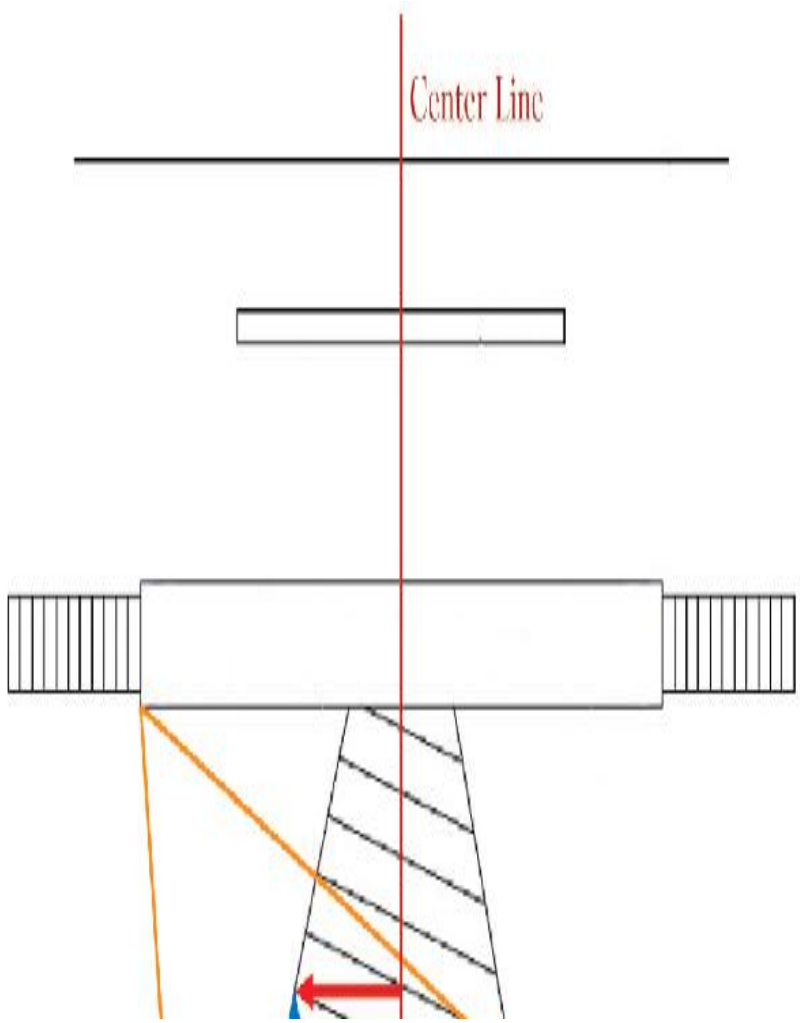
Figure 5.3 The set for *The Farnsworth Invention* at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Scenic design by Mandy Kolbe.

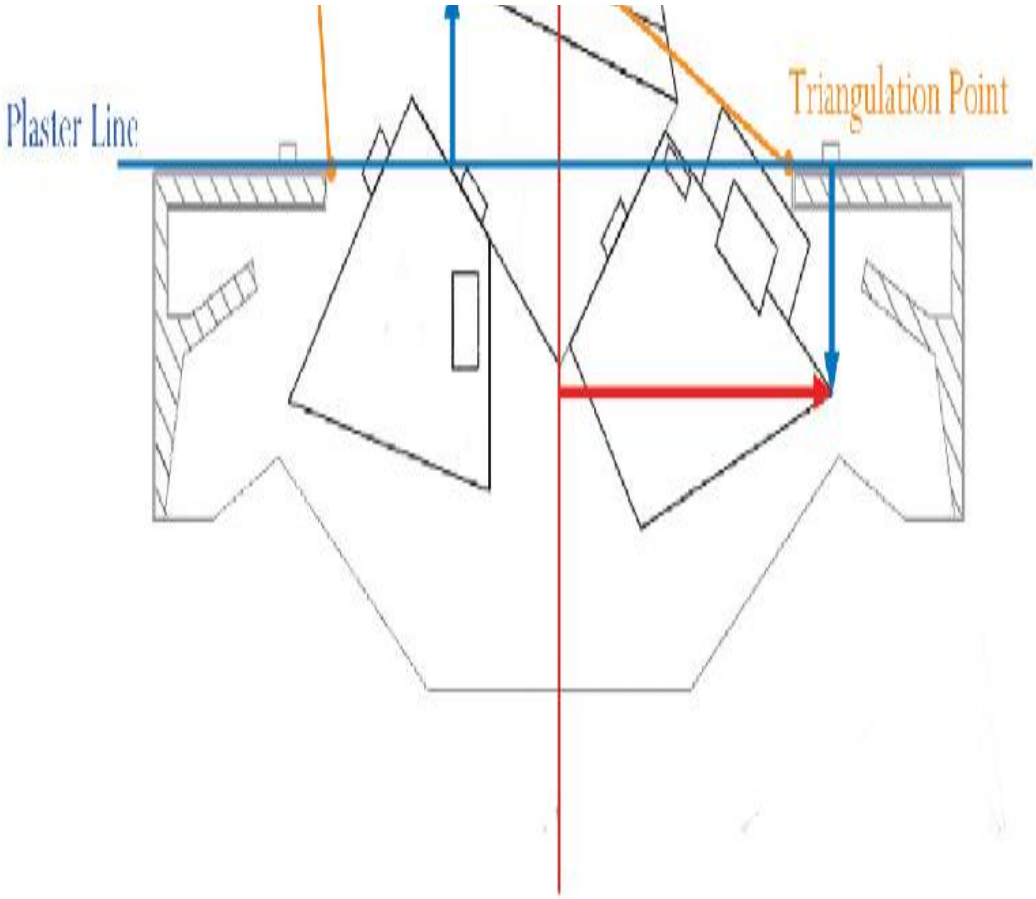
Figure 5.3 is a full-stage image of a production of *The Farnsworth Invention* by Aaron Sorkin. The set consisted of a series of steps and platforms, which remained on stage for the entire show. Tables, chairs, and other furniture pieces moved throughout the play to indicate a variety of locations.

Translating this design onto a rehearsal room floor would focus on noting the size and location of the permanent pieces along with the front edge of the stage, which defines the downstage area. The director could block scenes on individual platforms by staying within the taped lines. It is not important to the process that ultimately the actors would be raised above the stage floor. The red and blue lines in Figure 5.4 show you how to tape out those important scenic elements by taking measurements relative to the center line and the plaster line.

For this production, the specific location of individual furniture pieces on the platforms was left up to the director, making it impossible to tape them out in advance. But that tape would not really be helpful. The actors need actual tables and chairs in order to rehearse. A rectangle the size of a desk would not encourage use of the desk or any props placed on it, or allow the director to stage the transitions to move it around the stage. As the director sets furniture placement, the ASMs can mark the locations on the rehearsal room floor with the same spike tape. Should the actual tables and desks become available later on, the spikes can be adjusted to the size of the new pieces. The SM team can then measure the location of those spikes by the same method used to recreate the groundplan and transfer them to the finished set, so the furniture ends up in the same spots.

The large set of stairs would present a challenge. Obviously no one will build you a set of temporary stairs in your rehearsal hall, so the tape will have to suffice. But the stage manager can facilitate some interaction. If the director asks an actor to sit on a step, the SM team can place a chair or cube in that location. This way, even though the actor may not be literally walking up stairs when crossing upstage, he or she can still find the physicality of a speech delivered while sitting down.





1. Identify the center line (red) and plaster line (blue) on your groundplan.

2. Measure the end points of each scenic unit in relation to those lines (ie: how far upstage or downstage of the plaster line, how far left or right of center).

3. Write down those coordinate measurements.

4. Lay down two tape measures at the center line-- with zero of each on the plaster line. This allows you to measure either upstage or downstage of the plaster line without extra math.

5. Locate the up/down coordinate measurement from the groundplan on your center line tape

5. Locate the up/down coordinate measurement from the groundplan on your center line tape.

6. Use a third tape measure to locate the coordinate measurement left or right of the center tape.

7. Place a dot to represent that point.

8. Repeat for all necessary points, then connect the dots.

Figures 5.4 Measuring the groundplan for *The Farnsworth Invention.*

Triangulation

When your set is placed in a proscenium theatre in an unconventional way, or when working in a thrust or arena theatre such as the one seen in Figure 5.5, you may be unable to utilize center and plaster lines for measurement references. An alternative method for measuring the groundplan is known as **triangulation**.

In triangulation, the stage manager takes measurements based on two fixed points. Rather than the X and Y lengths, points on the set can be located by the distance from those points. You still have two reference measurements. The orange dots in Figure 5.4 represent potential triangulation points. To find the downstage right corner of the back walkway, tape measures are affixed at each point and then extended to the spot on the set, as indicated by the orange lines. Each line is a distinct, measurable length, which can be translated to the rehearsal room floor. There will be only one point at which tape measures extended to those measured lengths cross—that is the location of that corner.

IOWA
UTAH
TEXAS

Figure 5.5 An example of a production in a thrust space, with a stage floor most easily taped out using triangulation.

One important difference is that with the X-Y method, the tape measures (especially the ones running along your center line) stay fixed and can be taped to the rehearsal room floor. Because the triangulation tapes will rotate on their fixed points at different angles for each measurement, you are best served by placing a small tack in the floor so the tape measure can swivel, or having your ASMs hold them so you maintain the freedom of movement without having the ends pull loose. Unlike the location of the center line and plaster line in a proscenium, no rule exists on how to choose triangulation points. A stage manager should look for accessible points from which the tapes can rotate freely. The orange dots in Figure 5.4 could just have easily been placed at the two corners in the front of the apron. Individual measurements would be longer but no less accurate.

THE MULTIPLE-LOCATION SET

By whichever method you use to recreate it on your rehearsal room floor, the groundplan for *The Farnsworth Invention* is relatively simple because it never changes. This is of course not always true. When planning for a show with multiple scenic units—particularly if more than one piece plays in the same location—the stage manager should adapt the method for taping out the set. Accurate blocking and furniture placement will depend on a clear understanding of the scenery on stage at a given time.

Our second set of sample groundplans is for a production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in the same theatre. In this instance, separate locations were defined by using specific scenic units. Some pieces, such as the main gate or trees, were used more than once, but other pieces were flown or carried in for only a single locale. Even without the labels in Figure 5.6, having all those lines on the floor at the same time has the potential to be confusing. Because the stage manager's goal is to communicate the design clearly, the actors need a bit more help than for *The Farnsworth Invention*.

Color comes to the rescue in the same way it has done thus far in paperwork (Figure 5.7). By taping out each unit in a different color, the actors can more easily focus on only part of the detail on the floor at any given time. (If no units overlapped in use, each location, rather than each unit, could get a single color.) When working on a scene in Olivia's garden, for example, the actors can be asked to focus on the gate and green colonnade, as seen in Figures 5.8 and 5.10. The urns and fountain could be represented with chairs or cubes, and spare music stands make excellent and easily portable trees. When moving to block a scene inside Orsino's compound, only the blue railing found in Figures 5.9 and 5.11 is relevant. Just as was true for the tables in *The Farnsworth Invention*, the cast will need rehearsal furniture to complete the setup, further helping them to temporarily ignore the other colored lines on the floor. (Larger versions of these groundplans and other taping examples can be found on the book's companion website.)

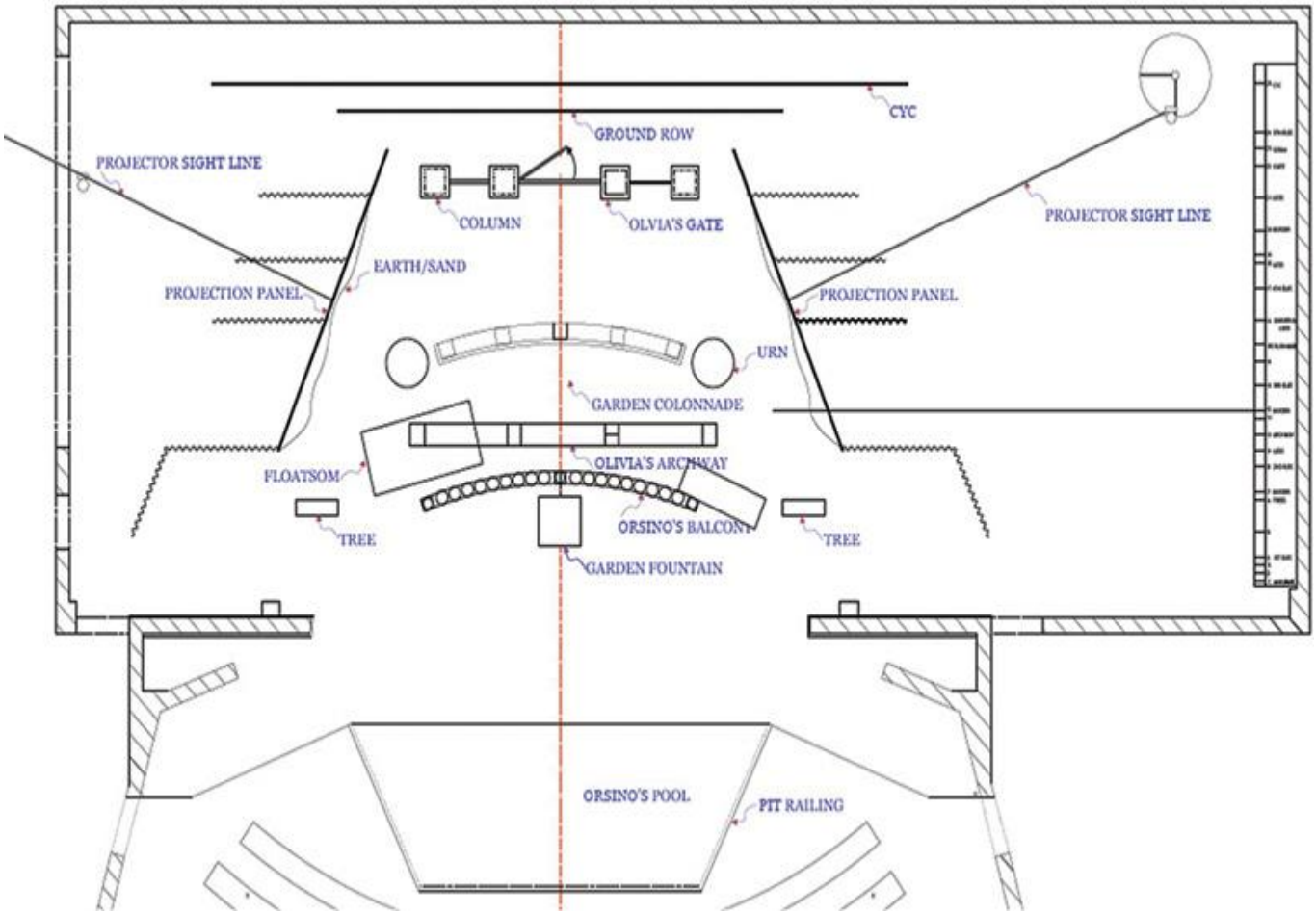


Figure 5.6 A composite groundplan for *Twelfth Night* at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Scenic design by Mandy Kolbe.

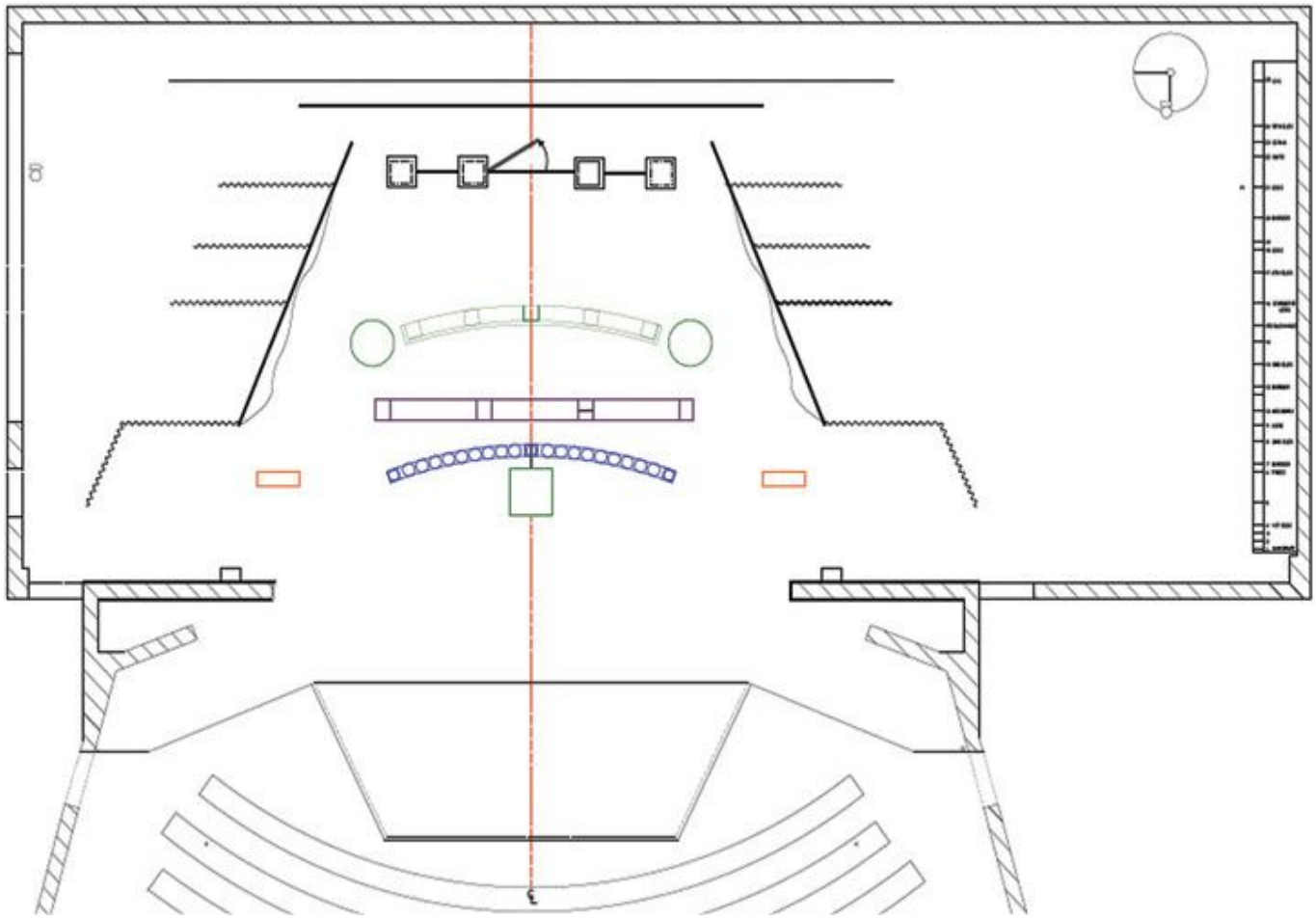


Figure 5.7 The same composite without labels, but with the color used to mark out the rehearsal room floor.

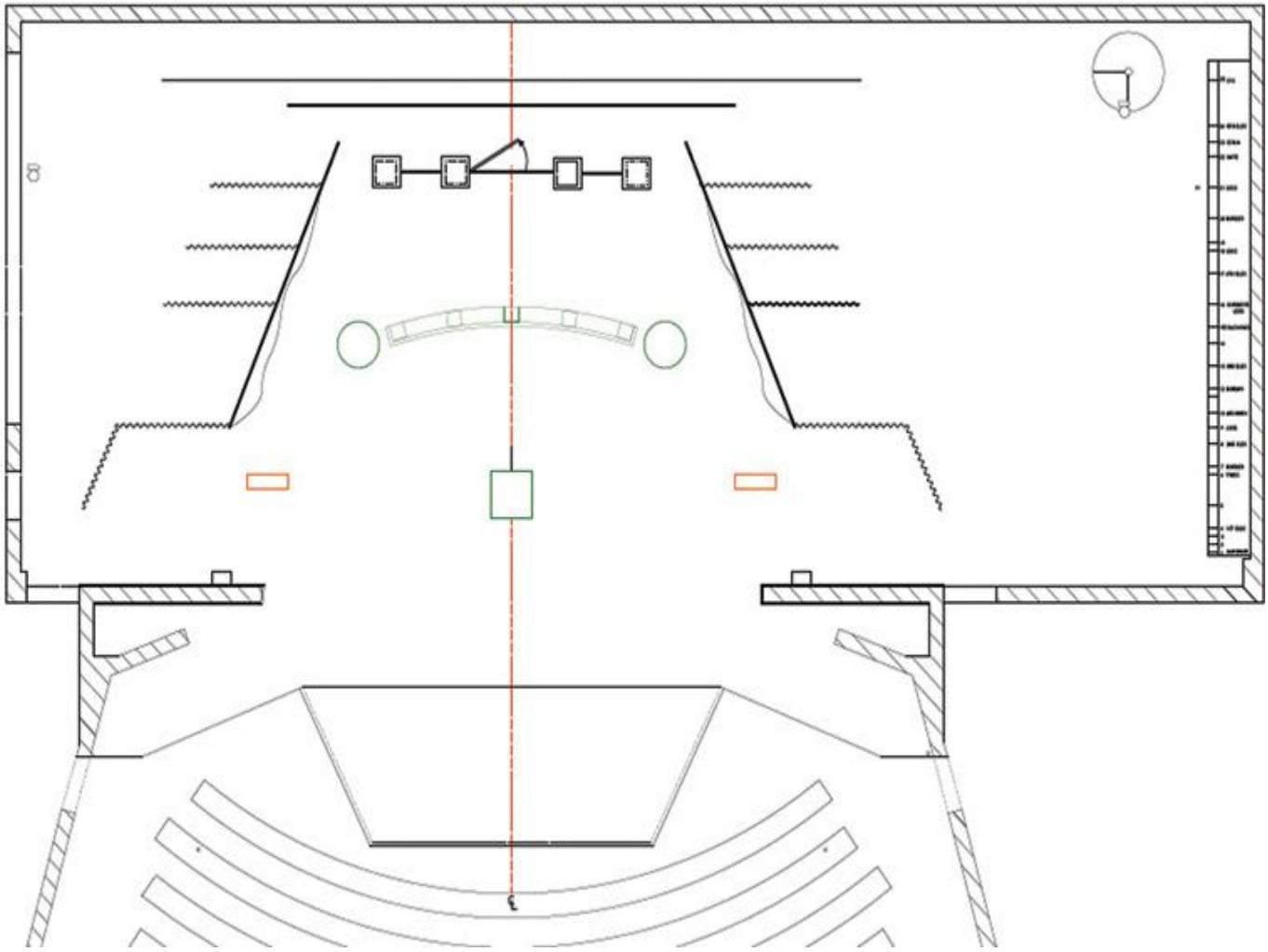


Figure 5.8 The units in use for Olivia's garden.

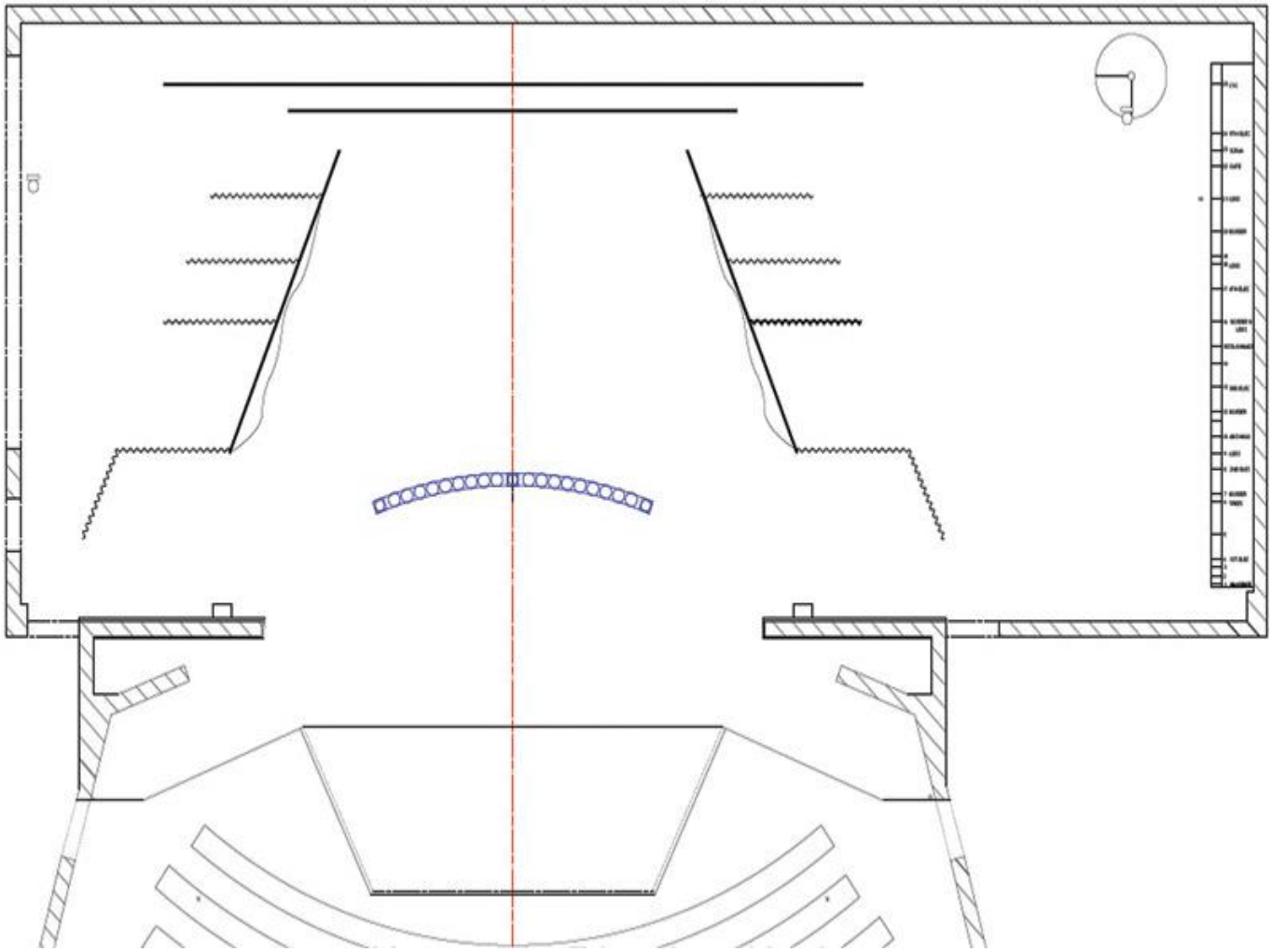


Figure 5.9 The units in use on Orsino's balcony.

Figure 5.10 A production shot of the garden.

Figure 5.11 A production shot of the balcony.

THE BLOCKING KEY

Because the stage manager's goal is to capture the actors' movement with as much specificity as possible, it is important to set yourself up for success before blocking rehearsals begin. To do this the SM needs to decide in advance what abbreviations to use.

These abbreviations will be collected in a blocking key—the Rosetta Stone to your prompt script. The key provides a reference for you, allowing you to be consistent with your use of symbols, but also aids others in understanding your notation. The blocking key contains several categories: areas of the stage and your specific set, actions, props, and character abbreviations. Later in this section, you will find the blocking key for *Twelfth Night* in Figures 5.18 and 5.19, detailing the collection of all of this information.

The blocking key should be kept in your prompt book at the beginning of the section containing the script. Because I like to have my key out and available while taking blocking, I keep it in a sheet protector so that repeated handling won't damage it. My key also takes two pages, and the sheet protector allows them to be kept together, back to back.

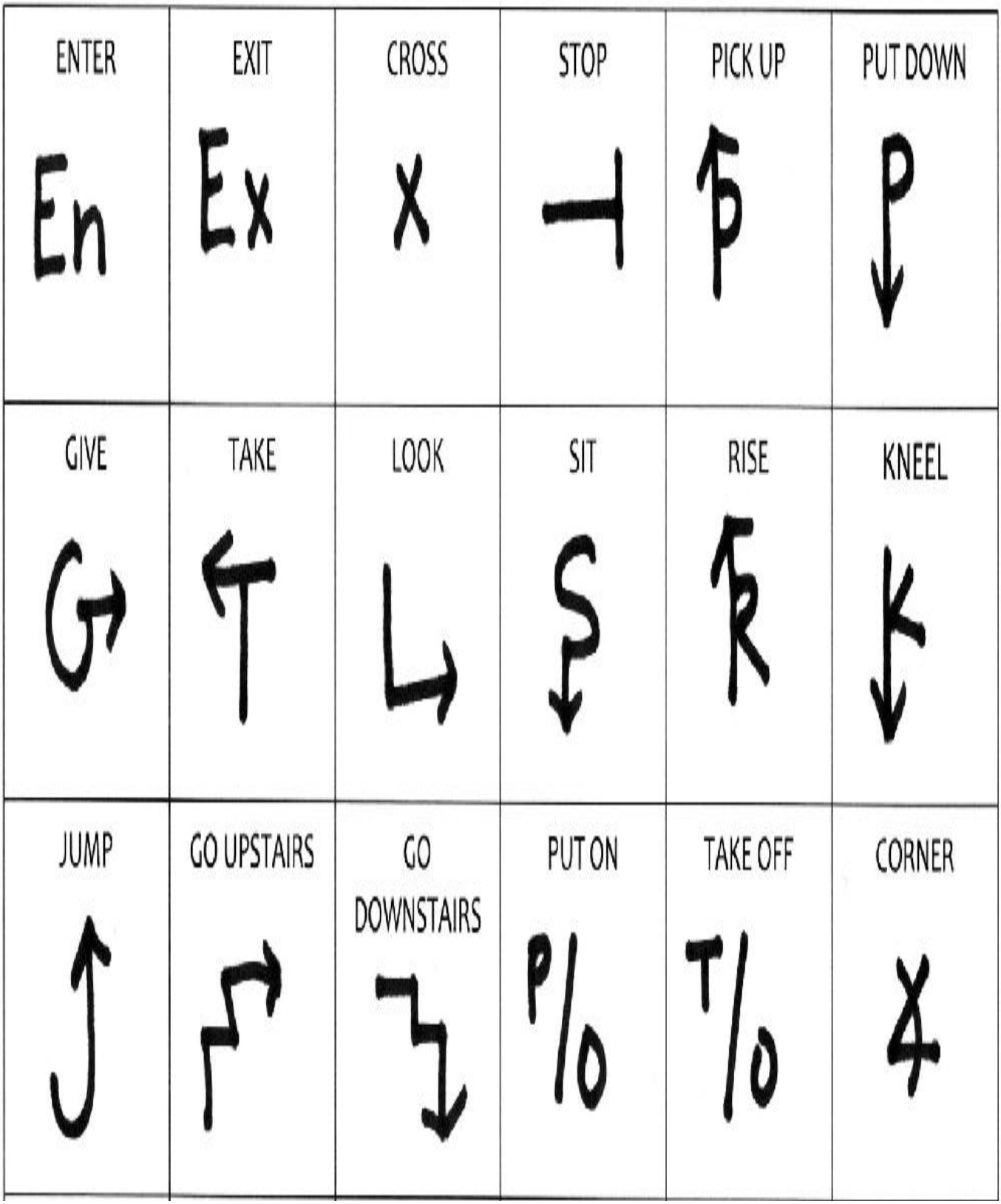
Early-career stage managers may try to write out all movement longhand, but over time you will discover that it is quicker to use a combination of words and symbols. The point of the symbols is to speed up your writing, so you want a system that actually does so.

Figure 5.12 contains the set of the blocking symbols I have developed over time. Many were originally introduced to me by mentors early in my career, and I have adapted them to suit my own style and the needs of shows I have stage managed.

The top three rows include symbols for common actions. Most are constructed on a very simple principle—the first letter of the action combined with an arrow indicating direction. Row four is a set of notations for location. These can be used to show where one actor or item is in relation to another. Again, the symbols are simple: arrows or a simple combination of dots and lines, making them easy to write and to understand.

The next few rows demonstrate an approach to noting props and furniture. These symbols are more pictorial than the actions or locations, but similarly simple in their design. You could, of course, draw a more complex lamp or stool, but the time spent on an intricate drawing would defeat the purpose of having it.

The bottom row in the chart shows how to combine symbols. The circle from the top of the lamp is joined with the table to indicate a table lamp. This allows you to distinguish between a table lamp, a standing lamp, or even a sconce (which might be that circle within a rectangle indicating a wall). Differentiating similar items is also easy. Look at the kitchen table and coffee table. With the simple addition of a letter, the furniture pieces are distinct. Once you have found a set of symbols that work for you, it is easy to adapt them to the needs of a specific production. You might not always have a kitchen table and a coffee table, but this strategy will assist you in creating a key for any show.



UPSTAGE OF (above)	DOWNSTAGE OF (below)	TO (toward)	ON TOP OF	UNDERNEATH	BETWEEN
TABLE	CHAIR	SOFA	STOOL	WINDOW	DOOR
LAMP	BED	DRESSER	BOOKSHELF	TREE	CRADLE
ROCKER	SUITCASE	BOOK	TENT	TV	RADIO

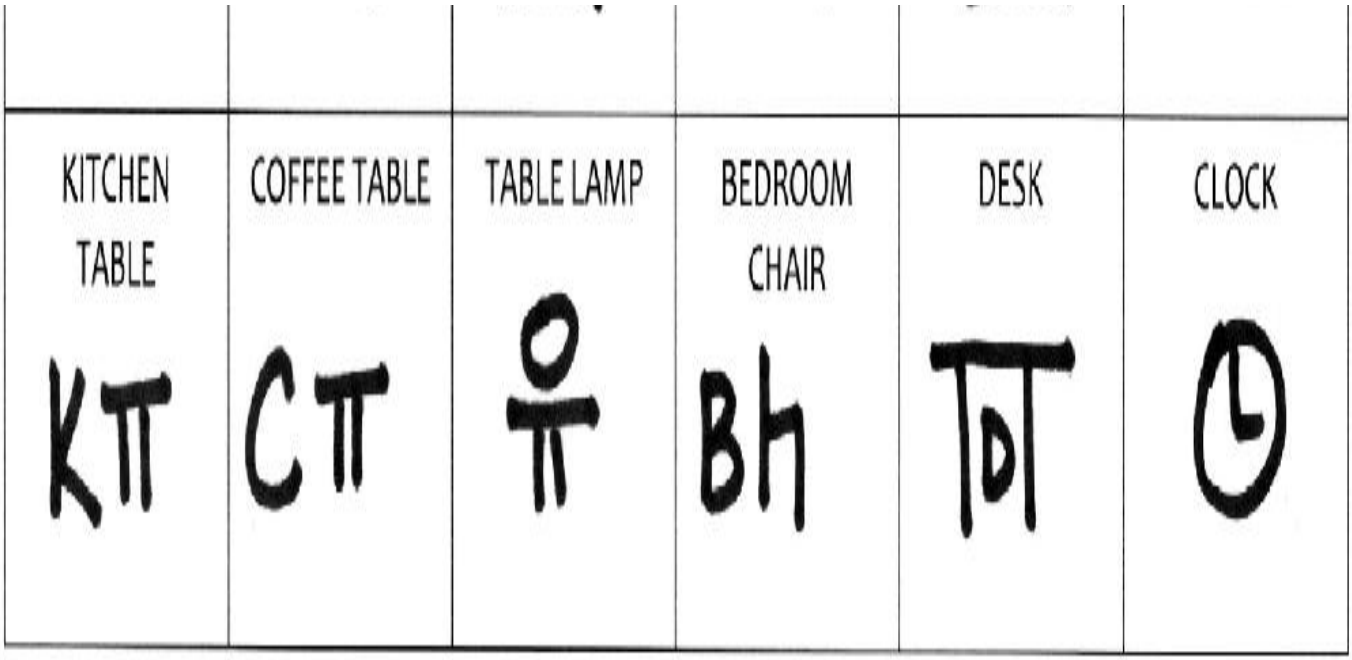


Figure 5.12 Blocking symbols.

The next set of decisions to make concerns abbreviations for character names. If every actor in your show plays only one role, then basing abbreviations on those names will work. Bob might be noted with a B and Arthur with an A. But if your two male characters are John and Joe, then you need more. Personally, I would abbreviate them as JN and JO, respectively. Why? Because JO will always read as Joe to me, even though *o* is also the second letter of John. And JN looks like John when I glance at it quickly.

If an actor plays two very distinct characters, it might be reasonable to use two separate character abbreviations. But for less-defined ensemble roles, you may find that abbreviations based on actor names are more successful. The blocking key for *Twelfth Night* contains all four strategies working together. Viola and Sebastian are easily identified with a single letter based on the character name. Orsino and Olivia have two-letter abbreviations. The same actor played the Sea Captain and the Priest, but due to the differences between the roles and their place in the play, two separate abbreviations for the same actor worked fine. But what about the actors who play a combination of lords, sailors, and officers? When looking quickly in your script to answer a question, will you always remember that Luke plays Sailor 2? Or that Curio, Sailor 1, and Officer 2 are the same actor? For these cast members, abbreviation based on their actual names was faster— particularly since these characters spoke few lines. The director created the blocking by asking Brian or Luke to take an action, not Sailor 1 or 2, making this another example of working within the language of your production. If you find that you forget who is who when looking at the text, you can write in Luke's initials next to Curio's lines in your book.

Naming the Set

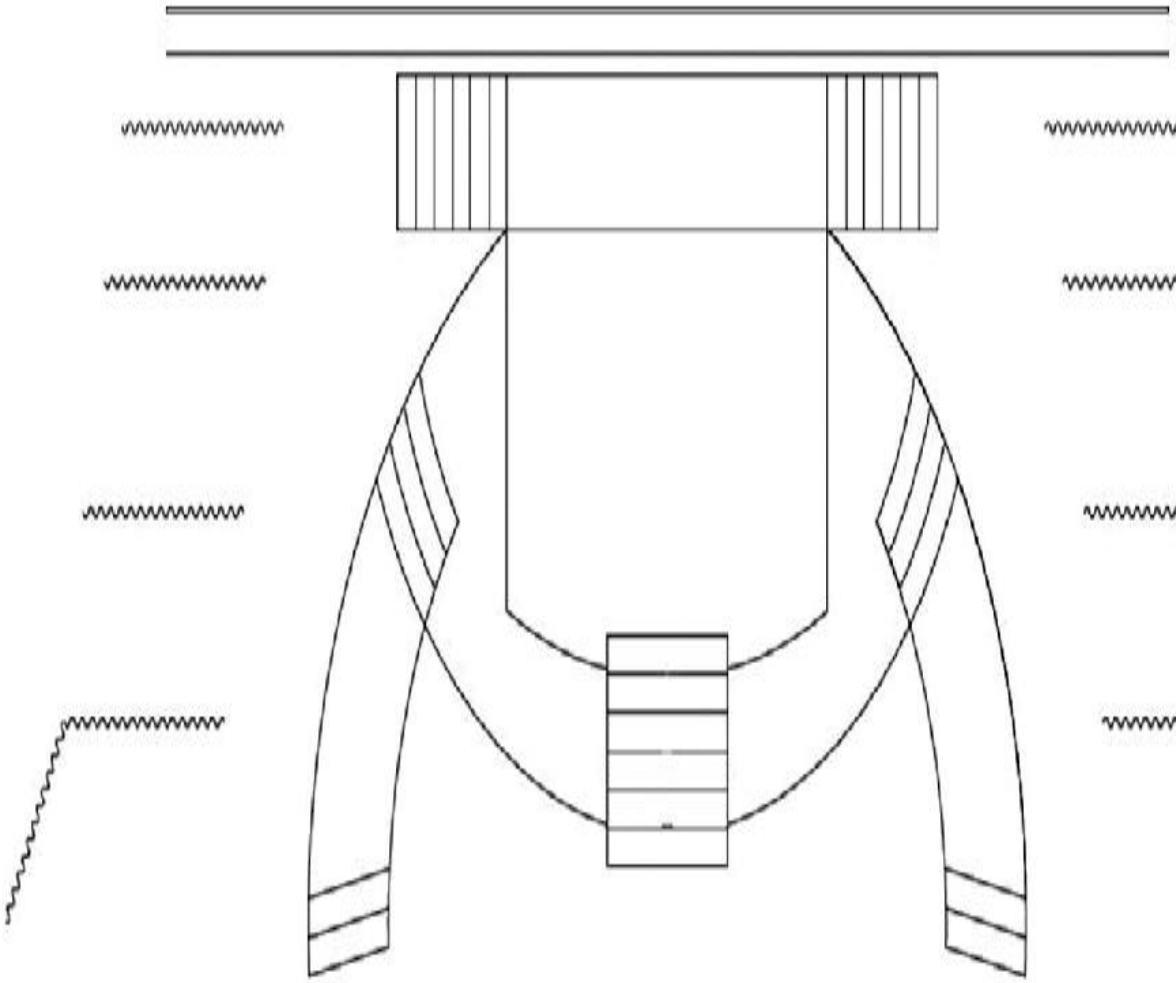
The final component of your blocking notation will be the elements of the set. In this instance, the terminology you use is not entirely your creation. Remember the design for *The Farnsworth Invention* with its three platforms. You might refer to them as stage right, center, and stage left; A, B, and C; or even 1, 2, and 3. During your prep work and initial meetings, the director and scenic designer inevitably discussed these items. What language did they use? That is your starting point. If the director refers to the units by their location on the stage, it will always be momentarily confusing if you answer an actor's question about where they were by referring to platform one instead of stage right.

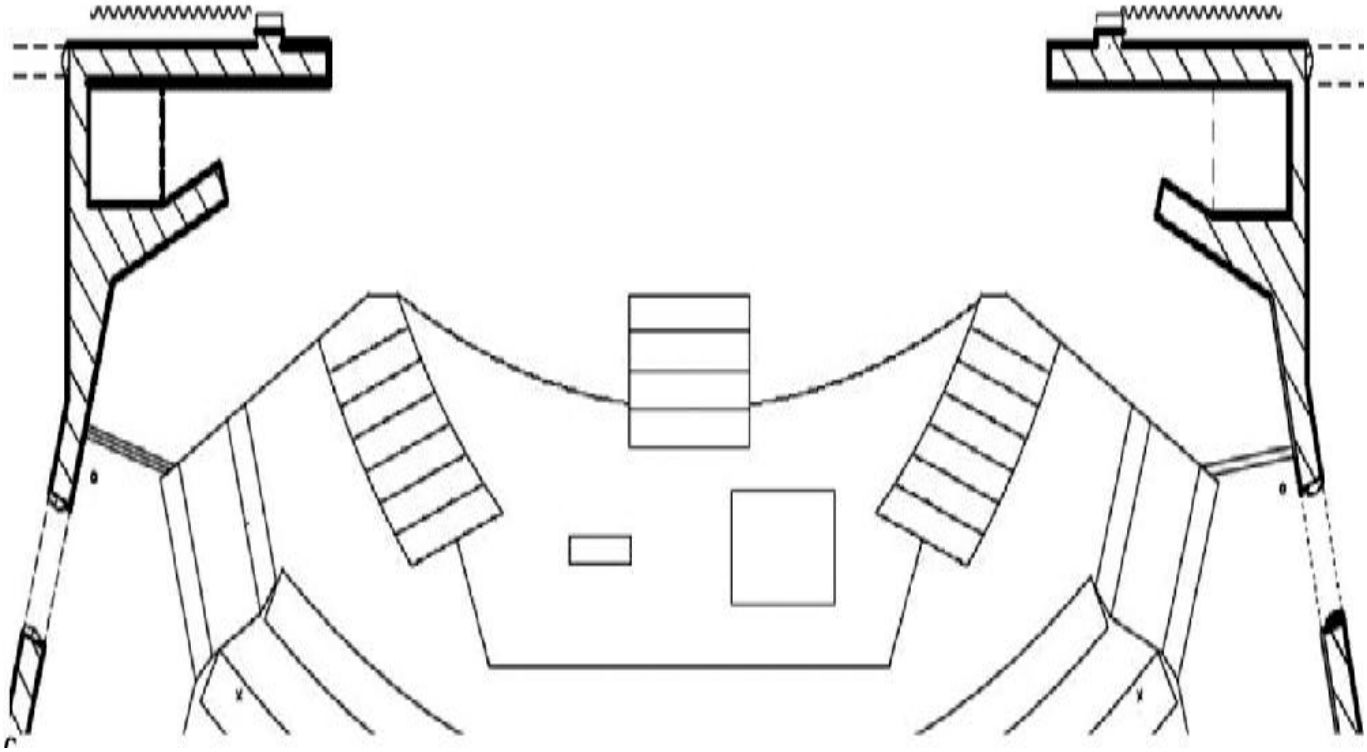
For a more complex set, the stage manager will need additional information. Figures 5.13 and 5.14 present the groundplan for a production of *Spring Awakening*, with and without labels. Although a single, immobile unit, it contains multiple playing areas and accompanying sets of stairs. When preparing for this show, I found the prospect of numbers or letters less precise than I felt I would need when taking blocking. I looked to the use of each space for help. The platform located center stage was intended for the orchestra. Since no action would take place there, the

name came naturally. The director and scenic designer both referred to the farthest upstage location as the “back platform,” and hence it was named as well. The curved platforms extending out on stage right and stage left got their names quite by accident, however. When looking at the groundplan in an early design meeting, one team member commented how the overall shape of the unit reminded him of a creature from an early video game, with the curved units looking like the creature’s arms, Everyone looked, agreed, and laughed—and the names stuck. With the platforms clearly identified, I could label the many stair units in relation to those platforms and take very specific blocking notes during rehearsal. And although not pictured in this preliminary groundplan, we ended up needing two additional sets of stairs to facilitate entrances when characters came from stage right and stage left, crossing over those arms. Because the actors making those entrances were carrying chairs, and the arms sat eighteen inches from the deck, a safety concern was raised about potentially tripping during that entrance. We needed two small step units located on the offstage side of the arms, at their midpoint. I still fondly remember writing the rehearsal note to request those step units—largely due to the fact that I could contextualize this placement as “in the elbow pad position.”

SPRING AWAKENING

Groundplan





SPRING AWAKENING

Groundplan with Scenic Nicknames

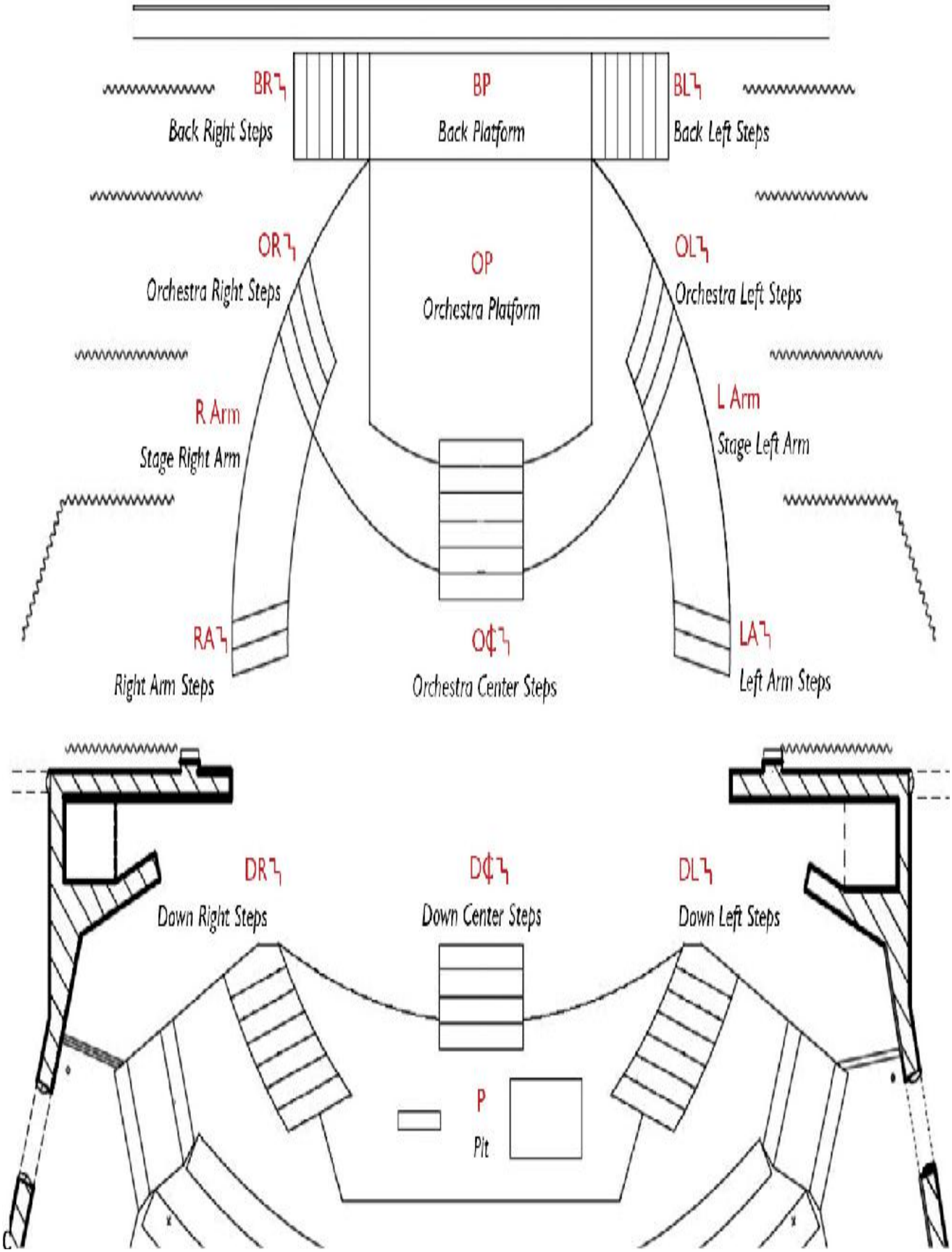


Figure 5.13–5.14 The groundplan for *Spring Awakening*, with and without scenic labels. Scenic Design by Mandy Kolbe.

A third example of naming the parts of the set can be seen in the production of *The Tempest* pictured in Figure 5.15. This scenic design provides a director and cast everything you could want out of Prospero's island—and includes thirty-three platforms at different levels. No quirky characters reveal themselves in the groundplan, and a simple numbering of the platforms is not particularly helpful either.

For this production, the stage manager worked with the scenic designer and technical director to superimpose a naming system onto the set. Despite small variations, the platforms can be grouped into six general heights from the stage floor. By starting with this subdivision, the platforms in each group could be numbered for specificity. The groundplan in Figure 5.16 shows that labeling at work. The labeled groundplan was shared with the full production team, who could then speak with precision about an individual location on the set.

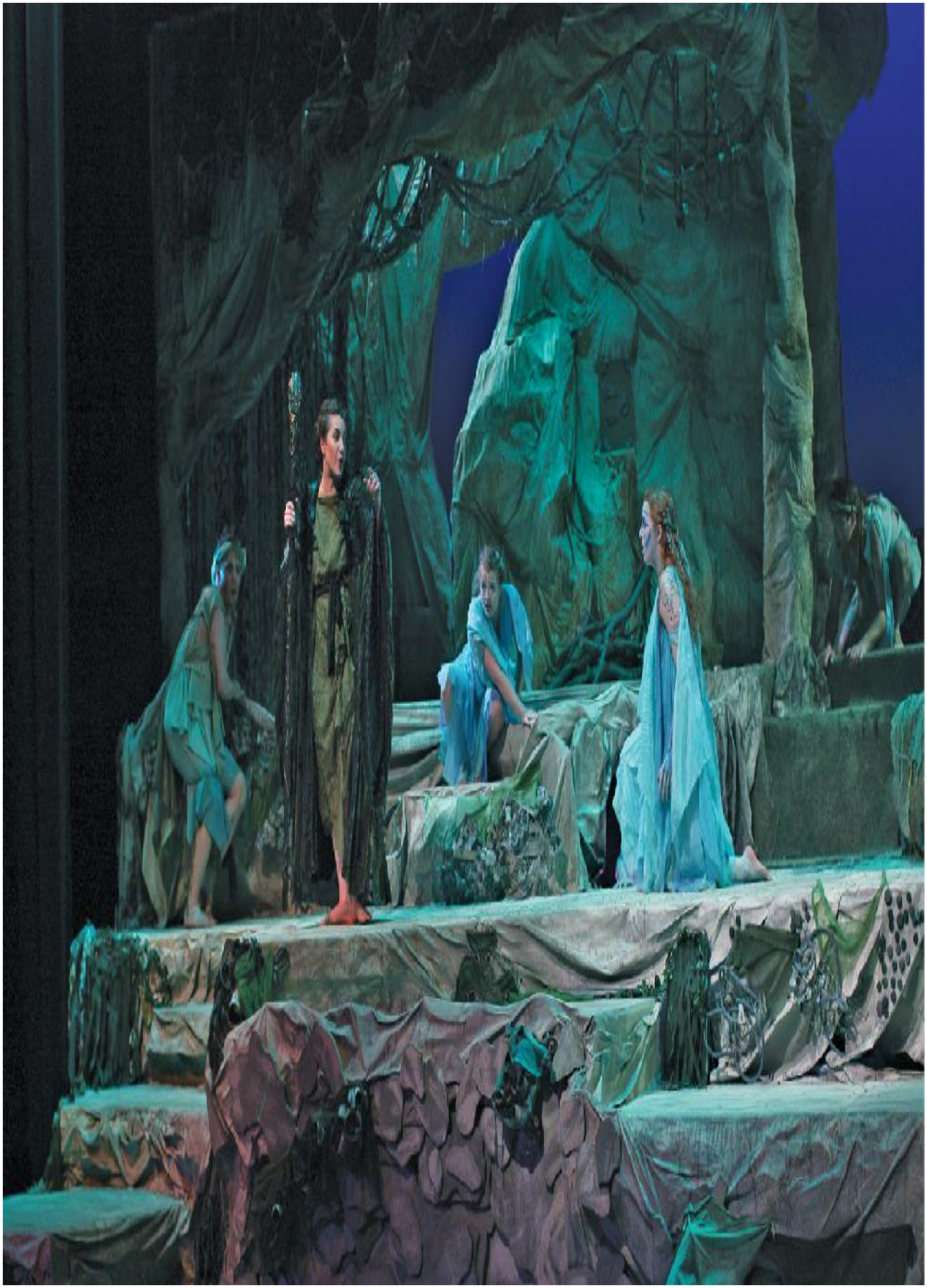


Figure 5.15 The set for *The Tempest* at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Scenic Design by Megan Morey.

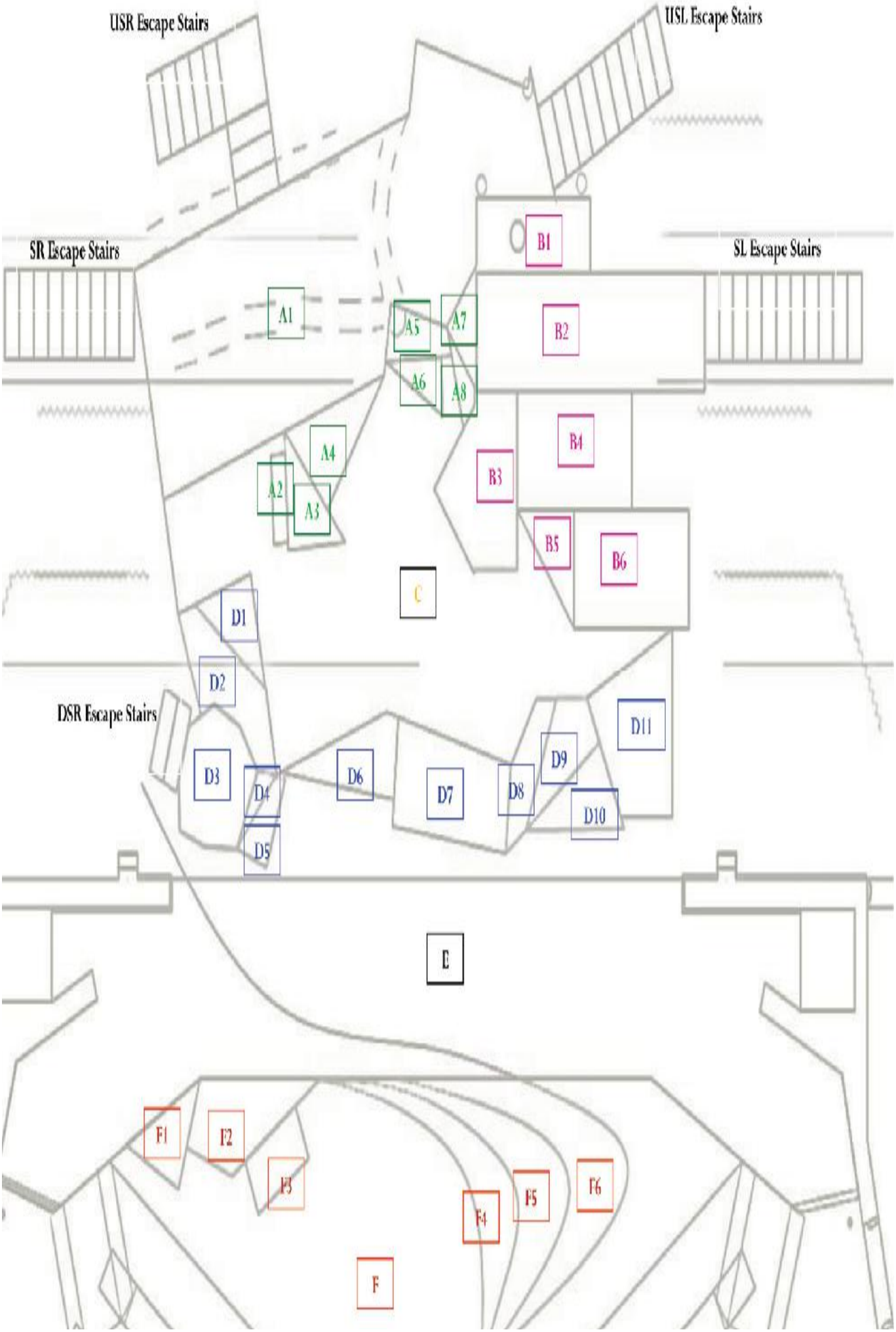

USR Escape Stairs
USL Escape Stairs
SR Escape Stairs
SL Escape Stairs
DSR Escape Stairs
A1
A2
A3
A4
A5
A6
A7
A8
B1
B2
B3
B4
B5
B6
C
D1
D2
D3
D4
D5
D6
D7
D8
D9
D10
D11
E
F1
F2
F3
F4
F5
F6
F

Figure 5.16 The groundplan for *The Tempest*, with labeling system implemented by stage manager Quinn Masterson.

The next step was to translate that into a usable form for rehearsal. The labeling system would also allow the director to give blocking notes to the cast with specific detail, but it would be impractical to ask anyone to memorize the designations—actors, the director, or the stage manager. Instead, the names were placed on the platforms themselves. (This production rehearsed on the set in the evenings rather than in a separate rehearsal room.) Each platform received two labels: one on the top, oriented so it would appear right-side up to an actor standing on the platform looking out at the audience; and one on the face, visible to the director and SM. Figure 5.17 is a close-up view of these labels on a part of the set. Both the SM and the cast could take detailed notes during the blocking period, and by the time the scene shop was ready to begin covering and painting the platforms, everyone felt comfortable enough with their movement patterns for the labels to disappear.

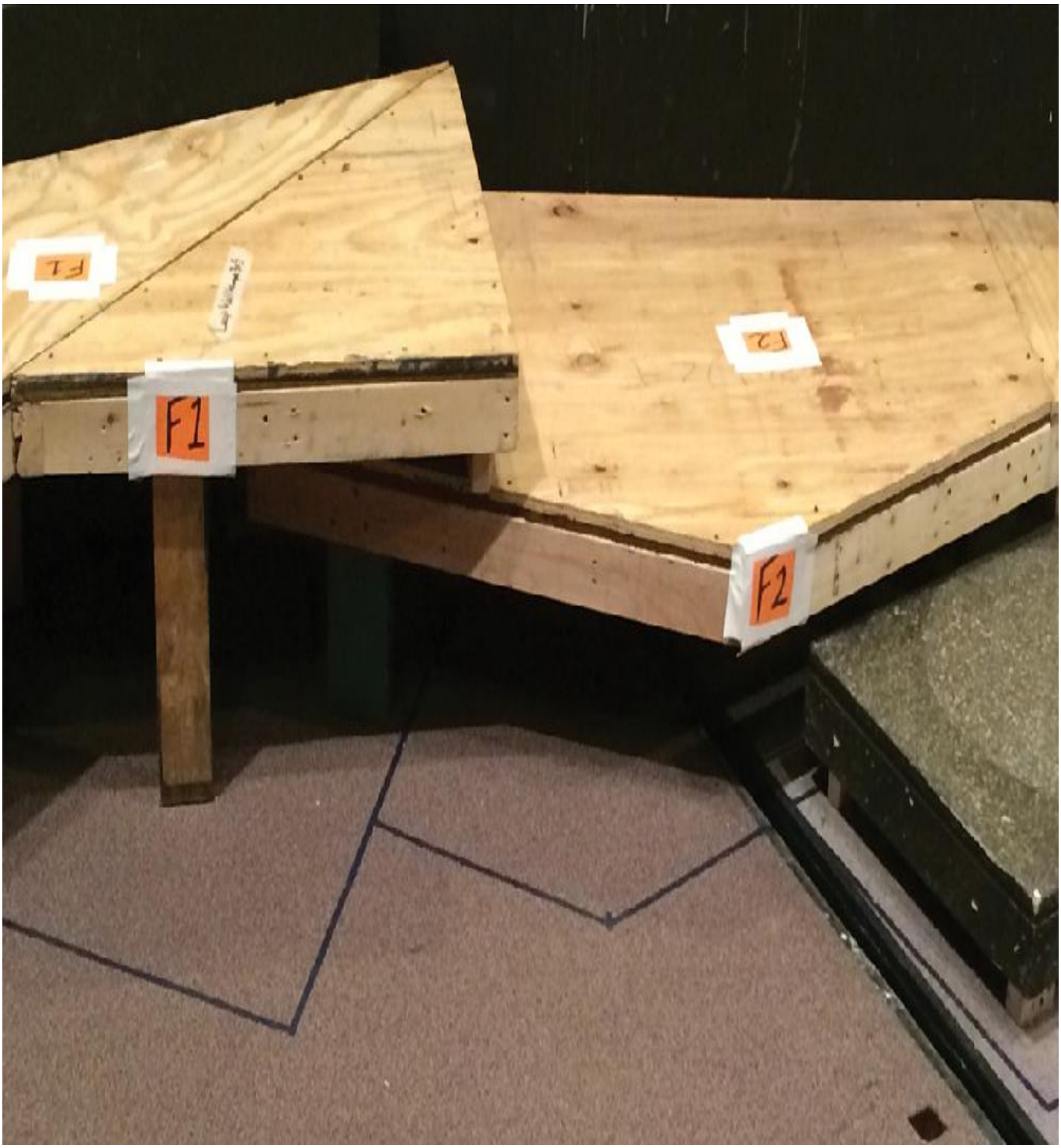


Figure 5.17 The platform labels at work.

The completed version of the blocking key contains all of these details: a decoder for your general symbol language, the abbreviations for the characters in the play, a labeled groundplan, and any specialized symbols you may develop for the scenic units or furniture in this particular production.

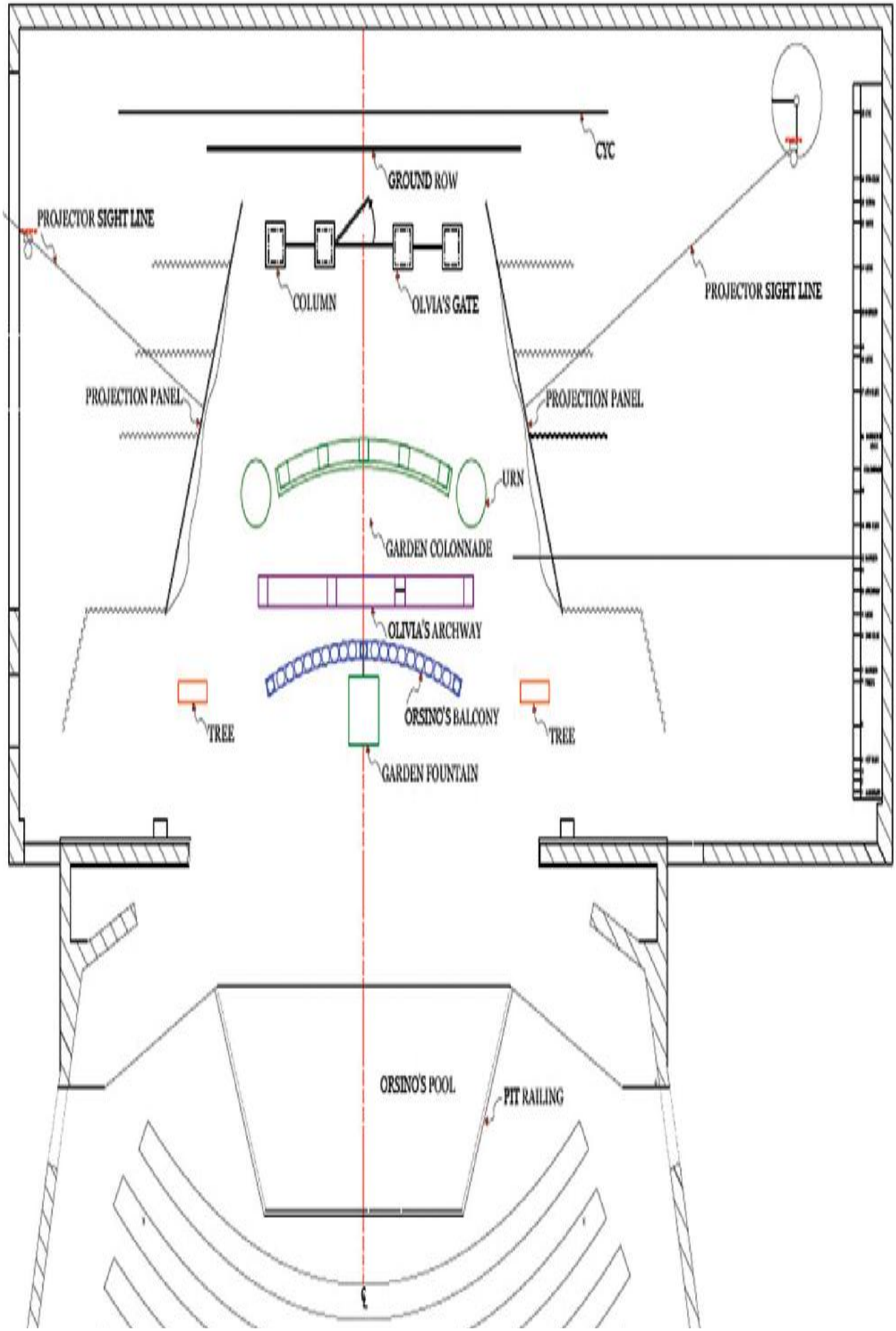
Twelfth Night

Blocking Key

en	Enter		OR	Orsino
ex	Exit		S	Sebastian
X	Cross		AN	Antonio
→	To/Toward		V	Viola
↗	Cross Below/In front of		OL	Olivia
↘	Cross Above/behind		T	Sir Toby
↑R	Rise		M	Maria
S↓	Sit down		MO	Malvolio
S↑	Sit up		AA	Sir Andrew Aguecheek
K↓	Kneel		FE	Feste
↑P	Pick Up		FA	Fabian
P↓	Put Down		SC	Sea Captain (Jake Voss)
↺T	Turn		P	Priest (also Jake Voss)
G→	Give		M1	Musician 1 (Shelby)
←T	Take		M2	Musician 2 (Suzanne)

	Lean		EW	Emily Ware	Attendant 1
	Stop		LV	Lindsay Van Norman	Attendant 2
	Look		AH	Austin Hernandez	Valentine, Officer 1, Sailor 3
	Jump		LP	Luke Prescott	Curio, Sailor 1, Officer 2
	Go up stairs		BC	Brian Coffin	Lord1, Sailor 2, Officer 3
	Go down stairs		DH	Don Hart	Lord 2, Officer 4
	On top of				
	Underneath				
|.|	Between				
P/O	Put On				
T/O	Take Off				
ctr	Counter				
//	Pause in dialogue for dramatic effect (not forgetting lines!)				

Figure 5.18 The blocking key for *Twelfth Night.*


CYC
GROUND ROW
PROJECTOR SIGHT LINE
COLUMN
OLVIA'S GATE
PROJECTOR SIGHT LINE
PROJECTION PANEL
PROJECTION PANEL
URN
GARDEN COLONNADE
OLIVIA'S ARCHWAY
ORSINO'S BALCONY
TREE
TREE
GARDEN FOUNTAIN
ORSINO'S POOL
PIT RAILING

Ph	Pool chairs		Orsino balcony railing
PT	Pool side table	C	Crate
Lh	Living Room chairs		Ring
LT	Living room table	L	Letter
S	Shrine		
KT	Kitchen table		
Kh	Kitchen chair		
	Gate		
	Colonnade		
	Tree		
	Urn		
B	Bench		

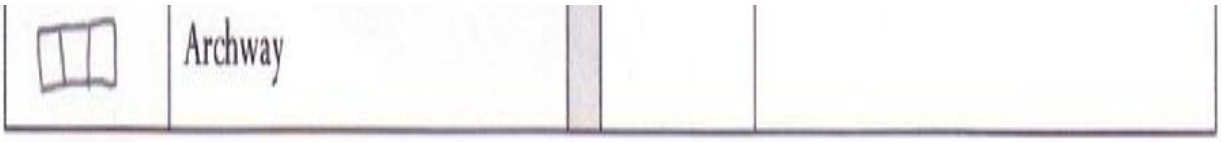


Figure 5.19 The blocking key for *Twelfth Night.*

PUTTING IT TO WORK

The blocking key and numbered lines on your backing sheet allow you to work precisely, as seen in Figure 5.20. The line number is written next to the individual word on which an action takes place, and your use of both words and symbols allows you to quickly describe this action in detail. The point of this specificity is twofold. The stage manager can clearly communicate the intricacies of movement set during a previous rehearsal to forgetful actors or to understudies and also be able to place cues based on specific actions into the prompt script with great accuracy.

As you go through the show, you may find that some of the blocking symbols you originally planned out are unnecessary or not simple enough to draw quickly. Keep them updated on your key. Conversely, you may find yourself creating new abbreviations or symbols on the fly. Simply add them. The space on page two of the blocking key is designed to give you a place to document those additional symbols. You are unlikely to fill this section before rehearsals begin, and that is by design.

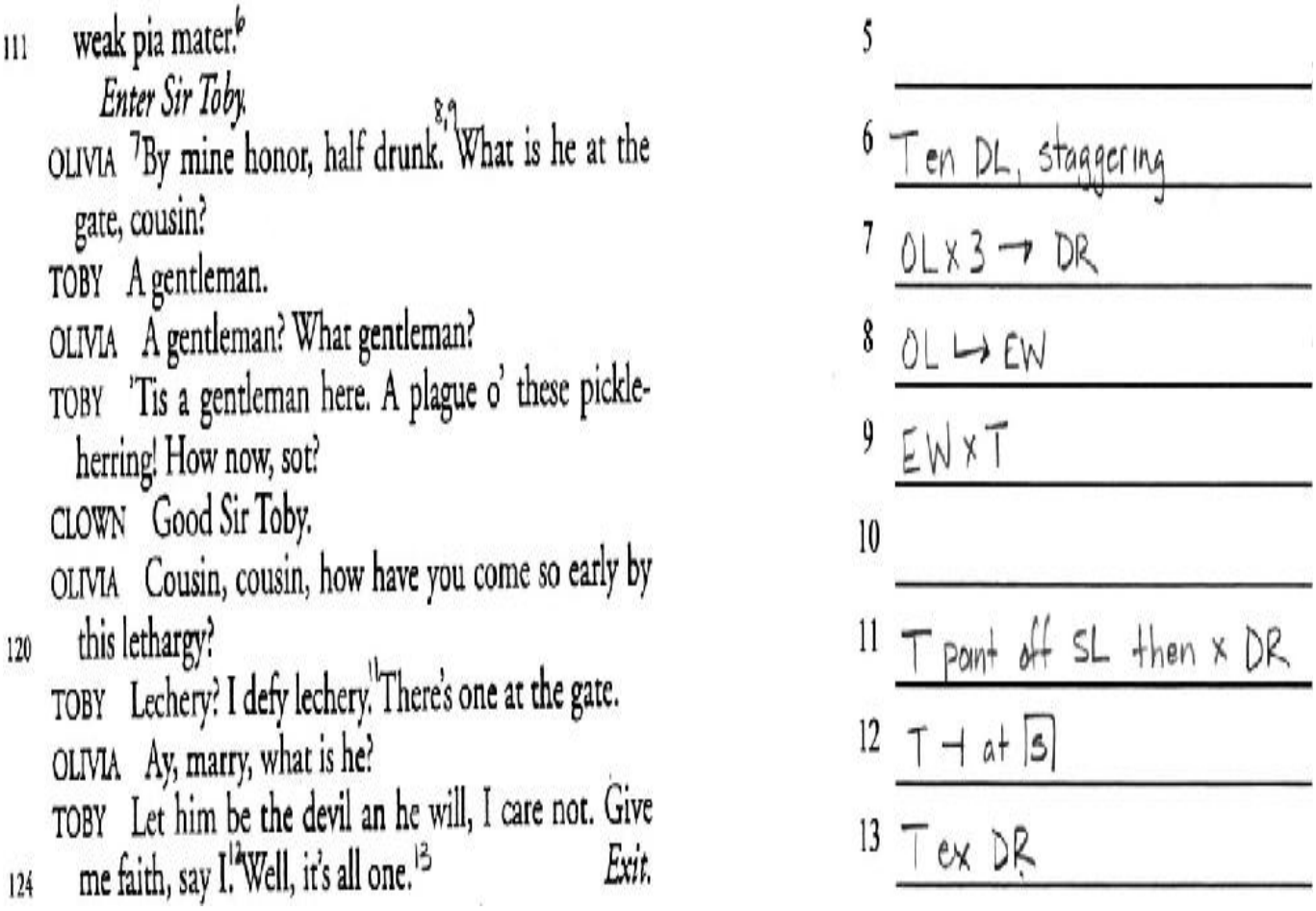


Figure 5.20 A close-up view of blocking notation at work.

Each director with whom you work will have a slightly different approach to blocking. The stage manager can ask some questions about blocking methods in your initial meetings with the director, but no matter what information you have ahead of time, stay flexible and responsive in rehearsal. If your director narrates detailed movement to the actors and then asks them to run the scene, take advantage of that narration time. While the actors are writing it all down, you should do the same. You will then be able to focus your efforts on placing the numbers when the pages are run,

rather than trying to do it all at once. If the director asks the actors to simply "'walk through the scene and see what happens," the stage manager should take notes here too. It will be a heartbreaking moment for you to hear a director say, "Great! Let's keep that and move on!" to a cast if you have not written anything down.

Another point to keep in mind is that scenes will be run many times before opening. A successful stage manager will strategize. (1) During the initial blocking rehearsals, focus on entrances and exits, major moves, and specific placement onstage given the cast. If you miss a small gesture the first time through, you will have other opportunities to capture that detail. (2) If you take advantage of the backing page setup and write the movement on the line most directly opposite the relevant dialogue, you automatically give yourself at least a rough placement for the blocking even if you were unable to also place the numbers onto the script page. (3) And if your schedule has only a brief number of days for blocking, consider having one of the assistant stage managers help record everything. You might focus on principals and the ASM on ensemble and then merge the notes later. Utilize your team to the production's best advantage.

MULTITASKING DURING BLOCKING

Even a seasoned director may have difficulty predicting exactly how long it will take to block an individual scene. The daily schedule is an educated guess. The stage manager may find it challenging to schedule costume fittings or other activities that take actors away from the rehearsal room on these days—especially if your costume shop is any distance away. You don't want to arrive at a scene early and have a key actor missing, or be unable to respond to a director's request to add an ensemble member to a nonspeaking moment in a show.

In light of this unpredictability, it is helpful to provide the actors with a nearby area to wait. A second rehearsal space across the hall, or even a green room, will permit actors to work on line memorization or songs or just relax and chat. They are available when needed, but much less frustrated than they would be if forced to sit in the rehearsal room just waiting for hours on end.

BLOCKING FOR THE MUSICAL

In Chapter 4, we saw two different options for the backing page—one for the play and one for the musical. This is necessary because both the quantity and quality of movement will be different between the two types of productions. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 illustrated documentation of the musical in action, but how do you approach it?

The first consideration is whether the movement is musical staging or true choreography. **Musical staging** refers to blocking that is very fluid and specifically timed to music, but may largely be comprised of walking, posing, and gesturing. The stage manager can capture this movement in the same manner as blocking in a play—and may only need to utilize the lines on the backing sheet.

8 M x ↲ ▭

9 MG ↑R, help M ↴

10 M shove MG aside

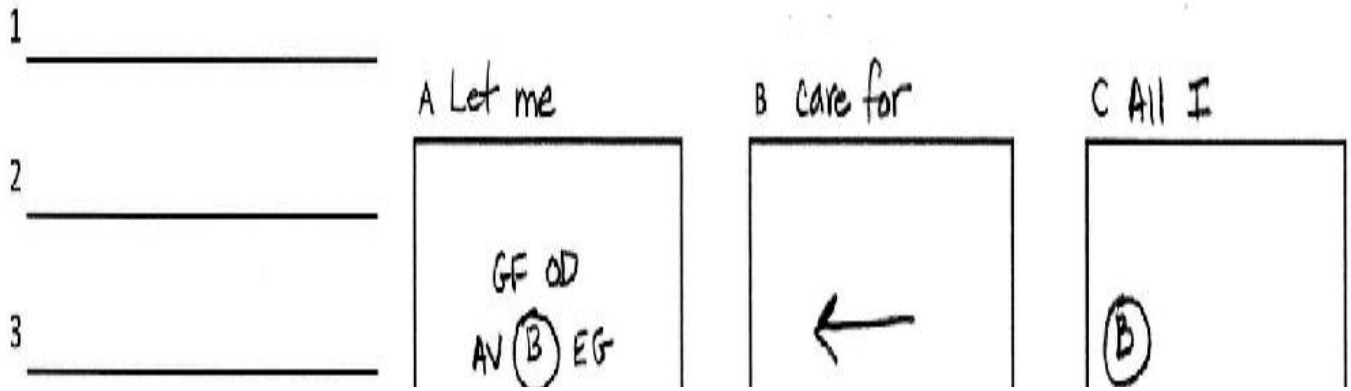
11 LY + M, take arm

12 LY, M x DR

Figure 5.21 An excerpt from the blocking script for the song "When You're Good to Mama" from *Chicago*.

Figure 5.21 is an excerpt from my prompt book for the musical *Chicago*—part of one backing page for the song "When You're Good to Mama." Although the reader does not have the benefit of my key to follow character abbreviations, the notation about the specific movement is straightforward: the character of Mama (M) crosses to the center of a platform and is helped down the stairs by an ensemble member (MG) who rises to do so. That ensemble member is then "shoved aside"—for which there is no cute picture in my symbol library. (*Sometimes words really are best!*) Another ensemble member (LY) crosses to Mama and takes her arm. The two then cross downstage right. Nothing about this notation is "musical specific," but in this instance there is nothing that warrants that approach.

When your task is to document choreography, the stage manager will find the boxes on the backing sheet to be more useful. They facilitate detailing general configuration and movement patterns. In choreography, you do not always need to note each individual performer by initials in each box. Consider the second example from *Chicago* seen in Figure 5.22, this time from the song "All I Care About." Box A notes the position of six ensemble women in a circle around Billy Flynn (B). When the entire group moves stage right but does not change their relative positions, an arrow communicates that information specifically enough. After spending additional time encircling Billy on stage right and then crossing back, it is reasonable to reaffirm everyone's specific placement with initials again as seen in box E. But because the relative positions remain until the movement captured in box J, the initials again disappear. Instead the focus is on a musically timed look to Billy and movement of the large fans with which the girls danced.



4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

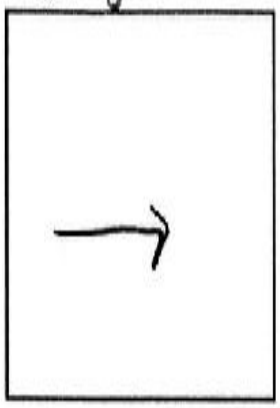
14

15

16

BR JM

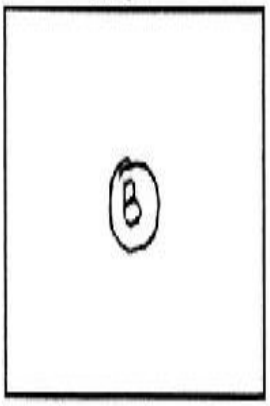
D Dialogue



E

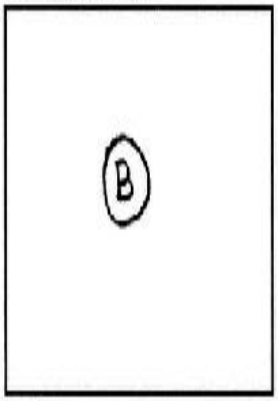
-1 at center

F RIMSHOT



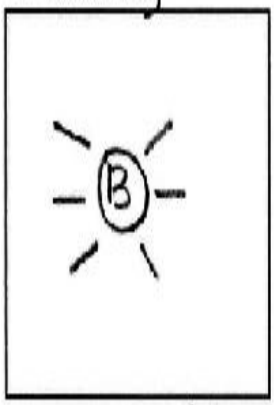
sharp look

G whistle



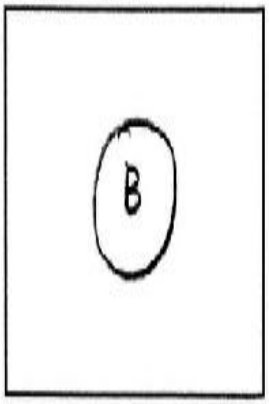
fanning B

H crooning



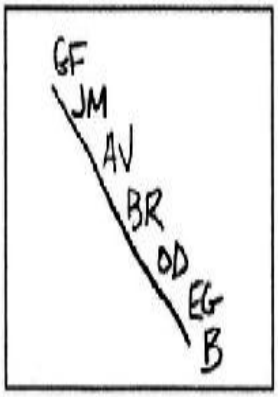
cover B w/ fans

I All he



open

J show me



K

L

to line

Figure 5.22 A blocking excerpt for "All I Care About" from the musical *Chicago*.

The line below the dance box allows the stage manager to make simple blocking notes like that "sharp look." Even if the choreography is more complex, it is not necessary to be fully versed in dance terminology. Should you need to reference a specific moment, describing it as "the series of fast turns" will serve you as well as knowing the specific term *soutenu*. And if you resort to something unconventional but visually descriptive for yourself, trust that performers in the number will figure out what you mean by the "shimmy walks" or even the "chicken arms" pretty quickly should you ever need to reference that point in the dance!

The space above each box left room in this song for a very brief lyric reference. Just as you focused first on movement detail and then timing specificity within the scene when taking blocking for a play you are best served by this same approach when capturing choreography. But since the boxes are not designed to individually line up with a specific line of text on the script page, small lyric notations will help you to place the letters corresponding with each box in the correct place in your libretto or score when you can.

WORKING WITH A DANCE CAPTAIN

The primary reason that the stage manager is not concerned about precise choreographic terminology is that you have a partner in learning and documenting the movement. Each production will have a **Dance Captain**. This is a member of the cast chosen by the choreographer to assist with documentation and review. They will be the first point of contact for an actor wanting to ask whether the sharp look was on count 4 or 5 of that measure, or whether the performers are standing in parallel or turned out at a specific moment. (If any of those terms are unfamiliar to you, you have just discovered exactly why the dance captain exists!) During rehearsals the dance captain will often hold review sessions for songs as part of the rehearsal day, and will assist you in maintaining the show after opening by giving notes and running numbers as needed.

The dance captain's role on the show is similar to that of a **Fight Captain**, chosen by a fight choreographer to help document and review stage combat sequences during rehearsals and performances. On an AEA production, these actors will receive extra compensation for these additional duties.

When creating the rehearsal schedule, a wise stage manager will consult with the dance captain and fight captain. They may have requests for rehearsal time to finish or review movement sequences, or for extra sessions with actors who might need extra time on their own. If actors are not needed for blocking or scene work in the main rehearsal room, the SM can schedule this time in a secondary location. On a production with understudies, look for times when the dance captain or fight captain are free, even if other primary cast members are not. This can open up a similar opportunity to give those actors a chance to begin learning the sequences. Asking understudies to learn entirely on their own, or to wait until formal understudy rehearsals—which often do not take place until a show opens—both complicates that future schedule and inhibits the understudies from being as effective as possible should they be needed sooner than that.

THE DAILY CALL

Now that the rehearsal period has begun, the stage manager will disseminate much more detailed information about daily rehearsal activities than available on the overall calendar. General days and times were the appropriate starting point, but now everyone will need more. The stage manager creates and distributes a specific work schedule on a daily and weekly basis. Actors need to know where to place their focus to prepare for the next day's work; the production team will be concerned with what units might be in use in order to be ready for a specific rehearsal prop or costume request—or to determine what *not* to make unavailable for that day. Communicating these plans requires both written and verbal strategies.

At the end of one day's rehearsal, you hope to announce to the cast the plan for the next day, emphasizing anything that has changed from previous information. That schedule may include actors not present at the time, so you need a way to reach them as well. Some theatres maintain a rehearsal hotline—a telephone number on which the next day's schedule is recorded as the outgoing voicemail message each night. Written communication of the schedule might take the form of a document posted on your electronic callboard or emailed out to your cast.

The sample daily call from *Footloose* found in Figure 5.23 is a good example of the potential intricacies of a single day of work. This would never fit onto a general calendar. It also did not exist at that time. Wednesday's schedule was the product of several days of notes from the director, musical director, and choreographer.

In written form, the call makes use of columns, allowing the actors to visualize how the activities overlap. The music sessions fit within the same time blocks set up for the director and choreographer. By merging cells to line up the time blocks, making use of sufficient white space, and placing commentary in italics, the actors have a way to navigate the plan.

I was the stage manager for this production, and can honestly say I am glad that my indirect way to reach my cast was a website and not a telephone hotline. It would be tricky to make this much information clear over the phone! My schedule was posted directly on the actor information page, with a hyperlink to a PDF file of the schedule in case someone wanted to print it out or was having problems viewing the columns (for example, on a mobile device).

But had the phone been my only option, I would have taken the following approach:

1. Begin by announcing any fittings on Wednesday before getting into the schedule, so that information wouldn't get lost.
2. Read the details for one location and then the other rather than going in time order and addressing both rooms at once.
3. Start with the scene work and choreography column, because it is less complex.
4. Concentrate on articulation and keeping my pace even.
5. Make sure I preceded the schedule with an introduction similar to this: "The following is the *Footloose* schedule for Wednesday, June 13. Please listen carefully, as we have lots of small overlapping work sessions planned. Grab your pencil now! If you have any questions, please call Laurie at 333-555-1212 for clarification."

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Wednesday June 13

Scenework & Choreography (in Toland Theatre)			Music (in the Choir Room)		
6:30 – 7:30 pm	Willard, Ren	Assorted Scene work	6:30 pm	Wendy Jo, Urleen, Rusty	#1, 4, 6, 7B, 11, 18
			7:00 pm	Posse (Beyer, Cornwell, Lake)	#10
			7:10 pm	Wendy Jo, Urleen, Rusty, Beyer, Bush, Cook, Cornwell, Escher, Lake, Schneider, K. Wolf	#1, 4, 9, 16A
7:30 – 8:00 pm	Chuck, Lyle, Travis, Ariel	Assorted Scene work	7:30 pm	Willard, Garvin, Jeter, Bickle	#13, 13A
			7:45 pm	Ren	#3, 9, 12C
8:00 – 9:30	Rusty, Wendy Jo	Let's Hear It For	8:00 pm	Black, Willard, Garvin, Jeter, Bickle, Chuck,	#1, 4, 9, 16A

6:00 – 7:30 pm	Rusty, Wendy Jo, Urleen, Ariel, Willard, Ren, Garvin, Jeter, Cowboy Bob, Beyer, Cornwell, Lake, Black, Fanshaw, Holloway, Schneider (*in other words, everyone at the Bar-B-Que except Erica and David*) Holloway to arrive at 8:40 pm	Let's Hear it for the Boy		Lyle, Travis,	
			8:25 pm	Chuck, Lyle, Travis	#2, 7B
			8:40 pm	Travis	Go to Toland!

Figure 5.23 A daily rehearsal call.

This would prepare the actors to hear a lot of detail and allow them to have my phone number jotted down right with their notes about the schedule. I had, of course, provided it several other times, but why not save a confused actor an extra step?

THE REHEARSAL DAY

Actors' Equity Association specifies the number of available rehearsal hours per day and per week. Those totals vary from contract to contract, based on the type of production and the amount of pay actors and stage managers receive. In some instances, the options are related to the proximity of opening night—such as the available hours during a tech week or during performances. At other times the contract provides options for regular rehearsals on which the cast can vote during the meeting on the first day of rehearsal. The SM will include voting on such items at the cast business meeting, and then follow the results of the vote when creating the schedule.

When working under the LORT contract, for example, the typical week is 47 hours long, with 45 of those hours available for rehearsal. The other two hours can be used for costume fittings, interviews, and the like. An individual day is generally 9 hours long, with 7 of those hours available for rehearsal. Actors can work up to 5 consecutive hours before reaching the mandated meal break. But this contract also provides an additional option: the 6-hour day. That day is just as it sounds: six hours of rehearsal straight through. No long meal break is required, although one of the regular 5 or 10 minute breaks will be extended to 20 minutes for "lunch." When calculating weekly rehearsal hours, this concentrated work day counts as eight hours. Although actors no longer need to vote on this option, they must receive notification in a rider to their contracts if a theatre intends to use this option during the rehearsal period of a show. It does not turn every day into a 6-hour rehearsal automatically; it becomes an option in the week.

This allows the SM to consider this option when helping the director to plan the week. The actors might be scheduled for several 7 out of 9 days in a row while blocking, followed by a 6-hour day for a full run followed by notes. The director loses that additional hour of work permanently for the week, but such an option can be useful. It might provide the actors a little extra time on their own in the morning to review lines or blocking before being called to work for the run; it might allow the director some bonus time to consider next steps before launching into the next phase of work with the actors, or for a meeting with a designer who has just seen the run and is interested in a longer conversation than would be appropriate for a production meeting. I have also worked on productions where casts simply prefer the consolidated day—sometimes because it is a small cast and the actors have little time when they're not working (and therefore possibly tiring sooner), and sometimes because the location of the rehearsal hall is somewhat remote and options for leaving the theatre for meals or errands during the break are limited. This same rationale is why LORT actors can also vote to shorten the 90-minute meal break on a long day to 60-minutes. Everyone might prefer the maximum amount of rehearsal time, but not feel the need for such a long break in the middle of the day.

At the beginning of the rehearsal period, you are likely to have simple schedules—full company calls for introductory sessions, and days divided into large segments for table work. Blocking and scene work days will be more complex. The director may wish to work with select groups of actors for more specifically defined periods of time. As you approach technical rehearsals, the schedule will simplify again as the work turns to repeated runs of the show followed by notes, requiring the full cast. You can see how those rehearsal hour options, if allowed, might help facilitate these phases of work.

CONFLICTS

One of the trickiest aspects to developing a rehearsal schedule can be finding a balance between the director's wishes and the actors' availability. Absences occur less frequently in a professional setting, but you could still have a cast member with a previously scheduled appointment or last-minute emergency. Academic stage managers find themselves handling many more conflicts. The ideal actor for a role might also play in the orchestra, which rehearses on Monday nights. Another might have a class on Tuesdays until 8:00 p.m. Both actors will clear their conflicts for tech week and performances, but may not be able to do so for the first few weeks of work on the show. The director agreed to this unavailability during casting, but will still be frustrated by rehearsals that become unproductive due to absences. Two-way communication helps to ameliorate the problem. Be sure you have a complete list of the actor conflicts noted on your audition forms. Make a follow-up request for conflicts once you have a cast. And consult that list carefully while helping to create the schedule. When working in an academic setting where conflicts are more prevalent, I will typically create a "conflict calendar," which looks nearly identical to my general rehearsal calendar but with the boxes for individual dates containing detail on when someone is unavailable or will arrive late rather than general rehearsal times and locations.

Sometimes the solution can be found in suggesting a new order for a given night so that everyone needed can be present. At other times you may need one of your ASMs to walk the role and write down any notes or blocking to give to an actor before the scene is next run. Keeping the director informed and getting missing actors caught up quickly allows work to be successful every night.

FITTINGS

The stage manager will be asked to schedule actors for costume fittings—times to visit the costume shop to try on costume pieces as they are built or altered. In a professional setting, the shop hours may be simultaneous to the rehearsal hours, requiring the stage manager to weave these appointments into the rehearsal schedule. In an academic setting, it is more common for fittings to happen during the day and rehearsals to take place at night. The stage manager will still schedule the appointments, helping the actors to find the best blocks of time within their class or work obligations.

NAME OF SHOW

FITTINGS

ACTOR REQUESTED AND FITTING LENGTH

By listing out costume shop requests here, you can easily give this sheet to an ASM to schedule, and cross off names once he or she has been successful.

Day:	Day:
1:00 pm_____	1:00 pm_____
1:15 pm_____	1:15 pm_____
1:30 pm_____	1:30 pm_____
1:45 pm_____	1:45 pm_____
2:00 pm_____	2:00 pm_____
2:15 pm_____	2:15 pm_____

2:30 pm_____	2:30 pm_____
2:45pm_____	2:45pm_____
3:00pm_____	3:00pm_____
3:15 pm_____	3:15 pm_____
3:30 pm_____	3:30 pm_____
3:45 pm_____	3:45 pm_____
Note: adjust the times listed next to lines above for the appropriate availability in your costume shop!	

Note: This form is based on one originally developed at the University of Arizona

Figure 5.24 A sample fitting request form.

Once scheduled, fitting reminders should be available to the actors. This might take written form on a callboard, website, or individual appointment slip filled out at scheduling time (much like the reminder card you get when scheduling a doctor's visit). You can also provide verbal reminders on the rehearsal hotline.

If your costume shop is responsible for building more than one show at a time, the stage manager may need to coordinate fittings across several shows so that only one person arrives at a time to see the same designer or staff member. The costume shop will request fittings a day or so in advance, allowing each stage manager time to consult their rehearsal schedule for potential slots, check with other stage managers, confirm times with their actors, and then communicate the combined fitting details to the costume personnel.

Your department or theatre may have a form for scheduling fittings. If not, you might choose to develop something to simplify the process for yourself. The form I use in rehearsal can be found in Figure 5.24. But it may be just as easy to type up a list of costume fittings similar to a rehearsal schedule. As long as the information is clearly presented for all users, the choice is yours.

THE FIRST RUN-THROUGH

The stage manager should help to develop a schedule during blocking days that allows both for new work and for the occasional review prior to the first attempt to stumble through the show on its feet. Your director might prefer spending the final portion of each day reviewing work or waiting to run several scenes at the end of the week. Review is ideal for two reasons: (1) actors will memorize blocking more effectively if given the chance to walk through it multiple times, and (2) understudies can take their notes in more manageable chunks. On professional productions, understudies are not always called for rehearsal if they do not also have a role in the show. Understudies who are members of the primary cast may not always be free to attend blocking sessions if called for other work at the same time. In both instances, this allows them to get information in concentrated doses.

But whether or not you've done any review, the first full run of the show is a major event. The SM team can confirm blocking and prop/costume tracking notes and obtain an updated running time for the show.

It is important to set up the room so that rehearsal props and furniture pieces can be moved efficiently, whether done by actors or the ASMs standing in as the crew. The stage manager should also anticipate the return of some of the first-day guests—particularly in-town designers. If you have moved the extra tables and chairs out of the room, now is the time for their return. You are striving for an efficient, functional work space for everyone.

ORGANIZING YOURSELF

With so many important tasks to accomplish, it is important for the stage manager to have a way to organize him or herself. If a show is particularly large, you may find your normal reliance on breakdowns and groundplans to be less effective than you would like. Be sure you take the time to determine how you can best keep the entire show moving forward, especially during rehearsals.

For the previously-mentioned production of *A Christmas Carol*, I found myself in need of something special. I had created a detailed character/scene breakdown, but the cast of fifty-four took two pages to list out, even with the form set up in portrait orientation. Some actors were cast in single roles and could be identified by character names, while others were multi-scene unnamed ensemble members. And then of course there were the ten children, both with and without specific character names. The script contained only informal scene divisions noted by a change in set pieces, but the director had added traditional numbering for the production team. And each location had particular furniture pieces much like the *Twelfth Night* we have looked at in this chapter.

I began rehearsals relying on my standard paperwork, but quickly found myself wanting something to pull multiple kinds of information together at once, and to make it easier to double check that I had called the correct subset of cast member for an individual scene. A cheat sheet came to the rescue, shown in Figure 5.25. Originally just created for scheduling, my ASMs were also quickly drawn to the consolidation, and we revised the document to provide easy access to even more. The addition of a column to note which spike tape color pertained to which scene's furniture setup proved very helpful.

I have not found the need to create this type of document for many other shows, but the notion of cheat sheets can take many forms. The stage manager always has a groundplan, and for multiple-location plays will have several individual drawings. You might find it useful to shrink them down so that many mini-groundplans fit on a single sheet. This will not provide you something to measure easily, but it may facilitate answering placement questions during a run-through and provide a consolidated place for documenting spike tape colors.

CHEAT SHEET

Act/Scene	Pages	Location	Spike Tape for Furniture	Cast
ACT TWO				
II-1	21-22	Scrooge's Home (Present)	PINK	Present, Scrooge
II-2	22	Street	*none*	Dickens, Scrooge, Present, Chestnut, Flower, Baker, Martha, Sopel, Cratchit, Fred, Mrs. Fred, Beggar **Kids: Izzy, Elizabeth, Tiny Tim**
II-3	23-28	Cratchit Home	BRIGHT BLUE	Dickens, Scrooge, Present, Cratchit, Mrs. Cratchit, Peter, Belinda, Martha **Kids: Tiny Tim**
II-4	28-29	Street (Bygone Christmas)	*none*	Dickens, Scrooge, Present, Belle, Young Ebenezer, Cratchit, Beggar **Kids: Fan, Boy Ebenezer, Tiny Tim**
II-5	29-33	Fred's House	GREY	Fred, Mrs. Fred, Topper, Cecil, Hazel, Florella, Scrooge, Present

II-6	34	Street (Ignorance & Want)	*none*	Dickens, Scrooge, Present **Kids: Annie, Elizabeth**
II-7	35	Scrooge's House (Future)	PINK	Dickens, Scrooge, Future (Coffin)
II-8	35-36	Street (Funeral)	*none*	Scrooge, Future (Coffin), Snuff Box, Pound Notes, Newspaper, Undertaker, Topper, Cecil, Fred, Cratchit
II-9	36-37	Cratchit Home	YELLOW	Scrooge, Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit, Belinda, Peter, Martha
II-10	37-39	Outside Graveyard	*none*	Scrooge, Future (Dickens), Char, Laundress, Joe the Beetler, Undertaker, Beggar, Fred, Cecil, Topper
II-10 A	39	Graveyard	*none*	Scrooge, Future (Dickens)

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Figure 5.25 A cheat sheet for *A Christmas Carol.*

SCENE WORK

The first run-through of the show will be followed by further exploration of the play. The work shifts from "what" rehearsals concerning logistics to "why" rehearsals concerning intention and motivation. Actors have a thorough grounding in the physical shape of the play and can now begin exploring details of their character.

Character work on a scene often requires a larger segment of the rehearsal day than was allocated for blocking it. Scene work may also be done out of order, so that an actor can explore the arc of a character through the play more concisely. In contrast to the blocking rehearsals, the stage manager may more easily identify opportunities to schedule costume fittings, dialect sessions, and other events that make actors temporarily unavailable to the director.

Scene work usually coincides with the line-memorization deadline because these rehearsals are more successful once actors are no longer carrying scripts. In addition to the added scheduling, the SM team will now take on responsibility for prompting (feeding lines to actors if they forget them) and taking line notes during this phase.

DONE TAKING NOTES?

The blocking may not be changing, so should the stage manager take notes in the prompt script during character rehearsals? *Yes!* Particularly if you will be maintaining the show or rehearsing understudies, document the discoveries taking place. The ability to refer to the director or the actor's own words will help legitimize your feedback later on.

LINE NOTES

Line notes are a tool to help actors memorize the script accurately. Although technically a form of written communication, they are a bit less formal. The goal is to achieve specificity, even though you are writing quickly. Using preprinted slips with a series of categories facilitates noting the type of error, and indicating the beginning of the relevant line along with the problematic section is sufficient identification. Figure 5.26 provides a sample of a single-note form.

CHARACTER_____ PAGE_____

Dropped Line Paraphrased Jumped/Missed Cue Called for Line

Dropped Words Sequence of Lines Pronunciation

Added:_____

LINE:_____

_____

Figure 5.26 A line note. These notes are formatted four per page, and are copied and cut into the individual slips prior to use in rehearsals.

If hard-copy line notes are impractical or less desirable, SM teams have found multiple ways to approach the task digitally. In addition to software created for this specific task, talented stage managers have built tables and spreadsheets with dropdown menus and preset abbreviations that can allow a team of ASMs to take line notes electronically and send them to actors at the end of the day.

The move to find digital options to traditional stage management tasks might be an example of where the collective stage management hive mind works best. Figure 5.27 is a line notes spreadsheet created in Microsoft Excel, in which the team can customize dropdown options for characters, actors, and error abbreviations. The form came to me by way of one of my students after her summer internship. When I asked that stage manager for permission to share her form, she replied: "I really can't take credit for it. It has been a document passed along by so many people I don't even know where to trace its origins to. I know a number of people who use something very similar and we all just tweak bits and pieces of it to suit our needs and what the show calls for. . . . I think it is a brilliant way to do line notes digitally, but I think credit may need to be more inclusive of the broader stage management community." And in that spirit, I share it with you. Having given the document an intense field test, it is very user-friendly: it is easy to customize the template for a production and speedy at the end of the day to select individual actors from the dropdown menu and PDF their notes individually. Be sure that the member of the team taking line notes using this form is a fast typist, or consider tasking that person to note the errata into their script during rehearsal and then type up the notes at the end of the day.

Macbeth

Dir: Paul Barnes

SM: Rebekah Heusel

Line Notes from 6/8/19

ASM: Hannah Steele

Line Note Key:

D: Dropped Word/Phrase	P: Paraphrased Line	WW: Wrong Word
LC: Line Called	R: Review	MC: Missed Cue/Late
IO: Inverted Order of Words	A: Added Word/Phrase	JC: Jumped Cue/Early

Actor	Character	Pg.	Note	Line
Sort A to Z Sort Z to A Sort by Color Clear Filter From "Actor" Filter by Color Text Filters Search (Select All) Alex Benjamin Fitz Leah		8	D	Of noble having and of royal hope, **that he seems rapt withal.**
		10	WW	LINE: To th' self-same tune and words. Who's here? SAID: Who's there?
		11	LC	..To win us to our **harm the instruments of darkness..**
		13	WW	LINE: Thou art so far before that swiftest wing of.. SAID: Thou art so far forward..
		13	D	whom we name hereafter **The** Prince of Cumberland

OK Cancel

		14	WW	LINE: It is a peerless kinsman. SAID: It is a worthy kinsman.
		14	IO	Yet **do I** fear thy nature.
Leah	Lady Macbeth	15	LC	..though wouldst highly, **That wouldst thou holily**
Leah	Lady Macbeth	15	WW	LINE: That which cries "Thus thou must do" SAID: This thou must do.
Fitz	Duncan	17	WW	LINE: See, see, our honored hostess SAID: ..noble hostess.
Leah	Lady Macbeth	17	WW	LINE: business to contend against those honors... SAID: to contend with those honors..
Fitz	Duncan	18	WW	LINE: and shall continue our.. SAID: and will continue...
Leah	Lady Macbeth	19	WW	LINE: He has almost supped. SAID: He hath almost supped.
Benjamin	Banquo	33	D	and question this **most** bloody piece of work,
Alex	Malcolm	33	JC	Donalbain: the near in blood, the nearer bloody. Malcolm: This murderous...

Figure 5.27 A spreadsheet for comprehensively taking line notes on a computer. Shared with me by stage manager Rebekah Heusel, but created by the greater SM hive mind.

When beginning the line note process, the SM team should concentrate on major problems: dropped lines, significant paraphrasing, or jumped cues. As the rehearsals progress and the actors become more proficient, the stage managers can correct more minute details. When the stage manager notices a line that is repeatedly misdelivered, it can be useful not only to identify the problematic part of the script but also to indicate what the actor is actually saying. Often the error has already been memorized, and the actor may not be aware of the inaccuracy. Be sure to make use of your whole team for this work. The person "on book" should not also try to write out line notes so that they can keep eyes constantly on the script. The moment you look away is always the exact moment an actor will call "line?'' If the SM is still taking or refining blocking notation and you only have one ASM, consider a "special guest star" to be on book. This might be a fellow stage manager or friend, or as a last resort a rotating set of willing cast members who may be offstage for several scenes each and available to help.

SAFETY IN REHEARSALS

A key task of the stage manager is to create a productive rehearsal environment. This includes the setup and planning discussed so far, but it also includes making that environment safe. And evaluating safety requires the SM to consider the production through multiple lenses.

FIRST AID

The first, and probably easiest, step is to evaluate the first aid available to you. Where is the nearest first aid kit? Is it stocked? Have any of the items in it expired? If you are unable to locate a kit or are concerned about its contents, talk with your supervisor. For student stage managers, this should be a faculty or staff member. In a professional theatre this may be the Production Manager or the Technical Director. They can help you acquire items that may be in short supply. Focus on the items you are likely to need most often: band-aids, ice packs, ACE wraps, and the like. Make sure that your first aid supplies are easily accessible during rehearsals. If the stage management supply cabinet is in the back corner of the room or in an adjacent space, consider relocating your kit or obtaining a small tub in which you can keep a small supply for easy access. Before adding or requesting pain relievers, ask if your school or company has policies about dispensing medication. In some places you may not run into problems, but in others this might not be an allowable purchase.

As part of their marketability and professional development, many stage managers seek out first aid certification. This is a noble and responsible goal, but should not be a mandatory one. If your theatre or university requires you to have training, make sure that you are receiving instruction from a certified person or an agency like the American Red Cross. Many universities have programs that allow students to go through the certification process as a course or for a reduced cost. Arts service organizations periodically arrange for discounted training for professional stage managers. Talk with your supervisor about whether this is right for you and how those programs work. A second and equally important part of first aid certification is that a stage manager should only advertise skill in this area if the training is current. Taking a course five years ago, no matter how thorough, is not the same. Especially if you are a student, think about other courses that require specialized knowledge—like math. If you finished your math requirements during your junior year of high school and then took a placement test when you arrived at college, how much did you remember? You might prefer a college math course that omits material you studied at one time and are sure you remember perfectly, but if it has been a year or more since that high school course, you are more likely to succeed if you enroll in a class that includes some review rather than simply assuming you remember all of Pre-Calculus and diving into Calculus I hoping for the best. The stakes are obviously higher for attending to injuries; apply the same standard.

A SAFE STAGE

Not all theatres have separate rooms for rehearsal. My university is one such place. Our rehearsals are scheduled in the evenings, while during the daytime the staff works in the shop and onstage to build and paint the set. At the end of every afternoon a member of the stage management team checks in with the Technical Director about the status of the scenic items on the stage. Are the platforms safe for standing and walking? Do stair units have railings? Is there a scenic item in the theatre that needs to remain there because it will not fit anywhere else but is not ready for use? The stage manager communicates these caveats to the director and cast each night. A director might be disappointed actors are unable to stand on a platform that is clearly visible, but will be much more unhappy if an accident were to occur because a unit is not ready for action. The start of every rehearsal night for the SM team is a thorough sweep of the space and a walkthrough to make sure that tools and equipment have been put away. Assume that your shop staff has made their best effort to have the shared space ready for you but be prepared for that second evaluation anyway. If the afternoon's work call involved routing the edges of a Masonite deck, a single sweep will not get all of the dust up, and the stage floor is probably still slippery.

THE STAGE FLOOR

Actors' Equity Association does not undertake the role of monitoring scenic design, but nearly all contracts specifically address elements that can have a significant physical impact on its members. An Equity production will need to adhere to specific rules about an inclined stage deck, known as a **rake**, appropriate handrails and safety markings for aisles and stairs, and the surface on which actors dance. In their current rulebooks, multiple agreements specify that "[a]ctors shall not be required to audition, rehearse dances or dance on concrete or marble floors or on any other surfaces which Equity shall deem to be injurious or unsafe, or on wood or on any other substance laid directly over such similar surfaces which do not provide air space of at least 1–5/8ths inches between the concrete or marble or similar supporting surface and the dancing surface."[1]

EMERGENCY MEDICAL FORMS

Many theatre departments and companies will ask the stage manager to collect emergency medical information about cast members and other participants in your productions. If this is common practice then a standard form may be available to you. If not, the sample form in the Appendix of this book and on the companion website is a good place to start.

Make sure that your company knows that you will keep the forms both nearby and confidential; actors may be unwilling to write down information which could be important in a medical emergency if they think it will become public knowledge. But think about practical information as well. Does your form include a place to list food allergies? Such information will be valuable when working on a play where actors eat onstage, but it is also valuable in the larger context of your rehearsal environment. Pay attention to things like nut allergies in particular. Some people can have such extreme reactions that being around the dust or even the smell of peanuts can trigger a reaction, for example. If this is the case, the SM wants to know this so the rehearsal areas can become a "nut free zone" for the entire company.

WORKING IN COMFORT

Beyond looking out for physical safety, a successful stage manager will help to generate an environment where the actors feel welcome to take chances and explore their characters. Many steps contribute to this.

(1) Create a distraction-free room by providing an alternate space for actors called for the day but not currently working to chat and use electronic devices, and keep the actors in that space updated on rehearsal progress. This might mean turning on audio monitors or having an ASM periodically provide quick updates.

(2) Keep the SM team similarly focused in rehearsal, minimizing work on computers in smaller rooms where even the quietest typing will be heard or where the "wall" of a laptop screen can inadvertently communicate disinterest. Your ASM may be hard at work on the preset list for tomorrow's run, but such effort will not look different from

spending time on social media from the other side of the computer. Both of these steps will help reinforce respect for the work.

(3) Be cognizant of conflicts between cast members that start to enter the room, even if they are unrelated to the show itself. The SM should not be expected to mediate every small disagreement that takes place in the vicinity of the production. The SM should, however, strive to be observant enough to notice such disagreements so they can monitor if external conflicts are starting to impact the production. A romantic scene can become more uncomfortable or a fight scene can become more dangerous if the two actors are upset with one another and unable to set those differences aside during rehearsal. A stage manager feeling ill-equipped to manage these factors alone should seek help. It is not a personal failing if you are unable to resolve the problem between two roommates or a couple that has recently broken up. For a student stage manager this might be the director or your faculty supervisor. A professional stage manager might speak to the Production Manager or Production Stage Manager, or seek out the person who handles human resources for the theatre. Allow their added experiences and resources to be part of the solution.

(4) If you are working on a play that contains charged language—specific racial epithets or more general racial attitudes—create a plan with the director to address how the dialogue will be handled in the room. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is based on the 1960 novel of the same name and set in Alabama in the late 1930s, and includes some hate-filled exchanges. The production cannot cut the lines, but the director and stage manager can be sure the cast has adequate context to understand why such rhetoric felt acceptable to some at that time, and to insist that such words and sentiments be used solely when dictated by the script and not adopted more casually by the cast and team when talking about the play. Both of these steps will help to reinforce respect for the people involved in the work.

THE HEALTHY REHEARSAL SPACE

It is not just plays which address that issues of race that can be difficult projects to work on. Scripts exploring discrimination, inequality, or violence can be emotionally taxing even when your cast comprises actors of good will playing characters of good intent. *26 Pebbles* is a documentary drama about the residents of Newtown, Connecticut both before and after the horrific shooting in 2014. The play does not dramatize the shooting; it is a difficult and sad script nonetheless. A list of similarly weighty contemporary productions would include *The Laramie Project* about Matthew Shepard, the death row stories found in *The Exonerated*, and Lisa Loomer's play *Roe* about the lawyer and plaintiff at the heart of *Roe v. Wade*. It is also worth noting that many "classic" scripts contain storylines or characters that resonate much differently today. The context actors and audiences bring to *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, has changed significantly from Shakespeare's day.

The term "safe space" has been marginalized and at times weaponized in popular culture, but it is a genuine consideration. The stage manager should consider what he or she can do to make the actors ready for the night's work. Some suggestions might include:

- Keep the spaces as professional as possible by making sure the room is open and set up before the first actors are scheduled to arrive for the day.
- Make an extra effort to acquire props and costume pieces for rehearsal and introduce them to the actors when they arrive.
- If obtaining those items is difficult or delayed, be prepared to answer questions about them so that confusion about the physical environment does not become added weight or concern for the cast.
- Look for occasions to invite cheer. Does anyone in the company have a birthday during rehearsals? You need not cater a large party, but a plate of cookies or even a verse of "Happy Birthday" at the end of the night can help the actors transition back from the play to their regular lives.
- Read the room. You may be due only for a five-minute break, but is it coming after a particularly intense scene? Allow the actors time to disengage from the material, attend to break-related business, and then get ready to work again—even if that means that the break ends up being a little longer than required.

Talk with the director about the topics of the play before rehearsals begin to find out if they have a desire to build decompression time into the end of the night or are planning to have an outside expert to come speak with the cast. This reinforces the rationale for meeting with the director before every production begins—even a director with whom

you have worked in the past. Assumptions based on past working experiences do not always serve you as well as you hope. A director who prefers five-minute breaks may recognize even before the first day that this is a show that warrants breaking that pattern. It is at least an opportunity to broach the subject.

If you do not realize until midway through rehearsals that steps such as these could be helpful, inquire about introducing them now. You've added them to your toolbox for consideration at the beginning of future productions, but that does not mean they are unwelcome or useless if they begin during week three this time.

INTIMACY DIRECTION

The theatre industry has considered it obvious for a long time that choreography and combat require expertise, and a director without these specific skills is joined on a creative team by a colleague who can do this work. The idea of an intimacy director is newer but no less important. Over the past three years stage managers have been increasingly likely to have this new expert as a presence in rehearsals.

Intimacy Directors International defines intimacy direction as the choreography of scripted moments of touch, nudity, and simulated physical intercourse to "accurately tell the characters' stories, as intended by the writer through the interpretation of the director and the actors involved while respecting the physical and psychological safety of all."[2]

IDI's intimacy work in theatre revolves around five pillars: context, communication, consent, choreography, and closure. It situates these highly vulnerable moments onstage in a clear understanding of the story and how these moments meet its needs, a designed set of movements which all actors involved understand and strictly follow, and an open line of discussion each day to ensure that all participants are professional, respectful, and comfortable with the physical work.

IDI has programs both for professional companies and universities to develop protocols and tools to handle intimate moments onstage. It provides training for professionals who wish to become certified as intimacy directors, and it provides resources to help a department or company without this expertise on staff to hire a person with it. A stage manager working with an intimacy director for the first time may wish to learn more about the process in order to successfully incorporate it into rehearsals, and a stage manager working on a play or musical with intimate moments but no designated expert should inquire how they will be handled during rehearsals and performances.

THE REHEARSAL REPORT

At the conclusion of each rehearsal day, the stage manager will prepare a report to be distributed to the production team and other staff members as required by your theatre or department.

RECIPIENTS

- Director and SM Team
- Designers and Assistants
- Production Manager
- Shop Heads (as appropriate)
- Production Stage Manager (if theatre has one)
- Faculty Advisors (academic productions)

WHAT IT CONTAINS

- Details of the day's work, including breaks
- Overview of the next day's schedule
- Absences, latecomers, and visitors
- Questions for individual production areas from the director or SM
- Discoveries about scenery, costumes, props, or any other physical element of the show

- Notations of any accidents or injuries
- General information for the full team

WHY DO IT?

- To provide an accounting of what is happening in the rehearsal room
- To alert production team members to needs or requirements for individual items
- To share the director or stage manager's questions

The rehearsal report is the most important communication tool for the stage manager. It is a direct line from the rehearsal room to the rest of the production team, and a highly effective method for distributing a large amount of information to a diverse audience. It can be sent as easily to guest designers in another state as it can be to staff members across the hall. The rehearsal report is considered an official document of the production, particularly for Actors' Equity or insurance issues.

As such, the stage manager should treat the report as formal communication, employing the three key rules first introduced in Chapter 1: to be tactful, timely, and specific.

The rehearsal report should thoroughly address each category of information. If you have no questions or information for the sound department on a certain day, it is better to write that you have "no notes today" rather than to leave that section blank. This reassures the sound designer that nothing came up in rehearsal—and not that you have forgotten to include it.

One characteristic of the blocking period is its distinction as the time when the most props are added to a show. It is also true that some of these props may be cut once you reach scene work and the actors are no longer carrying scripts. So should you wait to make requests for additions to the prop list in case they go away? *No*. The props department will be unable to accurately plan their time or budget if you request a long list of items late in the process. The scenic designer will be unable to share concerns with the director or to discuss compromises about a specific prop if he or she doesn't know about it. And if a request cannot be fulfilled, then everyone's time is wasted in rehearsal by miming an item that will never come.

Notes should also be written as specifically as possible. If your director requests a baseball cap for an actor, then you are omitting details by writing a note asking just for a hat. Conversely, it is not up to you to make artistic decisions. If only a hat was requested, it is not your job to determine a baseball cap is the best choice.

It can be awkward to write a note you feel will be unpopular or that delivers bad news. But that does not mean the stage manager should not write it. Pre-production time spent learning about the elements of the design will provide you some context to know if requesting a change or asking a question could prompt an emotion-filled response, but the stage manager's job is to communicate nonetheless. You might opt to combine written and face-to-face communication by conveying general details in the report and following up in person the next morning. You need to provide the information so that a conversation can happen—even if that conversation is an argument.

"THE DIPLOMATIC HAND GRENADE"

In their book *Difficult Conversations,* authors Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen describe delivering a difficult message as the equivalent of tossing a hand grenade. No matter how hard you try, tact may not truly soften the blow. They stress dealing "creatively with problems while treating people with decency and integrity." Transforming your message-delivery role into the opportunity for a conversation is much more constructive.[3]

REHEARSAL REPORT

Production: Twelfth Night

Date: Friday October 29

Stage Manager: Laurie Kincman

Assistant Stage Managers: Melissa Heller, Quinn Masterson

Guests: Colleen Schulz

Call Began: 7:00pm Breaks: 7:45 (5), 9:00 (5) Ended: 9:30 pm

Late: none Absent: Austin Hernandez (excused)

Rehearsal Breakdown		
Time	What	Who
7:00 pm	Block II-1	Sebastian, Antonio
7:50 pm	Block III-2	Sebastian, Antonio
8:05 pm	Block II-2	Viola, Malvolio
8:40 pm	Block II 4 to p. 37	Orsino, Viola, Feste, Coffin, Hart, Prescott

Next Rehearsal Monday November 1		
Time	What	Who
6:30 pm	Block I-3	Toby, Maria, Andrew
7:30 pm	Block II-3	Toby, Maria, Andrew, Malvolio, Feste
8:30 pm	Block II-5	Toby, Maria, Andrew, Malvolio, Fabian

Scenery/Technical Direction (Mandy and Ron):

25. Will the gate be pinned to the deck after it flies in? (We are not asking for this—just wondering if we should allow time/personnel for it).

Props (Mandy and Laura):

26. Please ADD a rucksack for Sebastian in II-1.

27. Please ADD a change of clothes for Sebastian to pack into the rucksack. It will be preset on the bench when brought on.

28. Several people are now blocked to sit on Orsino's poolside table (only one at a time, though).

29. Please ADD money (bills) for Valentine to pay Feste in II-4.

Costumes (Michelle):

Please see prop note #27 regarding clothing for Sebastian to pack.

30. Sebastian and Antonio's overcoats for II-1 will be preset on the coat rack when it is brought onstage.

31. Antonio's overcoat should have an inside breast pocket for his wallet.

32. Walterwould like Antonio's disguise for III-3to include dark sunglasses.

Lights (Nick):

33. III-3 is currently blocked to occur far downstage right on the apron in front of the proscenium arch.

Sound (Brent):

No notes tonight, thank you.

Miscellaneous:

34. Suzanne Clum and Shelby Krarup will be the Musicians in the production. There will be no third musician.

Thanks everyone,

Laurie Kincman SM

Figure 5.28 A rehearsal report from *Twelfth Night.*

ANALYZING THE REPORT

The sample rehearsal report from *Twelfth Night* in Figure 5.28 allows us to examine the document both for format and content. General details requested by the theatre appear at the top, including personnel, date, and attendance information. The next section outlines the schedule in summary form. Because this is not a document for the actors, you can present the facts simply—and in this case in a slightly smaller font size to minimize the amount of space it takes up. The most important sections of the report are those for individual production areas, so they should be the most prominent components of the page.

Although this top-of-page information may be of less consistent use to the production team, you should still include it—even as a student stage manager. If the actors in your production are working for academic credit, then a portion of that grade may be based on attendance. Taking the time to document the information now will make it easier to summarize it later. This also allows you to gain experience for reports you will write after graduation when such information may be related to logging overtime payments or other business activity at a professional company.

Information about the next day's schedule is equally valuable. Both now and in your professional career, the stage manager wants to create the most effective rehearsal environment possible. Designers and production shops will never memorize the details of your schedule, nor should you expect them to do so. By including a "heads up" about the next day, you enable them to look at their goals and lists with rehearsal needs in mind as well. If your prop master has limited available time and has to choose which prop to complete that afternoon, it is easier for them to choose the one you need that night if they remember that is the case. And conversely, it also helps your shops make a rehearsal-friendly choice when deciding whether to take something apart or give it a coat of slow-drying paint at the end of their work day.

Other general document design principles from Chapter 2 in action include the following:

- A layout that presents the information legibly in the least number of pages
- Just enough white space to keep the text accessible
- A commonly available font, consistent with the one used for other show paperwork
- Minimal use of color and shading

REHEARSAL REPORT TEMPLATES

If your theatre does not have a format for rehearsal reports, the one provided here is a good start. If you have been asked to present the information in a specific way, however, you should do so. When beginning work for a new company, ask the production manager or a fellow stage manager about existing forms you should use. Often they exist in a common folder on a computer available to the stage managers so that you can easily acquire the necessary templates to fill in for your production.

Looking at the report for content, a stage manager can find several useful strategies at work. The necessary formal tone is in place, set by the use of full sentences with correct grammar and punctuation. Questions and comments are concise, including all information from that night's rehearsal, without embellishments. Additions are requested with a *please*. And every area of the report is filled in, even if there are no notes.

CLARITY AND COMPLETENESS

The props notes from this particular evening include both additions and clarifications. The additions are obviously important, but so is the detail provided about the poolside table (note #28). As the scenic designer and props master search for the most aesthetically pleasing furniture piece, it will be important to know it needs to bear weight. If the first-choice piece might not do this on its own, the team can now plan to reinforce it, look for another option, or initiate a conversation with the director about the necessity of that blocking. Similarly, the costume section includes specifics about where a coat pocket is best located for the blocking and an addition to a disguise for later in the show.

NUMBERING NOTES

Throughout this report, you will notice that most notes have a number. Numbering facilitates directing attention to a specific detail—either sending the same production area back to a previous report or directing a different area to a note with shared implications. A good example of this can be found at the beginning of the costume section. It is reasonable for the costume designer to want input into this prop clothing. Even though an actor will not wear it, it belongs to a specific character and should fall within the design concept for his look. If the rucksack had been added as a filled item (meaning the contents would never be seen on stage), then props could handle this alone. But because the clothing is seen, both areas should know about the note.

The stage manager should expect that production personnel will read notes in their individual sections thoroughly, general notes quickly, and other area notes not at all. Without a reference to the prop note, the costume designer could easily overlook the information. And by directing the designer's attention to a specific prop note, time is better used than if he or she was asked to search through the props section for the relevant item (not difficult on a night with only four prop notes, but what if there were more?).

The "please see" note does not need its own number, because it is not new information. It is the equivalent of the italicized commentary a stage manager might include on a chart or in a schedule. Personally, I also omit numbers when the note is a thank you. I do this to keep some control over the number of numbers. Thoroughness in reporting is essential, but there is something a bit overwhelming about opening a report to find it begins with note number forty on day five!

REPORTS FOR A MUSICAL

The rehearsal report for a musical is the same in format, but may require a slightly different approach to content. Rather than individually listing the twenty-four actors called for a choreography rehearsal in a section of the report your team will scroll past, it will be more efficient to adopt the "full company except" approach. (This is also useful on rehearsal schedules.) You may need to include sections for additional production areas. Expect to document ensemble members being added to scenes during rehearsal, more complex costume fittings for actors playing multiple roles, duplicate props needed as a result of time limits imposed by a song, and even requests from the Musical Director about the tone of a sound effect. The report from *Big Fish* presented in Figure 5.29 showcases several of the typically colorful types of notes you may find yourself writing, presented on the same form and with the same specificity as notes from a play.

REHEARSAL REPORT

Production : Big Fish

Date: Wednesday February 7

Stage Manager: Laurie Kincman

Assistant Stage Managers: Rachel Krause, Sydney Smith

Guests : none

Call Began: 6:30 pm Breaks: 8:02 (10) Ended: 9:21pm

Late: none Absent: Flaningam (ill)

Rehearsal Breakdown		
Time	What	Who

6:30 – 8:02 pm	Choreography Rehearsal	Full Company except Coppenbarger, Englebert, Gates, Olson, Scott
8:12 – 9:21 pm	Work Act One	ADD Coppenbarger and Englebert

Next Rehearsal Thursday February 8		
Time	**What**	**Who**
6:30 – 7:00 pm	Music Rehearsal	Full Company except Rightmire
7:00 – 9:30 pm	Work Act Two	Same people as above

Scenery/Technical Direction (Megan):

31. The heel of a character shoe found a weak spot in the deck just below turntable #1, between 6:00- 7:00. We marked it with red spike tape. *(We're considering 12:00 to be straight upstage.)*

32. Following up on the conversation from this afternoon, we would love for you to add the ramp downstage left! Cullen is unable to get out of sightlines when riding his tricycle if he stays on the raised deck. He is also dragged offstage in the same spot during Act Two.

Props (Mandy)

33. Please ADD a pooper scooper for Edward at the circus. It should be separate from the push broom requested yesterday.

34. Please ADD a second baseball bat. We do not have enough time to run it from SR to SL during "Ashton's Favorite Son."

Costumes (Joe & Michelle)

35. A confirmation that Carly Boles has been added to I-5 as the Waitress.

FITTINGS

Friday February 9

1:00 pm- Cullen Gaffy (*All but Red Fang*)
2:00 pm - Jenna Moilanen (USO)
3:30 pm - Caitlyn Nettesheim (*Wedding, Prairie, Redhead*)

Lights (Hide)

No notes tonight.

Projections (Ben)

No notes tonight

Sound (Alex)

36. Please talk with Kat about the flatline sound when Edward dies. She would like to request it in a specific key due to the song which immediately follows in the score.

Miscellaneous

No other notes tonight.

Thanks everyone,
Laurie Kincman, SM

Figure 5.29 A rehearsal report for a musical.

PRESENTING THE PROBLEM, NOT OFFERING THE SOLUTION

One of the toughest things to master as a stage manager is learning when to step in. If a prop or scenic piece should malfunction during a performance, of course the SM's problem-solving skills take over, and your job is to find a way to temporarily repair or replace the item so the show can go on. But during rehearsals, when you have the full staff working on the show, that is not your responsibility.

The stage manager can communicate if a piece of music is shorter than the transition for which it was written, if a table is too heavy to be carried by the actor tasked to do so, or if an actress in a long skirt has been blocked to run up a flight of stairs. That information is exactly the type of detail you should include in a rehearsal report. However, it is not your job to inform the costume designer that the skirt should be shortened or to pull a lighter table for the show yourself. By presenting the problem, the stage manager allows the correct area to work on the solution—whether that is an easy substitution or a compromise reached after discussion in a production meeting.

Particularly in a rehearsal report, which is written and widely distributed, the SM should be careful not to imply that a colleague has made a poor choice or done an inadequate job. If your solution is requested, you will be asked for it. This might happen in follow-up conversation in person, where you can utilize your skills at reading body language to gauge how much "help" to provide if asked.

The exception to the unsolicited-suggestion rule might be discussion of a note during a production meeting if the personnel involved have reached an impasse. The SM can read the room and offer the "I know this might be a crazy idea, but could we ..." comment. Your idea might work. Or it might restart the conversation and lead to a different outcome. The change in setting makes all the difference!

FINDING BALANCE

As the SM is writing the nightly rehearsal report, it is just as important to know when to include a note as how to write it. A production of David Auburn's *Proof* I stage managed offers an example of just that.

The tradition at my university is that rehearsals take place in the theatre, on the set, at night. Typically the first two nights of rehearsal take place off-site, allowing the scene shop to get a jump start on construction without having to stop early or clean up for rehearsals on those initial days. Day three marks the first evening the cast will work onstage.

Proof takes place on the back porch of a house in Chicago. The set consists of the house and that porch. In our production, the director and scenic designer opted to place the house at an angle rather than facing straight downstage. Because I hold a dual post as production manager, I was aware it took several conversations to arrive at the current orientation of the house, and that a lingering question regarding sightlines was never completely resolved. In preparation for our first night with the set, I visited the theatre in the afternoon and quickly realized that the sightline question would indeed be back. But as I was neither the director nor the scenic designer, it was not my question to pose. I did, however, chat briefly with the technical director—asking about the feasibility of adjusting the angle of the house. She told me it could happen, especially if requested within the next two days before the installation of the walls. I filed that information away and went to rehearsal. Midway through the evening the director did raise the subject of sightlines. Knowing that a change was possible technically, I encouraged him to pose that question to the designer. I had not spoken with him during the day, so the artistic response to an angle adjustment was unknown. Nonetheless, it needed to be addressed in the report.

My report that night included three scenic notes: the answer to a question from the scenic designer, a request to fly in a piece of masking for rehearsals, and that pesky angle-of-the-house note. I presented them in that order, and I did so on purpose. The section read:

1. We are happy to swap the two tables and to keep the larger one on the porch.
2. Would it be possible for us to fly in the black traveler during rehearsals?
3. (The Director) has a general layout question for you. He will come find you in the morning.

By first reporting success with a request from the designer, I started off positively. The use of the traveler would not be difficult for the shop to facilitate. It simply meant leaving construction projects slightly closer to the back wall at the end of the afternoon. And I did not specifically ask the design question in the report. Because I could not control the context in which the designer would read the note, I did not want him to be upset—or to feel there was no room for discussion on the subject. He was simply alerted to a time-sensitive question headed his way. This allowed a genuine conversation to take place the next morning, when an agreement was reached. And because the technical director read additional meaning into the note, she was able to make a mental adjustment to the day's work plan while reading the report in the morning in case an actual adjustment would be required for the afternoon. Everyone's wishes and feelings were respected, and they were all happy with the end result.

This situation might seem easier for me to handle because the director and scenic designer were faculty colleagues. But I would have had the same responsibility, and nearly the same approach, were I a student stage manager. As a student I might have been reluctant to hint to the TD in advance that a change might be forthcoming even if I felt confident in my assessment of sight line challenges. But I certainly could have sought out my advisor for their advice and possible assistance. And my report at the end of rehearsal would have been written exactly the same.

A BONUS BENEFIT OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

In addition to the specificity and understanding a student stage manager gains from technical theatre courses in school not directly related to stage management, after graduation you may find that the experiences did more than simply allow you to write effective reports.

Recent graduate Heather Sopel shares how that knowledge has manifested itself in the first few years of her professional career.

> Although I was involved in many aspects of the theatre throughout school and college, I always thought that stage management was the only one I would do professionally. Well, I was wrong. I've spent time as both an overhire carpenter and electrician. While working as an overhire carpenter, I was offered a job as an assistant stage manager at the theatre the following season. Moral of the story is that you never know where opportunities and connections will lead you so take advantage of all the learning opportunities that you can, don't fall asleep in Stagecraft, and be open to accepting work even if it isn't your "dream job." On the days you are getting paid to turn a golf cart into a magical pumpkin carriage, to set up a boxing ring, or to run a spotlight for a concert for the man who wrote "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," you may question how you got here, but those days may also teach you ways to be a better stage manager too. It is important to remember that there are no two stage managers in the world who have taken the exact same path to get where they are today.[4]

DISTRIBUTING THE REPORT

We have seen tact, timeliness, and specificity at work within the report itself, but the issue of time applies equally to distribution of the report. Daily reports obviously need to be sent out every day, and the stage manager should do their best to keep to a schedule. Complete the report at the end of the rehearsal, send it on its way, and then go home. Production team members will get used to receiving information at a certain time, and may not always keep checking for their notes.

This is particularly true in an academic setting when you are communicating with both students and faculty. A student stage manager may be concerned about a test the next morning and want to study for a few hours before typing the report, or want to go have some fun before tackling more work. If you fall asleep, get home later than intended, or simply forget, appropriate areas may not get your report before working on a project directly affected by your notes from the night before. Their class or work schedules might permit reading email only at the beginning and end of the day. If that beginning is 8:00 a.m., and your report arrives at 1:00 p.m., the information may be missed.

This author also strongly recommends finding the review method that works best for you. As part of the formal presentation of information, the report should be free of easy-to-find spelling errors or missing words. Notes need to be coherent. Your first effort to get the words on the page may not be as successful as you think.

I know myself well enough to realize that I proofread hard copies more successfully than written words on a computer screen. So once the report is done, I print a single copy. And I often read complex sentences and potentially unpopular notes out loud. If there are no changes to be made, then I already have a report for my prompt book. I can print any additional copies, distribute the report electronically, and call the task complete. But if I find errors, I have an opportunity to catch them before sending the information out into the world. I would rather waste a sheet of paper than appear sloppy or uncaring.

In today's electronic age, the rehearsal report is typically emailed out to production team members. By choosing common fonts and relatively simple formats, you can ensure that the report will look the same when opened on any computer. If you find that your reports are accessed over a wide variety of electronic devices and jumbled formatting is compromising legibility, you should consider distributing a PDF copy, as first discussed in Chapter 2.

The stage manager may also be asked to post one or more copies in specific locations around the theatre. Follow these policies, but keep them in mind while preparing the report. Personally, I do not like posting reports—not

because they are secret, but because the potential exists for others to read the information out of context. Consider the following hypothetical situation: The stage manager needs to inform the costume shop that the director has considered the options shown to her earlier in the day and has decided she would prefer for Actress X to wear the sundress rather than the shorts and t-shirt. A seemingly harmless note. But what happens if the report is posted in a common area where that actress can read it? Perhaps she won't think much of it. But the actor could just as easily infer that the director thinks she looks fat in shorts and her body problems are better hidden by the dress. Of course your note said nothing of the kind, nor did any portion of the conversation between the director and designer concern that issue. This is a scenario existing solely in the performer's head—but one you cannot predict or control. Loss of context opens the door for outside interpretations. If I were posting a report with that note in a public place, I would alter it slightly to say that the director had decided the dress will work well with no reference to the other option. The decision has been communicated just as successfully, but with less opportunity for misunderstanding.

PRODUCTION MEETINGS

During the rehearsal period, your production team will gather regularly for meetings, allowing everyone a chance to discuss multi-area issues, schedules, or budgetary concerns, and to get clarifications on information from your reports. The meeting might be run by the stage manager, the production manager, or even the director, depending on the tradition of your theatre. You will also find differences in formality regarding an agenda. Some meetings will work from a previously distributed list of topics, and others will unfold more organically.

The stage manager should come to production meetings with an agenda, even if one is not distributed or required. Preparing an agenda gives you the chance to look back through the previous week's reports—identifying unanswered questions or group topics—and to think ahead to upcoming events that might impact the production team. The agenda can function as a checklist for you to ensure all those items get discussed. If a conversation turns into a very specific discussion of small details that do not affect everyone, the list provides the SM with some backup to suggest finishing that discussion in a "meeting after the meeting" with only the necessary participants, as there are still multi-area questions needing attention during the actual meeting time.

Preparation for meetings is especially important in an age when your entire production team may not be around the table. Technology now allows guest designers to join meetings by video conference, but they will do so at a slight disadvantage—unable to see everyone face-to-face and with the lingering possibility of audio challenges as well. A stage manager in a production meeting with virtual participants should test the connection prior to the meeting, be additionally diligent about sticking to the agenda, and potentially reorder items so that questions related to long-distance guests are addressed early in the meeting. It is likely that a conferenced-in attendee is joining while in the midst of another project and may have a smaller amount of available free time. Whenever possible, task someone at the table with the responsibility of "aiming" the phone or computer at the person who is speaking, improving the odds that the designer can see or hear the specifics of the conversations.

If your team has limited opportunities outside of production meetings to talk about questions from rehearsals or developments as the show is constructed, the stage manager could find themselves in the midst of a discussion that turns contentious. Just as with those hot-blooded moments in the rehearsal hall, going forward requires tact and balance. A problem related to a small misunderstanding can be as tricky to solve as a large-scale complication or requested change from the director. Look for moments to clarify, to reinforce commonalities, and to diffuse comments that may feel focused at an individual rather than the situation.

If a resolution is not immediately forthcoming, try to pause the fight. You may be able to move the conversation to one of those "meetings after the meeting" if only some of the participants are involved, or suggest returning to solving the problem at the end of the meeting so that other essential agenda items are discussed. A few minutes of calmer voices might reset perspectives. An unrelated act of collaboration or compromise might make the first problem seem less intractable. When personalized anger or blame are set aside it will be easier to remember that everyone wants the production to succeed.

The sample agenda in Figure 5.30 was prepared for a production meeting two weeks prior to the beginning of tech rehearsals. The stage manager itemized the pressing issues for the show along with important events in need of

confirmation.

Twelfth Night

AGENDA: November 10

Director–Walter

Top of show – designers thoughts on using shrine without gate?
Intermission after III-3

Scenery and Props– Mandy

Time to set a height for the pit with Orsino and Malvolio
Live flame concerns for candles on the shrine
Ripping up the challenge letter

TD– Ron

Status of pit repair

Costumes Michelle

Confirm PR photo on Thursday at 6:00
Confirm Toby coat test right after photo
Scheduling a quick-change rehearsal

Lights–Nick

No current questions

Sound–Brent

OK on headsets?

Music– Alden

No current questions

SM Laurie

Paper Tech next week at 11 lovely to get cues Friday or Monday!

Replaced lost crew member

Discuss use of dry tech time on Sunday

Figure 5.30 The agenda for a production meeting during the rehearsal period.

MEETING MINUTES

Often the stage manager is asked to record minutes from production meetings. Taking these minutes is not about stenography. The important considerations are to summarize important updates, to present decisions made during the meeting for those who were not in attendance, and to remind everyone about upcoming action items. You don't have to capture every word uttered in the room.

When organizing meeting minutes, it is helpful to place discussion notes under the relevant production area, no matter who initiated the conversation. For example, during the meeting for which our sample agenda was prepared, the director was the first to ask about the status of the problem with the stage elevator. But, as this was ultimately a technical direction issue, the information was summarized in that section of the minutes.

Minutes should be distributed within forty-eight hours of a meeting—sooner if possible. Because most production meetings take place on a weekly basis, the action items and schedule reminders are typically short term. If too much time transpires between the meeting and the distribution of the minutes, the details may no longer be relevant.

THE ASM POINT OF VIEW

Three young stage managers offer their perspective on the role of the assistant stage manager in rehearsals.

Cara Cook: "The most important task of the ASM is to understand your role. Not just the 'standard' responsibilities of an ASM, but knowing what the SM, director, and even crew expect of you from different productions or companies. Working with different personalities is always a challenge, but with the different personalities come different ideas of what your job entails. It is absolutely incredible how fast the rehearsal process goes and being as organized as possible can be the difference between a smooth or disastrous rehearsal."[5]

Nicole Smith: "I believe the goal of the ASM is to prepare in rehearsals the transitions of the props, costumes, and scenery to the best of your ability, so the actors, SM team, and director are comfortable with how those elements will work on stage, which will allow their focus to be on the new elements added in tech."[6]

Quinn Masterson: "As an ASM, the rehearsal period is my favorite part of the process. It's almost like a scavenger hunt for me. If I'm focusing on props or furniture, it is fun to find the track of where things will come on and off stage or where they're going to be preset onstage for the actors. On the other hand, if I'm the costume ASM, being able to see if an actor is going to have enough time for a costume change or where costume pieces are going to be needed to be is something that makes each night of rehearsal fresh."[7]

ADDING THE ELEMENTS

As your production approaches technical rehearsals, the shops may be able to provide the cast with actual furniture or access to movable scenic units now built—both to enhance the rehearsal hall experience and to prepare them for the process of pulling the show together in tech. Other useful additions might include rehearsal costume pieces or sound cues.

In some theatres the SM team will pull rehearsal props or costumes from their stock. If you are responsible for collecting rehearsal items on your own, be sure that you familiarize yourself with the drawings and renderings so you can pull accurately. There is a big difference between working in a chair with and without arms. You also would not want to provide an elastic-waist prairie skirt to an actress who will wear a straight, above-the-knee skirt in the show.

In an academic situation where actors may provide their own rehearsal items, use these same criteria to recommend what they should bring from home. Ask for help if the SM team (or a cast member) does not have something appropriate at your disposal.

During this phase of rehearsal, the stage manager works to successfully integrate these new elements into the room and increases specificity in the rehearsal notes. Switching from one rehearsal chair to another is of less concern to the props shop than making an adjustment to a show item recently purchased or built.

It is important to make sure the director is aware whenever a "real" item comes into rehearsal. A show prop will get more serious consideration than the stand-in version. Walk the director through all the new items prior to the start of a rehearsal day. The stage manager should also specifically ask the director for notes about these pieces at the end of the day, so they can be immediately put into the rehearsal report.

AEA AND SHOES

If you are working on an Equity production, specific rules regarding shoes come into play. Under most contracts, dancers must be provided with shoes at least one week prior to dress rehearsals. If your show includes any traditional ballet, the shoes must be provided for any rehearsal in which the performers are dancing *en pointe*. The SM will be responsible for reminding costume personnel about this deadline, and then facilitating the pickup, use, and storage of the shoes once they arrive.[8]

Some production elements will never be replicated in the rehearsal room. Just as you will never get a second floor, you are extremely unlikely to execute light cues. The stage manager's method for communicating important lighting changes is through narration. Announcing "blackout" versus "lights change" appropriately will help the actors to become aware of how light will interact with their work—even if they do so unconsciously. Similarly, the stage manager can narrate sound cues prior to playing anything in rehearsal. This is particularly important for effects that impact the action: a door knock that prompts a line, an offstage crash or gunshot, or the fading out of music that signals the start of the next scene.

PLANNING FOR EXTRAS

As the SM team prepares to incorporate new elements into rehearsal, take time to think proactively about what you will need to make the process a success.

- Do you need more time to set up? Does this mean overtime that needs approval?
- Do you need dollies to help cart things around?
- Do you need better speakers in the room than those in your laptop?
- Do you need to borrow the production assistant from the other show to be on book because both of your ASMs will be moving scenic pieces?
- Do you need to return items to the shops at the end of the night? Do you have keys to do so?
- Can you leave things in the room? Is there a secure place for valuable items or electronics?

UPDATING PAPERWORK

As rehearsals progress, the SM team will add and delete props, make changes to the calendar, and gain new information about actor entrances and exits. Part of successful communication is keeping the relevant documents up to date and distributing those revisions to the production team.

Updated paperwork should reflect the new version number and date. Archival documents such as the character/scene breakdown might not need to highlight the updated information, but interactive documents will benefit from some additional formatting to make the new facts stand out.

The prop list in Figure 5.31 is a look at that information after three weeks of rehearsal. (The preliminary list was first introduced in Figure 3.11.) New items, first appearing in the rehearsal report, have been inserted. They are presented in blue text to make the additions visually distinct. This makes it easy for the stage manager or props master to look at the list, remember what is new, and make sure there is a representative item for rehearsals. If the list is distributed in hard copy, and your team does not have easy access to color printing, consider another option to achieve this same heightened focus (use of bold, large asterisk outside the left margin, etc.).

Props that have been cut remain on the list, but the text has been struck through. The stage manager could remove the entries, but by choosing this formatting option instead, it is clear that the item is indeed cut and was not accidentally deleted during the updating process.

The SM team should have a consistent schedule for updating paperwork. It is rare that items will need to be redistributed more than once a week. It is also ideal to send out updated documents the day prior to your next production meeting, so that everyone can operate from the same version of the information.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

REVISED PROP LIST

Page	Prop	C	Character	Notes	R	A	Source
FURNITURE/SCENIC ITEMS							
	Trash cans/garbage barrel			Multiple, possibly danced on			
	Outdoor bench						
	Refrigerator						
	Antique dentist's chair						

	(3) Stools			2 work table, 1 counter			
	Counter						
	Work table			Old			
	Coat rack						
	Shiny new work table						
	sign		On door	"open" "closed"			
18	Dust pan		Audrey				
18	Broken flowerpots		Audrey	In pan- "terracotta" pieces			
19	Cleaning rag		Seymour				
21	Leftover sandwich		Wino #1	Lettuce and white bread			
21	Roses		Audrey	Limp, lifeless			
22	Pod #1		Seymour	Large, but sickly; expandable			
~~24~~	~~Cobweb~~		~~Set Dressing~~	~~On register~~			
24	Roses		Audrey	Dead			

24	~~Monster movie magazine~~		~~Crystal~~	~~Oversized~~			
26	Plant food		Seymour				
26	Spray/spritzer bottle		Seymour	For watering plants			
27	Blood	*	Seymour	Pricks finger, and feeds Audrey II			

Figure 5.31 One page from a revised props list.

If this prop list needed a version 3, the updating procedure would be as follows:

1. Turn all existing text back to black. In the next issue, it will not be new.
2. Insert all props added since the last version, and add notes to reflect any new information about existing props.
3. Update cut props to appear in strikethrough text.
4. Change the font color for all above items to blue.
5. Update the revision number and issue date.
6. Redistribute and update the copies posted on any callboards or show websites.

REHEARSALS FOR DANCE

A stage manager working full time for a dance company may experience a process that is similar in many ways to that of a play or a musical. When not attending to other administrative tasks you regularly attend rehearsals, distribute notes to the production team, organize or simply attend production meetings, schedule fittings, and take blocking—those pictorial notes in boxes on the dance-specific backing sheets introduced in Chapter Four. The SM may have the additional task of running sound each day. This is especially true for modern dance companies working with existing, recorded music.

If the stage manager is hired part time, only some of these tasks may be yours. You might only be expected to attend occasional rehearsals until production time nears, in which case the choice of days may be largely up to you. Consider selecting rehearsals in close proximity to meetings so that you are as knowledgeable as possible. You might also be hired full time, but not until week three—after the choreographer has completed creating a new work and is now clarifying and refining it. Both are relatively common scenarios.

In my professional career I have also experienced a third contractual structure: hired to start only a few days before tech rehearsals. In such an instance, the scheduling of costume fittings falls to a different full-time staff member, and the choreographer or an assistant will handle notation or sound in rehearsal. You may or may not have the opportunity to attend meetings. This is common for small ballet companies who are resetting work. This year's production of *Sleeping Beauty* will be identical to the one performed two years ago except for the actual dancers. But you will still need a script! Fortunately, when working in these types of short-term situations, the stage manager usually receives some invaluable material at the time of hire: paperwork about scenic pieces and light cues, and a video recording of that previous performance. The creation of a script can become an offsite project, with the SM noting movement while

watching the video in the same manner you write down choreography during rehearsals for a musical. That completed script comes with you to rehearsal, where you can add other relevant detail when finally seeing the dance live. The cue lists will allow you to have your own personal paper tech (discussed in the next chapter), and scenic lists may facilitate a shift plot if one will be required.

This may sound like extreme circumstances, but remember that the dance company will want the show to succeed—and therefore you to succeed as well. I have never been told *no* when asking to attend more rehearsals than required, and I've never had a lighting designer refuse to answer questions about a cue list. If I do not have enough initial information for crew paperwork, a clarification about what was in use last time either leads me to a source for more details or the person who actually prepared it. (In some instances, the technical director or lighting designer is a full-time staff member and takes on those responsibilities due to that status.)

CONCLUDING TIME IN THE HALL

The final days in the rehearsal hall are for refining the work. The stage manager should anticipate running the show multiple times, with each run to be followed by a notes session. Continue to take important character-based notes during this time, and hold on to them for additional assistance during the run of the show.

The SM team is now eagerly anticipating the arrival of crew! We will meet the paperwork distributed to the crew in the next chapter, but it is during these final days when preliminary versions are created and checked to be as thorough as possible.

The stage manager should also make time to visit the theatre as load-in progresses. Adjustments are occasionally necessary as pieces are assembled, and the SM gains the opportunity to alter the rehearsal room spike tape, so the director can address the blocking before arriving on the set if a big change is necessary. If it is feasible, you also might want to arrange a field trip for the cast. Standing onstage for even a few minutes will enable them to more successfully make their own transitions from tape to platforms, and to start incorporating a sense of the theatre into their final rehearsals in the hall.

If you are lucky, your schedule will permit a day or more to rehearse on the set before tech rehearsals begin. This allows sightline adjustments and other small changes to happen in advance and could give the lighting designer a chance to see the actors in place as they finish focusing lights and begins to create cues. The assistant stage managers get a preview of life backstage and may find additional duties that need to be incorporated into the crew paperwork. If such a day does not exist on your original production schedule, the stage manager should inquire about the possibility. You may face time or budgetary restrictions that preclude transition days, but you will never know if you don't ask!

CHAPTER 6

Technical Rehearsals

Technical rehearsals are one of the most exciting parts of the process for a stage manager. You are at the heart of the show, essential to the successful integration of all the production elements. With your guidance and expertise, the work of the actors, designers, and technicians seamlessly merges into a complete show.

The beginning of this new phase in the rehearsal process also brings with it new communication challenges for the stage manager. Your overall communication goals to be tactful, timely, and specific remain the same. But you now find yourself doing so on longer days and in the presence of the entire company at once—most of the time while in the dark and with one of your ears covered! The work done thus far has prepared the SM to introduce new personnel (the crew), coordinate multiple activities at once, and be mindful of time and space constraints.

TECH REHEARSAL TASKS

- Facilitate necessary adjustments for the actors as they move from the rehearsal hall to the theatre.
- Plan out and organize the backstage areas for scenery, props, and costumes.
- Revise paperwork documenting the placement and movement of technical elements started during the rehearsal period.
- Train the crew to execute these moves.
- Write cues in the prompt script.
- Learn to successfully call those cues.
- Fully delegate responsibilities to your assistant stage managers.
- Manage the needs of all personnel—cast, production team members, and crew.

CREATING THE TECH SCHEDULE

In most theatres, the schedule for technical rehearsals will be created by the production manager or technical director, who will apportion the available hours in the theatre to ensure there is adequate time to rehearse, and also an opportunity for the SM team to set up backstage and for production areas to attend to notes within the available hours each day and each week. When personnel from multiple unions are working on a show, the production manager will also balance the provisions of each individual set of regulations to create something that meets everyone's needs.

REVISITING THE REHEARSAL DAY

On an Equity production, additional rehearsal hours are typically available during the week prior to the first paid audience. Many contracts also introduce a new format for an individual rehearsal day, in which actors can work for ten hours within a twelve-hour time span. Contracts will articulate how many times this longer day can be used. For regional theatres under the LORT contract, the day can be scheduled twice. Stock theatres guided by the CORST contract find slightly different language, restricting the day to one on which a dress rehearsal, but no performance, is scheduled. Smaller agreements may not offer the option at all, while the Production Contract governing Broadway permits each of the seven days prior to the first audience to be a 10 out of 12.

AEA stage managers may find themselves spending a week or more in technical rehearsals. Academic productions typically have less time, possibly only two or three days. Some theatre departments opt to begin tech rehearsals on the weekend, allowing them to simulate the 10 out of 12 by working for a longer period of time on a day with no classes, with subsequent tech rehearsals taking place on weekday evenings.

TYPES OF TECH REHEARSALS

Your tech period can include several different types of rehearsals, each intended to unite the production elements and the actors in a slightly different way. No show will need all of these events, but the stage manager should consider what is most beneficial to the process. Take full advantage of those planned for you, and be prepared to ask about useful options not on your original schedule.

Dry tech. A rehearsal without actors focusing on sequences where multiple cues occur at once: a transition where the lights change while music plays and scenery moves onto the stage. Such a rehearsal provides the designers and technicians a chance to synchronize their work without asking actors to stand around and wait. Be sure you have time to train the crew in advance, so the designers do not wait around either.

Cue-to-cue. A rehearsal with actors that skips over sections of the show with no cues. This can maximize the available time in the theatre by prioritizing technically complex moments. When working in this scenario, the stage manager should be sure to know when backstage prep moves or costume changes will take place. Even if no cues are called during these pages, running these sections of text allows backstage personnel to be sure they have adequate time to complete their work. The cue-to-cue can be a tricky choice, however, because it may turn out that a designer does need a cue in a section initially skipped over. Once you finally run the entire show, the SM might get additions—and have less time to practice these parts of the show.

Tech rehearsal. A stop-and-start progression through the entire show, often over multiple days. This is the most common circumstance under which the production elements and actors come together.

Sitzprobe. Exclusive to the musical, this is the first opportunity for the performers to work with the orchestra. This German term is loosely translated as "sit and sing." The conductor and musical director focus on timing, tempo, and fitting the music into the dialogue—without staging, scenic moves, or other cues. Productions that benefit from having performers on their feet for this work opt for a *wandelprobe* instead.

Quick-change rehearsal. A chance for actors and wardrobe crew to practice costume changes happening in under a minute. If such a rehearsal is needed, the SM should request time on stage prior to the first day the cast will work in costume. The actor will make his or her exit, get to the backstage location, change costumes, and reenter. The stage manager can rely on a stopwatch to determine if the speed of the change fits within the amount of time taken up by the dialogue or music happening on stage at that time, without calling those actors or technicians as well.

Dress rehearsal. A run of the entire show with no stops. For some theatres this marks the introduction of costumes. Other productions may allow the actors to work with wardrobe pieces for all rehearsals on stage, and this marks the point at which the full show is run each day. On a musical, this is often the transition from piano to full orchestra.

OTHER UNIONS

A stage manager working in professional theatre may work with members of unions in addition to Actors' Equity Association. Some of the most common are listed below. Although similar in their focus on protecting members' rights, each union has a distinct set of rules and protections—which do not include a common set of guidelines for rehearsal hours, even when members of multiple unions are working together on the same production.

IATSE is the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the union representing technicians in theatre, film, television, trade shows, and professional shops building scenery or costumes for these art forms. Similar to AEA, union members have specific work rules outlined in their contracts that must be followed by employers. These include schedule and safety issues as well as jurisdictional guidelines about working with production elements. Unlike the set of Equity contracts organized by theatre size, IATSE subdivisions, known as "locals," are

geographically based. Members of a wardrobe crew may be separately or concurrently represented by the theatrical wardrobe union **IATWU**.

The **AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS** represents the interests of professional musicians in the United States and Canada, in theatrical, concert, and recording settings. Much like AEA and IATSE, members work under guidelines that address wages, benefits, schedules, and working rules. AMF chapters are also organized into locals like IATSE. A stage manager is most likely to encounter AFM members as part of a professional pit orchestra for a musical.

UNITED SCENIC ARTISTS is the union representing designers, artists, and craftspeople working in film, theatre, opera, ballet, television, industrial shows, commercials and exhibitions. Because a USA member's association to a production is more akin to that of a director, they will not be subject to the daily and weekly work hour regulations like actors, technicians, or musicians. It is rare for the SM to see rehearsals and performances impacted by the protections and guarantees in a USA contract.

PREPARING FOR TECH

SM LOAD-IN

As noted in the previous chapter, the stage manager should plan to visit the theatre during the final days of scenic construction to get any necessary updates from the designer and technical director. Once the set is in place, the SM team can conduct a load-in of its own. Typical load-in tasks include (1) locating and laying out prop tables and parking spaces for large items as shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, (2) taping out sightlines, (3) checking for adequate running lights, and (4) marking any potential safety hazards backstage. If actors move around the stage in the dark, you will also strategically place glow tape to identify the edges of platforms, walls, and so on. The spike marks denoting the location of furniture and other scenic items should now be transferred from your taped-out floor in the rehearsal hall to the stage itself. The SM team can do this by measuring the location of the spike marks on the taped floor using the same method you used to tape out the set itself. You will skip the step of measuring a groundplan, but will end up with similar sets of coordinates or triangulation points.

If you are working on a production with a nonunion crew, there will be few restrictions about working on stage beyond identifying a time to do so. You may be able to share time with other departments as they finish up their work—laying out backstage areas while the painters are at work, or placing glow tape and spike marks while the sound designer sets preliminary levels. The SM should make such a shared time request an agenda item for one of your final production meetings so the technical director or production manager can include this in the tech schedule.

UWL
BROWN TRAY WITH: - BUTTER BOWL
- BAKED POTATO BOWL
* BLOOD PACK

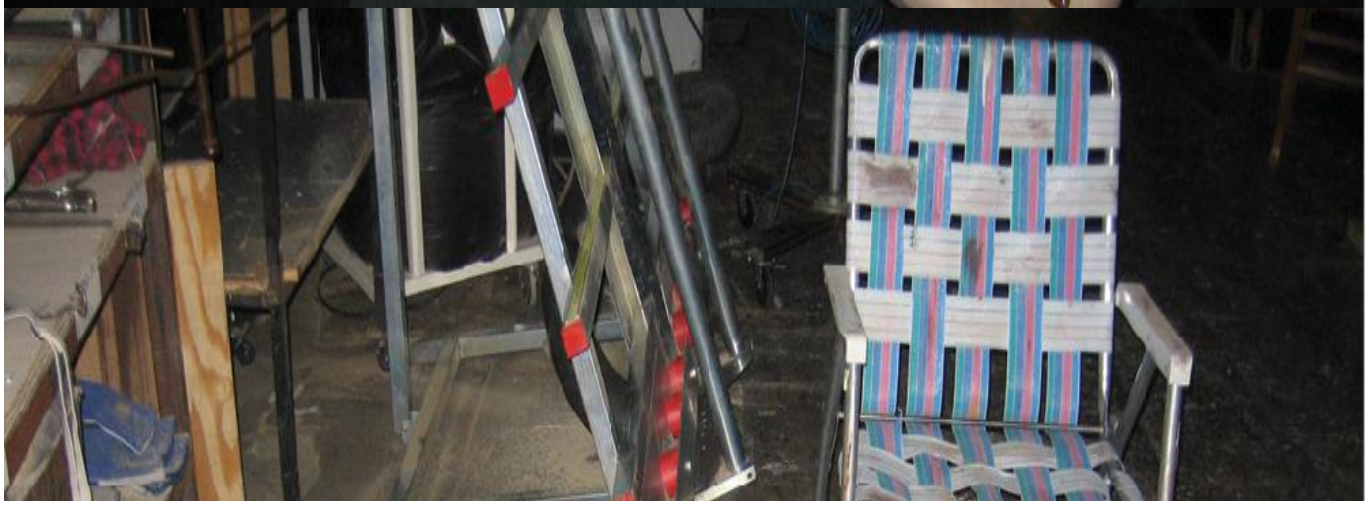


Figure 6.1–6.2 Labelled prop tables and parking spaces.

If your production features an IATSE crew, the SM will find some additional challenges in those union regulations. Typically the stage management team is not allowed to do this work themselves (or actually handle the props or scenic pieces). In this case, coordinating a load-in will involve a more careful negotiation so that time can be allotted within the crew's work hours. You may find that you are unable to participate and instead provide a detailed list of needs to the production manager, technical director, or head carpenter on the show, so those duties can be included in the load-in schedule and addressed on your behalf.

The stage manager should also think ahead about communication needs backstage. Prior to arriving in the theatre, provide information to the appropriate departments about the setup for headsets and cue lights—essential tools for talking with backstage personnel and triggering scenic moves or actor entrances.

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE STAGE MANAGER

Technological improvements in theatre are not limited to the designers. Today's stage manager has access to several new tools that enhance communication between the stage and the booth.

Cue lights. A light bulb mounted backstage and run to a switch box at the stage manager's desk. Cue lights can be used to initiate scene shifts or actor entrances when it is not possible to have personnel on headset in that area, or when multiple actions begin simultaneously. The stage manager will turn the light on as a warning and off when the move or entrance should happen. Examples of the light and box can be found in Figures 6.3 and 6.4.

DR
UR
DL
UL
RRAIL
GRAIL

Figure 6.3–6.4 A cue light mounted backstage and the stage manager's control box.

CUE LIGHT SYSTEMS

Many theatres in which you will work have a cue light system already installed, with lights permanently mounted in various spots backstage. An advanced system will contain additional lights that can be added to show-specific locations. If you find yourself in a theatre with no existing system, cue lights can still be possible for you.

Several theatrical supply companies sell complete cue light systems, some of them wireless, which could be purchased and installed. These range in price from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. Some systems have rental options, allowing a theatre to meet the needs of a specific production without making a large investment on something that may not always be necessary. Completed systems for purchase or rent will have an array of features. If the stage manager has the opportunity to participate in the conversation about acquiring cue lights, be sure to pay attention to a few key components. How large are the lights that will be installed? Small LEDs are bright and easy to place in a variety of locations, but may be more difficult to see clearly when mounted high on a theatre wall so they are not obscured by other items in the wings. Is the system an "intuitive" one which allows backstage personnel to press a confirmation button once they see the light? This is handy in a space without headsets, but will again set limits on exactly where the lights can be placed in order to be easily reached.

When working in a theatre that does not have a permanent cue light system, be sure to consider nontraditional options as well. Companies specializing in equipment for DJs will often sell small switch boxes. The original intent may be for the control of strobes or even bubble machines, but they will control lights just was well. I recently discovered a control box for a flight simulator that is both durable and size-appropriate. The wiring of connected lights would require more electrical expertise than I personally have, but colleagues to whom I have shown the box described the prospect as "a fun challenge."

I have also worked with a variety of homemade systems over the years. They might prioritize function over form, but will still do the trick. One particularly low-tech system I used in a small theatre many years ago was made of nothing more than power strips and extension cords. Three power strips were mounted to a board placed at the SM desk. A long extension cord was run from each strip to the appropriate position backstage, where a light was plugged in. This could be a clip light, a nightlight, or a more standard-looking cue light with an Edison plug. When the power strip was turned on, so was the light. Cueing an actor or technician was accomplished by simply turning off the strip. The mechanics were not glamorous, but the system ultimately worked just fine.

Video monitors. The stage manager can use several different types of video monitors to receive detail about the show. A *stage monitor* provides a full from-the-front view of the stage, especially useful if you are calling from backstage or from a partially obstructed location out front. An *infrared monitor* allows the SM to watch the stage during a blackout and see actors and technicians not visible to the naked eye. The *conductor monitor* allows the stage manager of a musical to follow the gestures of the conductor as he or she cues orchestra members or singers. Figure 6.5 shows both of these monitors in use. Other specialty monitors might provide an up-close view of a particular part of the stage, generally for safety reasons.

Each of these monitors would have a corresponding camera installed in the theatre—above the stage, in the house, or in the orchestra pit. A cable will connect each camera to the corresponding monitor(s). Small, easy-to-install cameras can often be purchased from companies specializing in security equipment, including the specialty infrared camera, which has a series of "emitters" surrounding the lens to enhance its night-vision capability to see people based on body heat. A theatre can often set up a camera and monitor for a few hundred dollars.

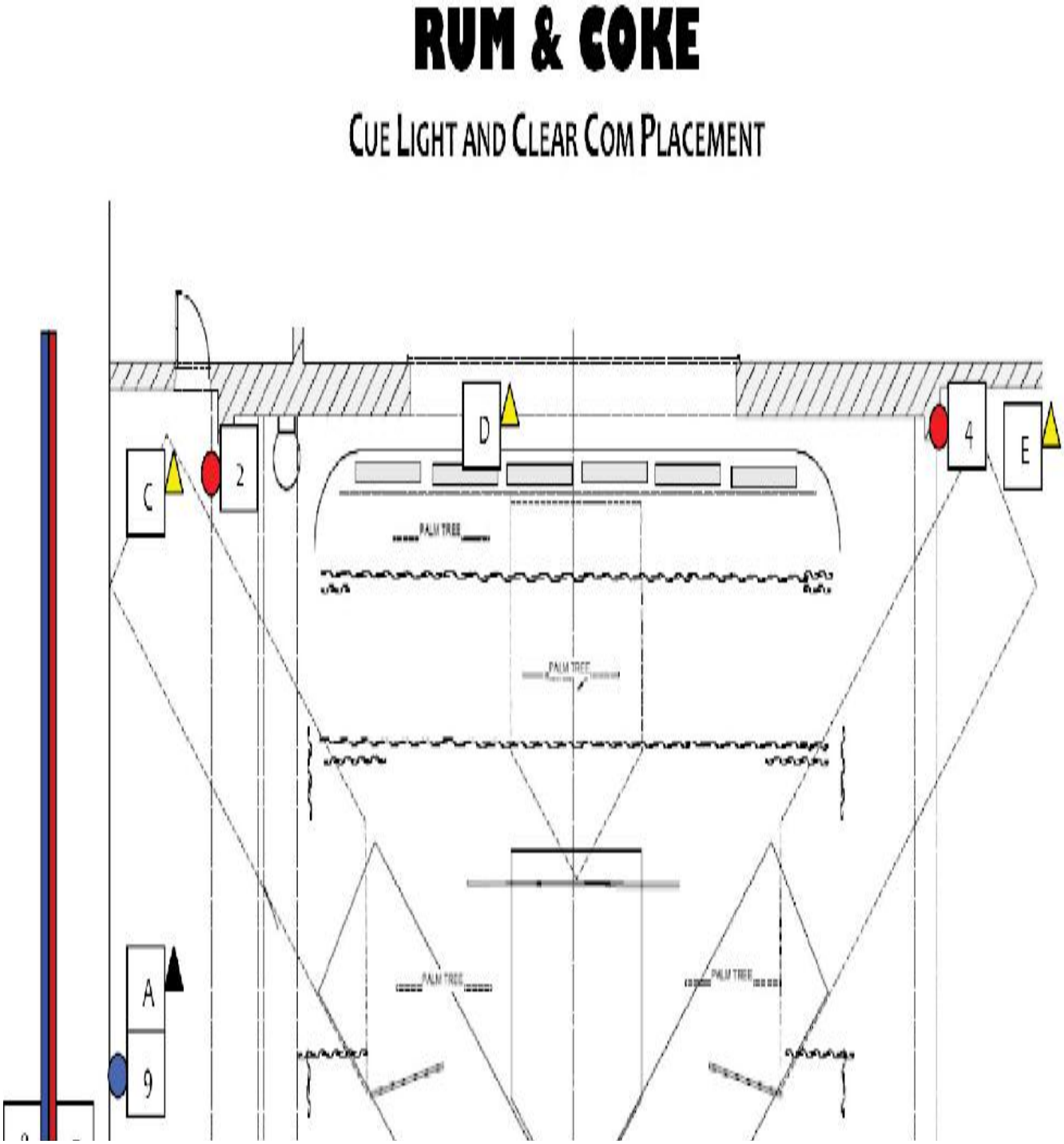
Figure 6.5 Conductor and infrared monitors in action.

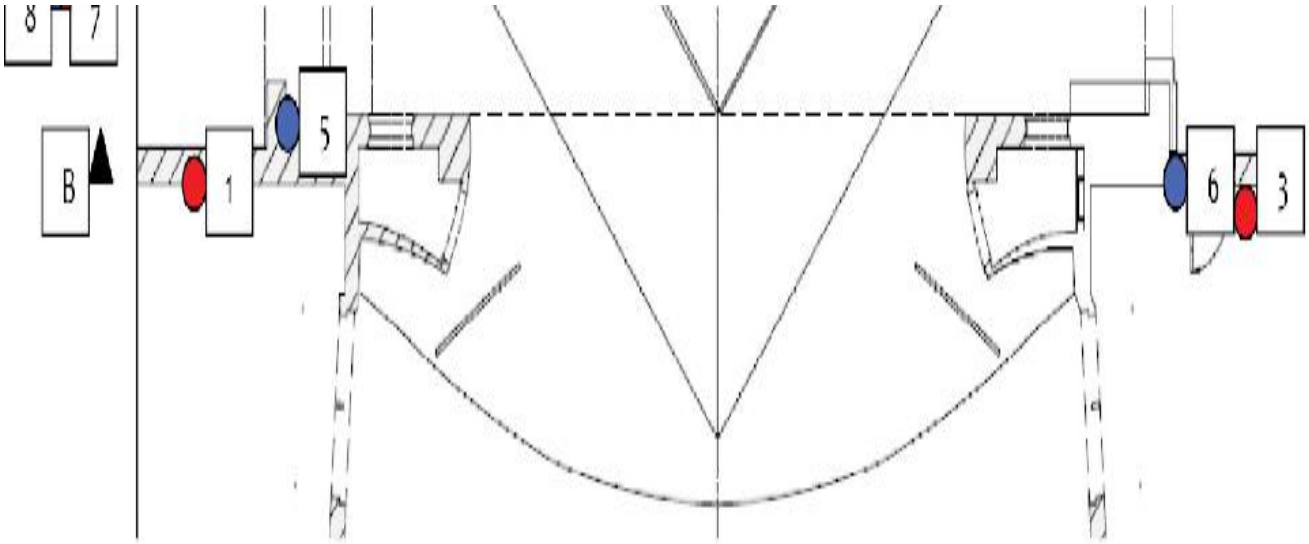
Headsets. Although not new, headsets are essential tools to allow the stage manager to talk to personnel backstage while sitting in the house or in the booth. This intercom system consists of a headset at the master control box (the base station), typically located with the SM, and individual intercom boxes with headsets run to board operators, your ASMs, and key locations backstage. Most base stations contain more than one channel, allowing for the separation of

the backstage crew, lighting technicians, and sound technicians, for example. This can be useful when multiple people within a department need to talk with one another during tech rehearsals, but do not need to hear other departments. Such a setup can prove useful when your ASMs are talking to one another to solve a problem backstage at the same time as the lighting designer is communicating with the light board programmer to adjust the cue onstage. Both conversations are necessary, but trying to conduct them simultaneously on the same channel inhibits everyone's success.

Modern intercom systems can be equipped with an interface that permits the use of wireless intercom—meaning that personnel will have the same boxes and headsets but not the tether created by the cable when plugged into an intercom outlet on the theatre wall. (This might sound complicated, but it is much like the improvement that cordless telephones provided over old phones with a handset connected to a base connected in turn to a phone jack.)

If your theatre has a standard setup for this equipment that works for your production, the SM need only confirm these items will be in use. If you have a more complex backstage that requires more headsets than normal or cue lights in show-specific locations, the stage manager should document their request well in advance so that the load-in period can include this setup.





CUE LIGHTS note: marker color indicates lamp color ● actors ● scenery (except for rail which has both colors)

Circ. #	Box #	SM Label	Color	Perm.
	1	DR	Red	Y
	2	UR	Red	Y
	3	DL	Red	Y
	4	UL	Red	Y
	5	SR Wall	Blue	N
	6	SL Wall	Blue	N
	7	Red Rail	Red	Y
	8	Blue Rail	Blue	Y
	9	Automation	Blue	N
	10	(spare)		
	11	(spare)		
	12	Late Seating	Red	Y

CLEAR COM note: ▲ indicates regular use, ▲ indicates emergency backup (wireless also in use for ASMs)

Circ. #	Box #	SM Label	Color	Location
	W1	ASM SR		Wireless

	W2	ASM SL		Wireless
	W3	ASM spare		Wireless
	A	Automation	Black	SR
	B	DS Rail	Black	SR
	C	Emergency UR Deck	Yellow	SR
	D	Emergency UC Deck	Yellow	UC
	E	Emergency UL Deck	Yellow	SL
	F	Lights		Booth
	G	Video		Booth
	H	Sound		Booth

Figure 6.6 A cue light and headset map for a complex backstage setup.

The map in Figure 6.6 details the setup for a complex show. This production featured both flying and automated scenery, projections, and a host of called cues. The stage manager outlined not only standard-use items, but also some emergency backup gear. The technical director engineered the moving wagons to be operated manually should the automation computer ever fail during a performance. But the operators would move to the rear of each unit, leaving the normal control station on stage right. Rather than having to run additional headsets at the last minute, the emergency items were included on the original setup plan so they would already be in place if needed.

Due to the number of cues, many scenic moves and actor entrances relied on cue lights. The SM requested two separate colors for the bulbs. For tight sequences originating in the same area backstage, the stage manager could communicate specifically to both actors and technicians without uttering anything else over an already busy headset.

The map itself makes use of words, pictures, and color to make the specifics as clear as possible. It is the rare show that will need this type of backstage setup, but when required it is in the stage manager's best interest to invest the time up front to articulate requests, so everyone can plan appropriately or find a compromise setup if the initial scenario is not feasible.

DELEGATION

The SM team adopts a divide-and-conquer approach to the vast array of information during rehearsals, sharing responsibility for capturing details about the production elements. Everyone participates in setting up the room for the day, and the stage manager can get up just as easily as the ASM to reset a prop or spike a chair.

Once you move to the theatre, the stage manager functions at a bit more of a distance: both physically due to your location out front, and psychologically as you take responsibility for the big picture. The SM must rely on the assistant stage managers to oversee the deck. The delegation and shared information-gathering from the rehearsal period now pays off because the entire team is both knowledgeable of and invested in the production details. Maintain this shared approach during tech. Be sure that you are talking with your team about the goals for the day. Share last-minute updates you receive on your way into the theatre. Information is not a commodity. Keeping it to yourself will only slow down the process.

WORKING WITH THE CREW

The day your crew arrives—whether one person or an army of technicians—is a happy event for the SM team. Throughout rehearsals you worked diligently to set up the rehearsal room quickly, facilitate scene shifts effectively, and identify potential problems. By the first tech, all of those details are firmly ensconced in your brains. One of the most significant challenges presented by the arrival of your crew is getting all of this information out of your heads and onto paper. Just as the stage manager wishes to empower the ASMs and delegate responsibility, the ASMs strive to train the technicians to set props and execute scene changes without constant supervision. In order to make that happen, the SM team creates several pieces of paperwork designed to relay all the necessary details to individuals who have never read the play or seen a rehearsal prior to their first day of work on the show.

Alexis Wells, a recent stage management graduate, shares thoughts on paperwork in the "real world": "I was a little relieved to discover paperwork is the same for the most part. Some forms have different names sometimes, but it's all the same in the end. It's always cool to learn a new/better way to do paperwork in order to help yourself and the people you work with. Also, just because you're working in professional theatre does not mean your crew is going to have a lot of experience. This means that having clear and concise paperwork is essential EVERYWHERE."[1]

THE PRESET LIST

The first of these documents is the preset list—a chart that outlines where everything goes at the top of the show. Formatted as a checklist, the preset list allows the crew to place everything correctly on the stage and in the wings. Figures 6.7A and B provide you with an excerpt of the document at work.

The preset list is organized into sections addressing (1) onstage areas, (2) offstage prop tables, and (3) offstage locations for furniture and other large items. Each entry is listed in specific detail, grouping objects that are placed together. When creating the document I always begin with the onstage props, thinking ahead to performances. The SM team will want to set onstage items first, clearing the stage for the check of flying scenic units or microphones, and making the stage available to the actors to warm up. Multitasking will be more efficient if the crew is setting offstage areas while others are onstage rather than asking the groups to dance around one another.

The list can be set up in portrait orientation because the columns to check off that something has been set for each tech or performance can be much narrower than the column listing the items themselves. Choose a reasonable number of days to include on the page. If you are running a production with an eight-show week, you might opt for eight check boxes and make fresh copies for each week. If your show performs six times over two weekends, you can fit the entire run. Try to avoid needing new paperwork within a show week itself.

On a long-running show, you can also consider making the preset list reusable. Instead of noting the dates, insert day-of-week initials, place the preset list into sheet protectors, and use a dry-erase marker. At the end of the week, you can clean off the list and start over.

Only a very minimal amount of shading is used to separate the individual areas onstage and backstage. Since you will be photocopying the preset list for distribution to the crew and SM team, color is of no use. And as is true with all other paperwork, the revision date and page number appear at the bottom.

DETROIT PRESET LIST

Stage Left Prop Table	10/15	10/16	10/17	10/18	10/19	10/20	10/24	10/25	10/26	10/27
Basting Brush										

Bottle of Steak Sauce										
(4) Blue Glasses										
Green Hors d'oeuvres tray with:										
(8) Slices of tomatoes										
(12) Dates wrapped in bacon										
Grey Bowl with:										
Small spoon										
Pink Salt										
Teal Bowl with:										
Spreader										
Danish Havarti Cheese										
Patterned Bowl with:										
Small spoon										
Caviar										
(5) Teal Napkins										
(15) Crackers on top of napkins										
Handkerchief										

White Towel										
Black Ice Bucket with:										
Small Tongs										
Ice										
Brown Tray with:										
Teal Bowl with Butter										
Grey Bowl with Sour Cream										
Striped bowl with:										
Tongs										
(4) Potatoes										
Metal Tray with:										
(4) Raw Steaks										
Cooking Rag										
Stage Right (Scene Shop)	**10/15**	**10/16**	**10/17**	**10/18**	**10/19**	**10/20**	**10/24**	**10/25**	**10/26**	**10/27**
(3) Long Decking Pieces										
(2) Small Piles of Decking Pieces										
Tool Box with:										
Framing Square										

Drill										
Pry Bar										
Fake Plant										
5 Gallon Bucket										
Folding Chair										
Mini Grill with:										
Charcoal										
Paper Plate with (4) Burger Patties										
Stage Right Prop Table	**10/15**	**10/16**	**10/17**	**10/18**	**10/19**	**10/20**	**10/24**	**10/25**	**10/26**	**10/27**
Spatula										
(5) Opened Beer Cans - empty										
Short Liquor Glass with Water										
Clear Canteen with Water										
Cookie Sheet with:										
Opened Bag of Cheese Puffs										
Unopened Sleeve of Saltines										
Unopened Can of Bean Dip										

Unopened Jar of Cheez Wiz										
Blood Pack										
Plastic Cup with Water										
Paper Towel										
(8) Hamburger Buns in Bag										
Jar of Dijon Mustard										
Jar of Pickle Relish										
Plastic Bottle of Ketchup										
Ring of House Keys										
White Bowl- empty										
White Bowl with Cheese Balls										
Wallet with 6 Bills										

Figure 6.7A and 6.7B An excerpt of a preset list.

When identifying the props and furniture pieces, avoid using character or scene names as descriptors. Your crew has just joined the production—it will be a while before they know the show as well as you and can remember the story.

The sample preset list corresponds to the backstage photos seen in Figures 6.1 and 6.2. Comparing the two, you can see that an effective preset list works in a single motion around the prop table, listing items in details, but without references to names, scenes, or actions. In this excerpt, a play with a great deal of food, distinguishing trays and bowls was particularly important. Much of the food was consumable. This meant that the crew had a lengthy post-show routine of washing dishes each night. It also meant that simply referring to the bowl by its contents was not always

sufficient, since the clean and now-empty trays and bowls would get refilled the next day. Color was the easiest way to indicate the difference between a bowl which held caviar and one which held salt.

ALIGNMENT IN A TABLE

Indenting is a simple way to indicate items are grouped together: on a tray, in a bowl, and the like. But when working with tables, the "tab" button takes you to the next cell, seemingly leaving you two options: justifying container items like a tray to the left and the contents to the right, or inserting spaces to create the indent. A third option may actually serve you best—additional columns. The far left column in Figures 6–7 A and B is actually three columns: two narrow and one wide. The "indenting" is created by merging cells and turning off border lines. The green hors d'oeuvres tray is listed in a row where all three of the left cells are merged, bringing the text to the far left edge of the table. The teal bowl is listed in a row where the left-most cell is left intact but with the right border turned off, and the second and third cells are merged. The text "spreader" appears in the third cell in the row, with the other two still in place but with their right borders turned off again. Figure 6.7C demonstrates this technique at work, shown here with the screen-only dotted lines that denote cells when their borders are turned off (on the left) as well as the text justification approach (on the right).

I find checking items on a prop-heavy show to be more reliable when the items can be accounted for individually. A less format-intense approach to the teal bowl might be to list the bowl, the spreader, and the cheese in a single row. But what happens when presetting if the cheese was put in the bowl but the spreader is missing? Do you check off the item now or later? Such an approach is especially helpful when documenting a prop like the cookie sheet on the stage right prop table, which has five items set on it, not all of which may be stored overnight in the same location (the blood pack for example, is unlikely to live in your prop cabinet between shows.) A setup like this will take a bit of time—though slightly less when working in Excel—but it guarantees a consistent visual lineup on the page. And one preset list with this setup can become the starting point for a preset list on another show.

White Towel		
Black Ice Bucket with:		
	Small Tongs	
	Ice	
Brown Tray with:		
	Teal Bowl with Butter	
	Grey Bowl with Sour Cream	
	Striped bowl with:	
		Tongs
		(4) Potatoes

Tool Box with:
Framing Square
Drill
Pry Bar
Fake Plant
5 Gallon Bucket
Folding Chair
Mini Grill with:
Charcoal
Paper Plate with (4) Burger Patties

Figure 6.7C A close up look at alignment through added columns or justification.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

PRESET LIST

ONSTAGE	M	T	W	R	F	SA M	SA	SU
Vanity								

Family								

3 Perfume Bottles								
Empty round jar								
Jewelry box								
Glass with Water								
Mascara								
Nail Clippers								
Nail File								
Makeup brush								

Empty oval jar with bow								
Cigarette Case with:								
(2) Cigarettes								
Zippo Lighter								
Lipstick								
Metal Tin								
Powder with Puff								
Necklace Stand with:								
Gold Necklace (front center)								
Talc powder								
Hand Mirror								
Hair Brush								
Comb								
Rocks glass with:								
Ice and liquor								

Figure 6.8 Using a photo to clarify part of a preset list.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

SET DRESSING

DR Bookcase	SR Shelves	UR Bookcase
ACT I		
1- Sad Sound Plant	1-Dust Pan & Brush *	1- empty
2- Transparent Green Pot	2-empty	2- empty
3- Clear Vase w/ White Flowers	3-(2) Medium Pots	3- empty
4- Gold Greek w/ Dead Foliage	4- (3) Medium Pots	4- Blue Vase w/ Yellow Daffodil
5- Yellow Rectangle Box	5- (5) Small Pots	5- Get Well arrangement # 2*
6- Clear w/ White Carnations	6-(2) Small Pots	6- Stack of Books
7- Green Square Chalise		7- empty
8- White Watering Can*		8- Get Well arrangement #1*
9- White Vase w/ White Daisies		9- Rag*
10- Green Mister*		10- Lg Fake Wooden Pot (DL 12)
11- Plant Food		11- empty
12- Dictionary*		12- empty
		12- empty

*Indicates Show Prop

Italics indicate a change from Act One to Act Two

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Set Dressing

DR Bookcase	SR Shelves	UR Bookcase

ACT II		
1- Happy Sound Plant	1-Dust Pan & Brush *	*1-Lg Brown Woven Basket*
2- empty	*2-Clear Vase w Lg Blue/White Arr*	*2-Green Woven Basket*
3- Clear Vase w/ White Flowers	3- (2) Medium Pots	*3- Oblong Vase w/ Red Roses*
4- Empty Metallic Vase	4-(3) Medium Pots	4- 1 Blue Vase w/ Yellow Daffodil
5- Yellow Rectangle Box	5-(5) Small Pots	*5- 2 Clear Vase*
6- Clear w/ White Carnations	6- (2) Small Pots	*6- Stack of Books*
7- Green Square Chalise		7- Tall Tulip Vase
8- White Watering Can*		*8-Transparent Green Vase w/ Pink Lily*
9- White Vase w/ White Daisies		9- Rag*
10- *empty*		10-White Tulip Bowl
11- Dictionary*		*11- Clear Short*
		12- Woven Round Basket w/ Vines
		13- Mickey Jar

*Indicates Show Prop

Italics indicate a change from Act One to Act Two

Figures 6.9A and B Relying on photos for clarity and changes.

For items set on a prop table, take care both to label the table and to use the same terminology found on the preset list. This makes it easy to both set and check. Oversized items will obviously not be placed on a table, but when laying out your backstage area, the SM team will identify storage locations for these pieces that utilize the same labeling consistency. These parking places will be important for managing backstage traffic during the show.

There are times when too much description can work against you. Consider the excerpt of a preset list for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* for the top of Maggie's vanity in Figure 6.8. It contains twenty-six props, each with a very specific placement. Trying to describe both the items and their location solely in words would be overwhelming. By inserting a photo of the vanity top, the crew has both a visual of the completed setup along with an itemized list to check off.

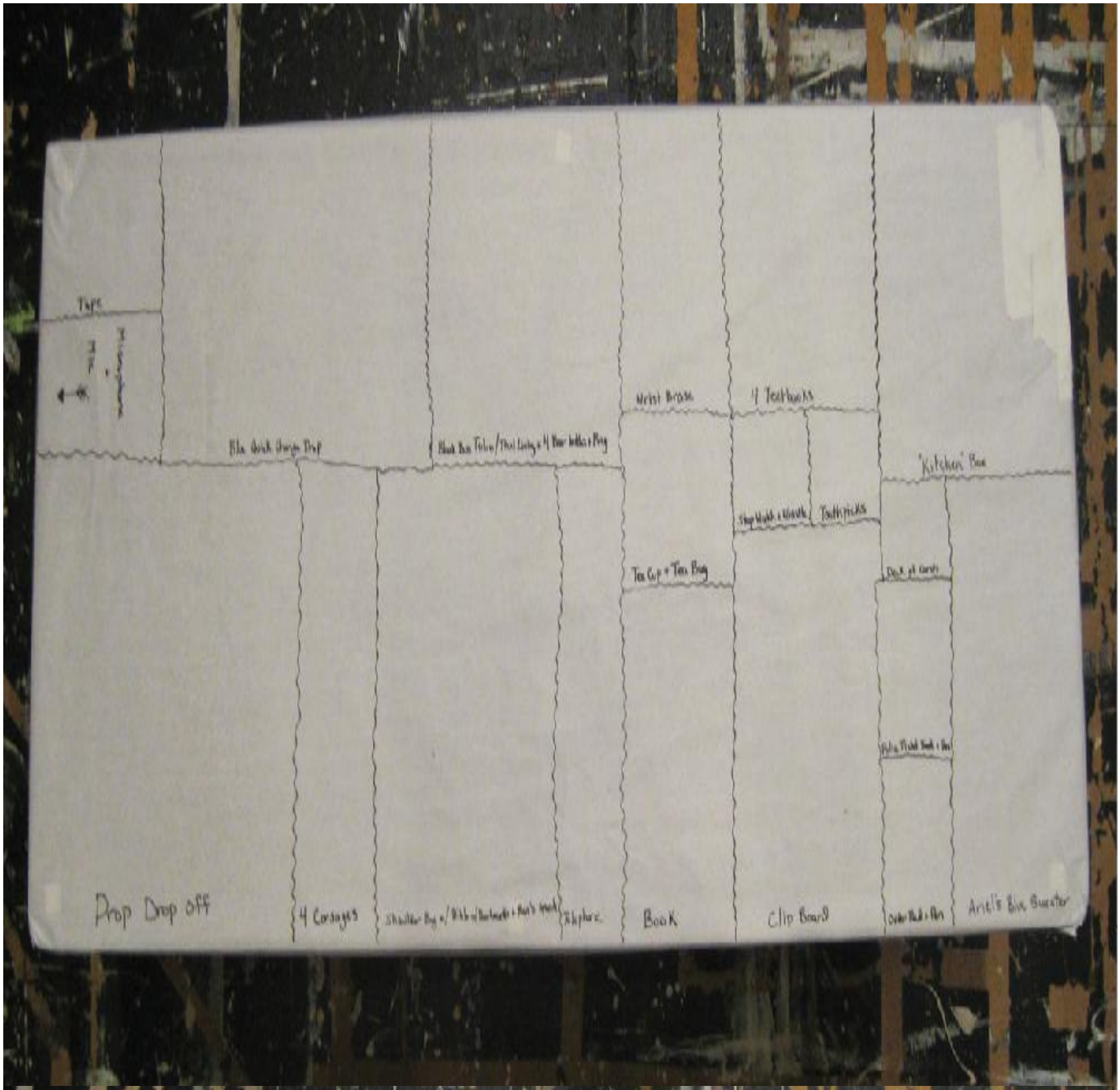
When the preset is especially complex, a photo may need to do even more work. Figures 6.9A and 6.9B present two pages from the backstage paperwork for *Little Shop of Horrors* specifically devoted to the shelves of plants inside the shop. Six rows of shelves were set at the top of the show and reset at intermission. They included set dressing that never changed, set dressing that did change, and show props used and moved by the actors. The numbers in the lists represent specific spots on each shelf, which were labeled out of audience view with white tape. Each plant/prop sat on the corresponding number.

MORE ABOUT PROP TABLES

A well-labeled prop table is actually a communication tool of its own. By specifying areas for each item, you are not only telling crew members where to place them but also telling actors what is present for their use.

When planning the layout for a prop table, the stage manager needs to know both where the prop starts and where it ends up. Not everything will make it back to its home, and your tables may need to provide bonus space for things that start and end on opposite sides of the stage.

The pair of prop table photos in Figures 6.10 and 6.11 demonstrate efficient organization by the ASMs. Each prop has a defined spot. There is also a large block in which nothing is set at the top of the show. Marked “prop drop off,” this space exists for those items that switch sides of the stage during the show. If the props were to be used repeatedly, it would be worth providing a labeled space for them on each side of the stage. But for things that will not reappear, a single area is sufficient. If the drop-off block gets full during Act One, the crew can clear it during intermission, readying the spot for Act Two props.


Tape
Wrist Brace
4 Toothpicks
'Kitchen' Box
Toothpicks
Tea Cup + Tea Bag
Prop Drop off
4 Corsages
Book
Clip Board
Ariel's Box Quarter

Tape
Wrist Brace
4 Toothpicks
KITCHEN

Figure 6.10–6.11 A prop table before and after it is set.

The SM team should be prepared to be creative when thinking about backstage storage. Some items will not be best placed directly onto a table. Figure 6.12 is a photo of backstage for that production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. One of the many versions of Audrey II is a medium-sized pot attached to a jacket with a fake hand. Borrowing a spare dress form from the costume shop allowed the jacket to be hung up (and the accompanying baseball hat to be set with it). A box added to the prop table put Audrey at the correct height.

On other occasions the stage manager may contend with items that will take up too much space on the table—requiring a second table that might not fit well into your backstage area. Figure 6.13 is a photo from backstage in a production of *Chicago*. For their entrance into one of the major dance numbers in the show, thirteen cast members needed to quickly pick up bowler hats. The crew was too small to simply hand off the hats. Because the hats were sized to each actor, specificity was required—making a pile of hats impractical. Vertical storage was the solution. An inexpensive wardrobe rack combined with two sheets of foam and some hooks made for rolling vertical storage that could be placed on each side of the stage near the actors' entrance just prior to the song and rolled away later. Each "wall" was labeled with actor names, allowing the performers to be self-sufficient. And although not pictured here, the back sides of the walls contained a second set of hooks for the large fans needed in another song, equally undesirable on the prop tables.

Figures 6.12 and 6.13 Thinking creatively about backstage storage.

THE SHIFT PLOT

In addition to documenting how to accurately set up for the show, the stage manager needs to detail what happens once the curtain goes up. This is done through a separate document known as a shift plot, introduced in Figure 6.14. Cataloging every move taken by the backstage crew, the shift plot will capture when and how the following activities take place:

- Scenery moving on or off the stage
- Handing a prop to an actor
- Catching a prop from an actor
- Prep work for an upcoming change
- Fast costume changes that impact the deck crew

This piece of paperwork has the distinction of being both a detail document and one that will be read quickly in low light. This means that the stage manager will need some extra organizational and formatting tools to ensure successful use of it.

NECESSARY INFORMATION

The shift plot includes a number of columns, each containing a valuable piece of information. These details are collected throughout the rehearsal process and enable the crew to accurately execute all moves in the show.

WHEN? The first two columns denote the order in which shifts occur. The SM numbers each activity or simultaneous group of moves. When more than one shift takes place within a single scene, they can be subdivided to identify a more precise order. Each event also has a time—when it takes place within the act. Times are presented cumulatively until intermission and then start over. Because intermissions can vary slightly in length, it is more precise to contain the running time to the act itself. The SM team will take timings while still in the rehearsal room during runs of an act or the full show and then update them during tech as needed.

WHO? The next column identifies the personnel involved in the move. Actions may be taken by one or more crew members, assistant stage mangers, or even cast members. Although the document may not be distributed to the actors, their activities should still be included. This enables crew members to work with them or around them, and also allows the ASMs to check for their presence. By placing actor moves in italics or in bold, there is just enough visual distinction for substitute crew members to see they are not responsible for these tasks.

Twelfth Night

Revised Shift Plot

#	Time	Crew	Lineset	Unit	Move	Spike	Notes
Shift II-3 to II-4: After "Maria Hatches a Plan"							
9A	54:15	Hans	LS 22	Gate	OUT	Red	RED RAIL
		Courtney, Anastasia		Kitchen table	OFF		SL
		Meghan		Kitchen chair	OFF		SL
		ASM-1		Pit	UP		to AUDITORIUM level
9B	54:35	*don, luke*		*SR railing*	*ON*	*Blue* ▶	
		ASM-R		Curved Legs R	PAGE		
		austin, brian		*SL railing*	*ON*	*Blue* ▶	
		Matt		Curved Legs L	PAGE		

		Katie, Ashlynne		Wicker settee	ON	Blue ▶	SR
		Courtney		Wicker table	ON	Blue ▶	SL
		Anastasia		Wicker chair	ON	Blue ▶	SL
During II-4: "Cesario Falls in Love with Orsino"							
	57:00	Katie		(2) towels and robe	HANDOFF		SR to Austin
		Meghan		Self	Go SR		to be ready for next scene shift
Shift II-4 to II-5: After "Cesario Falls in Love with Orsino"							
10A	1:04:00	Katie, Ashlynne		Wicker settee	OFF		SR
		Courtney		Wicker table	OFF		SL
		Anastasia		Wicker chair	OFF		SL
		don, luke		*SR railing*	*OFF*		
		ASM-R		Curved Legs R	PAGE		
		austin, brian		*SL railing*	*OFF*		
		ASM-L		Curved Legs L	PAGE		
		ASM L		Pit	DOWN		
10B	1:04:30	Hans	LS 22	Gate	IN	White	RED RAIL
		Matt	LS 15	Colonnade	IN	White	RED RAIL
		Amanda	LS 6	Trees	IN	White	GREEN RAIL
		Katie		SR urn	ON		SR
		Ashlynne, Meghan		Garden bench	ON	Green ●●	SR
		Courtney		SL urn	ON		SL

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Figure 6.14 A page from the *Twelfth Night* shift plot.

WHAT? The next two columns list the specific prop or scenic piece affected. If the moving unit is a flying piece, the line set number is included. When working on a show with no rail activity, this column can be deleted. The item

description is brief and should match the description used on the preset list and prop table for continuity.

WHAT HAPPENS TO IT? Next, the stage manager will describe the move itself. Specificity and consistency of verbs are key. Flying scenery can move *in* or *out*. Rolling units can move *on* or *off*. A technician can *hand off* a prop or *catch* it from an actor. If an item is moving to a new location but is still in use, it is being *reset*. If it is removed from the stage, the crew will *strike* it. Technicians might *load* a scenic piece by moving it closer to the stage to enable a quicker entrance in the next shift, or *park* it by moving it to a storage location once a shift is complete. Technicians might also need to *page* a curtain to allow actors or scenery to pass quickly through a wing.

WHERE DOES IT GO? Moving units will be traveling to a precise location, and the stage manager should record any spike information available. On a show with a simple deck layout, noting the side of the stage may be sufficient. A more elaborate show will need more detail in this column.

The two sample scenic designs first presented in Chapter 5 illustrate this difference. In *The Farnsworth Invention*, furniture pieces moved on and off specific platforms. Because only a few units ever played on each part of the stage and in distinct locations, the spike column on that shift plot could simply identify on which platform the move occurred. Personnel easily learned which spikes belonged to each piece of furniture and could place them accordingly. During *Twelfth Night*, a stock set of items played in a wide range of locations. Several units were placed in the same area of the stage at different times. In order to ensure that each shift was done correctly, colored spikes were used, and the shift plot references these colors.

Twelfth Night also presented an additional challenge—some shifts took place in light and others during a blackout. The color of the deck was light enough to make glow tape difficult to see when not actually glowing. To manage these conditions, both colored spike tape and glow tape were used. But glow tape does not come in multiple colors. So how do you distinguish between several glowing objects in the same place? Shape. The small pieces of tape were cut in squares, circles, triangles, and other simple forms. The shift plot notes both the color of the spike tape for *a vista* shifts and the shape of the glow tape for those happening in the dark.

WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW? By providing a notes column at the far right, the stage manager has a spot to provide whatever other information is necessary. This might include the manner of cueing or the fact that a prop handoff takes place during a fast costume change. “Notes” is a general enough heading to accept all these details and allow the stage manager to vary the entries as necessary.

PROVIDING LANDMARKS

Even though the shift plot includes running times, this is not quite enough information for the crew, particularly on a busy show. The shift plot is subdivided according to the scenes of the play. These subdivisions have two characteristics. First, these headings reference the scene that has just ended or that is happening at the time, beginning with the word *after* or *during*. Identifying an activity as happening *before* a certain scene presents the same challenges as describing a prop by the character that uses it. During the early days of technical rehearsals or a performance with a substitute crew member, the stage manager is asking the crew to act based on information they don’t have yet. This leads to the unpopular “oops, I was supposed to .. .” realization once that scene begins.

Subdivisions based on solely scene numbers are equally useless. An effective shift plot will include scene nicknames based on easy-to-identify plot points.

Twelfth Night

Revised Shift Plot

#	Time	Crew	Lineset	Unit	Move	Spike	Notes
Preshow Duties							

Preshow Duties							
		Hans, Matt		Deck	SWEEP		
		Courtney, Anastasia		Deck	MOP		
		Katie, Meghan		Prop tables	SET		see preset list for details
		Courtney		Urns	SET		onstage for fight call
		Meghan		Toaster	SET UP		on counter in green room
		Meghan		Flask	FILL		1/2 with water
		Meghan		Wine bottle	FILL & CORK		1/4 with water
		Hans, Matt	LS 9, 21	Legs	IN		clip to boom and screen
		Hans, Matt	LS 6, 10, 15, 22	All flying units	TEST		End with colonnade left onstage for fight call
		Katie		Shrine	ON	Red //	
		Courtney, Anastasia		Pit Steps	ON		pit is all the way down
		ASM-L		Pit	CHECK		PIT POWER IS ON (light switch lit)
		ASM-L		Fan in pit	OFF		
		ASM-L		Pit remote	MOVE		arrange cable so you won't be run over by railing later!
		Hans	LS 15	Colonnade	OUT		fly out on SM request during fight call
		Courtney		Urns	OFF		strike to pre-show spots on SM request during fight call
		All Crew		Glow tape	CHARGE		

		Video		Projector carts	SET		also run video test once plugged in!
At the 15 minute call							
		Meghan		Toast & Juice	PREPARE		make toast, pour juice, deliver to tray on SR prop table
Into I-1: After Opening Storm							
1A	02:20	Amanda		Shrine	OFF		DR cue light

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Figure 6.15 *Twelfth Night* preshow duties.

Crew members will have additional responsibilities at the beginning and end of each rehearsal or performance. The shift plot begins with these preshow duties, noted in Figure 6.15, and ends with a section to address post-show. Setting props will be one of these tasks. Given the amount of detail and differences in formatting, it would be difficult to find a common setup for these two documents.

DOCUMENTING THE MUSICAL

The process of creating a shift plot for a musical is the same as the one for a play, though the document itself will probably be longer and perhaps more complex due to the presence of props and scenic units specific to an individual song and not simply a scene. This would lead to additional subdivisions within the plot.

The presence of the music itself can prompt two other important changes. Song titles can be effective scene nickname identifiers, as the songs often become recognizable to the crew by the end of the first day. Use this to your advantage when labeling the subdivisions. The other difference has to do with the flow of the show. Not only will the actors be choreographed—the shifts may be as well. The director may set specific places within a song where a part of a shift takes place, or the SM team may try to time a shift in relation to the music being played. This might lead to more specificity about the order of events, and additional A and B notations within a single scene change.

Figure 6.16 presents an excerpt from *Big Fish*, containing both simple and complex scenic changes in the show.

Big Fish SHIFT PLOT Version 5: 2/21/18

2/21/18

Shift #	Time	Who	Unit	Move	Where	Notes
During Scene 2: "Be The Hero"						

6A	5:00	Stephen, Taylor	Trap	OPEN		For mermaid
6B	5:45	Stephen	Fish #1	TOSS UP	From trap	
6C	6:00	Stephen	Fish #2	TOSS UP	From trap	
6D	7:25	Stephen, Taylor	Trap	CLOSE		Come to deck after trap is locked
6E	8:15	Matt	Fish Luge	TOSS TO STAGE	From FOH	Toss by handful to stage as fast as you can
After Scene 2: EDWARD: "I didn't know she would change my life forever."						
7A	10:50	Gabrielle	Platform 3	BRAKE OFF		With the start of the music
7B	Auto	**Shane F. & Gabe B.**	**Platform 3**	**CLOSE**		**Closed = yellow spikes line up**
7C	Auto	Gabrielle	Platform 3	BRAKE ON		When platform wall fully closed
7D	11:15	Morgan	Swamp branches	FLY IN	Line set 15	Red Rail cue light
During Scene 3: "I Know What You Want"						
8A	11:30	Gabrielle, Taylor	Twin Bed	STRIKE	Platform 3	Book with red cover sitting by pillow
		Morgan	Square backed chair	STRIKE		
		Stephen	Table lamp	UNPLUG		Sitting on top of white bedside table
		Stephen	White bedside table	STRIKE		Strike with lamp
8B	Auto	Gabrielle, Taylor	Park bench	SET	Platform 2	

8B	Auto	Stephen	Lamp post	SET & PLUG IN	Platform 3	
After Scene 3: End of "I Know What You Want (Reprise)"						
9A	18:45	Morgan	Swamp branches	FLY OUT	Line set 15	Red Rail cue light
9B	19:00	Emily	Microphone Pack A5	SWAP	SR	From Violet E. to Megan R.
		Gabrielle	Microphone Pack C8	SWAP	SL	From Emma H. to Maddie S.

NOTE: Shifts in **BOLD** are completed by actors onstage ; AUTO denotes a move in a shift that follows the prior actions with no separate cue Page 3 of 9

Figure 6.16 A sample shift plot for a musical.

FORMAT CONSIDERATIONS

It should now be clear why the shift plot is described as a detail document. On a busy show, the SM team has a significant amount of information to convey. The formatting work will help do this successfully. The basic requirements can be achieved with either a word-processing table or a spreadsheet.

The landscape orientation best suits the shift plot because it provides enough width to fit all of the columns. Column headings are repeated at the top of each page. A moderately sized font allows everything to fit and still be read easily. In general, a single line of text for each activity is best. Some wrapped text appears in the preshow duties, but those lines will be read in full work light and under less time pressure. Setting up the entire document in portrait orientation would necessitate a smaller font size or much more wrapped text—either scenario making the document more crowded and less accessible.

WHITE SPACE

Each column is slightly wider than the longest text entry in it. And when multiple shifts occur in the same scene, there is an empty row in between them. These techniques are providing the eye a place to rest. To help reinforce which actions happen simultaneously, the shift and time columns for each group have been merged so that the information appears centered in a larger box.

SHADING AND COLOR

Only a minimal amount of shading has been used for the subdivision headings. While it might seem useful to employ color to reinforce these rows or emphasize the spike mark detail, this document gets photocopied. Each technician will need one, along with all members of the SM team. The document will also inevitably be updated as tech rehearsals progress. Practicality does not support repeatedly printing this multi-page document in order to use color.

PAGINATION

One final way to manage the information on the page is to keep the sections of the document together. Achieving this means not splitting shifts. A preset list will be functional with repeated headers when one section flows onto a second page—starting page two, for example, with the heading "Stage Right Prop Table, continued." Because the shift plot is

used in low light and with little time to stop, turning the page during a scene shift can ever so briefly affect the user's concentration and slow them down. The stage manager should use the page-break options available in the chosen software to keep sections together. At times this will mean leaving some additional blank space at the bottom of one of the pages. Small adjustments to the overall page margins and column widths of the completed plot can help you achieve a balance between many half-filled pages and shifts that don't quite fit.

UPDATING THE SHIFT PLOT

The shift plot with which the stage management team begins tech rehearsals should be considered a well-organized plan A. No one is at fault if extra duties arise, a job takes more crew than you expected, or the production team decides to take a different approach to a transition than the one discussed in production meetings. Throughout tech the stage managers will keep notes on changes and additions in order to update the paperwork.

Crew members can also make valuable contributions to the updates. Encourage your crew to take their own notes and inform you about other tasks they find themselves undertaking. This does not mean that crew should rework shifts on their own, but the ASMs cannot be everywhere at once. If, for example, a crew member finds himself holding a flashlight during a fast costume change, that should end up in the shift plot. The actor and wardrobe crew will become dependent upon this assistance. If you have a substitute technician on the deck one night and that job is not written down, no one might remember to ask for the light until the change is in progress and not going as smoothly as normal.

The SM team should provide the crew a revised version of the shift plot by the next time you rehearse that section of the show. If your tech rehearsal schedule is set up to work Act One on Tuesday and Act Two on Wednesday, new paperwork will not be needed until Thursday. The stage managers can enter the first night's changes right away but wait to reprint the paperwork until they have rehearsed both acts and have a full set of changes. When the schedule dictates running the full show each day, updates will be processed more quickly.

THE ASM POINT OF VIEW, PART TWO

Two additional young stage managers offer views of life on the deck.

Kristen Harris: "One of the most important things I have found during the tech and preview process is flexibility. As the show is coming together artistically, there are bound to be things that are added or cut, and being flexible during these long rehearsal days allows changes to be implemented seamlessly backstage."[2]

Erica Bush: "Quick in-the-moment decisions will undoubtedly come up during a run of the show. Whether it's an important prop was left backstage or someone has become ill in the cast, dealing with the unexpected is the biggest challenge and yet one of the greatest thrills of being an ASM."[3]

PAPERWORK VARIATIONS

Not every show is as large as the samples presented here. And while these productions benefitted from two sets of paperwork for the deck crew, the stage manager may be able to simplify the work for less-active productions.

When working on a show with no internal prop or scenic moves, the stage manager can adapt the preset list to serve as the sole piece of paperwork. By adding a "preshow duties" section at the beginning and a corresponding "post-show duties" section at the end, tasks not related to the props such as mopping, charging glow tape, flying masking in and out, or checking the remaining supply of food items can be listed and checked off.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee **COMBO Preset & Shift Plot**

PRESET

Onstage								
Bleachers								
(2) Folding Chairs								
Desk, with								
Official Spelling Ledger								
Clipboard with Volunteer info								
Small Note Pad								
Bell								
Pencil Cup with Pencils								
(10) Contestant Placards Top down order: 11, 6, 1, 22, 27, 7, +4 for volunteers								
SL Prop Table								
"Rona" Banner								
Trophy								
(3) Entry forms								
Savings Bond Check								
Cell Phone								
Camera								
Can of Diet Pepsi (with brown water)								
Wallet w/ $25 cash								
(8) Juice Boxes								
(1) Open & Empty Juice Box								
Cooler								
Small Plant								
Gardening Gloves								

Hoe								
Fencing foil								
Karate Chop board								

SHIFTS DURING THE SHOW

Time	*Unit*	*Move*	*Side/Spike*	*Crew*	*Notes*
During "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee"					
4:50	"BEE" banner	FLY IN	LS 10	Shelby	
During Pandemonium					
22:15	Ribbon Sticks	HAND OFF	DR Wing	Kyla	To Lily
25:45	Ribbon Sticks	CATCH	DR Wing	Kyla	From Olivia
During " I Speak Six Languages"					
58:50	Fencing Foil	HAND OFF	SL False Pro	Shelby	To/From Seth
AF	Fencing Foil	CATCH	SL False Pro	Shelby	
AF	Karate Chop Board	HAND OFF	SL False Pro	Shelby	
AF	Karate Chop Board	CATCH	SL False Pro	Shelby	
During " Jesus"					
1:01:00	Rope swing	Prep	SL Loading Deck	Shelby	
AF	Rope swing	Catch	SL Loading Deck	Shelby	From Nirvan
During "Champion"					
1:23:30	Check	HAND OFF	UL	Ali	To Seth
	Confetti Cannons	FIRE	DL & DR	Kyla & Shelby	

NOTE: AF indicates a scenic move that will automatically follow the previous action without separate cueing

Figure 6.17 A combination preset list & shift plot.

If your crew has only a few shift duties, you might still consider a single document. By adding one more section to the preset list for those intermission tasks, you can successfully detail all backstage responsibilities. You might also blend the two forms so that both styles of information presentation are retained. The SM's main concern should be efficiency—and a separate document to list only a few tasks may not qualify. Figure 6.17 shows such an example. Because both the preset list and shift plot are simple and short, it is a reasonable exception to the cautionary note about trying to merge the documents. Ultimately this "combo-form" is successful because the page is effectively divided in half.

Considering the other extreme, there are times when you may find yourself working on a show where the quantity of fly rail or automation cues prompts you to separate them from the prop handoffs on the deck to make the plots clearer for the individual operators. In this circumstance, working in a spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel will be your best software choice. The worksheets within an individual document can be linked. The SM can simply highlight and copy all columns of the completed plot, and then paste them into a second worksheet using the Paste Special function. Select "Paste Link," and the pages are joined (Figure 6.18). It is then possible to delete all unessential information from the second worksheet to create a customized plot for certain technicians. As long as the stage manager makes all updates to the master worksheet page with all the details, the linked pages will automatically contain the changes.

Another version of complexity is a show filled with *a vista* shifts that are choreographed to have a stylistic rather than streamlined feel. If your crew has specific traffic patterns to follow, then noting how they move will be as important as what they move or to where. In this instance, the insertion of small groundplans or dance boxes may be the key. Additional preset list and shift plot samples can be found on the book's companion website.

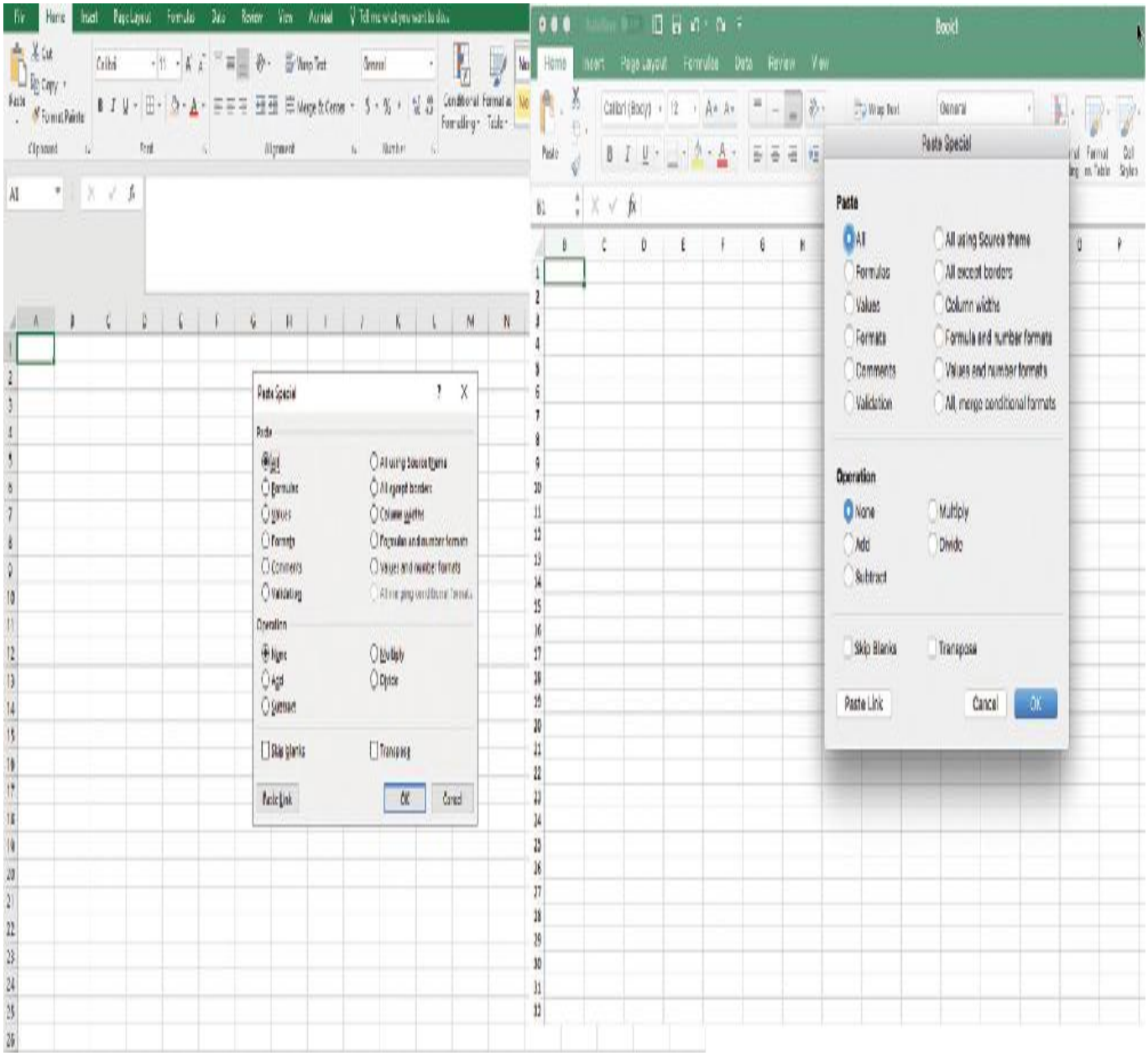


Figure 6.18 A screen shot of the paste special functions in Microsoft Excel for PC and Mac.

THE COSTUME PLOT

The last major piece of backstage paperwork is the plot documenting the actors' costume changes throughout the show, seen in Figure 6.19. Like the shift plot, this is a detail document for the show.

The content of the costume plot is similar to that of the shift plot—several different categories of information denoting when and where activities occur. Each change has time markers, and the overall plot will be subdivided by scene. The SM team should use the same subdivisions and nicknames introduced in the shift plot to create continuity between the two documents and help the entire crew talk about the show in the same language.

The most significant difference in the philosophy of the two charts is that the costume plot tracks where the actor exits and reenters as well as the change itself. Large scenic units rarely have more than one offstage location due to space, and these locations are clearly delineated in the companion preset list. If you know you are moving the conference table, you know where you will be. Actors are much more flexible! Wardrobe crew members need locations for every change.

Creating the costume plot is a collaboration between the stage managers and the costume department. The designer will have the most detailed information about who changes and when. Most designers create a "pieces list" that forms the basis of a daily check-in sheet for the costume crew. Typically the costume designer or a shop staff member makes

that check-in sheet, even though it sounds much like the props preset list decidedly in SM world. At some theatres that person also creates the costume plot, but in other theatres and in academic programs this is a stage management task. No matter who does the formatting, though, the document will still be a joint effort. Costumes has the descriptive detail about each individual item, and stage management will have the information about time and location. If you are new to the theatre, be sure to ask about this paperwork tradition as well.

WHERE SHOULD THE CHANGE TAKE PLACE?

Fast costume changes are best located as close to the re-entry spot as possible. If the actor switches sides of the stage, it is best to travel first and change later. This helps to manage unforeseen delays caused by a problem with the costume. As soon as the actor is dressed, he or she is ready to go—and doesn't have to run around the theatre before entering.

Big Fish COSTUME PLOT Version 2: 2/23/18

Time	Actor	Exit			Re-Enter			
		Location	Character	Costume	Location	Character	Costume	Length
After Scene 3 "I Know What You Want (Reprise)"								
18:45	John Divney	SR	Teenage Edward	Blue pants, white shirt, baseball cap, baseball jacket	SR	Wedding Edward	REMOVE: ball cap, baseball jacket	:20
18:45	**Carly Boles**	**SL**	**Witch**	**Witch costume/skirt/cape, black ballet shoes**	**SR**	**Waiter**	**REMOVE: witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes ADD: Black skirt,white tux shirt, white apron, black character shoes**	**1:00 (Kaitlyn)**
18:45	Sarah Lambert	SR	Witch	Witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes	SL	Teacher	REMOVE: witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet slippers ADD: green print skirt, white blouse, beige cardigan, character shoes	10:00
	Leah Williams	SR	Witch	Witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes	SR	Girl with Cat	REMOVE: witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes ADD: pink/green dress, character shoes	10:00
	Megan			Witch costume, skirt, cape			REMOVE: witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes	

	Gunderson	SR	Witch	ballet shoes	SL	Hillbilly	ADD: overalls, plaid blouse , brown boots	10:00
	Tess Doury	SL	Witch	Witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes	SL	Aunt Bea	REMOVE: witch costume, skirt, cape, ballet shoes ADD: gold print dress, tan apron, character shoes	10:00
During Scene 4 - Getting Ready for the Wedding								
20:00	**John Divney**	**SR**	**Edward**	**Blue pants, white dress shirt**	**SR**	**Edward**	**ADD: vest, jacket, blue tie**	**:45 (Jackie)**
During Scene 5 - The Wedding Reception								
24:45	**Megan Roddy**	**SL**	**Josephine**	**Wedding dress**	**SR**	**Josephine**	**REMOVE: wedding dress** **ADD: Pregnancy pad, floral dress**	**1:30 (Mia)**
24:45	**Jenna Mollanen**	**SL**	**Sandra**	**Turquoise dress**	**SL**	**Sandra**	**REMOVE: turquoise dress** **ADD: blue skirt, white blouse, tan sweater**	**1:30 (Josey)**
25:00	Reed Schwender	SR	Wedding Guest	Yellow shirt, black pants, long tie	SR	NY Doctor	ADD: lab coat	5:30

NOTES: Changes in **BOLD** need help from costume crew because they are fast and/or complex- assigned crew noted in parentheses

Page 3 of 15

Figure 6.19 An excerpt from the costume plot for *Big Fish.*

The costume plot is set up to track every time an actor adds or removes clothing. One way to streamline the document can be to use descriptive phrases rather than listing each garment separately. In the production of *Big Fish* excerpted in Figure 6.19 each ensemble member had a base layer as well as multiple pieces added for specific scenes or dance numbers. The costume crew had a check-in sheet used at the beginning of each show to be sure all individual pieces were present, which included those base items. Because the base layer was never removed, it was not necessary to mention it in the run-of-show plot, saving space to focus on the detail necessary to document individual character looks. Of course if a character is simply adding or removing a single item (a lab coat, for example), that is all the stage manager needs to record. Principal characters like Edward spent more time onstage and often made smaller changes between scenes. But because of their stage time, nearly every change was a fast one, requiring crew assistance.

Speed is an important factor in costume changes. The plot is set up to identify those changes considered fast (less than one minute) as well as those that will require assistance.

In plays or musicals where actors portray more than one character during the play, the "character" column helps track that information. Although in this production only some actors played multiple roles, the stage management team set up the chart based on the most complex information needed. Changes are grouped according to their location, with actors listed in the order in which they reentered the stage.

It is not simply the large musical that can require detailed costume documentation. The second costume plot sample is from a production of *Proof*. The play features only four actors playing a single character each, but time of day and the given circumstances of each scene necessitate that they wear something different for each one. Fortunately the play is set up with formal scenes so costume changes can be handled while prop moves take place onstage.

A nearly identical format serves this production. One notable difference is the omission of columns for actor names, feasible because each actor played only one character. This allowed the "change" columns to get wider—a useful modification for capturing the necessary detail. Figure 6.20 shows that for each change, the SM team listed the specific pieces of clothing to be added or removed. And while the "length of change" column still appears, in this instance it only noted what was *not* a fast change. When calling this show, I waited at the end of each scene shift for a "clear" from one of the ASMs to know that the actors were set for the next scene and I could continue calling cues. But despite the formal pauses in the play, the production still held quick-change rehearsals to make the changes as efficient as possible—on one occasion determining that the "clear" would come when only part of the change was complete because the actor did not reenter at the top of the scene and had time during the opening dialogue to finish putting on her shoes.

{PROOF} COSTUME CHANGE PLOT Issue #3

Run Time	Character	Exit		Re-Enter		Length of change
		Location	Costume	Location	Costume	
ACT ONE						
After Catherine Calls the Police (1-1 to 1-2)						
24:00	Catherine	House	Grey sweater, blue & green flannel, black tank, ripped jeans, key necklace, bare foot	House	REMOVE grey sweater, blue & green flannel, ADD light green flannel, slippers, black hair clip, hair towel.	
	Hal	House	Grey button-up shirt, graphic t-shirt, khaki pants, brown shoes	SL	REMOVE grey button-up shirt, graphic t-shirt, ADD white t-shirt, red checked button-up shirt	
After Harold Dobbs is Real (1-2 to 1-3)						
	Catherine	House	Light green flannel, black tank, ripped jeans, slippers, black hair clip, hair towel, key necklace	House	REMOVE light green flannel, ripped jeans, slippers, hair towel, ADD black slip, black dress, black heels	

37:00	Hal	House	Red checked button-up shirt, white t-shirt, khaki pants, brown shoes	House	REMOVE red checked button-up shirt, khaki pants, socks, brown shoes, ADD white button-up shirt, tie, black suit jacket, black pants, black socks, black shoes	
	Claire	House	Black cami, pink blouse, grey blazer, black pants, black heels	House	REMOVE pink blouse, grey blazer, black pants, black heels, ADD blue robe, black slippers, ponytail	whole scene to change!
After Kissing During the Party (1-3 to 1-4)						
49:00	Catherine	House	Black dress, black slip, black tank, black heels, black hair clip, key necklace	House	REMOVE black dress, black heels, black hair clip, ADD blue/green robe, black slippers	
	Hal	House	Black suit jacket, white button-up shirt, white t-shirt, black pants, black socks, black shoes	House	REMOVE black suit jacket, tie, white t-shirt, black socks, black shoes, ADD BACK white button-up shirt unbuttoned	

As of 10/13/15 NOTE: unless otherwise indicated, every change is a fast change Page 1 of 3

Figure 6.20 An excerpt from the costume plot for *Proof.*

FORMAT CONSIDERATIONS

The costume plot and shift plot bear several formatting similarities as well. Both are best presented in landscape view, with column size and blank rows set to maximize white space. Running-time cells are merged to unite simultaneous events, and shading is used only minimally to reinforce subdivisions.

The plot header and footer are repeated on each page. For the costume plot, a two-row header best organizes the details, banding together the exit and reentrance facts. Changes do not need to be numbered, because the stage manager will not call them, but the use of A and B could help to point out multiple sets of activities within the same scene when needed.

The discussion of these three major pieces of paperwork should reinforce the importance of delegation within the stage management team. The assistant stage managers are best suited to oversee these activities backstage and to update the corresponding documents during tech. This keeps the SM free to undertake his or her own major projects—managing the big picture and calling cues.

CUEING

PARTS OF A CUE

Every cue has three parts: the preface, the action, and the trigger. The **preface** refers to the element changing along with its sequential number in the show (lights 19 or shift 4A). The **action** is the word *go*. Occasionally you may also use the word *stop* to announce the end of a manual move. For example, a fog machine might be turned on when the stage manager says "fog, go" but turned off when you say "fog, *stop*." Saying "fog end go" is clumsy and not quite natural speech. Cues can be **triggered** by a word in the text, an action taken by a performer, a beat of music, or even the end of an appropriate pause.

CUE NAMES

Over time a common vernacular has developed for the prefaces of cues for each production area.

Lights: Any lighting change that occurs by pressing the Go button on a light board. On Broadway and in some dance companies, the word *electrics* is used instead.

Sound: Recorded effects or music.

Shift: Scenic moves.

Rail: Flying scenic moves, if a separation from deck cues is warranted.

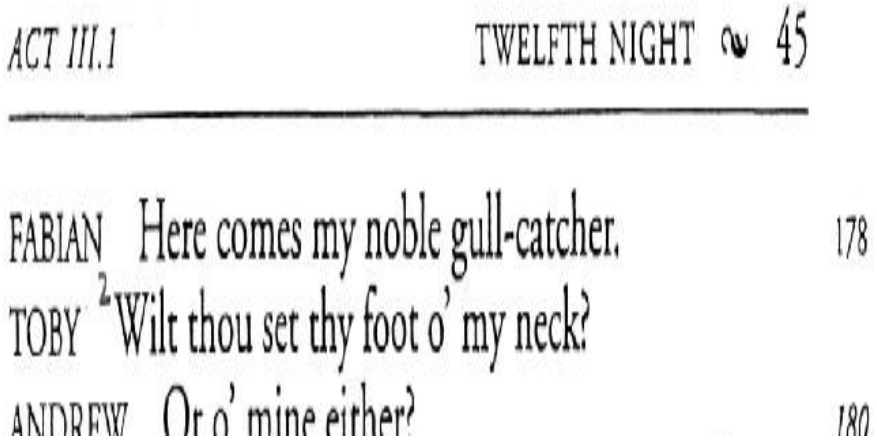
Auto: Computer-controlled scenic moves.

Effect-specific: Sequences involving spotlights, pyro, fog, haze, snow, or other similar special effects are commonly labeled by the equipment itself.

The advent of projection and video design has introduced new categories of cues and necessitated the development of additional names that have not yet found the same standard across the industry. Video is a clear-enough preface to indicate the start of a movie sequence. Projections are a bit trickier. In the early days, the word tab was used. It referred to the computer key pressed to execute a change. Because projections today are controlled by a wide range of programs, that word has fallen out of use. Some stage managers preface these cues as *projection* or *slide*. My personal preference is the word image. It is aurally distinct (*slide* and *lights* can sound alike) and has fewer syllables than *projection*. I also find that I can use it for both still and moving images without causing confusion over headset.

PLACING CUES IN YOUR SCRIPT

The stage manager writes all cues into the prompt script, using the oversized margin created during the photocopying process. Cues are marked as precisely as possible, written on a line that extends to the trigger. Often the stage manager will note visual triggers immediately above or below the drawn line rather than boxing a blocking number. The trickiest part of cue placement is determining how much you may need to anticipate a cue so that the change onstage is seen or heard by the intended word or action. One of the benefits to always writing in pencil is that it is easy to adjust your notations as you refine placement throughout tech. (If working with a digital script, the stage manager still tries to be as precise as possible using whatever comment or notation features the app or software permits. These notations can also be adjusted during or after rehearsal.)


ACT III.1 TWELFTH NIGHT ~ 45

FABIAN Here comes my noble gull-catcher. 178

TOBY 2 Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?

ANDREW Or o' mine either? 180

ANDREW [illegible]

TOBY Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip and become 181
thy bondslave?

ANDREW I' faith, or I either?

TOBY Why, thou hast put him in such a dream that,
when the image of it leaves him, he must run mad.

MARIA Nay, but say true, does it work upon him?

TOBY Like aqua vitae with a midwife. 187

MARIA If you will, then, see the fruits of the sport, mark
his first approach before my lady. He will come to her
in yellow stockings, and 'tis a color she abhors, and 190
cross-gartered, a fashion she detests; and he will smile
upon her, which will now be so unsuitable to her dis-
position, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that
it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt. If you
will see it, follow me.

TOBY To the gates of Tartar, thou most excellent devil 196
of wit.

ANDREW I'll make one too. *Exeunt.*

LX 35 TRANS

SQ 29

IMAGE 22

SHIFT 11

RED RAIL Q ↓

20.21

III.1 *Enter Viola and Clown [with a tabor].*

LX 36 SCENE | FESTE |LOOKS| DS

SQ 30

IMAGE 23

VIOLA Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live 1
by thy tabor? 2

CLOWN No, sir, I live by the church.

VIOLA Art thou a churchman?

CLOWN No such matter, sir. I do live by the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.

178 *gull-catcher* fool-catcher 181 *play* gamble; *tray-trip* a game of dice 187 *aqua vitae* any distilled liquor 196 *Tartar* Tartarus, the section of hell reserved for the most evil

III.1 Before the house of Olivia 1 *Save thee* God save thee 1–2 *live by* make a living with 2 *tabor* drum

Figure 6.21 A cueing page from *Twelfth Night.*

Figure 6.21 is a sample page showing the placement of cues for a transition between two scenes. It contains a quirky visual indicator of mine—the pair of horizontal lines inserted between the sets of bracketed cues. This tells me to take a slight pause before calling the next sequence, usually because I need to wait for the cues I just called to execute. If you think back to the blocking key in Figure 5.18, you might remember a similar symbol, although in that case the pair of lines was vertical. They are my "don't prompt too soon, the actor takes a pause here" reminder. Early in my career I sought a similar reminder to wait during complex calling sequences, and using a version of that blocking symbol made sense to me—it has stuck ever since.

Some stage managers utilize colored stickers on which the cues are written in order to provide additional visual distinction between lights, sound, and scene shifts, for example. This is something I often do when calling from a musical score because of the page's inherent visual complexity but incorporate less typically on a play. It is a matter of personal preference. My only universal caution would be against inexpensive removable flags that are not sticky enough to stay put on a reasonably permanent basis. It can be quite disheartening to turn a page in your prompt book and find a cue marker has moved or fallen off!

RECEIVING CUES

Cues come to the SM in the form of lists provided by the lighting and sound designers, samples of which can be found in Figures 6.22 and 6.23. The shift plot functions as the scenic cue sheet. Some productions will schedule a **paper tech** to discuss the technical elements. This is a meeting attended by the stage manager, designers, and director. It provides everyone the chance to talk through the entire show before the first tech rehearsal, confirming individual placements and discussing groups of cues that will happen simultaneously. If provided ahead of time, the SM should arrive at paper tech with cues written into the script and make adjustments warranted by the discussion. At other times the SM will receive the cues during paper tech, writing them into the prompt script as they are discussed. Despite the value of such a meeting (in either form), not all theatres will schedule one. In some cases the SM might meet individually with designers and in other instances receive only the lists themselves.

The Wild Party

WORKING LIGHTING CUE LIST

	Cue	Time	•	Pg. / Sys. / Mes. / Beat	Description	Intels	Spots
Pre-Show	1	5		Pre-Show	House Full & Preset		
	2	5		Pre-Show	House to Half		
	3	3	•	Pre-Show	BLACKOUT		
#1 - Opening	4	5		Pre-Show	Music Stand Lights up, cueing musicians to start.		
	5	8		1 / 1 / 3 / 3	Add city sky-line & stage glow		
	6	8		2 / 1 / 1 / 1	Add deep blue down light		
	7	8		2 / 2 / 2 / 1	Add backlight special CS for Queenie		
	8	6		2 / 3 / 3 / 1	Add spots on Queenie		2 & 3 – Queenie
	9	8		3 / 3 / 3 / 1 (she)	Add colors in dim pink	Colors – dim pink full stage	

Figure 6.22 An excerpt of a lighting cue sheet for *The Wild Party.* Used with permission of Sean Michael Smallman, lighting designer.

DISTRACTED

Sound / Projection Cue List

S	Cue	Page	Type	Called on	Description	Where
Scene 3	27	20	Video	At top of scene	Fast and Furious plays on one screen, living room look on rest	
	AF	20	Sound	Autofollow	Street noise fades out	
	28	20	Video	MAMA: "No you are not"	TV snaps off	
	29	21	Video	DAD: "...if you don't mind"	Newscast w/ bombs on TV (@W1)	
	30	21	Video	VISUAL as Mama turns off TV	TV off	
	31	21	Sound	MAMA: "...stands for hyperactivity"	Blast of rap music from Jesse's room (@2)	
	32	21	Sound	DAD: "Turn it off!"	Rap music fades down a bit	
	33	21	Video	VISUAL as Dad turns on TV	Video of Pres. Bush (@W1)	
	34	22	Sound	DAD: "You worry too much."	Blast of rap music upstairs	

Figure 6.23 An excerpt of a combination sound and video cue sheet for *Distracted*. Used with permission of Sean Michael Smallman, sound and projections designer.

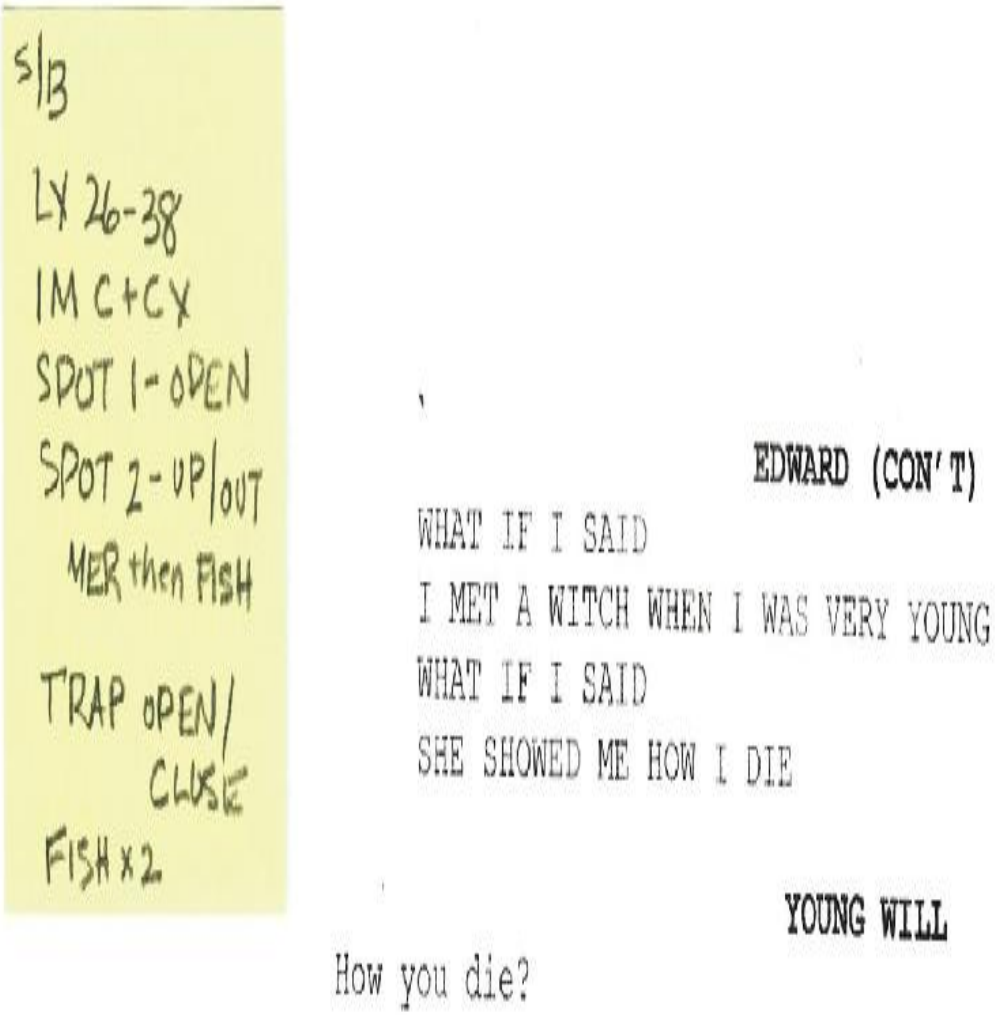
SPECIFICITY IN A MUSICAL

Identifying a specific note within a piece of music, particularly when there are no accompanying lyrics, requires the designers to use a different technique. Individual notes are referenced by using a set of numbers that identify their location by the page, system, measure, and beat. (This can be seen in the placement notes for the light cues in Figure 6.22. If you need further explanation of these references, please review Figures 5.2A and 5.2B.) As mentioned earlier, this is an occasion when I find colored stickers extremely helpful. Several types of stickers work well—

semitransparent dots as seen in Figure 4.12, paper post-it-like arrows as seen in Figures 6.24 C and D, and semitransparent flags which are clear at the bottom and colored at the top. (*The last option is my current favorite, but they do not scan well for purposes of including in this book*.) The stage manager's main goal is to attain that specificity, use non-distracting color purposefully, and to be consistent.

My typical approach to a musical that includes both libretto and score pages is to apply "play" rules to the libretto pages and introduce the color for the score pages. Figures 6.24 A–D show an excerpt of "Be the Hero" from the musical *Big Fish*, which makes use of all of my marking techniques. As first discussed in Chapter 4, you will notice two places on the libretto pages where I have written in numbers. These are the counts over which a note is held. The presence of lyrics makes calling from the score less necessary, but the SM still wants to be as precise with cue placement as would be possible placing a flag above a specific note in the score. A lighting designer will create cues in relation to a specific musical spot or length of time. Light Cue 30 is placed on beat seven of the eight beats during which the word "bend" is sung. If the designer had created a slow cue intended to build over the entirety of those eight counts, I would have used the word itself as the placement. But a shorter cue, changing the look onstage in anticipation of the next verse as was the case this time, would resolve too quickly and therefore be inaccurate if called on the word. Adding in the numbers allows for precise placement which is a good reminder for the primary stage manager, and clear to a substitute should someone less familiar with the music end up in the booth and at the helm.

Another important note about working in a score is to give yourself landmarks to follow. When lyrics are present, the SM has no problem falling along. But it can be easier to get lost during dance breaks, especially as the stage manager looks up to the stage and then back down to the page of music. Your script will still have a blocking page opposite the score which documents the movement in detail, but I find it helpful to write in very simple choreography reminders so that I can reorient myself quickly should I need to. Figures 6.24 C and D also include such notes—you can see places where a sequence is abbreviated ("clap-knee-arms") as well as single movements ("chug"). Should I find myself momentarily lost, the words get me to the correct part of the page and then I can pick up following the music itself.



EDWARD

POWERLESS IN THE FACE OF IT
TERRIFIED IN THE WOOD
THAT WAS WHERE MY LIFE WAS CHANGED FOR GOOD

(THE WITCH exits; reveal THE GIANT--EDWARD shakes his hand.)

EDWARD

HEY!
WHAT IF I SAID
I MET A GIANT WASTING IN A CAVE
WHAT IF I CLAIMED I ROSE TO BE FAR BRAVER THAN THE BRAVE
ALL MY LIFE OF STORIES, SON, AND EVERY ONE IS TRUE
LX 26
SO BELIEVE ME AS I'M TELLING YOU 2 3 4

TO BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY WHILE YOU MAY
BE THE GUY WHO GETS THE GIRL AND SAVES THE DAY
YOU DON'T NEED A BOOK OF GREEKS
TO TEACH YOU HOW TO STAY ALIVE
BE THE HERO OF EACH STORY YOU DERIVE
THEN FOREVER YOU'RE THE STORY WHO'LL SURVIVE

LX 27
EVERY TALE THAT YOU INVENT
IM C
CAN BE A LIFE THAT YOU MAKE REAL
WHERE EACH CHARACTER YOU MEET

BECOMES YOUR FRIEND

(ENSEMBLE enters, each one dressed as we will see them later in the show.)

LX 30

SPOT 1 - OPEN FULL

SPOT 2 - OUT

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A NOVELIST
TO MAKE BELIEVE WHAT'S WAITING 'ROUND THE BEND 2345678

EDWARD AND ENSEMBLE

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY 'TIL IT'S DONE
WHY GO PROMENADE WHEN YOU WERE BORN TO RUN

EDWARD

TRAP OPEN

IF YOU UNDERSTAND THIS PREMISE
YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE

EDWARD AND SOME ENSEMBLE

YOU CAN CONQUER EVERY CHALLENGE
YOU CAN FACE EACH STEPPING STONE

VIS: SEE HER HEAD

LX 33

SPOT 2 UP - MERMAID

EDWARD AND FULL ENSEMBLE

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY

(EDWARD spots THE MERMAID in the river)

EDWARD

WHAT IF I SWORE
I SAW A MERMAID SWIMMING IN THE MIST
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU

SHE WOULD BE THE FIRST GIRL THAT I KISSED
OUT THERE NEAR THE WATER
FILLED WITH EAGERNESS AND FEAR
LX 34 HERE IS WHAT SHE WHISPERED IN MY EAR

EDWARD AND FULL ENSEMBLE

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY
VIS: KISS BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY
LX 35 BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY

VIS: SHE'S OUT *(Quick kiss--As music builds, EDWARD helps THE MERMAID out of the river.)*
LX 35.1
SPOT 2 OUT

EDWARD

Something about that kiss transformed her.

(She now has legs! She dances.)

Pretty as she was in the water, she was even more beautiful out of it.

(she blows a kiss and spins out)

LX 36 One day, I met this fisherman...
SPOT 2 UP- FISHMAN

(A FRUSTRATED FISHERMAN enters)

FRUSTRATED FISHERMAN

You gottta help me! If I don't catch a fish, my family's gonna starve!

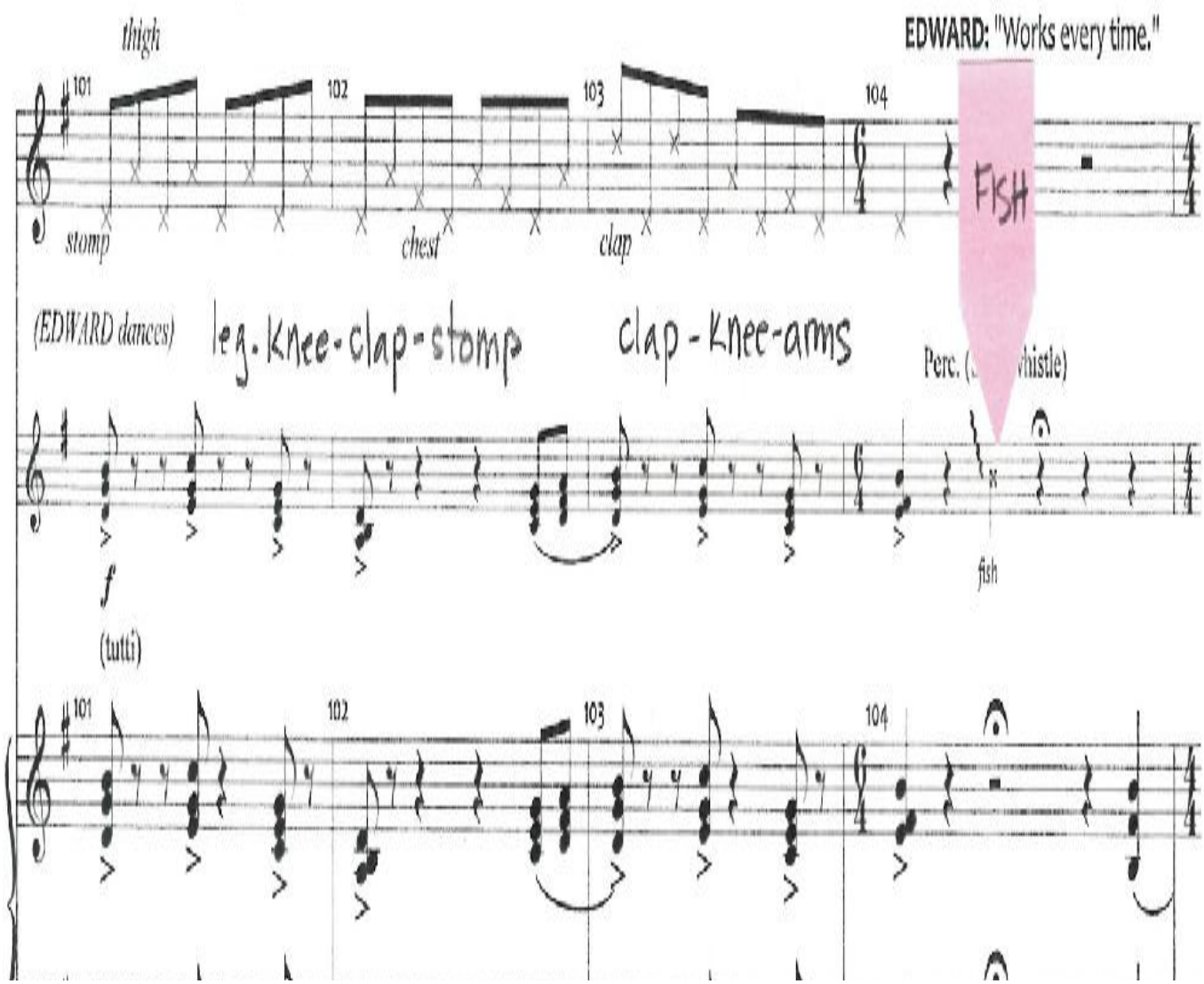
EDWARD

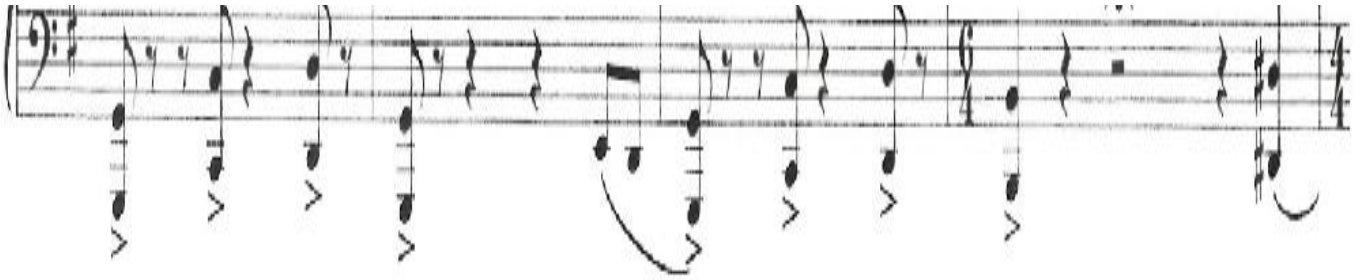
The fish are sleepin'! You gotta get 'em movin'.

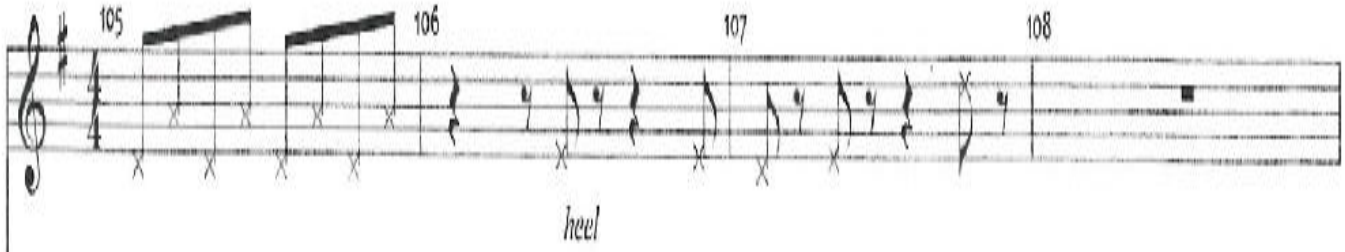
(an idea)

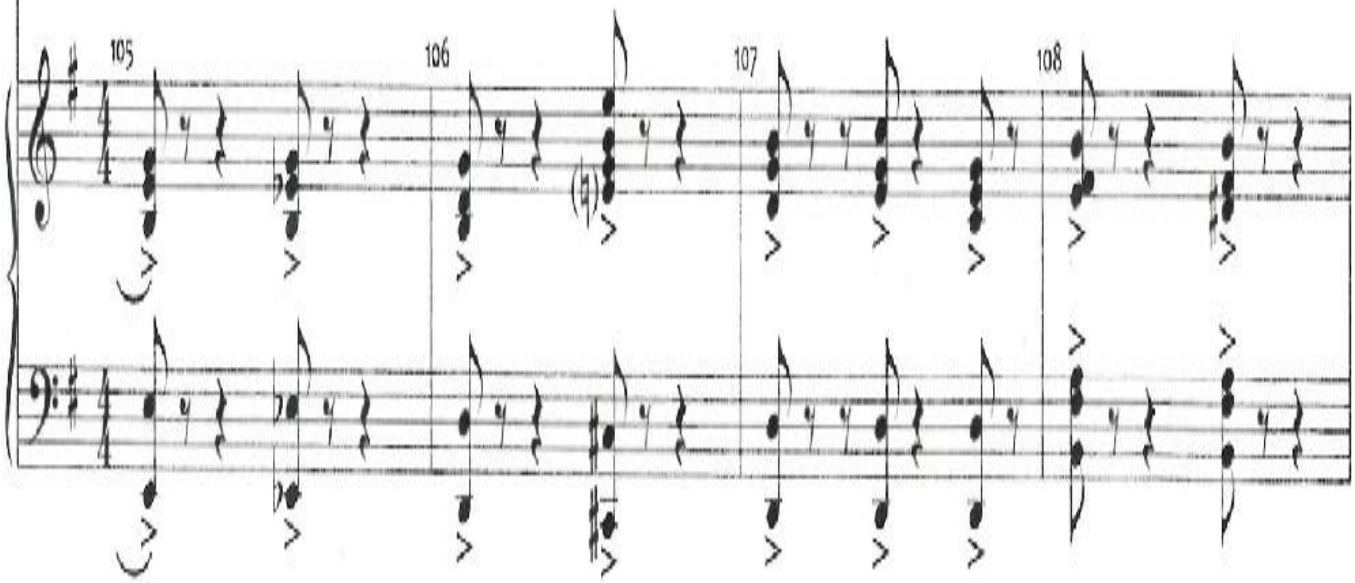
Try the Alabama Stomp!

(EDWARD launches into a stomping dance step. One fish jumps out of the river, landing on stage --it's incredible!)









EDWARD: (*ad lib*) "Something about this rhythm really gets their fins movin'."

chug chug clap arms

Perc. (whistle)

Picc. (8va)
Tpt. (loco)
Hn (8vb)

109 110

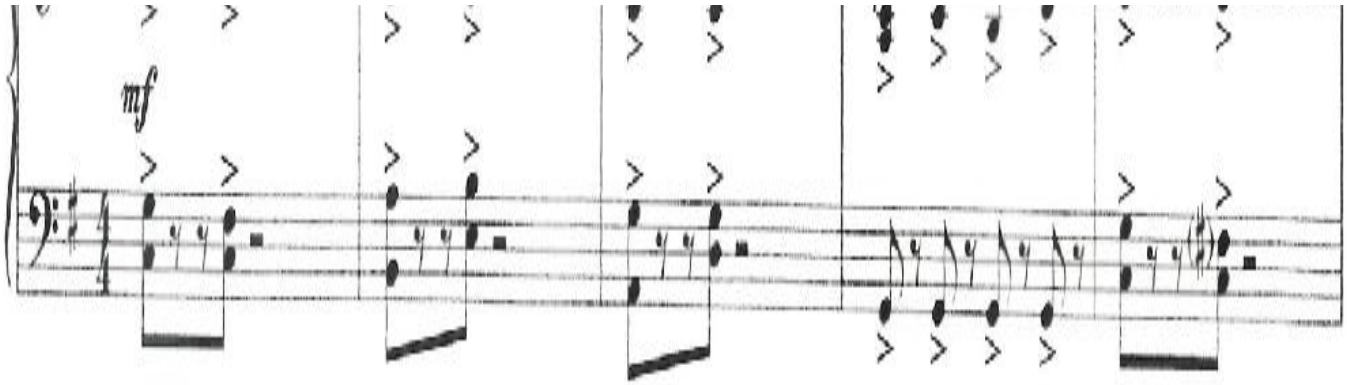
PC

111 112 113 114 115

repeat with Fisherman

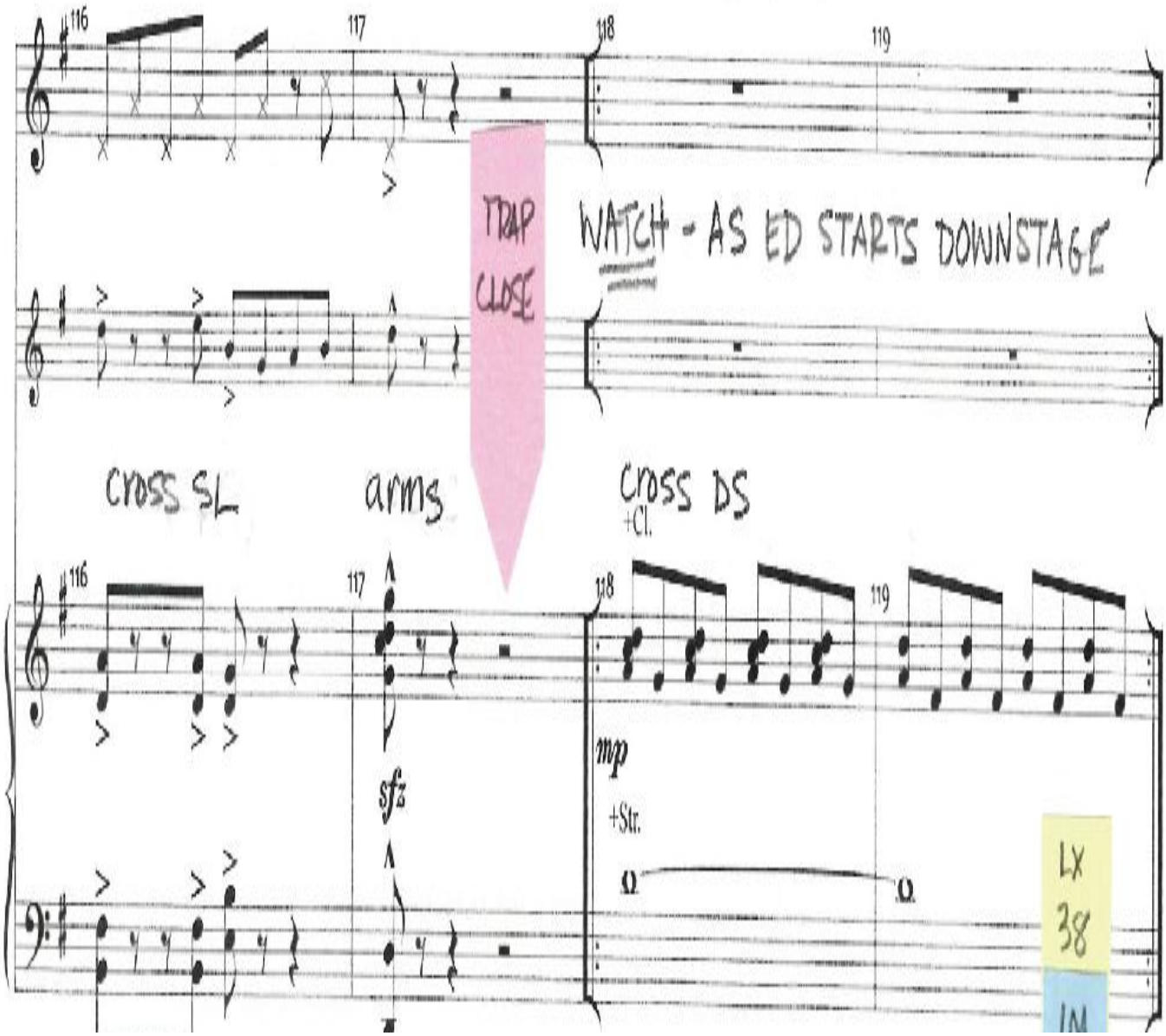
Cross US

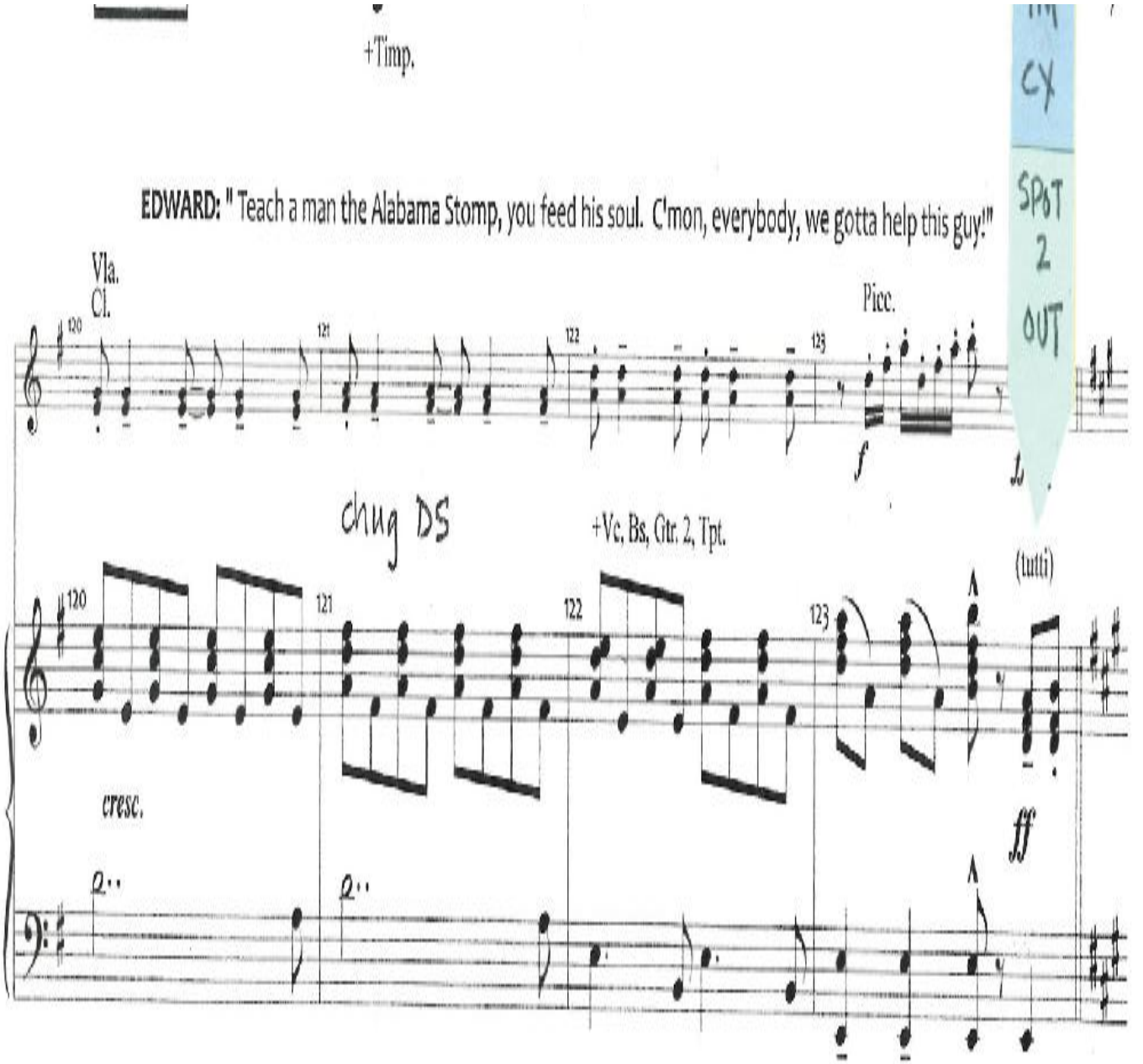
111 112 113 114 115



YOUNG WILL: "Couldn't you just give him some money?"
EDWARD: "See Will, give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." *[GO ON]*

(no fish) **VAMP (jump any beat)**





Figures 6.24 A through 6.24D An excerpt of "Be the Hero" from *Big Fish*, used with permission of John August and Andrew Lippa.

THE STANDBY

Once all cues are placed, the stage manager adds standbys into the script. These warnings alert board operators and other technicians to an upcoming cue or sequence of cues. Standbys should be placed approximately one half-page before the cues begin, allowing time for the SM to warn all necessary operators and to receive confirmation that everyone is ready. For cue-heavy sections of a script, the stage manager groups cues in the standby—warning "lights 10 through 17 and sound 4 through 9," for example.

When multiple departments are included in a standby, the stage manager should announce them in a consistent order. This commonly means standing by (1) lights, (2) sound, (3) video/projections, (4) scenic moves, and (5) effects. If cue lights are in use, the stage manager should include them in both the standby and go sequence, placing their notations at the end of the above list—it is a reminder to you to turn on and then off the appropriate switches in the box.

It is helpful to make the standby distinct from the cues placed into the script. This can be achieved by drawing a box around the standby or even placing it on a small Post-it (with good staying power, of course). Should the stage

manager be in problem-solving mode during a performance, the additional visual element will help remind the SM to prepare for the next cue sequence.

THE CALLING KEY

The final element of preparing the prompt script for cueing is to create a calling key. Similar to the blocking key, it serves as a guide to the symbols and notation used within the script. The SM will not need the calling key at hand during tech; you should be able to read your own pages without help. The key is intended to help other stage managers who might use your script. Figure 6.25 presents my key for that production of *Big Fish*.

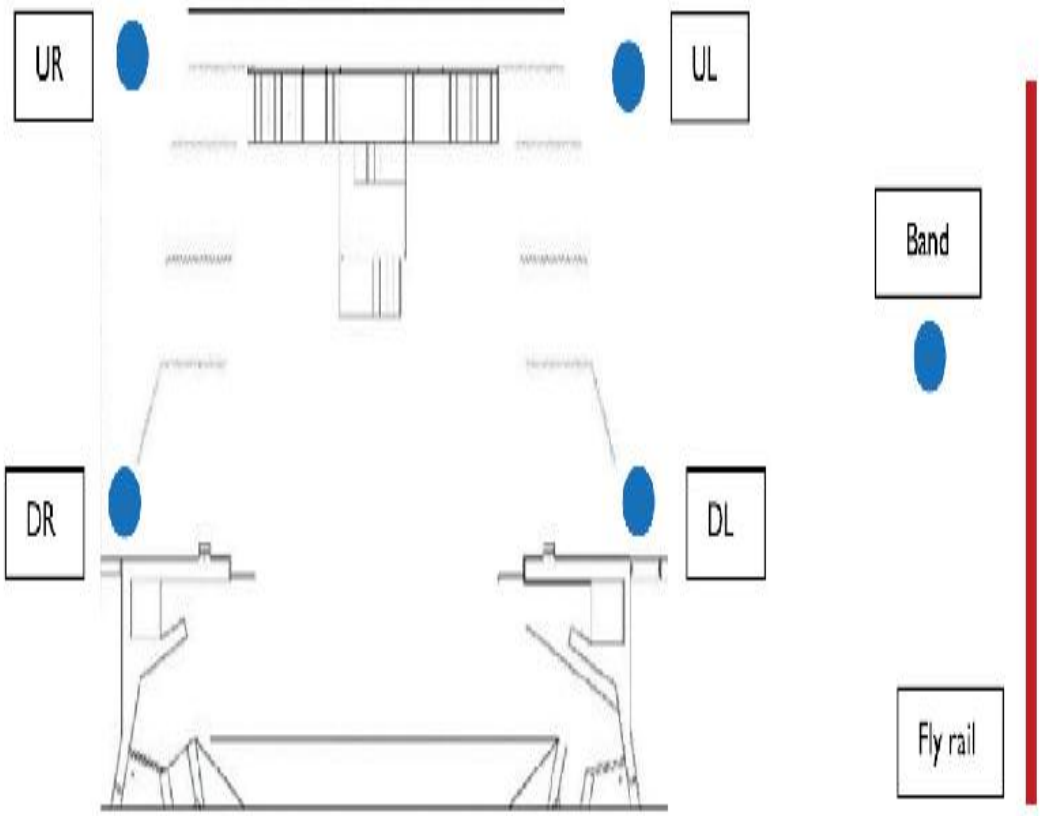
The key outlines your method for marking cue placement. This includes abbreviations, symbols for turning on and off cue lights, bracketing cues to be called together, and your method for identifying specific triggers. If you are using colored stickers of any kind, their placement and color would also be explained in the key. You will note that this key describes the information for libretto and score pages, because my prompt script was a combination of the two.

CALLING KEY

ABBREVIATIONS

LX	Light Cue (YELLOW flag in the score)
SPOT	Follow Spot cue (GREEN flag in the score)
SQ	Sound Cue (*all handled by cue light in this production!*)
IM	Image Cue- still projection or video (BLUE flag in the score)
SHIFT	Scenic move onstage (PINK flag in the score)
S/B	Standby for one or a series of cues- listed in small yellow post-it, always in above order!
↑ or ↑↑	Cue lights ON (standby)- one arrow for single cue light, double arrow for multiple cue lights
↓ or ↓↓	Cue lights OFF (GO)- one arrow for single cue light, double arrow for multiple cue lights

CUE LIGHTS



SOUND in house at mixing console

PLACEMENT WITHIN SCRIPT

- A cue drawn to a line of text with a box placed around a single word or syllable means the GO is called on that word. An "X" means the GO is called immediately after the word or line/lyric.

- A cue drawn along a line/lyric with no specific box or X but with an action written to the right of the cue means the GO is called visually on that specific action, which generally occurs during the line or lyric underlined

- A cue drawn along a line/lyric with no specific box or X but with "vox" to the right of the cue means the GO is called to anticipate the vocals in that song or verse
- A cue drawn to one in a series of numbers means the GO is called on that specific beat- may also be seen as "on 3" or similar notation for calling GO within the measure preceding the vocals
- A cue drawn to the symbol means the cue is called with the conductor on the downbeat of the music
- Cues which are bracketed together should be called simultaneously with a single GO
- Descriptions of cue action or sound effect are provided within cue box whenever possible

Figure 6.25 A sample calling key.

WATCHING, READING, AND TALKING

During tech rehearsals the stage manager calls each cue as it is written in the prompt script, taking care to follow notes precisely and to articulate as clearly as possible. This ensures that changes are executed in the exact spot chosen, so that everyone can see if adjustments are needed. A designer might change the length of a cue or request a different placement; a director might ask the stage manager to move the cue in relation to an action on stage. And even without receiving a note, the SM can sense how best to land a cue to make it work as intended. But all these scenarios are dependent upon accuracy with plan A.

During early rehearsals it can be difficult for the stage manager to look up from the script and at the stage. One of the secrets to an effective call is to leave space between the cue preface and the word *go*. This space provides the SM time to listen for an individual syllable or look up to watch for a specific action. When calling a musical, cues within songs will happen at precise locations in the music. The video monitor providing the SM with a close-up view of the conductor will allow you to correctly anticipate these moments, and the space provides you that chance to watch for the appropriate signal. For busy sequences some stage managers add an additional piece of notation to mark where they begin talking in order to consistently preserve that space. This might be a dot above a specific word, a colored notation of some kind, or even the preface itself in quotes. The last variation is far more useful in a score than in a libretto.

WORKING ON HEADSET

Nearly every directive from the stage manager during tech will be delivered over headset. Most of the technicians with whom you are communicating will not be able to see you at all, making it essential to develop a consistent method for warning and executing cues, and to speak clearly and with adequate volume (loud enough to be heard by others wearing headsets, but not so loud you compete with the actors).

When working with new board operators or ASMs, try to find a moment before the first tech rehearsal begins to let them know what they will hear from you and what you expect in return. Describe the fact that you will always insert a tiny pause before the word *go*, and emphasize that operators should wait for that word. Clarify the type of confirmation you want after a standby. Most of the time that will be "lights," "sound," "stage right," or the equivalent.

Voices always sound slightly different over an intercom system, and you may not be able to tell who has replied if the response is "okay" or "standing by."

When calling very fast sequences, the stage manager may need to limit the number of words said in order to get all the *gos* in the right place. Explain this to your operators, and remind them of this difference in the standby if you need to. For example, a production of *Footloose* for which I was the stage manager included a tight sequence of cues at the end of the first act—four light cues on each of the final three beats of music and a blackout in rhythm one beat later, followed by the main curtain coming in and then the house lights up for intermission. There was no time to say more than the actual word *go* on a single note. I called the sequence by saying "Lights 136 through 139—*go, go. go*, *go*" and then throwing a cue light to bring in the main curtain when we were at black. Once the curtain landed, I could announce, "Lights 140 *go*." This worked well and allowed me to be very precise. Under other circumstances the SM might choose to drop the cue number at times to save the syllables. As long as your operators know what you are doing—and you resume using all the cue information as soon as you can—find whatever method lets you talk quickly enough to make everything happen.

The companion website for this book contains selected video excerpts of the call in action, along with the accompanying script pages. These samples demonstrate the importance of articulation and precision in your calling style, and specificity in the notation in your prompt script.

ARE YOU YOUR OWN CREW?

In some small theatres, the stage manager may have a secondary responsibility beginning at tech rehearsals. You might be the person operating the lighting or sound console. Even certain AEA contracts provide for this situation. This can be a tricky prospect because the SM's focus will always be divided between the stage and the board, and you will write cues into your script just a bit differently since you will not need to allow for the beat between "go" and the pushing of the button. Be sure that you are clear about the potential for this situation prior to the beginning of tech so that you can learn how to operate the equipment if you are unfamiliar with it. The SM should also think about how best to prepare ASMs for some additional problem solving, as they might be the most available for troubleshooting during a performance while you are executing a cue sequence. If you are operating one console but calling cues for an operator on another, I recommend keeping your prompt script in "SM-mode" throughout and calling the *go* for the cues you take yourself, even if not aloud. It is even trickier to only anticipate some of the call.

It is also important to know whether you will be your own board operator from the start of tech rehearsals, or only as you approach and reach performances. Listening simultaneously to the lighting designer asking for cue adjustments and the actors delivering lines on which you will call those cues gets overwhelming fairly quickly. And as soon as someone backstage asks a question, you may lose focus on both. In an ideal scenario, an alternate person will be available for those first few days of tech, and the SM will transition to the board operator once the bulk of the notes are completed.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

This relationship is the key to success on the musical. The monitor providing you a shot of the musical director conducting the orchestra is not to keep you company—it is the means by which you execute the call. Just as the stage manager learns where to place a cue in relation to an actor's cross from stage right to stage left so that he is never in the dark, or how to break up a scene shift into parts so that the transition from one locale to another flows smoothly, the SM is reliant on the musical director for the triggering of cues intricately tied to the conducting of the show: anticipating a downbeat at the top of a song or the bump as the music cuts off, or placing the ten-count color change on the cyclorama to perfectly time with the key change in the middle of the song. When a special effect is specifically tied to a place in the music, the musical director in effect conducts that portion of the call as well as the musicians and singers. The work done by the stage manager to learn the music and to annotate the prompt script earlier in the rehearsal process will facilitate communication about these details in tech and beyond. The musical director will remain your partner on the show after opening, sharing responsibility for the maintenance of the show.

Musical Director Kathryn Skemp Moran offers these thoughts on key elements of the partnership between the SM and the musical director, from small logistical details to big-picture coordination.[4]

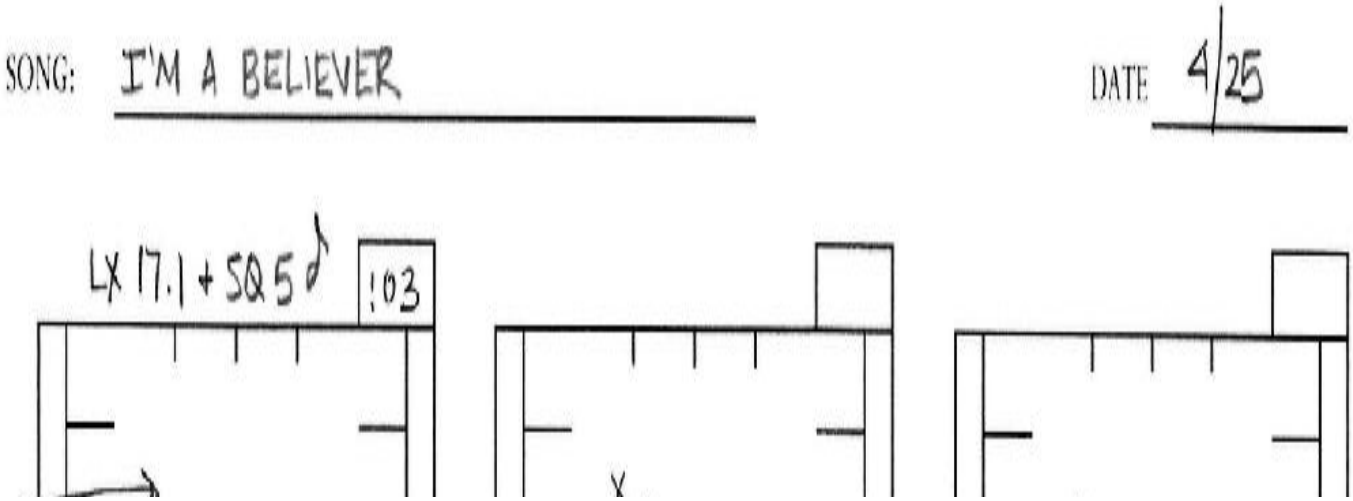
- Prompt and efficient rehearsal scheduling and pace to ensure time to learn, review and refine music in the show
- Good communication between director, choreographer, and stage management about any cuts to the script and score
- Assistance with score distribution
- Helping to ensure appropriate chairs, light stands and monitors for the orchestra
- Arranging for the necessary video and audio monitoring both for the musical director and the cast
- Clarity on cueing. Will the musical director lead the show out of the scene shift music after playing it one time through, or does the SM call the next cue based on the technical elements with the MD bringing the orchestra out of the vamp as the lights begin to change?
- And lastly, tape— lots of tape — to secure stands, cables, lights etc.

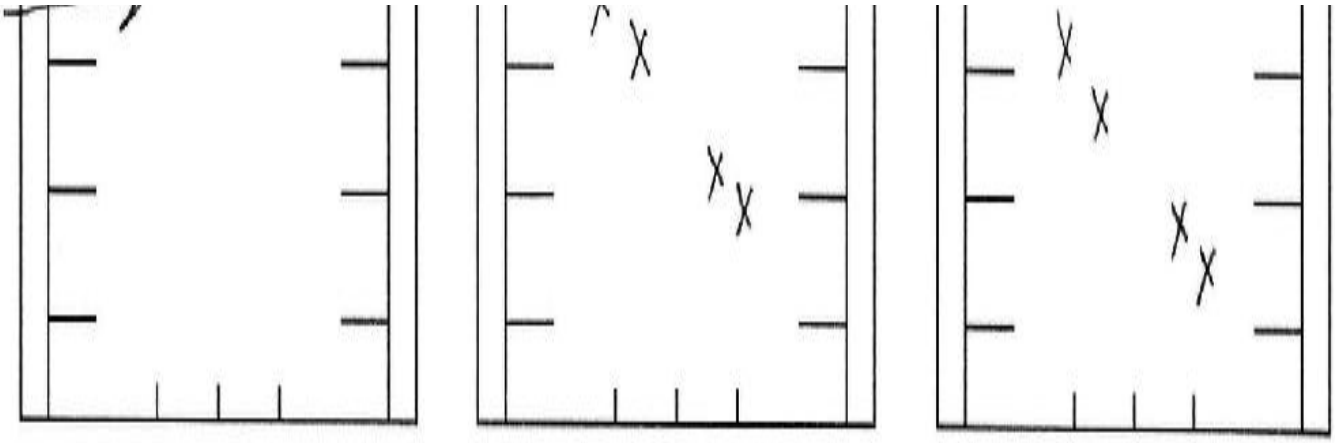
While you still have the opportunity to take college courses, try to achieve at least a basic level of music proficiency and score reading. Although you will still be able to place cues in your script based on words/lyrics or stage directions, many will be entirely based on the music itself, a task much easier if you know how to find measure numbers and count beats in a score.

TECH FOR DANCE

Technical rehearsals for a dance production are again cousins to their theatrical counterparts. The stage manager may again have a paper tech, although it may be a meeting with just the lighting designer. And if detail on a cue sheet is unclear, meeting in a place where a rehearsal video can be played solves the problem. If the choreography is difficult to describe in words, usually pointing at the screen or pausing the file to say “there” is not. It is also possible that the designer will provide the SM with a cue list only after taking time to write the cues, and the cue-booking process will happen very quickly before the first tech rehearsal.

A complex dance piece with moving scenery may benefit from a dry tech, but in most other instances this will be skipped. As will the cue-to-cue rehearsal. It is not practical to skip forward though the music and ask dancers to pick up the choreography at various disconnected points in the same way that actors can jump over pages of dialogue. In order to balance the need both to run and to stop, the SM would do well to suggest running the piece with music first (or a section of the piece if it is a long work). After that, you could ask the dancers to go to a particular spot onstage or moment in the dance without music and then hold there for a moment while the lighting designer makes a necessary cue adjustment. Because the dancers have just done the choreography, they will be able to easily move to the correct spots. In general, dance moves more quickly to runs without stopping than a play or musical. Stamina and fluidity are even more important here.





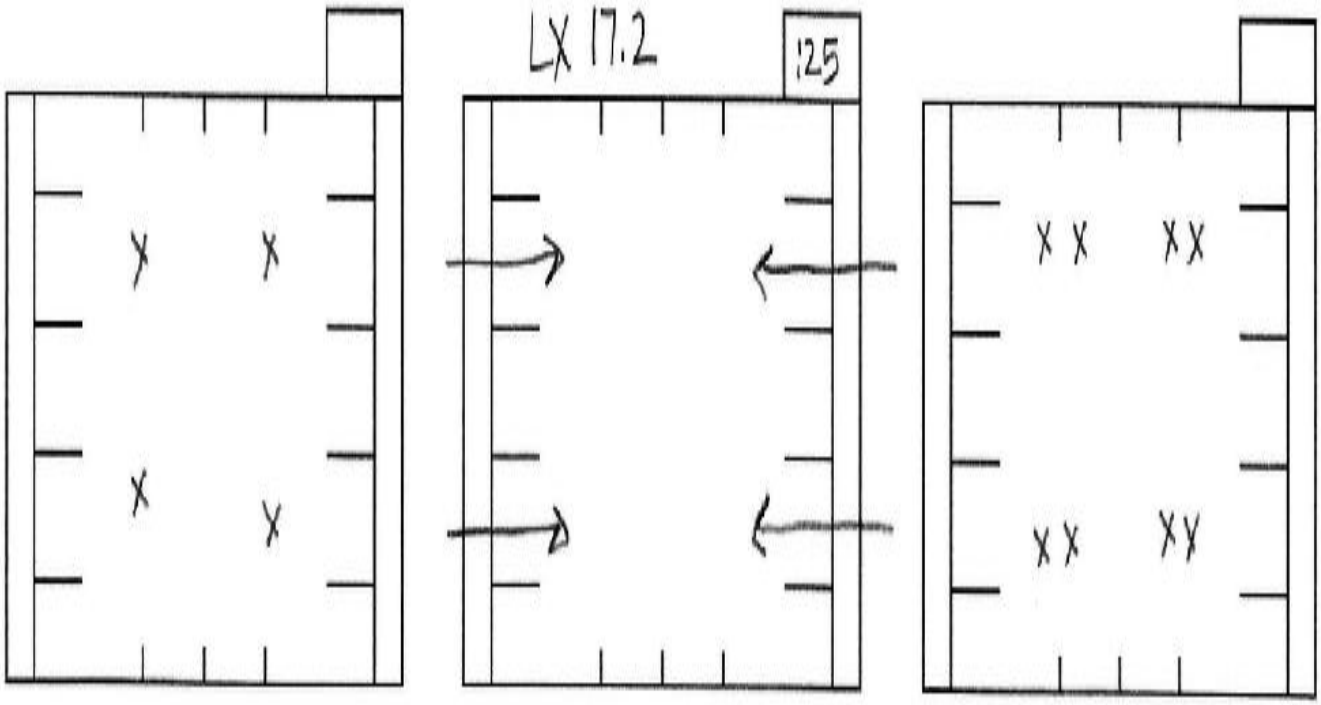
4 dancers

pairs

girls spin, boys bounce

LX 17.2

:25



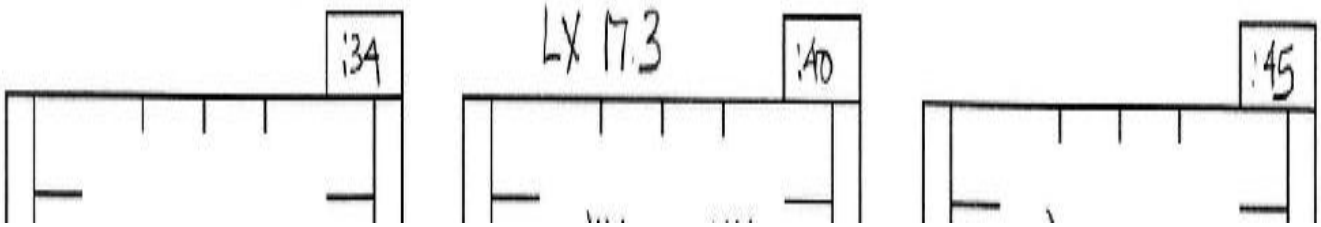
"saw her face" 4 more ch

LX 17.3

:34

:40

:45



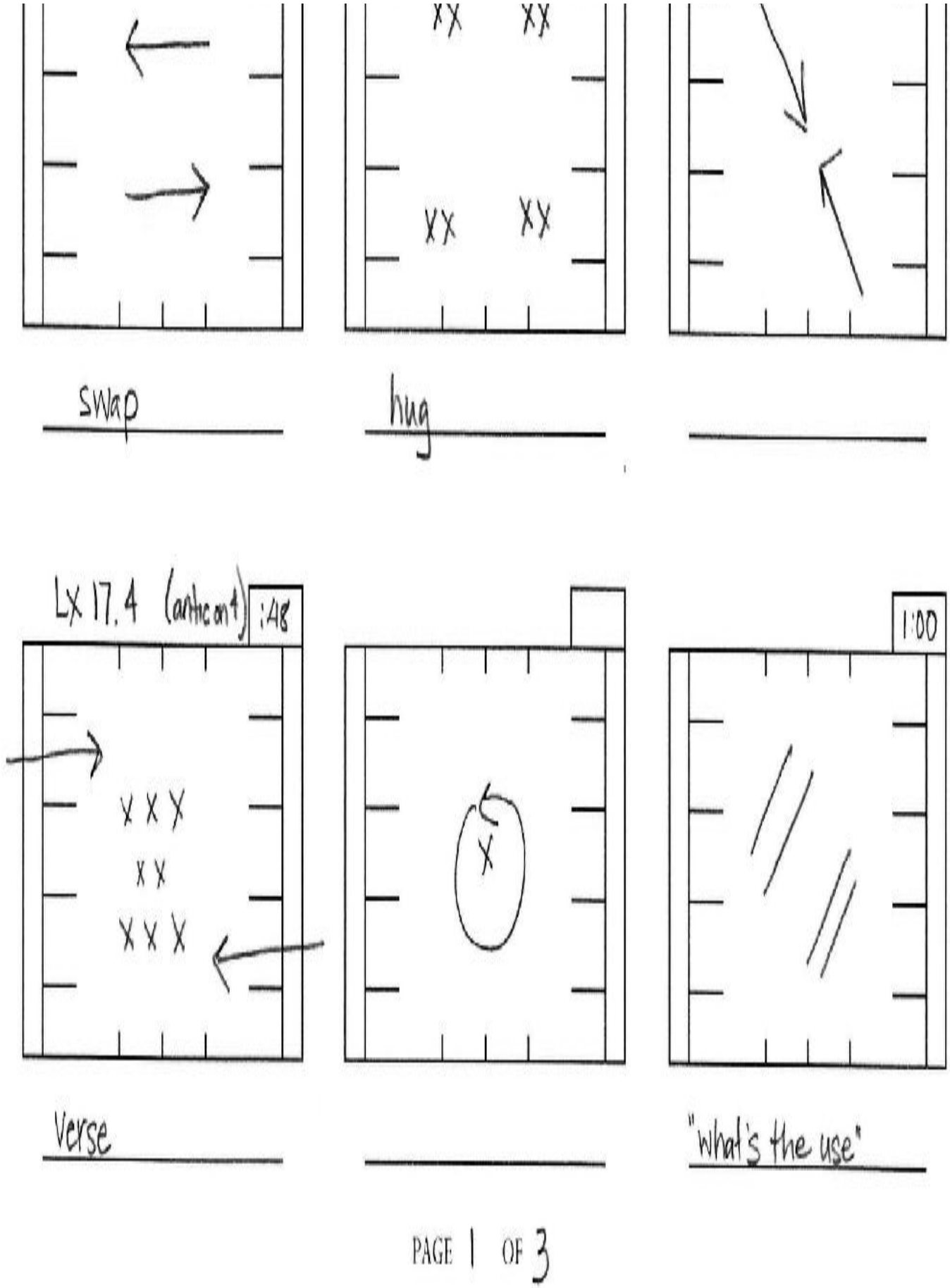


Figure 6.26 A page from the stage manger's calling script for *Monkeemania*, choreographed by Kathy Gorman with music by The Beatles.

The SM calling script for dance is often that same blocking sheet. First you added choreography notation, and now you add cue notes. If the stage manager never used the line underneath the boxes for descriptive details, then it could be a place to write the cues. But as this is unlikely, the best placement will be above the box, to the left of the stopwatch time information. It is also more visually accessible during a performance. Figure 6.26 is a page from a dance script, complete with choreographic notation, sound cues, and lighting cues.

THE ART OF IT ALL

The stage manager has everything written down, but the joy of live theatre comes from responding to each individual rehearsal or performance, working in sync with the performers. Susan Threadgill, Director of Production for University Events at the University of Texas at Austin, offered this apt description of the art of calling cues:

> *A stage manager is never "given" his or her cues; there is a dialogue between the stage manager, the director, and the designers to determine when the audience should become aware of the cue; when the cue should resolve; and whether the cue is dependent on the music, dialogue, or action. Because the art form is live, the conditions for the call of the cue could be, and often are, different every night.*
>
> *A good stage manager adapts to his or her given circumstances on the fly. The conductor is moving slowly tonight and has tacked on a total of two minutes in Act One alone … change the call to make the cues* ***work****. The leading actor has entered a bit late and is not clear of the area where the Act Two wall comes to the deck … change the call to make the cue* ***safe****. The ensemble has risen to new heights in the final scene and needs one half-second more with this phenomenal moment … change the call to make the cue* ***right****.*[5]

STEPPING UP TO RUN THE SHOW

The consolidation of all elements and personnel marks the beginning of a transition in authority for the show. Most directors and designers depart after opening, and the stage manager will be tasked with maintaining the collective artistic vision until closing night. Tech rehearsals are designed to let you learn the intricacies of doing just that.

Tech rehearsals also prompt a change in priority from written to verbal communication. You will continue to prepare and distribute rehearsal reports, but you are now interacting with those same individuals constantly throughout the day. Bring the same sense of professionalism and clarity to your conversations that you showcase in your reports. Provide the information you have. Seek details you are missing. Take notes (no one remembers everything). Even when you are stressed, try to remember that you do love your job!

Throughout this book, I have used the words *authority* and *responsibility*. Note that you do not find the word *power*. Power implies control over other people and a hierarchy of who is right and who can act. Remember that theatre is a collaborative art, and being entrusted with the job of bringing everyone together is not the same as being made the boss of them all.

It is also important to remember that not everyone with whom you interact will be able to both see and hear you. Backstage personnel on headset will be informed by the tone of your voice. Staff sitting in the house may see only the expression on your face or the hunch in your shoulders. Your words, actions, and body language are still working in harmony to communicate your thoughts and feelings, whether you like it or not.

If you are overtly frustrated or overwhelmed, everyone will know it. If you exude confusion, you undercut trust in what you say and do—and even in the paperwork you have prepared. Project confidence; breathe; remain calm. Make sure you actually take at least part of your breaks to step out of the theatre for a moment and away from the chaos. Lessons about understanding body language are even more important when the stage manager is tired or under stress.

Undoubtedly, it is far easier for me to type these reminders than for you to live them. With experience you will learn to manage your emotions and go with the flow. As a new stage manager, it is common to take everything

personally. In Chapter 1 we first discussed how tough it can be to recognize the difference between someone yelling at you and yelling toward you. When a director or designer is upset, it is easy to assume they are upset with you. Trust in the work you have done so far. Expect that there will be changes. Remember that many times it isn't anyone's fault. As time and money become limited, tensions rise. And as the central point of communication, much of that tension comes your way. Over time you will develop the skill to listen and not automatically react.

In addition to setting the tone, responsibility for the big picture requires the stage manager to keep goals in mind and use time wisely. You have the authority to announce, "Hold, please," and make everything stop. But the stage manager should always evaluate what adjustments warrant that stop. When safety is at risk, or multiple departments need to make changes for a stage moment to work, time is best spent addressing those issues right now. Moving a piece of set dressing a few inches upstage or calling a ten-count cue a beat earlier can probably be handled with a note and adjusted for the next day.

While you are holding, be sure that work is taking place. If the lighting designer indicates it will take a few minutes to reprogram a sequence, this might be a good time to add a newly requested piece of glow tape or invite the director to give an acting note on the previous scene. Tech rehearsals can be slow; multitasking helps offset that trait. And when work resumes, the stage manager should make sure everyone is back in place and then clearly announce where the scene will pick up.

REHEARSAL REPORTS DURING THE TECH PERIOD

The stage manager continues to prepare rehearsal reports during the tech period, but the content will change. It is not necessary to catalog adjustments made to the show during rehearsal itself. Most production teams also gather briefly at the end of each night of tech. These short production meetings provide the opportunity for feedback and questions that were not possible while everyone was working. The SM does not need to document this entire discussion either. This is not a meeting that requires minutes.

As your days are getting longer, your reports in general are getting shorter. This is both appropriate and convenient. Members of each production area will be present during tech rehearsals, taking their own notes or at times fixing problems right in the moment. The SM team can certainly use the extra time at the end of the night to update paperwork and script notations before the next rehearsal.

The notes in the tech rehearsal report primarily focus on information acquired without everyone present. This could be news of a broken prop discovered at the end of the night as a crew member put it away. It could be a comment the director forgot to pass along during the post-show meeting, or one that came from a cast notes session not attended by the designers. It could also be a request based on a problem-solving session the SM team had time for only after everyone else was gone.

On occasion, though, the SM may be asked by a production area to repeat a note discussed during tech or the meeting. This might be to ensure that it does not get forgotten, or because it is a job for a member of their department not in attendance. Be sure to follow those requests and include the information. And if you are unsure if a note was given earlier, cover your bases and write it down.

After the final dress rehearsal, the company is ready to add the final component to make the show complete—the audience.

CHAPTER 7

Performances

Figure 7.1 The stage manager's view during performances.

The audience is an essential component of theatre. Performing in front of a live audience is what makes our art form different from television or film and keeps the experience new and fresh every night. Each time the house lights dip to half, the entire company takes a leap together—hoping that everything will unfold as planned, and that all the work will pay off.

The audience on night forty deserves to see the same show as those in attendance on opening night. The stage manager's responsibility to maintain the artistic and technical components of the production is what makes this possible.

PERFORMANCE TASKS

- Maintain the director's vision.
- Ensure that the artistic and technical components of the production remain accurate and consistent.
- Work with front-of-house personnel to look out for the audience.
- Incorporate understudy, substitute, and replacement cast and crew members into the production.
- Continue prompt and clear communication with the production team.

PREVIEWS

In many professional settings, the first nights in front of an audience are part of the rehearsal process. Preview performances exist to allow the company to "test" the production and make adjustments based on the reaction of patrons. Evening previews can be followed the next day by notes sessions and additional rehearsals to refine a technical moment, clarify an onstage relationship, or, in some cases, to make major changes to lines or blocking.

The stage manager must help the entire company to work with extra efficiency. The time allotted for rehearsals during the preview weeks of an AEA contract is traditionally much less than other points in the rehearsal process. Areas of the show in need of work are selected precisely, and adjustments must be communicated very clearly so that everyone understands how these new elements weave into the show as a whole.

Some academic theatre programs will also incorporate previews into the schedule. Although you may only have one or two instead of a week or more, the purpose is the same, and any rehearsal time outside of those previews should be approached with the same focus. Notes sessions are more likely to follow the performance rather than take place the next day, but the SM should still expect to facilitate some additional rehearsal time to look at new cues or make blocking adjustments.

STOPPING DURING PREVIEWS

Technically, because the preview is a rehearsal, the stage manager could stop the show so that an error can be corrected. Practically, the culture of stopping during a preview is very specific to an individual theatre. Some companies will welcome moments to stop and reset to remind the audience this is still a rehearsal. Others will treat the presence of any audience the same and resist stopping for anything besides a true emergency. The SM needs to understand the point of view of the theatre's artistic leadership in order to accurately assess how to proceed when complications arise.

REFINING YOUR ROUTINE

The presence of any audience places a time constraint on preshow activities. If things run behind during tech rehearsals, you might get underway later than originally planned. And while this might be an unpopular experience for

the production team, no one else is left waiting. Audiences are generally allowed to enter the theatre thirty minutes prior to the performance—meaning that all setup must be completed by that time.

The stage management team facilitates this goal by developing an order for preshow activities once dress rehearsals begin. Identify tasks that can happen simultaneously, as well as the overall order of all jobs. The SM and ASMs take responsibility for overseeing specific portions of the setup to ensure not only that everything gets done, but also that it happens in the most efficient manner possible. These include tasks performed by the crew as well as the stage managers themselves. In some professional theatres, this will include taking over duties previously completed by members of the design team, such as conducting the dimmer check with the light board operator.

In an academic setting, or one with nonunion crew, the development of the preshow routine will primarily be determined by the SM team. When working with union crew, the stage manager will partner with the head technicians to coordinate tasks within the contractually defined responsibilities of individual crew members and the allotted preshow work time. By the time you reach previews and performances, this routine will be set and allow both backstage and front-of-house needs to be met.

THE RUN SHEET

The stage manager should document the overall flow of the preshow routine, creating paperwork that would help a substitute SM to be in exactly the same places at the same times. The run sheet shows how divided responsibilities fit together, and how the preshow section of the shift plot fits with actor time onstage before the house opens. (A note: the names of documents in this book are the ones with which I am most accustomed. Variation does exist. In some theatres the shift plot may be called a run sheet because it details the activities during the run of the show as much as it describes how to shift from one scene to another, and our run sheet might be referred to as a checklist or time list. No matter the name, the function and importance remain the same.)

FORMATTING AND CONTENT

The run sheet is not a document to be widely distributed and does not need a significant amount of formatting. The sample found in Figures 7.2A and 7.2B is a simple list, specifically for the SM, containing two types of information: the time and what happens. Stage managers looking for more structure in the list or wanting a place to check off completed activities could either utilize a formatting style reminiscent of the preset list, or place the run sheet in a sheet protector and use a dry-erase marker to cross off jobs as they are completed each day.

Recently I have also seen stage managers load their duties into smart phones or tablets, giving them the ability to mark an activity as complete by touching it on the screen. This makes for a very portable list, but it will not be useful for a sub. If you opt to work with an electronic device, I recommend keeping a printed copy in the prompt book as a backup.

Twelfth Night

SM RUN SHEET

PRESHOW

5:15 pm / 11:45 am	Arrive at theatre

Turn on house, work, and grid lights from touch panel backstage (SR or SL)

Unlock doors:
-back of house left and right
-stage door left and right
-lower house door left
-dressing rooms, makeup room, laundry room
-storage room; open and place stage weight in door
-green room
-room 70

Unlock booth and turn on lights

5:45 pm / 12:15 pm — Check for crew arrival. Ask Cara to call anyone who is late.

6:10 pm/12:40 pm — Check in on video setup& make sure dimmer check is happening
Check glo tape onstage and replace any missing pieces
Check cue lights
Confirm headset check is complete

6:15 pm/12:45 pm — Check sign in sheet for actors. Ask Melissa to check for missing folks & call anyone who is late.

6:25 pm/12:55 pm — Be in house for rail check. Pay special attention to amount of stretch in ropes on LS 6 (trees)

Be prepared to make a slight adjustment if hitting the out spike means flying the bottom of the tree hardware above the first electric. (Trees will catch and not come in correctly during the show if this happens)

6:30 pm/1:00 [illegible]

6:30 pm/1:00 pm	Stage Open
6:35 pm/1:05 pm	Make sure fight call setup is onstage; colonnade, 2 urns, bench
6:40 pm/1:10 pm	Fight Call: Antonio, Sebastian, Fabian, Andrew, Viola, Toby Sword fight and fist fight ** keep ASM and rail on standby to fly out colonnade/strike urns after sword fight
6:55 pm/1:25 pm	Close stage Final check of onstage preset Make sure pit power is on Go into Lights 1 and Sound .5
7:00 pm/1:30 pm	Open House Announce half hour dressing rooms
7:15 pm/1:45 pm	Announce 15 minutes in dressing rooms then check in with ASMs

Figure 7.2A The stage manager's run sheet for *Twelfth Night.*

7:20 pm/1:50 pm	Check in with House Manager then head to booth
7:22 pm /1:52 pm	Call 5 minutes over cast call mic and headset
7:27 pm /1:57 pm	Call Places over cast call mic and headset

7:30 pm / 2:00 pm	Begin show (or when receive "house is closed" from house manager) Crew on headset to start: lights, sound, (2) ASM, (2) projections operators Top of show places: SR: Orsino, Prescott, Hart, Coffin SL: Olivia, Hernandez

INTERMISSION

At 8 minutes in	Call 5 minutes in dressing rooms then check in with ASMs
At 10 minutes in	Check in with House Manger, head to booth
At 13 minutes in	Call Places
At house closed	Check for places, all crew back on headset Part Two Places: SR: no one SL: Toby, Andrew, Fabian, Maria

POST SHOW

At house empty	Announce house is closed and ask for work lights & call Sound 46 Go down to deck and check in with ASMs and crew - prop notes

- consumables check

Go down to dressing rooms to check with actors & costume crew

Pit back up to auditorium level, fan off, power off

Lock all doors that were unlocked at beginning of show

Collect stuff from booth, turn out lights, lock door

(Make sure center projector in booth has been turned off!)

Go to office: write report, email it to production team and post on theatre callboard in hallway and online on show website

Figure 7.2B The stage manager's run sheet for *Twelfth Night.*

Very basic headings break the duties down into those happening before the show, during the show, and after the show. The times are included for both evening and matinee performances to prevent the SM from repeatedly stopping to translate from day to night when looking at his or her watch.

Note that the content of the entries does not presume previous knowledge. This is particularly important for academic productions. Not everyone may know where the light switches are located, who needs to attend fight call, or which ASM will call missing crew members. The goal of the run sheet is to provide as much specificity about how to get to the start of the show as the script does in how to execute the cues. This, at times, might include a narrative explanation of why something happens, if the reason is not obvious. The italicized note below the check of the flying scenic pieces is an example of this.

RUN SHEETS FOR ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

Each member of the SM team should have a run sheet, as each of you will have separate though intersecting tracks during the show. Think back to the "divide and conquer" approach you took to rehearsals. By sharing responsibilities, the team can ensure that everything is taken care of in a timely and efficient manner. Only a single person needs to check the sign-in sheet and call anyone late to arrive. One ASM can oversee the preparation of the food props needed in Act One while another ensures that everything is in place for the quick changes. And the stage manager might therefore be in the best position to be available in the house to ensure that speaker check has taken place, or determine how the humidity in the air has impacted flying scenic units that night. If everyone thinks a job belongs to someone else, then a task can get overlooked. Figure 7.3 is an excerpt of the run sheet for one of the *Twelfth Night* assistant stage managers. Note the differences in focus from the SM version.

If the ASMs have specific shift or costume-change responsibilities during the show that are already detailed in the appropriate crew paperwork, there is no need to list the items again. Simply note the switch to crew paperwork,

emphasizing that the ASM has tasks during the show and not just supervisory responsibilities. If the ASMS do not have specific moves, then the section of the run sheet devoted to activities during the acts can highlight important checks and provide any brief anecdotal information that might be needed.

Why? The run sheet is not simply designed to keep the SM team on task. It can prove to be one of the most useful documents for a new or substitute SM or ASM. Stepping into a production without the history of the rehearsal process as context is difficult. The run sheet can also benefit the ASM who takes on additional responsibility after opening. Some companies employ additional stage managers or interns during the rehearsal and tech process, but cut back to contractual minimums once the production is open. Theoretically a running show is easier to manage. An assistant stage manager who shared the job of overseeing the deck during rehearsal will be less familiar with the intricacies of the tasks with which he or she was not originally involved. Combining two run sheets into one can help to ensure that all of the necessary jobs are still happening.

Twelfth Night

ASM RUN SHEET STAGE RIGHT

PRESHOW

5:30 pm/12:00 noon	Arrive at theatre
	Get keys from SM and unlock props cabinet
	Double check that props notes from previous show have been completed
5:50 pm/12:20 pm	Call any crew members who are late
	Ensure that the rest of the crew has started preshow duties
6:00 pm/12:30 pm	Check wax seal on trick letter and redo it if it is falling off
	Check stability and length of candles in shrine replace if too short, melt more wax around them if too loose

	Check spike tape and glo tape on deck and replace missing pieces as needed
6:30 pm/1:00 pm	Have crew set stage for fight call; colonnade, 2 urns, bench **After sword fight, SM will ask for colonnade out and urns struck for fight part 2
6:55 pm/1:25 pm	Have crew reset stage for top of show Double check that dousers for both projections computers are closed
7:15 pm/1:45 pm	Get on headset after SM calls 15 minutes
7:28 pm/1:58 pm	Check for actors once places have been called Switch to show paperwork

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DURING PART ONE (note times below are now running times)

	Check candles each time they come off stage – they have a tendency to get loose after being carried around while lit
6:00	End of I-1; Page DR leg for crew to strike railing
11:00	Top of I-3;Cue Maria at door
20:00	Before I-5: Make sure Olivia has her ring

23:00	During: I-5: Send Katie over to SL with wine glasses and martini glass
40:00	End of II-1: Watch as trees are flown in for the first time- make sure crew remembers any spike adjustments made for this performance
54:00	End of II-3: Watch as trees are flown out for the first time – make sure they do not overshoot (*If bottom turnbuckle gets above the batten on lineset 6 they will not be able to come back in. Let SM know if this happens and be ready to fix at intermission.*)

Figure 7.3 An excerpt from an ASM run sheet for *Twelfth Night.*

OPENING NIGHT

Cara Cook: "There's nothing like the feeling of an opening night. It doesn't matter what position you hold during a show: if you're a performer, designer, or manager, seeing everyone's hard work come to life and hearing the first audience respond to it is amazing and a large part of why a lot of people are passionate about theatre."[1]

Opening night marks a new phase for your production. It is the point at which reporters can attend a professional production and review the work. It also begins the final set of time guidelines within an Actors' Equity contract, outlining new rules about when actors need to arrive at the theatre and how much rehearsal can take place each week. (Yes, there is still rehearsal! More about that later.)

The opening-night audience will be different from any other group of patrons you are likely to see during the run. In addition to the press, the house is filled with friends, family, and fans. They will applaud often, laugh loudly, and inevitably give you a standing ovation at the end of the night. While this enthusiasm is welcome, it often impacts the rhythm of the show in a unique way. The SM should always be sensitive to the dynamics of an individual audience. But it is important to recognize that although tonight you may wait longer than ever before to call the scene-change cue at the end of a big song, this is not a permanent change simply because you have reached performances.

The opening performance may begin with curtain speeches or other acknowledgements requiring an alteration of cue sequences. The SM should think ahead to be sure these special events can happen successfully. Does the preshow music fade directly into the "turn off your cell phones" announcement, which itself fades directly into the first sound cue? You might need to coordinate with the director and designers for a temporary adjustment so there can be silence for a speech at some point. Is there adequate visibility in the preshow light cue for someone to stand on stage? You might also require a one-night-only lighting or follow-spot addition. It is best not only to get verbal confirmation that adjustments have been made, but also to have the operators go through those sequences to ensure they are correct. And once someone removes these extras from the show after opening, make sure to review the sequences on night two as well to make sure they are really gone!

EQUITY HOURS AFTER OPENING

The SM encounters the third set of rules about the work day and week once a production reaches opening night. Although there is some variation between agreements, the rules exist in two major categories.

1. **The Call.** As difficult as it may be to believe, the official call for an actor is at "half hour," thirty minutes prior to the start of the show. If your theatre does not have a main drape flown in prior to the performance, this means that no time is available to the actors to be onstage before the show starts. Nothing will preclude an actor from choosing on their own to arrive early, but if more time is officially needed to be ready for a performance, then the actor will receive overtime. A few circumstances that might warrant an early paid call include: a daily fight call to be sure that combat sequences continue to meet safety and artistic goals, or a hair or makeup call for an actor who undergoes an extensive transformation to get into character.
2. **The Week.** In addition to performing a contractually-specified number of times each week, Equity actors can be called for up to ten hours of rehearsal each week after opening. Typical rehearsals focus on brushing up details that might be inadvertently changing, or preparing to work with an understudy. Unless it is a long rehearsal of five hours, in which case a meal break is required, the rehearsal will be scheduled immediately prior to the performance call.

Equity also looks out for actors and stage managers on two-performance days. When the mandated break between the end of a matinee and the call for an evening performance is shorter than your contract provides, the theatre will be required to provide you a meal.

Because overtime, extra performances, and meals all require the theatre to spend money, it is rare for the SM to approach opening night and find the theatre has not planned for this in some way. An effective stage manager, however, should still check up on those plans to be sure there are no surprises.

WORKING WITH FRONT-OF-HOUSE

The arrival of the audience brings the stage manager a new partner for overseeing the show: the house manager. The house manager is the liaison between the audience and the production, and is responsible for the order and safety of the patrons.

In order to do this job successfully, the house manager needs to know about the nightly schedule as well as elements of the show that could affect members of the audience. These include physical aspects of the production that could exacerbate a patron's medical condition, or content issues that could impact their enjoyment of the play. This same information may be requested by the box-office staff in order to successfully answer questions from ticket buyers.

The stage manager might convey these details verbally by meeting with the house manager prior to the first night the audience will be in the theatre. Describe the relevant production elements with conciseness and specificity—remember that the house manager is as new to the show as your crew was only a few days or weeks ago. Answer questions thoroughly, and consider walking through the theatre during the meeting if you have a particularly audience-impactful setup.

Other theatres may request written documentation in order to provide the same information to all staff members and volunteers who will interact with the audience. Figure 7.4 is a sample of a front-of-house information sheet that can be used to capture a wide range of production facts.

Much like a rehearsal report, the front-of-house information sheet contains organizational and time information at the top and devotes the bulk of the document to specific details in a series of categories. The first set of questions addresses general concerns relating to the overall performance. These details allow the house manager to know about interaction between the stage and audience areas of the theatre. Some items are general information that could impact any venue, while others may be more important to a specific theatre configuration. The existence of a scene change during a blackout, for example, has little impact on patrons of a proscenium-style theatre. But an audience member sitting in a thrust space could try to step out into the lobby at the exact moment a large furniture piece is en route to

the stage down the same vom. (A **vom** is an aisle in between banks of seating in a thrust or black box theatre, used both by actors and audience members.) Knowing this detail allows the house manager to make an informed decision about the best location to station ushers inside the theatre during the show.

The second and third categories focus on production-specific details. These include the physical components of the design such as fog, gunshots, or strobe lights, along with content considerations such as profanity, smoking, and adult content. There is little the house manager can do about these aspects of the play or musical, but, with information, they can be prepared for audience members who leave early, complain at intermission, or demand refunds.

NAME OF SHOW

FRONT-OF-HOUSE INFORMATION SHEET

Opening Date:	Closing Date:	Theatre:
Director:	SM:	ASMs:

RUNNING TIMES

Act One	
Intermission	
Act Two	

GENERAL

	Y/N	NOTES
Latecomer Seating Hold		Length of Hold:

Actors Enter Through House		
Actors Travel into Audience		
Audience Members Onstage		
ASL Interpreters Scheduled		
Scene Change(s) in Blackout		
Obstructed Views		
Preshow Fight Rehearsal		

EFFECTS

ONSTAGE Gunshots		
OFFSTAGE Gunshots		
Fog/Smoke		
Strobe Lights		
Flash/Smoke Pots		
Other Loud Sound(s)		
Other Effects		

CONTENT

Characters Smoke Onstage		
Characters Drink Liquor Onstage		
Drug Use Depicted		
Violence Depicted		
[illegible]		

Nudity		
Profanity		
Sexual/Suggestive Content		

Additional Notes/Information:

Figure 7.4 An information sheet for front-of-house and box office personnel.

FORMAT

The front-of-house information sheet is designed to present the information cleanly with streamlined formatting considerations. As with other paperwork discussed in this book, the form is set up to capture the broadest range of information. A performing arts center with multiple performance spaces might not want individual layouts for different venues. Details have specifically defined and labeled boxes, placed on the page in sections devoted to each category. Individual questions can be concisely answered yes or no, and space is provided for supplemental details or explanations. Questions not applicable to an individual theatre can be marked as such. White space sufficiently separates each category, and the prominence of the show title allows users to easily differentiate this sheet from the one belonging to other productions. A busy theatre might wish to further distinguish individual venues. The lack of shading on this form would allow the use of colored paper with no loss of accessibility.

THE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The stage manager continues to provide daily updates about the production after opening. Like the rehearsal report, the performance report is an official document of the production and maintains the link between the show and its artistic and technical personnel.

RECIPIENTS

- Director and SM team
- Designers
- Production Manager
- Shop heads receiving rehearsal reports
- Theatre personnel with new run-of-show responsibilities
- Executive personnel (if requested)
- Production Stage Manager (if you have one)
- Faculty advisors (academic theatres)
- House Manager (some theatres)

WHAT IT CONTAINS

- Details of the day's show
- Upcoming performances
- Technical problems fixed before or during the show by the crew
- Unresolved technical issues needing attention
- Information about illnesses or injuries

- Front-of-house details as requested

WHY DO IT?

- To document the events of the performance
- To provide updates or make requests regarding technical problems
- To report audience size, patron issues, or other requested house information

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The performance report should maintain the formal written communication style of the rehearsal report. Although information may be categorized differently, the same care should be used to tactfully and specifically relay all details. It is unlikely the relevant team member was present for the performance. Providing context for technical notes allows staff members to work effectively to solve any problems that took place. Did you try a repair that was unsuccessful? Will the temporary fix hold for a few shows but then need further attention? Have you exhausted the supply of backups?

CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS

The sample performance report in Figure 7.5 provides a format for the relevant details for the run of the show. Requested organizational information again appears at the top, presented in largely the same manner as it was during rehearsals.

The schedule overview component includes the first significant change in content. Everyone receiving the document knows there was a performance last night. It is not necessary to list out the calls. Of more concern is how smoothly the performance ran. A late opening of the house might indicate work on a technical issue or problem in the box office. The same rationale prompts including the length of the intermission. Directors pay attention to the running times of individual acts—large unexplained variances from the original pace of the show will prompt concern, and the stage manager should not be surprised to hear from the director if this is an ongoing event. These times also contextualize any potential feedback from audience members regarding their overall experience. A reminder of the next performance concludes the time section, serving as a reminder of the deadline for any potential work needed on the show.

The meat of the report is again devoted to the presentation of specific details. The requested information for this theatre includes a more prominent accounting of absences and late arrivals, front-of-house issues, and any technical notes. If your theatre requests the information be presented in a certain way, you should defer to the provided format as you did with rehearsal paperwork.

At this point in the process, it is not essential to subdivide the technical notes and to acknowledge when there is no information for each designer or shop head if you are not asked to do so. Problems and concerns can be addressed in a single section of the report, with care taken to prominently identify the department who is receiving a note. If you prefer to maintain individual department areas in your report, use your rehearsal report as a template and adjust the other areas of the document (such as the schedule and run times) to capture the new information to be recorded.

The *Big Fish* sample includes several different kinds of technical notes: issues resolved during the show, a note that can be addressed by the crew the next day, a repair the crew identified as beyond their capability, and two events that could be indicative of larger problems that warrant attention from shop heads during the day. The SM wants to include this range of detail in the report. It might seem unnecessary to document problems that were solved, but a pattern of mic problems allows the sound department head to foresee a larger potential issue, if one exists. Continual mending of the same costume piece might warrant replacing it in the future. And if no proactive response is needed, department heads are made aware of the hard work being done by the crew.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

Production: Big Fish

Date: Friday February 23

Stage Manager: Laurie Kincman

Assistant Stage Managers: Rachel Krause, Sydney Smith

House Open	7:00
Curtain	7:31
Act I	1:15:11
Intermission	16:40
Act II	57:35

Next Performance Saturday February 24		
Time	**What**	**Who**
5:45 pm	Call to Theatre	Full Company
6:00 pm	Call to Theatre	Board Operators
6:20 pm	Mic Check	Company with microphones
6:45 pm	Pit Check	Band
7:30 pm	Curtain	All

Actors or Crew Late:

None

Front of House Notes:

Intermission held due to long lines at the restrooms.

Tonight's full house stood for enthusiastic applause at the end of the show.

Problems or Repairs:

1. SCENERY. A pieces of foam fell off the wall on turntable 3. After the show, the crew determined it was a piece of the lower trim and reattached it.

2. SCENERY. The brake on turntable 2 slipped back down while it was being opened for the circus, causing it to stop the turntable early and then get jammed. We used the occasions of the cast running off scared first of the giant and then of the werewolf to jiggle the turntable and free the brake so it would close for the Auburn University scene.

3. COSTUMES. The sole of Cullen's right ballet slipper is starting to separate from the rest of the shoe.

4. COSTUMES. One of the buttons fell off the right arm of Evan's army jacket. Violet will reattach it before tomorrow's show.

5. SOUND. One of the Rio boxes in the pit spontaneously turned itself off and back on during exit music.

Accidents or Injuries:

Isaac strained something during his tumbling run. He appeared to land not quite as intended. After a few ice packs and some additional stretching, he said he felt fine. Laurie will check in with him tomorrow afternoon.

Additional Notes:

A reminder that the photo call originally scheduled after this Sunday's matinee has been cancelled.

Thanks everyone,

Laurie Kincman, SM

Figure 7.5 A performance report from *Big Fish*.

Some theatres also request that performance reports include such other information as the ticket count for the night, any special guests in the audience, or even the weather (especially in outdoor venues). Other theatres ask for documentation of notes given to the actors. This sample could easily be modified to include sections for these details. And as with other paperwork, if your theatre has a standardized document for all productions, use it!

FORMATTING THE REPORT

Because the performance report serves a similar function to the rehearsal report, it is logical that it contains many of the same formatting principles. The formal tone is maintained by the continued use of complete sentences and correct grammar. The report is typed in the same commonly available font as other show paperwork and probably sent out as a PDF, and in this case also continues to use a graphic from the show to provide a quick visual identifier as to which show this report belongs. The numbering of notes continues, but resets back to one.

The reader's eye is guided by two techniques—adequate white space within each section of the report, along with the use of capital letters to highlight the technical areas receiving notes. (This is a tradeoff for not including individual sections for each department.)

DISTRIBUTION

The final parallel between the rehearsal and performance report is distribution. The report should be sent promptly following each show to all production team members. In the case of a two-show day, the SM should investigate theatre policy about sending a report during the dinner break versus sending two reports at the end of the night. Due to the shortened amount of time before the next performance, it is not always feasible for staff to read email, get to the theatre, and complete any repairs before the evening show. In many instances you will be able to set up a system that "no news is good news" between performances. Urgent problems are often best communicated through a phone call. The SM might be able to receive all necessary information verbally, or at least instructions on how to start a repair while the needed staff member is driving in. Be sure that you know what you will do before the first weekend is upon you, and be sure that your production team is on the same page.

The avenues of distribution should match your rehearsal report. If you have been sending it via email, continue to do so—with any adjustments to the recipient list warranted by personnel changes. If you also post copies, do this as well. You may think that no one will look at a posted report in between the Saturday evening performance and the Sunday matinee. Perhaps you are right, but perhaps not. As always, it is best to have the information available should anyone need it.

CHANGING PERSONNEL

Opening night typically marks the departure of the director, along with designers who are not resident to the theatre. Although these team members remain connected to the show by continuing to receive reports, they will not be able to provide any hands-on attention to problems that arise. The stage manager might need to expand the communication circle to include theatre personnel not previously associated with this show who take on new responsibilities during the run. For example, daily oversight for the lighting created by a guest designer might be a task for the theatre's resident lighting assistant.

It is wise to talk in person with the new team members before simply adding them to your email distribution list. You can establish a more personal connection and bring a new contact up to speed with the history of production elements in their area. Do you have ongoing problems with a piece of equipment and anticipate frequent notes for continued repairs? Is there a cast member who has recently been ill and whose understudy has not yet had a costume fitting? By providing some advance context for your reports, the new personnel will more easily be able to support the show's needs and save you from providing lengthy explanations later on.

SETTLING IN FOR A LONG RUN

Recent graduate Alexis Wells shares another observation about her move to professional theatre—and the differences that arise when the number of performances goes from 7 to 70!

"I have found that within a few weeks of opening, none of my crew has to use their paperwork anymore because we've done the show so many times. We have 8 performances a week and some of those included 10am school performances. You get into this groove where you know the show so well that you spend more of your down time during scenes in the green room rather than waiting backstage. I think that one of the toughest parts of adjusting to a long run is keeping up the mood with the cast and crew because everyone gets tired and sick, so being a sort of beacon of positivity is important. Also, notes happen more often because things break from getting used and consumables get used up more quickly, so you're still working with the shops to get things fixed and sometimes you have to fix things yourself in an emergency."[2]

MAINTAINING THE ARTISTIC INTEGRITY OF YOUR SHOW

Now that the director has left the production, the stage manager has primary responsibility for maintaining its artistic components, in partnership with the musical director if you have one. Even if the director does not leave the theatre company itself, they often begin work on a new show and will not give your production primary focus.

TECHNICAL CONSISTENCY

Artistic maintenance of the show is first achieved by continuing to call cues accurately. There is a difference between responding to the ebb and flow of live performance and deciding now is your chance to "fix" a cue you never liked. The latter is not our job.

Occasionally you may find that a moment in the show grows over the course of the run and warrants a design adjustment. If, for example, an auto-follow cue is now consistently cutting off the applause at the end of a song, the SM reports this change and requests assistance. The designer could then ask that the board operator make a programming adjustment—extending a wait time, making the second cue manual, and so on. Your observation is apt, and clear communication that respects the designer's work will lead to a solution.

GIVING NOTES

The stage manager also looks out for the work done by the actors. Your task is to watch the performance with the director's vision in mind, giving notes when required to keep everyone on the same page and in sync with the technical components of the production. This means looking out for added business or ad libs, altered blocking, changes in pace to individual scenes, or anything else that impacts the rest of the cast and the overall show.

Giving notes to the cast can be a tricky endeavor. Not all performers will be receptive to your observations. Although you have been part of the show since day one, the SM plays a very different role during the rehearsal process. You did not create the blocking or the character, and your feedback can sometimes come across as an indicator that the actor is doing something wrong.

So how does the stage manager approach this situation? Be proactive. You know this job is coming, so do everything you can to position yourself for success. Actively listen to notes sessions during rehearsals. Notice how cast members react to receiving line notes or late-arrival calls. Consult the director for specific things they would like you to look out for. And if you are a new stage manager, consider asking the director to share this information with the cast during one of the final notes sessions before opening, so it is clear that your authority on the show includes this duty.

And once the run begins:

1. **Remember that anyone can have an off day.** Unless it is an issue of safety, apply a "one for free" filter to your notes.

2. **Recognize that shows do grow.** Is the change within the parameters established during rehearsal? Has the actor simply become more comfortable with an aspect of their character and found something new that the director would encourage if present?
3. **Prioritize technical aspects of the performance.** Is the actor now crossing farther stage left than originally set and walking out of light? Has the actor changed the timing of her entrance, causing a blocking problem for someone else on stage? Is someone dropping lines and causing the SM to skip over cues or rush a backstage prep activity for the next scene? Performers may more easily accept those big-picture observations from your position out front.
4. **Consider timing when delivering notes.** Your feedback will be better received at the end of one night's performance than it will be at the fifteen-minute call the next day. Providing the actor time to think about the note will be less intrusive to their process.
5. **Show the actor respect.** If you need to deliver a note that concerns the quality of a performance, do not do this in front of a full dressing room. Consider delegating part of your post-show routine to your ASM so you can be available to talk with the actor as they leave. Or pop your head into the dressing room and ask that the actor find you on the way out so you can "ask a quick question." This avoids potential embarrassment or the implication in front of the rest of the cast that an actor has done something wrong.
6. **Ground your feedback in the show.** Now is the time to use those artistic notes you took during character rehearsals and run-throughs. By employing the director or actor's own words, it will be clear that you are not trying to take the production in a new direction.
7. **Do not give musical notes alone.** When working on a musical, remember your partnership with the musical director. They are in the best position to give specific vocal notes, and are the person with the expertise to do so. If you have a concern with the pace of a song as it relates to a cue or other technical element in the show, that is not actually a note for a performer or musician. A conversation with the musical director will be the most successful way to determine if the change is inadvertent, or if it is another aspect of the show growing that may warrant a note to the production team.
8. **Find out if you have backup.** In the case of an actor who might be negatively impacting the show but with little interest in receiving your notes, do you have options? Is the director close enough to come back to see a performance if needed? Is the theatre's artistic director available in an extreme situation or is there an assistant director still under contract and monitoring the performances? Looking out for the show also means knowing when you need help to do what is best for everyone.

In general, verbal notes come across as less autocratic than written notes. The SM will also be able to use those skills reading body language to gauge how the feedback is received. You might have three notes to give. Perhaps the performer can only handle one tonight. Or perhaps the change has been prompted by another actor. Verbal notes also provide the opportunity for a conversation to take place.

Remember that most Equity contracts permit a small number of rehearsal hours once a show opens, the specifics of which will always be detailed in the rule book under which you are working. Brush-up rehearsals can be an effective way to address a physical change that impacts several actors or to clean up fight or dance scenes in need of more concentrated work than the preshow schedule allows, even if you have a main curtain and would not necessarily need to call actors prior to the opening of the house at half hour.

In an academic situation, you are unlikely to have designated rehearsal time after opening, aside from a possible brush-up rehearsal if several days transpire between performances. But in exchange for this, the SM has other options available that do not exist in professional theatre. There is no overtime penalty involved if you need to call one or more actors early to address a problem from the night before; you may have access to the actors during the day and can discuss notes in between classes or over lunch; and the director is often a faculty member and never very far away from the production.

WORKING WITH UNDERSTUDIES

The stage manager's duties during the performance period also include working with the understudies in the cast. Should one of the actors be unable to perform on a given day, the understudy will step in to cover the role. In most instances, the understudies will not have a chance to work on the role during the rehearsal period. These actors attend

rehearsals to learn blocking and observe character work, but may never get up on their feet. After opening, the SM will conduct understudy rehearsals to provide them an opportunity to work through their characters and become acquainted with the set.

UNDERSTUDIES, STANDBYS, AND SWINGS

An **understudy** is a member of the cast who learns the role of another actor and is prepared to step in should the primary actor be unavailable due to illness, injury, or absence. Understudies can have this "substitute" duty as their sole position in the acting company, or they might be ensemble members learning a second role in addition to their primary work in the show. On a large-scale production the SM may also work with standbys. A **standby** is an actor who understudies one of the lead roles in the show but is not otherwise a part of the cast, and who would be the first call to go on. It is possible to have both a standby and an understudy, though this is generally reserved for the largest of shows—much more commonly on Broadway than anywhere else.

In the case of a musical that has a chorus, swings may also be required. A **swing** is a multi-actor understudy who is asked to learn the roles of several (or all) chorus members of their gender and to be prepared to perform for any one of these actors. That collection of roles is known as their **track**. A chorus member could also be a partial swing, hired to learn the role of a fellow chorus member for numbers in which they do not normally appear. Each type of AEA agreement outlines specific requirements for understudies and swings, which vary by cast size and type of show within each agreement itself.[3]

Not all productions have understudies. Only certain Equity contracts mandate having such backup for the performers, and some permit an Assistant Stage Manager to be an understudy. Academic productions do not always have enough students to cast two sets of actors. If you are working on a show without understudies, it is important for the SM to know what would happen if an actor becomes ill or injured so that such emergency planning could be put into action quickly.

UNDERSTUDY REHEARSALS

On most professional productions, understudy rehearsals begin during the week following opening night. The stage manager will focus on accuracy with lines and blocking, delivering any acting notes within the same guidelines as those for giving feedback to the primary cast. The intent of understudy rehearsals is to give these cast members a chance to recreate the roles developed by the original actors in case they are required to perform. Understudy rehearsals are attended by the understudies themselves as well as the SM team but not other members of the cast. Typically understudy rehearsals are conducted with only minimal technical support—working with scenery and props but not lights, sound, or costumes, for example. When working on a show with fight choreography, singing, or dancing, be sure that the understudy rehearsals include the chance to review these elements as well. The appropriate staff should be in attendance—your musical director, fight captain, or dance captain—especially if you were unable to find pockets of time for this work during your initial weeks of rehearsal.

Non-Equity or academic productions might provide more substantial opportunities for understudies to get up on their feet during the initial rehearsal process. The amount of rehearsal time and theatre tradition will guide the SM to know if he or she should pursue building this into the schedule. If this is not possible, then the stage manager should plan to hold understudy rehearsals on the AEA model.

PUT-IN REHEARSALS

Because understudy rehearsals do not involve the primary cast in their normal roles, the SM will need to call a specific rehearsal to work important moments with those actors in the event an understudy is going on. As a rule of thumb, I never ask an actor to sing with, dance with, fight with, or kiss another actor for the first time in front of an audience. The put-in rehearsal will also address tricky physical or dialogue timing, actions that trigger cues, and anything else that could not be replicated during understudy rehearsals.

You will almost never have a full complement of understudies to individually cover each role in a large show. During understudy rehearsals you might need to run a scene twice for an actor covering two roles. You might also

send your ASM on to read lines for an uncovered part or to handle a scene shift. The put-in rehearsal allows the understudy the chance to work necessary parts of the show with the correct people and with all the technical elements in place.

The limited work hours available after opening are also intended for these understudy and put-in rehearsals. If you know in advance that an actor will be out, the SM can proactively schedule put-in time. In the case of an emergency, you will most likely be calling actors to ask them to come early to the next performance to address parts of the show.

In most cases, you will call only the actors directly affected by the existence of the understudy to the put-in rehearsal. One exception would be when an understudy for the lead role in a show is slated to perform for the first time. Your emergency scenario may not change, but with advance notice the SM might be able to arrange for one day with only the affected actors and a second day to run the entire show so the new lead can feel the full pace of the show—including the times he or she is not on stage. This may also be a significant-enough development to warrant requesting crew, so that the second rehearsal can include all of the cues. Advance scheduling gives you the chance to get any necessary overtime pay approved and to let the crew members make themselves available.

UNDERSTUDY DOMINOES

Given the range of relationships an understudy can have to the principal cast, the SM team will want to plot out what would happen should that understudy be required to perform.

Consider *Twelfth Night*, one of our sample productions in this book. If the actor playing Orsino is out, obviously the role will need to be covered. If Orsino's understudy does not have another part in the show, then he will step in as a straight substitution—requiring no other adjustments. But if Orsino is understudied by the actor playing Valentine (a smaller speaking role, but one who appears in scenes with Orsino), then a second understudy will step in for him. If Valentine's understudy is outside the primary cast, then the switching is complete. But if Valentine were to be understudied by one of the lords, then a third set of adjustments will be required.

Such a scenario can quickly get complex, and it can be difficult to think through all the potential ramifications on the fly. When working on a show with understudies, the stage manager's time is well spent to plot out the dominoes in advance, so that as many situations as possible can be covered during understudy rehearsals and the put-in can focus on making the adjustments, not figuring out what they will be. You can also identify absences or dominoes not currently planned for so that the director (or musical director) can address these questions in advance.

She Loves Me

Understudy Plot

OUT:	Robert Schneider	Georg

IN:	Costume Changes	Prop Changes	To Rehearse	Notes
Larry Kyle	None	None	"Perspective" & box stack Trio in "Tonight at Eight" "Tango Tragique" dialogue timing	

OUT:	Jane Smith	Cafe/Shop Customer		

IN:	Costume Changes	Prop Changes	To Rehearse	Notes
Susan Adams	None	Need handoff of bag in I-3 Move christmas present to SL table	Romantic Atmosphere Dance Tango Tragique Dance	Will Still Play Carolers in II-4 (just have one fewer customer in scene)

OUT:	Jason Mendez	Sipos		

IN:	Costume Changes	Prop Changes	To Rehearse	Notes
Scott Johnson As: Sipos	None	ASM be ready to help him pick up the pile of boxes!	"Perspective" & Box Stack 12 Day Xmas fight with one fewer customer	
Chris Mitchell AS: Keller	Chris will have new Quick Change to cafe customer	None	None	

OUT:	Joe Hicks	Violinist		

IN:	Costume Changes	Prop Changes	To Rehearse	Notes
None	None	None	None	No violinist in cafe scene at all (just orchestra part)

Figure 7.6 An adapted excerpt of an understudy plot for a production of *She Loves Me.*

Figure 7.6 is a sample understudy plot, excerpted to show four different understudy scenarios in the musical *She Loves Me*. Scenario one is a lead character out, covered by an understudy not part of the regular cast. Specific music and blocking moments requiring work with the orchestra and other principal actors are highlighted. Scenario two addresses a night when one ensemble member is out, and her role is covered by a second ensemble member who still performs her primary role. In addition to two pieces of choreography to run, this situation requires a few prop adjustments to accommodate the double duty. Scenario three is a double understudy, featuring an ensemble member stepping up to a principal role and a second ensemble member playing two roles. This brings with it a new fast costume change, which should be practiced. Our final scenario is a role that would be dropped. In this production, the director opted to double the violin part of a particular song by adding an actor to play violin onstage. Because this was an addition to the show, no outside understudy was cast. And because no other member of the company played the violin, the role would simply be eliminated should he fall ill.

By creating a chart to catalog all of these potential changes and rehearsal needs, the stage manager is prepared to effectively run the put-in rehearsal and to notify the cast, crew, and conductor about the specifics for any given night. The SM should begin this work during the rehearsal period, so that questions and uncovered roles can be addressed before the night of the performance.

FORMATTING THE PLOT

The understudy plot works best as a chart, set up in a spreadsheet or word-processing table. Individual columns exist for the understudy, prop and costume changes, specific rehearsal needs, and other important notes. Landscape layout provides sufficient room for all the columns, without using a small font or wrapping a large amount of text. Ample white space makes the document easy to read quickly. In order to further facilitate the notification process, the SM might opt to include telephone numbers right on the plot.

Because it is unlikely to be widely distributed, the stage manager opted to use color to highlight each scenario (which actor is out) and print the small number of copies required. Each member of the SM team will need a copy. Only a limited version of this information will be needed by other areas. Lighting is unlikely to be affected at all and will need no information. Both front-of-house and the costume department would need to know who understudies whom—for signs and clothing, respectively. But neither area would be concerned with rehearsal needs or prop adjustments. Modifying your cast list to include a third column for understudies is often a satisfactory way to provide them the necessary details. Because the color is limited to the fill of "out" rows, and is relatively light, the chart would be just as legible if it did get printed in grayscale.

NOTIFICATION ABOUT CAST CHANGES

Whenever an understudy is performing in an AEA production, the theatre is required to inform the audience by a combination of methods: a sign in the lobby such as the one in Figure 7.7, an insert in the program, or an announcement before the show begins. Broadway and Regional Theatres will be required to use two methods, while smaller theatres may only need to use one. Non-AEA theatres will typically also provide this information to the audience; their efforts are often limited to only one of these methods as well. (*For some bonus content, take a second look at the actor names in the photo. This is a double-domino situation!*)

NOT JUST FOR ILLNESS

In professional theatre, an understudy may not simply perform in the event of a sudden illness in the cast. Depending on the length of your run, your actors could be eligible for vacation. And in the case of an extreme run (think of *Phantom of the Opera*), it is unlikely the cast will stay the same forever. In this instance, you might be preparing a replacement rather than an understudy. Regardless of the situation, the SM should approach working with new cast members the same way.

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY
The Servant of Two Masters
For This Performance:
The role of Truffaldino, usually played by Steven Epp, will be played by Liam Craig
The role of Brighella/Porter, usually played by Liam Craig, will be played by Paul Reisman
The role of Waiter 2, usually played by Paul Reisman, will be played by Tyler Herman

Figure 7.7 The understudy sign prepared for the audience at a production at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, DC. Photo by Christopher Anaya-Gorman.

CHANGING CREW

In addition to replacement actors, the stage manager may have occasion to work with substitute crew members. The same vacation or illness situations can give rise to the need for alternate technicians. When working with IATSE crew, the union steward or head carpenter will make arrangements for a replacement; in an academic setting, this might be the job of the stage manager—or more likely the faculty production manager or technical director. The important considerations for replacement crew members will be to orient them to the backstage setup, explain the relevant paperwork and how to find their duties, and to practice tricky moves as best you can within the available time. Whenever a new technician is on the deck, the ASMs should pay extra attention to those backstage jobs, ready to provide assistance or additional in-the-moment direction to help the show proceed as though no one is new that night. Replacement crew members may have the chance to shadow their technician for one or more shows before taking over those duties. Availability, schedule, and finances will determine the feasibility of this, and will vary from theatre to theatre.

EMERGENCY PLANS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

Understudy plots prepare the stage manager to handle emergency situations arising with the actors, but the list of situations that could occur is unfortunately much longer than the cast list. In order to be prepared, the stage manager will need to collect information about responding to a wide range of scenarios.

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE SHOW

The first category of problems to solve is handling the breaking or malfunctioning of production elements. Think through potential issues in advance and inquire about solutions so that you can clearly and quickly communicate adjustments during a performance. Even a thorough preshow check cannot guarantee nothing will go wrong. The key is to remain calm and to find a way to keep the play moving forward. Not every problem will be noticed by the audience. And those that are noticed will be quickly forgotten if you are prepared and able to respond quickly.

A single lighting instrument burning out is not necessarily impactful—unless it is the only light on during a speech or song. Jumping quickly to another cue or bringing up a follow spot or nearby light allows you to keep going. If the entire light board fails, can you turn on the work lights while the situation is investigated? A scene change unexpectedly in silence might be awkward; the lack of the doorbell cue to prompt the next line will be noticeable. Can you ask someone offstage to knock? Scenic malfunctions can be more complicated. Make sure you and your crews understand the mechanics of individual pieces: which components have the potential to break, or how to switch to manual operation. New stage managers will have less experience to draw upon in the moment, but taking the time to ask questions in advance can offset this limitation.

If the problem cannot be handled without stopping, the SM may need to halt the performance to allow a repair to happen. Make sure you have a working microphone to make announcements to the audience. Write out the speech in advance, so you won't have to think about what to say. Notify the house manager as soon as you stop. And when the problem is fixed, let everyone know you are ready to get under way again. (A sample set of announcements can be found in the Appendix.) If your theatre does not have an announcement microphone, designate one of your ASMs to be the person to go onstage if needed. Try to choose a team member with a loud voice, and give them copies of the announcements to keep backstage to review.

FACILITY PROBLEMS AND OUTSIDE FORCES

Not all situations the stage manager encounters can be fixed with gaff tape, or even a five-minute hold. When working at a theatre for the first time, be sure to learn about the emergency procedures in place for problems beyond the scope

of your show. This can include such events as:

- Losing power
- Fire
- Tornadoes or hurricanes
- Rain (in an outdoor theatre)
- Earthquakes
- Gas leaks
- A broken elevator or other building problem
- Medical emergencies
- Building lockdowns

Many of these scenarios will require you to contact specific theatre personnel or local emergency services. If your theatre does not have a list of procedures and phone numbers, collect the most important details and write them down for yourself. Academic theatres are generally governed by a set of university policies that extend beyond your department. A trip online may be all you need to find the specifics. By having the information up front, the SM can remain in problem-solving mode during an emergency rather than having to gather information before determining how to proceed.

PROBLEM SOLVING RAIN OR SHINE

Heather Sopel shares another experience from her post-graduation world. "I fell in love with assistant stage managing at outdoor theatres in rotating rep so the biggest and obvious differences there are getting to work outdoors and working on more than one show at a time. To prepare, most importantly, I bought a black raincoat and then had to learn all the ways the weather can affect the production. From heat plans to rain plans, the SM team must always have the safety and morale of the cast and crew in mind and must learn how to respond quickly and calmly in all situations. I ultimately learned to rely on my paperwork and could fully appreciate how consistency in all aspects of the job gives you peace of mind and builds trust among the cast and crew."[4]

Another important aspect of solving problems is understanding limitations. Recognize when everyone's best efforts cannot fix a malfunctioning scenic unit, and then move on to how to live without it for today. This might require an explanation to the audience, but could the show go on anyway? Even if that resolution is not your first choice, think about the long term. Don't sacrifice future performances with a quick fix that permanently alters something.

Perhaps the most useful strategy to avoiding problematic situations is to take steps to ensure they won't happen at all. I often believe there is some sort of cosmic "force field" that comes from having a backup—thinking through the possibilities in advance seems to keep them from happening at all. In addition, stay on top of what is in your control. The SM has no power over the weather, but can make sure that the preshow checks are taking place. You did not give that actor the flu, but did you verify the sign-in sheet right at call time to start the process of finding someone who hasn't arrived? Remaining proactive, even at the end of a long week of shows, always pays off.

The stage manager has the authority to halt a performance, but you are rarely in the position to cancel a show. This responsibility lies with someone above your pay grade—a fact I have always appreciated. Know who makes those decisions so you can reach that person in an emergency situation. Make the call early enough so that your superior can be aware of the problem-solving efforts under way, effectively and calmly communicating your actions. You may still be told to find a way to go on, but once again, creating a conversation rather than dropping a bomb will help you guide the situation to a successful resolution.

Whether the production lasts a week or a month, the stage manager should approach each set of performances equally prepared. You may not give many actor notes during a one-weekend run, but food poisoning, thunderstorms, and computer malfunctions are not discriminating events. A solid foundation in the artistic priorities, backed up with technical knowledge and clear communication with your team, will enable you to live up to your promise to bring the best possible show to each night's audience.

CHAPTER 8

Next Steps

As the final performance approaches, the stage manager will face one of two situations: closing the show or moving it to a new theatre. In both instances you will undertake some final organizational tasks and revisit your documentation of the production to ensure that it is thorough and complete.

MOVING THE PRODUCTION

If the end of the run does not mean the end of the show, the stage manager's final days will be spent preparing to move to a new location.

PREP FOR THE NEXT VENUE

If you will be traveling with the show, find an opportunity to gather information about the new theatre space. The exact leadership role the SM will take for the move will be different at every theatre, but after clarifying your responsibility, ask your production team what is known so far. If the second run is a preplanned co-production with a fellow theatre company, many of these details may have been discussed during the design process. If there are missing details (and there inevitably will be), find out if there is someone you can contact directly at the new venue, or if you should submit questions to be posed on your behalf. When given the chance to make contact yourself, the best sources of information, once again, will be speaking with the production manager or technical director and visiting the venue if possible.

Rather than simply looking for facts, this time you are conducting a comparative analysis between the original theatre and the new space. Some important concerns and questions to ask follow.

- Does the entire set fit? If not, what is changing?
- Amount of wing space.
- Location of dressing rooms and distance from the stage.
- Typical calling location for SM.
- Available technology and communication equipment, including headsets, cue lights, and infrared or other monitors.
- Access to theatre for setting up backstage, placing spike marks, and so on before first rehearsal.
- Amount of time allocated for rehearsals and if any of it is actor-only time before tech.
- The location of these rehearsals: on stage, in a rehearsal room, or both.
- Specific theatre policies that will impact your work. (These might be regulations about who can have keys, where available parking is located, work hours, and a variety of other things.)

Armed with these details, the SM can assist the production team with the transition by pointing out potential changes and helping to develop a schedule that will provide time for everything. Be sure that you understand the applicable rules before initiating work for the next run of the show. AEA stage managers are entitled to additional compensation for their work when a show is transferring to another venue.[1]

This discovery time is an opportunity to build relationships with the personnel at the next theatre. The stage manager should approach these conversations and emails with the same professionalism and clarity that have served you well thus far. Think back to your very first meeting with the director—allowing him or her to talk freely at the

beginning gave you valuable insight into priorities, working style, and concerns. Once again, you want to listen and not just ask questions; you are an expert on your show, but not on the new venue.

Equally important is to understand the limitations in your knowledge. Supervising the crew member running the automation computer does not mean that the SM knows how to program it. Defer questions to your production team when it is appropriate. You will not be judged harshly for recognizing someone else can answer a question more accurately, but you can create problems if you provide incorrect information.

The show may be the same, but the stage manager should be ready for changes at the next location nonetheless. It is highly unlikely the theatre setup will be identical. If there are no cue lights, think about another way to communicate to backstage in those moments. If the wing space is much more limited, consider if there are places on the back of your set walls where small shelves could be mounted to hold certain props. Start from the needs, and then find a way to meet them. Flexibility will be key to the transition, and your willingness to think creatively will help make the process more successful for everyone involved.

NEW AUDITIONS

Productions featuring children or local actors in ensemble roles may not bring the entire cast to the new venue, prompting supplemental auditions for replacement actors. The SM may be asked to assist with these auditions in the new city. If you participated in the original auditions, revisit the information you prepared at the time. If you were not part of the show at that point, you will need to locate or create paperwork to facilitate that process. You are likely to need the following:

- Audition forms that capture the same information as the originals.
- General information sheets with show details and character descriptions.
- A new show calendar with general dates and deadlines.
- Sides. Be sure to ask the director if the previous selections are still relevant. Depending on the roles to be recast, they may have different requests this time.

MAKING THE HANDOFF

The stage manager does not always stay with the show. You might participate in the transition for a few days and then depart, or you might hand off the show in your own theatre so the new stage manager is ready to take over when the production arrives in their facility.

If you are not traveling at all, expect to see your successor at some point during the final weeks of the run. They will want to watch the show, observe the call (possibly call the show, if permitted), walk through the backstage areas, and review your paperwork. The new stage manager is doing the same sort of comparative analysis—looking for differences between the two spaces to anticipate changes.

Even if you are disappointed that you will not move to the next location, that is no reason to make life difficult for your replacement. Take advantage of the transition time to explain not only “what” but also “why.” Is the current crew handing off the book to Actor X because he has to make a long cross behind the set and does not have time to get to the prop table? Because he worries about the big speech in the next scene and routinely forgets it? Or because your crew member had few tasks and you sought places to give him responsibilities to keep him invested in the show? Again, context is everything.

The same is true of cueing. If you have come to rely on a specific unconscious move an actor makes right before the visual trigger for a cue, share that insight. Is there a section of the show where the lines are never quite right? Be generous and let the new SM know what typically happens, and how you call that page successfully. Theatre is a very small world, and building this relationship is just as important. You never know when you will cross paths with this colleague again, or when he or she will be asked for a referral when unable to take a job.

TOURING

If your production is embarking on a series of stops, the venue questionnaire is still appropriate; you will simply end up with multiple sets of answers. I recommend developing a way to organize details in a single location, and committing to logging information diligently. A comparative chart of some sort will allow the SM to look for patterns and do some proactive planning. If your venues will vary in size but fall into general "large" and "small" categories, for example, you can invest time now in creating plans and documents for each category.

A multi-stop tour often translates into abbreviated amounts of time for load-in, crew orientation, and any necessary rehearsals. An effective SM team will plan ahead here as well.

Rehearsals. If the production has a component in need of a brush-up rehearsal, such as a fight or a piece of choreography, look for time at the end of one tour stop to schedule this rather than as part of the schedule at the next venue. That keeps time free for venue-specific needs.

Information and Signs. Have a set of signs you can post backstage to help the cast and tour crew quickly find the dressing rooms, sides of the stage, etc. (This is one of those moments to make use of a large, bold font and colored cardstock.) Create a template for a "local information" form you can post on your callboard so that actors can look to a single, familiar spot to see what is different at this stop.

The Script and the Call. The stage manager should look at their prompt script with an eye for places where a sound cue or follow spot cue might reference a character's name. If the first time your local spot operator might see the show is during their first performance operating that spot, the technician will be more successful from night one if asked to pick up "the woman in the red dress entering from stage right" than if asked to pick up "Lola."

Backstage Crew Training and Paperwork. If your backstage crew will be supplemented by local technicians, think about how to simplify their introduction to the show. It is extremely rare to have a full rehearsal for new stagehands and dressers. Look for opportunities to pair local crew with your touring crew to ease the transition. And think differently about how to handle paperwork. The preset list should be effective as is because it is still a document used before the performance begins—even on the first day in a new city, but all of the detail you captured in the shift plot or quick change plot might be a bit overwhelming without much or any rehearsal. One technique is to adapt those documents from one that combines all the crew moves in one place to a set of cards specific to each technician, labeled in general terms such as "props 1" or "wardrobe A." The cards should be small enough to fit in a technician's pocket. An individual card would contain the same information originally contained in the shift plot for a single shift or change. Each card can be laminated for longevity, and the set can be bound with a key ring or tie line. At each venue, the SM team would identify which new crew member will step into each track, and hand out the appropriate pocket-sized guide. I have seen SM teams that distinguish props crews from rail crews or wardrobe crews by printing on separate colors of cardstock. Colored ink remains impractical both for cost and legibility in low light, but black ink on colored cards should not be a budget drain and will make it easier for the ASMs to ensure the packs are distributed correctly. (It is also a worthy investment for the SM team to have backup sets of cards for each crew spot—just in case! I also recommend backup copies of preset lists, or possibly laminating them as well.)

THE END OF THE LINE—OR IS IT?

If your production ends on closing night, the stage manager should make sure that all information in the prompt book is up to date and that the notes in your script are accurate. It may seem unlikely that you will revisit this show again, but opportunities may exist outside your immediate future.

On a professional production, it is not unheard of to remount a successful show in a subsequent season, or to tour the show to a location not foreseen during your original run. In nonacademic theatre, the prompt book typically stays with the theatre after the production closes. You may or may not be the stage manager for this next set of performances. Look at your cues. Did the growth of the show lead to a relatively permanent adjustment in cue placement that exists only in your head? If the call is different from the documentation in your script, you may not remember the changes later on. And if you do not stage manage the show next time, your notes are simply inaccurate.

Although professional nonunion theatres may vary in approach to who owns the material after strike, Equity agreements specifically state that the stage manager's prompt book is the property of the theatre at the close of the show. The SM is unable to keep it for their own use. Additional rules apply to those final updates. The stage manager is required to keep the script accurate to the performance, but if the theatre requests other significant revisions or the preparation of a supplemental copy of the book, the stage manager is entitled to additional compensation for the work.[2]

The same is true for the run-of-show paperwork, including your preset list, shift plot, costume plot, and run sheet. By the fourth week of a run, the ASMs and crew may not refer to the paperwork as regularly as they did during previews. Similar small adjustments may have occurred, which should also be documented. The SM does not need to redistribute the paperwork but should update the electronic version and print a single copy for the prompt book.

In academic theatre, the rationale behind final cleanup may be a bit different. A student stage manager may be asked to submit their prompt book as part of a grade for their work and want it to be an accurate reflection of the show. Or you may wish to retain specific script pages or pieces of paperwork as part of your portfolio. When talking about the show to a prospective employer or graduate school, you would not want to answer questions about your methodology by replying, "Well, we didn't actually do it this way, but. . ."

Although it is rare for a university theatre production to be remounted, there are a few significant exceptions to that rule. If your department participates in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF), the production could be entered into one of the regional festivals. A select number of shows are invited to perform at those festivals each year—often months after the original production. Accurate documentation will allow you to remember the show correctly and to help identify any changes required by this move to a new facility. KCACTF strives to present shows in venues similar to the original theatre, but even if you are still in a proscenium, you may have a different amount of backstage space, dressing-room locations that prompt additional quick changes, or even different cueing based on the lighting setup.

The **Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival** is a national festival honoring and celebrating academic theatre work around the United States. Participating universities have the opportunity to enter work for adjudication—providing students valuable feedback, professional development, and recognition. "Through state, regional, and national festivals, participants celebrate the creative process, see one another's work, and share experiences and insights within the community of theatre artists. [The festival] honors excellence of overall production and offers student artists individual recognition through awards and scholarships in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing, and design."[3]

Certain productions find their way into college repertoires in the same way that they do in professional theatres. *A Christmas Carol* is a good example. My university presents it every four years, ensuring that each theatre student can experience the show once during their college career. The set and costumes are kept in storage, and the director is always the same. The cast is almost entirely different each time, and it is likely the stage manager will change as well. A good archival prompt script is a valuable resource. For my first encounter with our production I relied heavily on the book of the previous SM, but found places where I wished for more detail in advance. I documented my iteration with an eye to eliminating those gaps for the next round. And although circumstances determined that I was the SM again four years later, good documentation helped me fill in gaps in our collective memory about how something was done the last time, and provided a welcome head start on the paperwork for that incarnation of the show.

PAPERWORK FOR OTHERS

In addition to production-specific details, the stage manager may be asked to provide other information at the close of a show. Professional theatres may request a final version of the contact sheet which includes the actors' permanent information. This provides staff with a way to reach actors in the future, either to include in mailing lists about upcoming auditions or to mail relevant payroll forms at tax time. The final contact sheet is also a great networking

resource for the stage manager. You now have an accurate set of addresses for sending holiday cards to new friends or updated résumés when in search of future employment.

Academic stage managers often participate in the evaluation process once a show has ended. Faculty members award grades, but may wish to incorporate specific feedback regarding the consistency of a crew member's work or the cumulative attendance record of an actor. Stage management is in the best position to provide an all-encompassing view of many participants. If the SM is required to provide this type of information, department policy typically dictates the form it will take.

Such evaluations are your final avenue to demonstrate your ability to be tactful, timely, and specific—those communication hallmarks with you since pre-production. Now is not the time to share gossip or to play favorites. An objective, honest assessment facilitates fair evaluation of your company members and helps to position you favorably for future assignments.

STRIKE

In academic and other non-Equity productions, the stage manager may also participate in strike: tearing down the set and returning props, costume pieces, and stock scenic units to their storage places. The SM may be asked to assist in communicating strike assignments and checking to see that all participants are present and working. At other times you will simply be one of many workers helping to complete tasks. If you are unfamiliar with your theatre's traditions, investigate what will be expected of you so that you can be active and helpful at the call.

Stage managers have their own strike tasks as well—these can include taking down information from posted callboards, helping to collect rental scripts for musicals, removing spike marks from the deck, cleaning out their work area in the booth, and completing paperwork on the final performance. The SM team should also be sure the rehearsal space is ready for the next production. If you have a quick transition from the rehearsal hall to the theatre, or if you will continue to use the hall during the run for any understudy or brush-up needs, you might not find the time to truly "move out" of your rehearsal room until the show ends. This means double-checking that spike tape has been pulled up from the floor, rehearsal props and costumes have been returned to their storage locations, show-specific signage has been taken down, and that the room is clean.

THE POST-MORTEM

Although more common in an academic setting than a professional one, your show may have one final meeting once the show is closed. Known as a post-mortem, this type of meeting allows the production team to reflect on the process as well as the end product, identifying unexpected challenges that developed along the way as well as successful moments of collaboration or problem solving. In a university setting, the cast might also be invited to attend.

Such a reflection is valuable, but can easily fall into one of two traps. Some teams find nothing but love in that final gathering, and constructive evaluation comes second to choruses of "it was so great when. . ." The other extreme is equally unproductive. If the show ran over budget or behind schedule, pointing fingers will not make that outcome any different. An unsuccessful collaboration will not improve during a post-mortem, but sour words can linger in everyone's minds and haunt the process the next time people work together.

A successful post-mortem is one that strives to make "why" as much a part of the conversation as "what." Did the partnership between two out-of-town designers work especially well due to additional opportunities to meet in-person during rehearsals? Did a complex show fit into a short rehearsal period due to a fortuitous acquisition of a second rehearsal room? Identifying why something worked well makes it significantly easier to repeat it. And when evaluating less-than-ideal parts of the process, think about what could have made a difference. Due to the stage manager's positioning in the heart of the production, you will have a broad set of observations and opinions about the successes and challenges of the show. When invited into the conversation, the SM should be as tactful as you were throughout the show itself, and also respectful of information you received confidentially.

The SM should also be prepared to have their work discussed during the meeting. Strive to be objective about the entire team's performance, and do not simply dismiss criticism directed your way. Without making excuses, return to

"why." Would you have been able to send out reports in a timelier manner with access to a computer in the rehearsal hall rather than having to drive back to the administrative offices? Are you a PC person who struggled more than you expected in a land of all Mac computers? Did the presence of a stage management intern make the transition to the theatre smoother because the team could more efficiently handle the work during rehearsals? Would walkie-talkies have worked nearly as well as the really expensive wireless headset package you argued for and did not get? And if this was your first time experiencing some aspect of the show (a large cast, a musical, automated scenery, etc.), embrace what you learned and can apply to the next production.

It is helpful to have someone a step away from the process attend or even moderate the conversation. The production manager will be more objective, and has the benefit of being in the position to implement budget, scheduling, or personnel changes in the future. If such a person is not available to you, it is still very useful to seek out a colleague not directly tied to this show. That person may not have budget power, but their removal from the direct facts will free them up to take lots of notes without wanting to jump in, and potentially to help steer a wayward conversation back on track.

If your department or theatre company does not engage formally in the post-mortem process, you can conduct some self-evaluation nonetheless. As you make the transition to that next project, find time to reflect on the work you have just completed. Did you handle a specific challenge particularly well? Did you revise a piece of paperwork to be much more effective? Did you experience something totally new? Be proud of these successes, and file them away. But also look at places where you can continue to improve. Even a show that may have seemed unnecessarily complicated or even unpleasant offers the stage manager an opportunity to learn; knowing what not to do is sometimes more valuable than finding the perfect solution.

As a stage management educator, I often ask my students to engage in a written reflection in order to ensure it takes place. The following questions provide a structure in which to evaluate their work. But these questions can also serve as an informal guide for an individual SM or ASM to think through the production experience now ending.

1. Were there any inherent challenges built into your show (size of cast, time of year, specific technical elements)?
2. How did you plan to address those challenges?
3. How would you rate your success, and why?
4. What challenges arose that you did not expect?
5. How (and how successfully) did you address those new challenges?
6. Did you try anything new on this show? What? Did it work?
7. Give one example of how something you did or experienced on a previous show helped you on this production.
8. In what aspect of stage management do you feel you were most successful?
9. What aspect of this production represents an area you still need to work on?
10. Looking back on the show, is there anything you would have done differently? Why?

Once the last report has been filed and the ghost light turned on for a final time, cordially and professionally bring the project to a close. A successful stage manager will make a positive final impression. Then you can take a breath and get ready to dive into your next show.

A FINAL TIP: MOVING INTO PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

If the end of the line you are facing is graduation from college, then the next step is a big one: moving into the world of professional theatre. While this book refers repeatedly to policies and concerns of Actors' Equity Association, nonunion professional work does exist, and is often the best first step for a recent graduate.

A new stage manager will encounter two paths through which they can join Actors' Equity Association. The first is the Equity Membership Candidacy Program. Young stage managers can accumulate "points" for weeks worked as an intern or production assistant on productions at many AEA theatres around the country. At two points in the process, the milestones of 25 and 50 points, the SM will have the option of joining the union. A stage manager will have a specified period of time to decide whether or not to move forward in the process, with the potential loss of points after predetermined periods of inaction. Equity candidacy can be a strong indicator to future employers that a young stage manager is serious about progressing in this field and may be helpful in a hiring process. But it is

possible to work as an intern or production assistant, often at the same theatres, without opting to pay the money to join the program. The experience and contacts will still serve you well.

The most common, and from my perspective the most advantageous, way to join AEA is when you are offered an Equity contract. Young stage managers do not need to be membership candidates in order to receive a contract offer. The benefit of the contract route is that you belong to the union AND have a job. Once a stage manager joins Equity, they are forbidden from doing nonunion theatrical stage management work in the future. This makes the choice of whether or not to accept an Equity contract a serious one.

Joining Equity is beneficial but not a race. There is no single path or a right path.

Take advantage of your post-graduation time to work in a variety of theatres and for a variety of companies. Simply having an Equity card will not guarantee you work. Do not dismiss the professional internship or apprenticeship because you think you deserve a big paycheck now. Developing relationships and gaining additional experience on productions that feel like much larger versions of those on which you worked in college—as well as those which seem far from your previous experiences—are the best way to ensure that one AEA contract will be followed by another. Trust your instincts, ask your mentors, and do not be afraid to take your time.

Epilogue

One of the trademark possessions of a stage manager is our kit—that tackle box containing all those little odds and ends we rely on. Over the course of a career, a kit will grow, so that by the end it is nearly bursting with all of the unusual tools that have become useful over the years and it now seems difficult to do the job without. In many ways, growing as a stage manager is building a different, less-tangible kind of kit. Each production you work on gives you new skills and experiences, making you that much more prepared for your next project.

As your career progresses, remember that your primary goals on any production will be to build relationships, facilitate information sharing, and maintain your focus on the best interests of the show. Effective communication and professional interaction will position you for success every time! It is my hope that this book and its companion website provide you with some strategies and tools to help make that possible.

On the heels of graduation, two of the young stage managers featured in this edition share some final thoughts about the move into the professional world.

> *Alexis Wells: "I think it's important to try and work in summer stock positions during undergrad because it would be helpful to have that prior experience and credits on your résumé for when you do graduate. I did not ASM professionally until (my current) apprenticeship and I think it would have made me less nervous about starting here. Since starting, I've found that I was a lot more prepared than I thought and I've done well so far, but I think working at more professional companies would have been helpful. It's also important to keep your options open and look anywhere and everywhere for jobs. It's always nice to have options and be able to decide which company to work for once you start applying and getting offers. Depending on the company, you could start out as a production assistant or an ASM. It all depends on what you want to do and you should do the research to figure out which company will be a good fit for you."*[1]
>
> *Quinn Masterson: "My biggest concern is going to be establishing a career as a stage manager. I know that internships and apprenticeships are going to lead to other gigs, but being able to balance making an actual living and being satisfied with my theatrical self is going to be something that will probably take time and require patience that I don't know if I will have."*[2]

Let's face it: being a stage manager is not an easy job. It can feel at times that we live at the photocopier and are constantly caught up in the politics of a situation. Everyone else has the fun job where they get to be creative. Despite the demands of this profession, I maintain that it requires both art and craft, and that achieving success as a stage manager is something to be truly proud of.

A few years ago, a colleague in an association of production managers to which I belong shared an inquiry he received about the true nature of stage management and its "qualification" as an artistic component of a theatrical production. With his permission, I shared an excerpt of his response as the final thoughts of the first edition to remind us all that our efforts at communication are important, and all the work really is worth it in the end. And as I revise the text now, the words ring just as true.

> *It's true that stage managers have to make use of certain technical skills to do their job. But that's no different than the technical skills required by a sound designer. Virtually all theatre artists need certain technical skills, and virtually all theatre artists are given specific direction. But to name the direction given to a designer as "collaboration" while naming the direction given to a stage manager as something else is just semantics. I disagree with anyone who doesn't recognize his or her stage manager as a fellow artistic collaborator.*

Stage managers use their knowledge and understanding of a director's vision to develop a strong sense of the show and how it flows from scene to scene. Directors and designers who collaborate with the stage manager to develop the best show possible are the ones who benefit the most. The stage manager must have, more than ANY other member of the team, a full understanding of the show: each actor, each set piece, each lighting and sound cue, and how each component individually and collectively moves through its individual moment. The stage manager's artistic ability and integrity is what, ultimately, transforms the show from its pieces into that magical whole.[3]

Al Franklin
(Former) Production Manager, Steppenwolf Theatre Company

BREAKDOWN
REHEARSAL
FITTINGS
ACTORS'
POLICE LINE
CHAMBER OF
CHILLS
LEOPARD
COMIC BOOK

Appendix

Although we have reached the formal end of this book, we have seen numerous times within these pages that there is no such thing as too much information. This appendix has been created to provide you with an expanded look at several aspects of the SM world. These include a more detailed picture of Actors' Equity Association, a list of the items that can be found in a stage manager's kit, a set of emergency announcements to use in the event you need to stop a performance, even more paperwork, and collections of online resources and books to read.

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

Actors' Equity Association is the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. First formed in 1913, AEA represents these artists through a series of agreements with professional theatres around the country. The range of agreements is designed to address a variety of performance situations and levels of experience, providing workplace guarantees for as many individuals as possible.

JOINING EQUITY

Actors and stage managers may join the union either through the Equity Membership Candidacy program, where they earn points for weeks of work at participating theaters, or by being offered an Equity contract. In addition, members of other performers' unions such as the Screen Actors Guild/American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG/AFTRA) for film, television, and radio performers or the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) for opera and choral performers and stage managers have the opportunity to join Equity for a reduced membership fee.

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

AEA negotiates contracts with a variety of theatres around the United States. Some contracts represent a group of companies, while others are negotiated specifically with an individual venue. A series of smaller "codes" also exist for major cities such as New York and Los Angeles to provide structure for showcase performances. Each code or agreement outlines the relevant rules of employment—including salaries, work hours, safety considerations, audition requirements, and publicity regulations. A full list of Equity contracts can be found in the document library on the Actors' Equity Association website, but some highlights are listed here.

Sample Companies with Individual Agreements

Children's Theatre Company—Minneapolis, MN
Disney World—Orlando, FL
Fireside Dinner Theatre—Fort Atkinson, WI
Ogunquit Playhouse—Ogunquit, ME

Sample Location-Specific Agreements

Bay Area Theatres Companies producing a season of shows located in the Greater San Francisco area in theatres that have fewer than 400 seats

Chicago Area Theatres A select group of nonprofit companies operating in the Greater Chicago area. As of 2020, the list of member theatres was as follows:

16th Street Theatre
A Red Orchid
About Face Theatre
American Blues Theatre
Black Ensemble Theatre
Buffalo Theatre Ensemble
Chicago Shakespeare Theatre
Congo Square Theatre
First Folio Theatre
The Gift
House Theatre
Hypocrites
Irish Theatre of Chicago
Lookingglass Theatre Company
Oak Park Festival
Porchlight Music Theatre Chicago
Provision Theatre Company
Remy Bumppo Theatre Company
Rivendell
Route 66 Theatre Company
Shattered Globe Theatre
Silk Road Rising
Southport, LLC
Southport Cabaret
Steppenwolf Theatre
Teatro Vista
Theatre at the Center
Theatre Wit
Timeline Theatre Company
Victory Gardens Theatre
Windy City Playhouse
Writers' Theatre

Sample National Agreements

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) Companies who produce plays or musicals written or adapted for youth up through and including high school–aged children

Casino Theatres Casinos or hotels that operate theatres or other performance spaces on their property

Council of Regional Stock Theatres (CORST) Companies operating exclusively in the summer that offer consecutive productions of a series of plays during their period of operation each year. As of 2020, the list of member theatres was as follows:

Barnstormers, Tamworth, NH
Flat Rock Playhouse, Flat Rock, NC
Maine State Music Theatre, Brunswick, ME
Mountain Playhouse, Jennerstown, PA
Peninsula Players, Fish Creek, WI
Peterborough Players, Peterborough, NH
St. Michael's Playhouse, Colchester, VT

Williamstown Theatre Festival, Williamstown, MA

League of Resident Theatres (LORT) The largest subgroup of AEA theatres, composed of 74 major nonprofit theatres throughout the United States. LORT theatres are subdivided into five categories (A, B+, B, C, D) based on the number of seats and the average annual box office income for the past four years.

ACT Theatre—Seattle, WA
Actors Theatre of Louisville—Louisville, KY
Alabama Shakespeare Festival—Montgomery, AL
Alley Theatre—Houston, TX
Alliance Theatre—Atlanta, GA
American Conservatory Theater—San Francisco, CA
American Repertory Theatre—Cambridge, MA
Arden Theatre Company—Philadelphia, PA
Arena Stage—Washington, DC
Arizona Theatre Company—Tucson & Phoenix, AZ
Artists Repertory Theatre—Portland, OR
Asolo Repertory Theatre—Sarasota, FL
Baltimore Center Stage—Baltimore, MD
Barter Theatre—Abington, VA
Berkeley Repertory Theatre—Berkeley, CA
Capital Repertory Theatre—Albany, NY
Center Theatre Group- Los Angeles, CA
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park—Cincinnati, OH
City Theatre Company—Pittsburgh, PA
Clarence Brown Theatre Company—Knoxville, TN
Cleveland Play House—Cleveland, OH
Court Theatre- Chicago, IL
Dallas Theatre Center—Dallas, TX
Delaware Theatre Company—Wilmington, DE
Denver Center Theatre Company—Denver, CO
Florida Studio Theatre—Sarasota, FL
Ford's Theatre—Washington, DC
Geffen Playhouse—Los Angeles, CA
George Street Playhouse—New Brunswick, NJ
Geva Theatre Center—Rochester, NY
Goodman Theatre—Chicago, IL
Goodspeed Musicals—East Haddam, CT
Great Lakes Theatre Festival—Cleveland, OH
Guthrie Theater—Minneapolis, MN
Hartford Stage Company—Hartford, CT
Huntington Theatre Company—Boston, MA
Indiana Repertory Theatre—Indianapolis, IN
Kansas City Repertory Theatre—Kansas City, MO
Laguna Playhouse—Laguna Beach, CA
La Jolla Playhouse—La Jolla, CA
Lincoln Center Theater—New York, NY
Long Wharf Theatre—New Haven, CT

Maltz Jupiter Theatre—Jupiter, FL
Manhattan Theatre Club—New York, NY
Marin Theatre Company—Mill Valley, CA
McCarter Theatre—Princeton, NJ
Merrimack Repertory Theatre—Lowell, MA
Milwaukee Repertory Theatre—Milwaukee, WI
Northern Stage—White River Junction, VT
Northlight Theatre—Skokie, IL
The Old Globe—San Diego, CA
Pasadena Playhouse—Pasadena, CA
People's Light—Malvern, PA
Philadelphia Theatre Company—Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh Public Theater—Pittsburgh, PA
Playmakers Repertory Company—Chapel Hill, NC
Portland Center Stage—Portland, OR
Portland Stage Company—Portland, ME
The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis—St. Louis, MO
Round House Theatre—Bethesda, MD
Roundabout Theatre Company—New York, NY
Seattle Repertory Theatre—Seattle, WA
Second Stage—New York, NY
Shakespeare Theatre Company—Washington, DC
Signature Theatre Company—Arlington, VA
South Coast Repertory—Costa Mesa, CA
Syracuse Stage—Syracuse, NY
Theatre For A New Audience—New York, NY
Theatreworks—Palo Alto, CA
Trinity Repertory Company—Providence, RI
Two River Theater Company—Red Bank, NJ
The Wilma Theater—Philadelphia, PA
Westport County Playhouse—Westport, CT
Yale Repertory Theatre—New Haven, CT

Commercial Theatre

Production Contract Broadway theatres and national tours controlled by producers who are members of The Broadway League

Special Arrangements

Guest Artist Agreement Allowing educational and nonprofit community theatres to hire up to three AEA actors and one AEA stage manager

U/RTA Agreement Allowing work with a recognized theatre program or their partner theater, including member campuses as well as non-member schools that might otherwise face challenges hiring union artists

Special Appearance Agreement Allowing small theatres outside of major cities (such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles) with fewer than 200 seats to hire up to three AEA actors

OTHER INFORMATION

Actors' Equity Association maintains a wealth of other information for its members, including a jobs board, forms, and information for a production's stage manager and deputy, and a listing of current productions not operating under union rules but potentially misleading members about this fact.

Please visit **www.actorsequity.org** for these and other details about the union.

THE STAGE MANAGER'S KIT

Most stage managers have a collection of essential supplies with them in rehearsals. Often kept in a tackle box or toolbox of some kind, the SM kit is a blend of office supplies, first-aid supplies, tools, and other handy items. When working in larger, more established theatres, you will find that some of these items are regularly provided. Newer stage managers, or those working in smaller venues, may wish to consider items from the following list in order to be "ready for anything." Do not, however, feel obligated to go out and buy it all!

Office Supplies

Binder clips
Click erasers
Highlighters
Hole protectors
One and Three hole punches
Hot Glue Gun
Paper clips
Pencils
Pens
Post it notes
Ruler
Scale rule
Scissors
Scotch tape
Sharpies
Stapler
Staple remover
White out pens

Equipment

CD Player, MP3Player or iPod (separate from your phone)
Laptop, Netbook, or Tablet computer
Portable Printer
USB Drive
<u>First Aid/Actor Comfort</u>
Ace bandages
Antibacterial hand cleanser
Antiseptic ointment
Aspirin and/or other pain relievers
Antacid
Bandaids
Bobby pins or hair bands
Cough drops

Dental floss
Emery boards
Eye drops
Icepacks
Kleenex
Saline solution
Sterile gloves
Tampons
Tweezers

Backstage Tools or Equipment

Batteries
Clip light
Extension cord
Flashlight
Gaff tape
Leatherman or other all-purpose tool
Needle and thread
Power strip
Safety pins
Spike tape
Small screwdriver
Small wrench
Stopwatch
Tape measure
Your own comfortable headset

Props or Other Miscellaneous Items

Bell
Crayons or colored pencils
Deck of cards
Lighter or box of matches
Ribbon or string
Whistle

EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

If your theatre does not have a set of standard announcements to use when stopping a performance during an emergency, use the following samples as a place to start.

Tornado/ Weather Speech:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

We have been alerted to a weather emergency and need to exit the theatre. Please remain calm and move with the rest of your row as directed toward the side doors and down into the basement.

Thank you.

Fire Speech:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

We are experiencing technical difficulties. Our safety code requires that everyone leave the theatre through the nearest exit as quickly as possible. Please remain calm and move with the rest of your row as directed. Further information regarding the performance will be available outside shortly.

Thank you.

Power Outage Speech (delivered by ASM from the deck):

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

We are currently experiencing a power outage. We will wait to see if the power can be restored in a timely manner and will update you as soon as we have more information.

Thank you.

Power Outage (if more than five minutes)

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

We have determined that the blackout is affecting (only this building/the entire block). While we investigate how long the blackout will last, please feel free to stand up to stretch your legs. Ushers can also help you reach the lobby and restrooms. We will make another announcement once we know the extent of the power problem.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Medical Emergency Speech:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

Due to a medical situation backstage, we need to pause the performance at this time. If there is a doctor in the audience who is willing to provide assistance, please go to the lobby and identify yourself to the house manager. We ask everyone else to remain in their seats, and we will resume the performance as soon as possible.

Thank You.

Medical Emergency in the Audience Speech:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

Due to a medical situation, we need to pause the performance at this time. If there is a doctor in the audience who is willing to provide assistance, please go to the lobby and identify yourself to the house manager. We ask everyone else to remain in their seats, and we will resume the performance as soon as possible.

Thank You.

Technical Difficulties Speech:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening. May I have your attention, please:

We are currently experiencing technical difficulties and need to pause the performance at this time. We ask you to please remain in your seats, and we will update you with further information as it becomes available.

Thank you.

Technical Difficulties That Aren’t Fixed Quickly

Good Afternoon/Good Evening Again

We are still working to resolve our technical difficulties. For your comfort, we will be bringing up the house lights. Please feel free to stand up to stretch your legs. We hope to resume the production in ____ minutes.

Thank you.

Technical Problems Resolved:

Good Afternoon/Good Evening (although depending on the delay, you might be at the "hello, me again" phase of announcements…)

Thank you again for your patience. We have resolved our technical difficulties and are now ready to resume tonight's (today's) performance.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

MORE PAPERWORK

As a bonus to the written communication tools already presented in this book, I offer you a few extra resources to facilitate your production process. These samples are also included on the book's website.

The paperwork provided is as follows:

- An emergency information form for actors and technicians
- An adapted emergency form to use when working with kids
- A template for collecting biographical information for the program
- A sample of an information sheet passed out to actors in an academic cast on the first day of rehearsal
- Checklists for the SM team for load-in and strike
- An alternate rehearsal report form
- A sample daily call for long days or AEA-style rehearsals
- A basic chart for logging spike marks in the rehearsal room to help the SM team prepare to recreate them onstage
- An excerpt of a groundplan-based color key for spike marks for a show with multiple scenes
- A sample technical questionnaire to use if your production is traveling to another theatre
- Contracts for the stage manager and assistant stage manager, along with a list of prompt book contents—created by me for college stage managers working on a practicum assignment (it is part syllabus and part contract)

Department or Theatre

Emergency Medical Information Sheet

This information will be kept confidential, and will only be used in the case of a medical emergency.

General Information:

Name: _____ Pronouns: _____

Phone: _____ Birthday: _____

Email:

Email: _____

Address: _____

_____

Emergency Contact Information:

Person to notify: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone(s): _____

Are you currently being treated for any medical condition? If yes, please specify.

_____

_____

Allergies (including foods): _____

_____

_____

Are you currently taking any prescription or non-prescription medications? If yes, please specify. _____

Have you recently received treatment for any major medical problem? If yes, please specify.

Signature Date

Department or Theatre

Young Performers Emergency Information Sheet

This information will be kept confidential, and will only be used in the case of a medical emergency.

General Information:

Name: _____ Pronouns: _____

Phone: _____ Birthday: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Emergency Contact Information:

Primary Contact: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone(s): _____

Secondary Contact: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone(s): _____

Is your child currently being treated for any medical condition or taking any prescription/non-prescription medications? If yes, please specify.

_____

_____

Allergies (including foods): _____

Pick Up Authorization:

YES NO The only people authorized to pick up my child are the primary or secondary contact listed above

The following additional people are authorized to pick my child up from rehearsals:

Signature Date

Biography

Please write in the third person and limit your biography to 50 words or less.

Change to your standards as appropriate!

NAME: _____

Basic Information And Expectations

Rehearsal Location: Toland Theater

Rehearsals: September 12 through October 7, Monday through Friday from 6:30 9:30pm

Tech: October 10–12, Call will be at approximately 5:45 pm

Performances: October 14 15, 20 22 at 7:30 pm, October 16 and 23 at 2:00 pm

Important Numbers:

Laurie Kincman (SM)	(XXX) XXX-XXXX office, (XXX) XXX-XXXXcell (the cell phone is ALWAYS the best way to get me!)
Costume Shop	(XXX) XXX-XXXX
Box Office	(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Expectations:

1. Except for previously submitted and approved conflicts, assume you will be called every night for rehearsal. A detailed

breakdown will be posted on the callboards on Friday nights for the following week.

2. Arrive at least 10 minutes before the scheduled call.

3. Sign in upon arrival.

4. Call the Stage Manager if you are going to be late for any reason at all. That means even if you are walking in two minutes late.

5. If you have any new or potential conflicts that were not included on your audition form, please see Laurie ASAP.

6. If you need to do warm ups, please be done before rehearsal starts.

7. There is no eating or drinking in the theatre. (Water is the only exception.)

8. It is your responsibility to attend all scheduled costume fitting appointments on time. If you are going to be late or must cancel the appointment, please call the Costume Shop (or Laurie if you are unable to reach Joe).

9. You may not change your appearance – including getting a haircut – without consulting costume/makeup designer Joe Anderson first!

10. Please be quiet and respectful of others during rehearsal. If you are not in a scene, but are at rehearsal, please keep the noise down. Bring homework or a book to read if you know you will be waiting around. We will try to only call you for the time we need you to rehearse, but we can not make any guarantees.

11. Check email daily. (Talk to me if this is a problem for you.)

12. Check the call board on a daily basis. There is a traditional callboard at the end of the theatre office hallway, and an electronic version found online at http://www.uwlax.edu/theatrecallboard.

13. Bring a pencil to rehearsal!

If you have any questions or concerns at all, I am always available! ☺

Laurie Kincman
Stage Manager
(XXX) XXX-XXXX cell
lkincman@uwlax.edu

STAGE MANAGEMENT LOAD-IN CHECKLIST

- [ ] Sweep and clean backstage areas as necessary
- [ ] Place prop tables
- [ ] Cover prop tables
- [ ] Label prop tables
- [ ] Assign & label spaces in prop cabinets

- [ ] Assign and label parking spaces on deck for scenery & furniture
- [ ] Tape out sightlines if needed
- [ ] Confirm spike colors on fly rail if needed
- [ ] Safety taping
- [ ] Glo taping
- [ ] Check for adequate run lights
- [ ] Check headset locations and amount of cable
- [ ] Check quick change areas
- [ ] Backstage seating for actors/crew
- [ ] Check first aid supplies
- [ ] SM: check tech table for necessary equipment and its placement

- [ ] ASM: set up your home base backstage (music stand, light, chair, etc.)
- [ ] Sign in sheet for cast/crew/board operators
- [ ] Preset list completed and copied
- [ ] Shift plot completed and copied
- [ ] Costume paperwork done and copied
- [ ] Prop Cabinet check in sheets completed and posted
- [ ] Any green room props/food setup needed

STAGE MANAGEMENT STRIKE LIST

- [ ] Be sure headset is coiled up and out of the way
- [ ] Finish post-show props strike as normal (but faster)
- [ ] Be sure all costume pieces have been cleared to dressing rooms

- [ ] Make sure props are retrieved from green room & dressing rooms
- [ ] Remove and throw away paper on prop tables
- [ ] Return prop tables to storage location
- [ ] Pull up (or have crew pull up) safety and parking tape
- [ ] Strike any show-specific storage or prep items
- [ ] SM: Clear show and personal items out of booth
- [ ] Strike callboard
- [ ] SAVE crew sign in sheets for use in crew evaluations
- [ ] ASM: clear show & personal items from home base area
- [ ] BE SURE the spike tape in your rehearsal room is pulled up

- [ ] Take down running orders or any other show-specific signage (including in dressing rooms)
- [ ] Return any chairs pulled for cast & crew to their previous home
- [ ] Return water jugs, extra first aid kit or any other actor amenity supplies
- [ ] Double check that actor personal belongings have been struck from dressing rooms
- [ ] Clean up green room as needed
- [ ] Fill out (or schedule time to fill out) crew evaluations

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

Date:_____ Start Time:_____ End Time: _____

Late:_____

Absent:_____

Guests:_____

In Attendance: Leonard, Walth, Gorman, Hart, Stoffregen, Anderson, Mompier, Gingold, Kincman, Crow, Reuss

Breaks: _____ (5 / 10) _____ (5 / 10) _____ (5 / 10) _____ (5 / 10) _____ (5 / 10)

BREAKDOWN		
TIME	WHAT	WHO

NOTES

PROPS

SCENERY/TD	COSTUMES

LIGHTS	SOUND

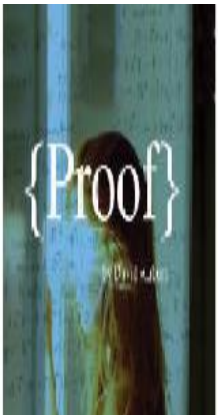
PM/SM	ASM	ALL STAFF
ACTOR NOTES	OTHER	DIRECTOR

COSTUME FITTINGS: Y N REMINDERS: Y N

REHEARSAL REPORT SENT: Y N TIME:_____ LAST NOTE #:_____

NAME OF SHOW

Daily Schedule



Date:

Span of day:

CAST	1st Call	Room	Sign In	CALL BREAKDOWN

Please Note:

COSTUME FITTINGS

ALL TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

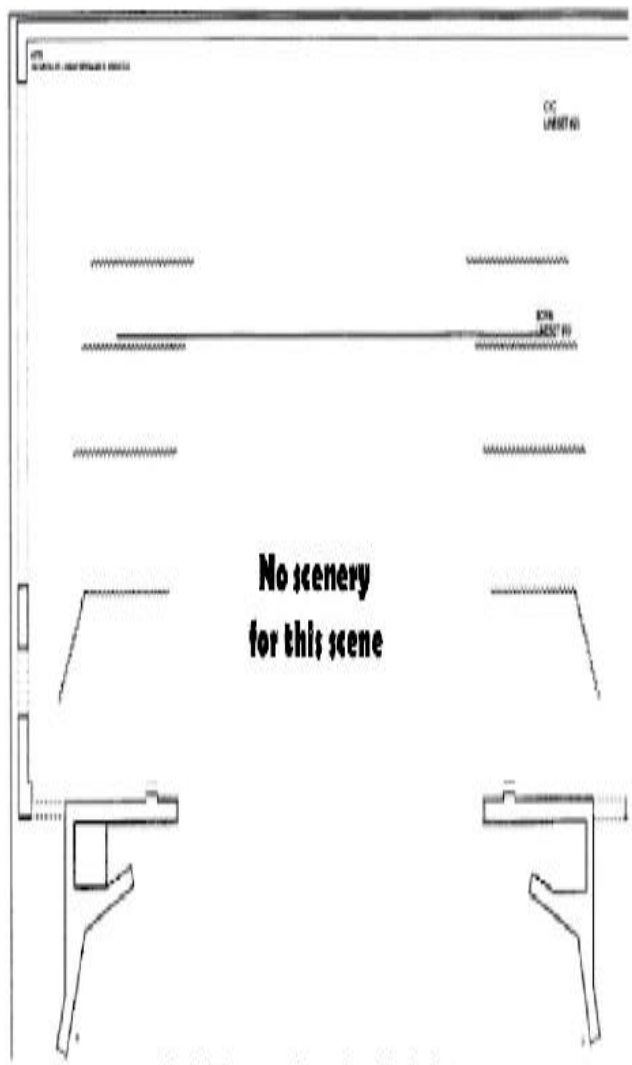
Big Fish

SPIKE LOG

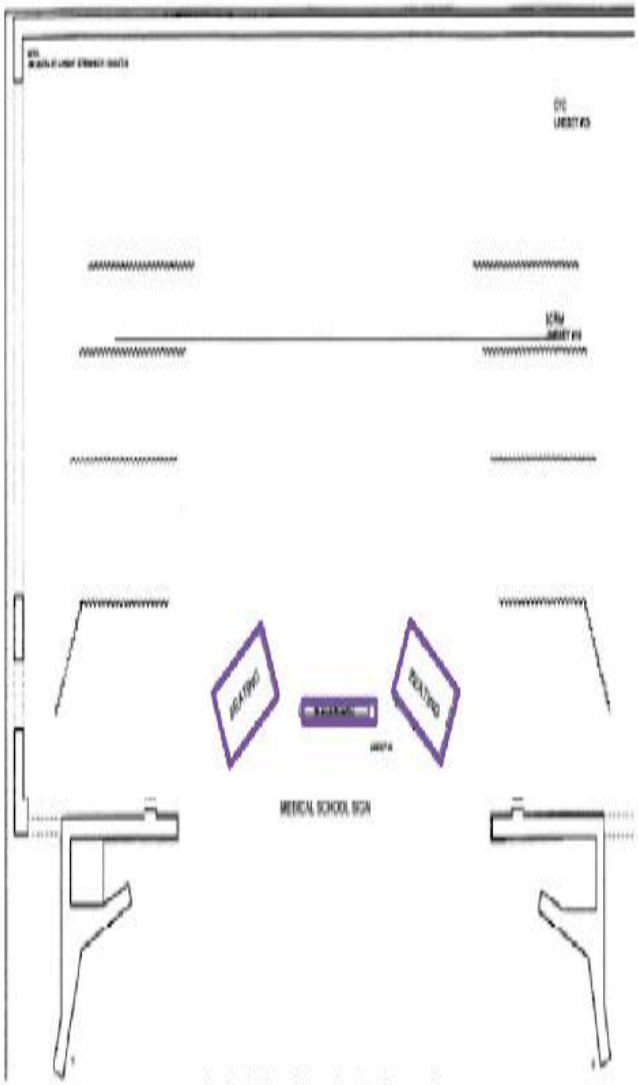
Scene	Color	Measurements Onstage	Purpose (furniture, actor mark, etc.)

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN SPIKE TAPE KEY

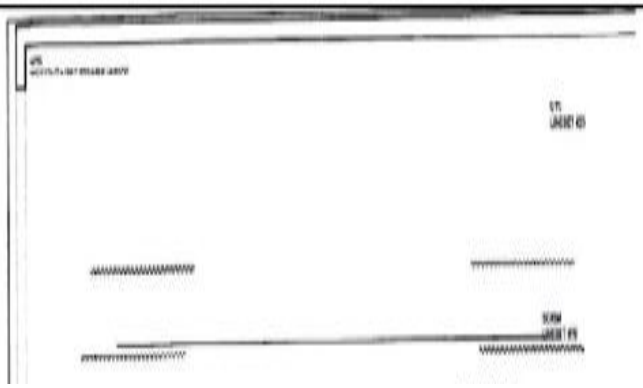
PLEASE NOTE: ITEMS ON GROUND PLAN WITHOUT COLOR ARE FLYING UNITS

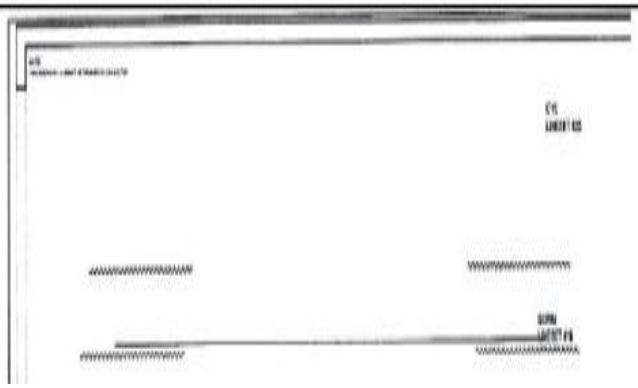


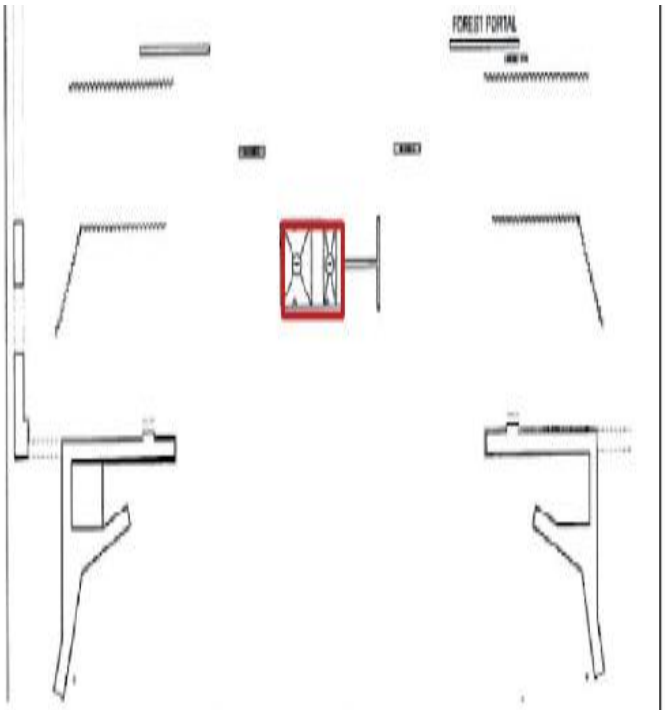
1-1 Transylvania Heights



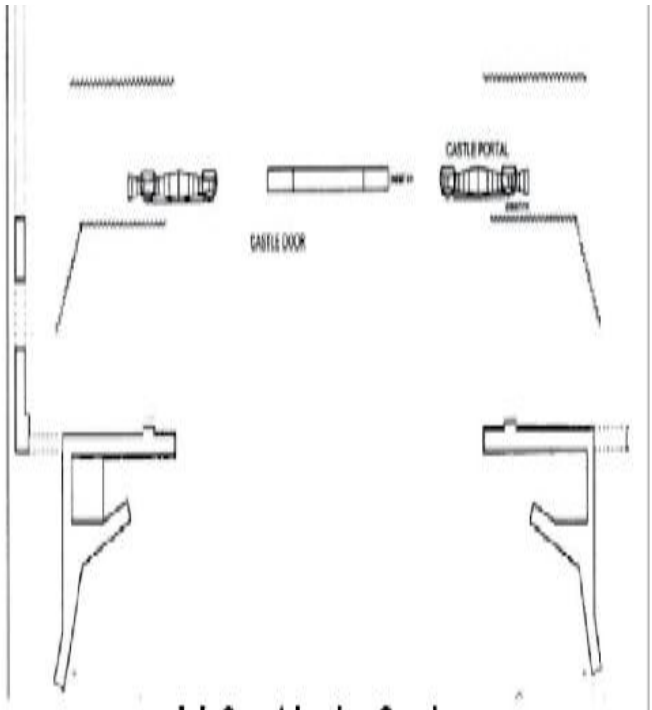
1-2 Medical School



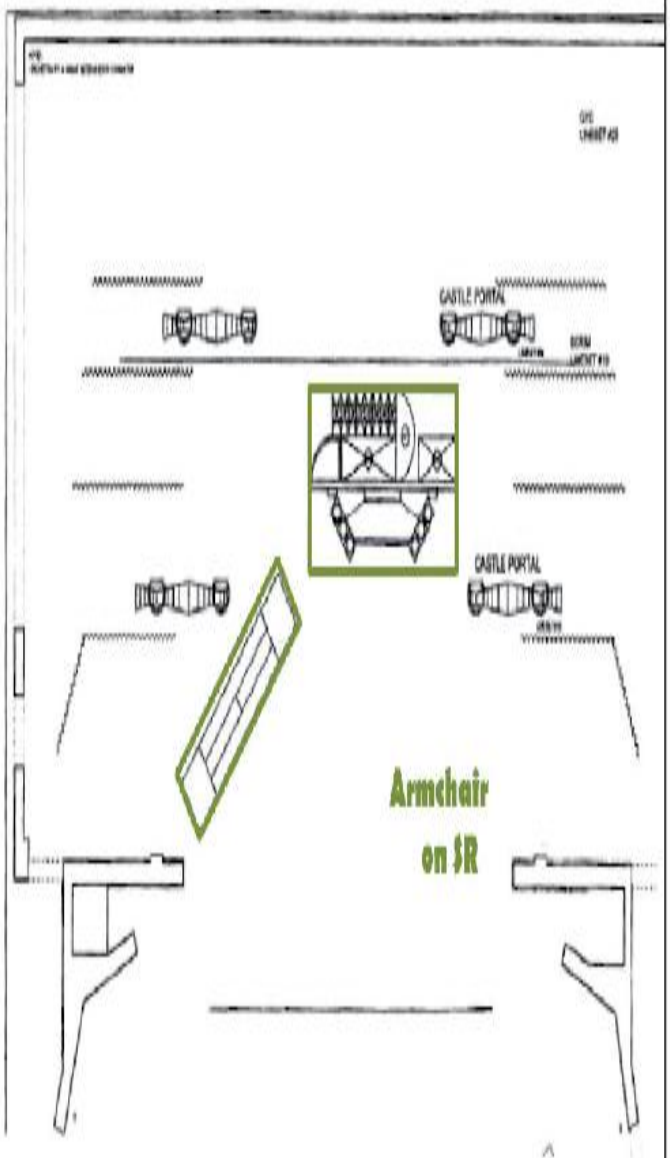


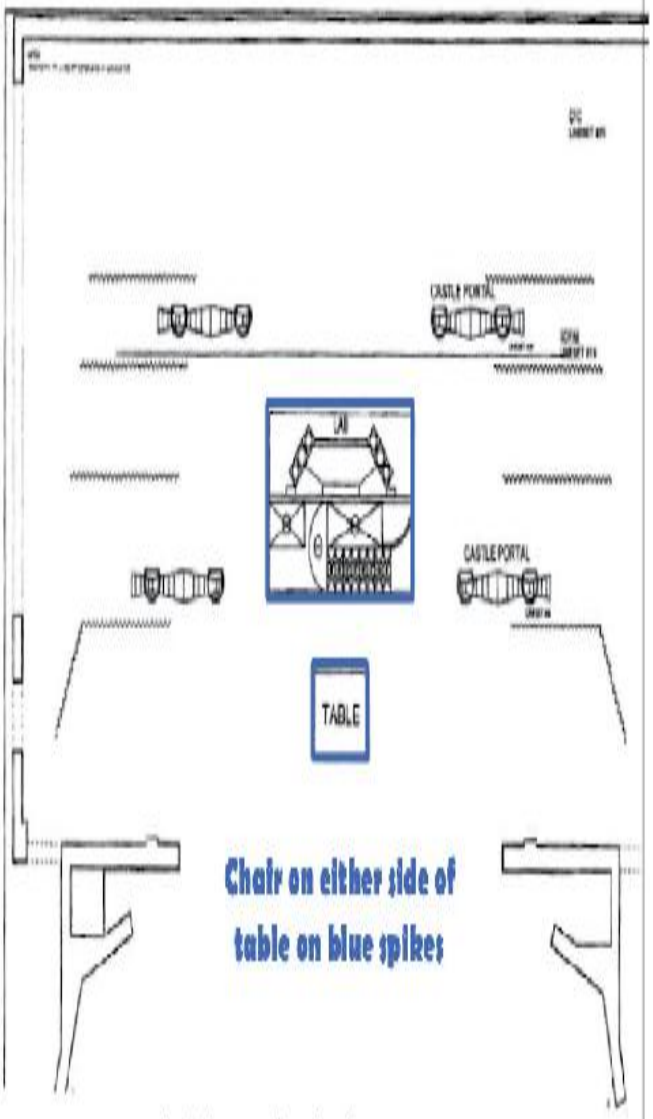


I-5 Woodland Clearing



I-6 Outside the Castle





I-9 Into the Laboratory

I-7 Inside Main Hall	I-8 Into the Laboratory

NAME OF COMPANY

Technical Information Questionnaire

GENERAL

1. NAME OF THEATRE: _____
2. Contact Person _____ Title _____ Phone # _____
3. Seating Capacity: _____
4. Balcony? _____
5. Removable forestage seating?: _____ Please note # of seats lost. _____
6. Load - in access: _____
7. Location of dressing rooms: _____
8. # of dressing rooms: _____
9. Location of tech booth: _____

STAGE

1. Proscenium height: _____
2. Proscenium width: _____
3. Depth from plaster line to back wall: _____
4. Depth from plaster line to last working lineset: _____

5. Forestage/apron dimensions: _____

6. Wing space SR: _____

7. Wing space SL: _____

8. Do you have a grid? _____

9. Grid height: _____

10. Lineset high trim: _____

11. Please describe your fly system: _____

(single purchase, double purchase, motorized winches, sandbag counterweight, etc.)

12. Location of crossover _____

13. Do you own a marley dance floor? _____ Color? _____

** PLEASE ATTACH GROUNDPLAN AND SECTION WHEN RETURNING THIS FORM

MASKING

1. Main Curtain. Color? _____ Operation (flies/travels open/both) _____

2. Number and width of legs _____

3. Number and height of borders:

4. Please check all applicable drops. We own a:

Black traveler Black scrim White scrim Cyclorama

Full stage black ____ with fullness _____

**PLEASE ATTACH STANDARD HOUSE RIGGING PLAN WHEN RETURNING THIS FORM

LIGHTING

1. Type of dimmers: _____
2. Number of dimmers: _____
3. Number of circuits: _____
4. Type of lighting console: _____
5. Do you have the capability of tying in additional dimmers if needed? _____
6. Location of house light control: _____
7. Number and location of cue lights: _____

**PLEASE ATTACH CURRENT LIGHTING INVENTORY WHEN RETURNING THIS FORM

If you have a house repertory plot that is recommended, please attach it as well

SOUND

1. Standard location of mixing console _____

2. Can mixing console be located in house? _____

3. Please describe playback devices _____

_____

4. Headset & paging systems _____

-

5. Do you own wireless microphones? _____ Please describe _____

_____

** PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMAITON ON INFRARED HEARING-ASSIST SYSTEMS, INFRARED VIDEOCAMERA SYSTEMS AVAILABLE FOR BACKSTAGE AND/OR AUDIENCE USE

STAGE MANAGER GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

ASSIGNMENT

Name	
Production	Semester
Position	Theatre

IMPORTANT DATES

	Date		*Date*
Keys Checked Out		Tech Paperwork Due	
First Rehearsal		Run Sheet Due	
Crew Meeting		Prompt Book Due	
Strike		Other:	
Keys Due Back			

TECH PAPERWORK: this includes everything you will be giving to your crew: your preset list, shift plot, rail cue sheet, quick change plot, and whatever else is necessary for your show

RUN SHEET: a detailed accounting of your activities from the moment you arrive at the theatre to the moment you go home, which would allow someone to fill in for you if you were unable to attend a performance

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

- Attend at all auditions, rehearsals, prep/SM load in activities, meetings and performances
- Maintain good communication with all production areas throughout entire production process
- Maintain clear and timely meeting minutes and rehearsal reports
  - Meeting minutes to be sent out within 48 hours of a production meeting
  - Rehearsal and performance reports to be sent out by 8:00 am the following day (including weekends)

- Have a positive, proactive attitude
- Maintain good team spirit, cooperation, and respect for the other members of the stage management team
- Have respect for your director, production team, actors, understudies, and crew
- Delegate responsibilities to your ASMs, and provide support and assistance when needed to complete those tasks
- Ask questions if you aren't sure about something, or need help
- Despite the schedule or demands of your production, keep up with the work in your other classes. If you anticipate problems, please talk with Laurie BEFORE you are headed for trouble!

BEFORE REHEARSALS BEGIN

- Meet with your director to get information about the plan for rehearsals
- Meet with the SM supervisor and confirm the names of your ASMs and their contact information, and confirm the important dates and special activities for your show
- Create a version of the actor contact sheet and actor conflict calendar to be double checked by the cast on the first day
- Begin to assemble your prompt book
- Make the Character/Scene breakdown—ideally to be included in the actor packet
- Collect/Create the items needed for the actor packet

DURING REHEARSALS

- Arrive at rehearsals 30-45 minutes before they are scheduled to begin, to ensure you are set up for the night
- Take blocking in your script
- Facilitate the scheduling of costume fittings, interviews, or other activities for the actors
- Keep items like your prop list up to date, and share those updates with the appropriate departments
- Make sure the SM team is ready to prompt and take line notes once the actors have reached their off book deadline
- Meet at least once a week outside of rehearsal time with your SM team to discuss upcoming events, changes, problems, paperwork, or whatever else may be next on your horizon (this may just be coming 15 minutes early or staying 15 minutes late once a week)
- Organize the crew meeting for your show and create the paperwork with important dates
- Check in with the production departments at least once a week—you will probably want to visit the shop/theatre every day before 5pm to know what is in store for you that night, though!
- Oversee the creation of the paperwork the crew will need to run the show; a preset list, a shift plot, a quick-change plot if necessary
- TURN INTO LAURIE a draft of all the paperwork for your crew no later than one week before tech rehearsals begin
- RESERVE the Sunday before tech rehearsals as a time to finish preparing the theatre and/or your paperwork in case you need it
- Have all cues and standbys written in your script prior to the beginning of tech rehearsals

- Update your script as needed based on notes/ changes during tech and dress rehearsals

DURING PERFORMANCES

- Attend all performances and call cues as set during tech rehearsals
- By opening night create your Run Sheet
- By opening night be familiar with any emergency procedures that could come up for your show

AT THE END

- Attend strike
- Complete crew evaluations as requested by production area supervisors
- Turn your prompt book in to Laurie by the end of the day following your strike

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER GUIDELINES
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

ASSIGNMENT

Name	
Production	Semester
Position	Theater

Position	Theatre

IMPORTANT DATES

	Date		*Date*
Keys Checked Out		Tech Paperwork Due	
First Rehearsal		Run Sheet Due	
Crew Meeting		Prompt Book Due	
Strike		Other:	
Keys Due Back			

TECH PAPERWORK: this includes everything you will be giving to your crew: your preset list, shift plot, rail cue sheet, quick change plot, and whatever else is necessary for your show

RUN SHEET: a detailed accounting of your activities from the moment you arrive at the theatre to the moment you go home, which would allow someone to fill in for you if you were unable to attend a performance

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

- Maintain a positive, proactive attitude
- Ask questions if you aren't sure about something, or need help

- Maintain good team spirit, cooperation, and respect for the other members of the stage management team

- Have respect for your director, production team, actors, understudies, and crew

- Despite the schedule or demands of your production, keep up with the work in your other classes. If you anticipate problems, please talk with Laurie BEFORE you are headed for trouble!

BEFORE REHEARSALS BEGIN

- Help to run auditions for your show (if you are assigned before they occur)

- Help the stage manager with scripts and other paperwork for the first day

DURING REHEARSALS

- Arrive at rehearsals 30-45 minutes before they are scheduled to begin so that you can be set up for the night, as requested by the SM

- Be attentive during all rehearsals (which means no homework, reading, or other non-show-related work)

- Take good notes on your assigned area (props, costumes, etc.) in your script, and check in with the stage manager and/or production area head if you have questions
- Participate in prompting and taking line notes once the actors are off book as coordinated by the SM

- Help the SM and other ASMs put everything away at the end of the night, and don't leave until dismissed by the SM

- Work with your SM and fellow ASMs to create the paperwork you will give to the crew to teach them how to set up and run the show

- Be willing and flexible to help with non-assigned areas, special projects, emergency situations, or changes
- Attend the crew meeting and be prepared to describe briefly to the crew what their jobs will be
- Meet at least once a week outside of rehearsal time with your SM team to discuss upcoming events, changes, problems, paperwork, or whatever else may be next on your horizon (this may just be coming 15 minutes early or staying 15 minutes late once a week)
- TURN INTO LAURIE a draft of all the paperwork for your crew no later than one week before tech rehearsals begin
- RESERVE the Sunday before tech rehearsals as a time to finish preparing the theatre and/or your paperwork in case you need it
- Update crew paperwork as needed during tech rehearsals

DURING PERFORMANCES

- Attend all performances, and work to ensure that crew carries out all assignments as set during tech rehearsals
- By opening night create a Run Sheet.
- By opening night be familiar with any emergency procedures that could come up for your show

AT THE END

- Attend strike
- Help to complete crew evaluations as requested by production area supervisors

- Turn your prompt book in to Laurie by the end of the day following your strike

GUIDELINES FOR PROMPT BOOKS

Below is a general list of the many things that can and possibly should end up in your completed prompt book at the end of a show. Some items (like contact sheets) will always be needed. Other items may be specific to your show or theatre. It is also possible that your show will have a specialty consideration (like kids) that may warrant attention & paperwork, and would therefore be added to the list for this production.

Ultimately your book should reflect your work on the production, and contain all the information you need to do your job. It will be a combination of things you have received and things you have created

ASMs do not need to have all of the cues and blocking in their scripts, but should instead have the notes they took during rehearsal.

- Cast list
- Character/scene breakdown
- Contact sheet(s)
- Distribution lists (who receives what documents: rehearsal reports, production meeting minutes, etc.)
- Schedules and Calendars
- Script labeled with acts and scenes
    - with blocking and blocking key (from your ASM if this was not your job)
    - with line notation key (from your ASM if this was not your job)
- Copies of reports, minutes, other communication

- Sections containing information collected from or generated for each department (scenery, props, costumes, lights, sound, etc.)
- Backstage plots: i.e. scene shift charts, rail cues, prop tracking, prop table lists, costume quick changes. Any piece of paper you generated that had to do with the actual running of the show needs to be included.
- Ground plans
- Run Sheet (SM should also have copies of ASM run sheets)
- Emergency information and plans.
- Front of House information sheet (SM only)

The prompt book should be in a 3 ring binder with LABELED DIVIDERS BETWEEN EACH SECTION. You can purchase label packets at the bookstore or any office supply store.

Thoroughness is key. Think of it as a record that could be used as a basic structure should the show ever be remounted. All of the information to take over your job, should you become unavailable, should be readily accessible in the book.

Review this list periodically throughout your show. If you haven't begun working on an item on this list, one of two things will be true-it might not be needed for your show, or it might be something you should be doing! If you don't know which is true in your case, please just ask.

NEATNESS, CLARITY AND THROROUGHNESS COUNT TOWARDS YOUR GRADE!

WEB RESOURCES

Actors' Equity Association—www.actorsequity.org

SMNetwork—www.smnetwork.org

An online community of stage managers for sharing experiences, answering questions, and exploring current trends

Stage Write Software—www.stagewritesoftware.com

Software for charting placement and movement onstage, as well as creating a digital prompt script. The software exists as both a web-based program for Chrome and Firefox and as an iPad app.

Cuelist—www.thecuelist.com

A collaborative web-based program for creating prompt scripts that can be shared with the designers and exported to PDF for offline use if desired. Script information such as cue lists or notes can also be viewed in spreadsheet form.

United States Institute for Theatre Technology—www.usitt.org

A nonprofit service organization that unites students, practitioners, and educators working in all aspects of theatrical design, management, and production through workshops, publications, annual conferences, and online resources

Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival—www.kcactf.org

A national theatre program involving thousands of college students across the country which recognizes achievement in performance, directing, dramaturgy, and nearly every aspect of theatrical production, provides training opportunities, oversees a series of annual regional festivals and an annual festival in Washington, D.C.

Stage Managers Association—www.stagemanagers.org

A national networking community created by and for stage managers

Stage Directors and Choreographers Society—www.sdcweb.org

The union for professional directors and choreographers working in theatres throughout the United States

American Guild of Musical Artists—www.musicalartists.org

The union for opera and choral performers and stage managers

IATSE—www.iatse-intl.org

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada represent professional designers and technicians in the entertainment industries

Theatre Communications Group—www.tcg.org

A nonprofit service organization whose defined mission is "to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre." It does this through annual meetings and conferences, special research reports, and other online and in-person training opportunities. TCG manages ArtSearch, one of the most comprehensive collections of available jobs and internships in the arts.

ArtsJournal—www.artsjournal.com

A collected digest of the top issues, ideas, and stories in the visual and performing arts

You can find other web resources with links on this book's companion website.

SUGGESTED READING

THEATRE MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION

Arts Management: Uniting Artists and Audiences in the 21st Century. Ellen Rosewall. New York: Oxford University Press. 2014

The Backstage Guide to Stage Management. Third Edition. Thomas A. Kelly. New York: Back Stage Books. 2009.

The Backstage Handbook. Third Edition. Paul Carter. New York: Broadway Press. 1994.

Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays. David Ball. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press. 1983.

Dance Production: Design and Technology. Jeromy Hopgood. Massachusetts: Taylor and Francis-Focal Press. 2015

Designing with Light. Seventh Edition. J. Michael Gillette and Michael McNamara. New York: Taylor and Francis-Focal Press. 2020.

On Directing. Harold Clurman. New York: Fireside. 1997.

Essentials of Stage Management. Peter Maccoy. New York: Routledge Press. 2004.

Fight Directing for the Theatre. J. Allen Sudduth. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Press. 1996.

Illustrated Theatre Production Guide. Third Edition. John Holloway. Massachusetts: Taylor and Francis-Focal Press. 2014.

Producing Theatre: A Comprehensive Legal and Business Guide. Third Edition. Donald C. Farber. New Jersey: Limelight Editions. 2006.

Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art and Technique of Design. Fourth Edition. Deena Kaye and James Lebrecht. Massachusetts: Taylor and Francis-Focal Press. 2015.

Stage Management Theory as a Guide to Practice. Narda E. Alcorn and Lisa Porter. New York/London: Routledge Press. 2019

Stage Rigging Handbook. Third Edition. Jay O. Glerum. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press. 2007.

The Art of Active Dramaturgy: Transforming Critical Thought Into Dramatic Action. Lenora Inez Brown. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing. 2011.

The Dramatic Imagination. Robert Edmond Jones. New York: Routledge Press. Latest printing 2004.

The Production Manager's Toolkit: Successful Production Management in Theatre and Performing Arts. Cary Gillett and Jay Sheehan. New York: Taylor and Francis-Focal Press. 2016.

Theatrical Design and Production: An Introduction to Scene Design and Construction, Lighting, Sound, Costume, and Makeup. Eighth Edition. J. Michael Gillette and Rich Dionne. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2020.

Working Together in Theatre: Collaboration & Leadership. Robert Cohen. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2011.

DOCUMENT DESIGN

The Non-Designers Design Book. Third Edition. Robin Williams. Berkeley CA: Peachtree Press. 2008.

The Practical Guide to Information Design. Ronnie Lipton. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2007.

Thinking with Type. Second Edition. Ellen Lupton. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. 2010.

White Space Is Not Your Enemy. Third Edition. Kim Golombisky & Rebecca Hagen. Massachusetts: Focal Press. 2017.

COMMUNICATION & LEADERSHIP

Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error. Kathyrn Schulz. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. 2010.

Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration. Ed Catmull. New York: Random House LLC. 2014

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most. Second Edition. Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. New York: Penguin Books. 2010.

Invisibles: The Power of Anonymous Work in an Age of Relentless Self-Promotion. David Zweig. New York: Portfolio/Penguin Publishers. 2014.

It's the Way You Say It: Becoming Articulate, Well-Spoken and Clear. Carol A. Fleming. New York: iUniverse. 2010.

Leadership in the Performing Arts. Tobie Stein. New York: Allworth Press. 2016.

On Managing People. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press. 2011

The Silent Language of Leaders: How Body Language Can Help or Hurt How You Lead. Carol Kinsey Goman. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 2011.

Winnie the Pooh on Problem Solving. Roger E. Allen and Stephen D. Allen. New York: Dutton Press. 1995.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 The summary definition offered for a Stage Manager according to Actors' Equity Association is compiled from job description items found in the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) 2017– 2022 Rulebook, the Production 2015–2019 Rulebook and the Council of Resident Stock Theatres (CORST) 2018–2023 Rulebook. Due to the fact that Actors' Equity oversees over sixty individual types of agreements and codes relating to every possible category of professional live theatre, there is no single all-inclusive definition. I have taken key elements from the working descriptions in these three agreements to create this summary.

2 Maccoy, Peter. 2005. *Essentials of Stage Management*. New York: Routledge Press. 39–40.

3 Fleming, Carol A., Ph.D. 2010. *It's the Way You Say It: Becoming Articulate, Well-spoken and Clear*. New York & Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc. 98.

CHAPTER ONE

1 Pease, Allan and Barbara. 2004. *The Definitive Book of Body Language*. New York: Bantam Dell—A Division of Random House. 9.

2 "Examples of Body Language," Separated Parenting Access and Resource Center, Accessed on May 21, 2012, http://www.deltabravo.net/cms/plugins/content/content.php? content.367

CHAPTER TWO

1 Hagen, Rebecca and Kim Golombisky. 2013. *White Space Is Not Your Enemy*. Second Edition. Burlington, MA: Focal Press—an imprint of the Taylor and Frances Group (Routledge Publishing). 6.

2 Williams, Robin. 2008. *The Non-Designer's Design Book*. Third Edition. Berkeley California: Peachpit Press. 153–160.

3 "Adobe Acrobat" Adobe Systems Incorporated, accessed May 4, 2012. http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/acrobatpdf.html.

CHAPTER THREE

1 Catmull, Ed. 2014. *Creativity, Inc*. New York: Random House. 76.

CHAPTER FOUR

1 Actors Equity Association, CORST Rulebook 2018–2023, rule 56 (F) (2).

CHAPTER FIVE

1 Actors Equity Association, CORST Rulebook 2018–2023, rule 53 (I) (1), as well as URTA Rulebook 2017–2022 rule 54 (H), and LORT Rulebook 2017–2022, rule 54 (J) (1), among others.

2 Intimacy Directors International, "About IDI," accessed November 1, 2019. https://www.teamidi.org/about-idi

3 Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen. 2000. Introduction to *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Mos*t. Second Edition. New York: Penguin Books. xxix–xxx.

4 Sopel, Heather. Interview with author. January 3, 2020.

5 Cook, Cara. Interview with author. November 17, 2015.

6 Smith, Nicole. Interview with author. August 15, 2012.

7 Masterson, Quinn. Interview with author. December 13, 2015.

8 Actors Equity Association, LORT 2017–2022 Rulebook, rule 12 (B) (2).

CHAPTER SIX

1 Wells, Alexis. Interview with author. December 27, 2019.
2 Harris, Kristen. Interview with author. August 17, 2012.
3 Bush, Erica. Interview with author. November 27, 2015.
4 Skemp Moran, Kathryn. Interview with author. December 3, 2015.
5 Threadgill, Susan. Comments shared with Production Managers Forum (excerpted with permission). June 1, 2012.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1 Cook, Cara. Interview with author. November 17, 2015.
2 Wells, Alexis. Interview with author. December 27, 2019.
3 Actors Equity Association, LORT 2017–2022 Rulebook, rule 70. Similar rules exist in most other agreements, although the number of understudies/swings or the compensation to be received may differ.
4 Sopel, Heather. Interview with author. January 3, 2020.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1 Actors Equity Association, LORT 2017–2022 Rulebook, rule 64 F-G. Similar rules exist in most other agreements, although the amount of compensation may differ.
2 Actors Equity Association, LORT 2017–2022 Rulebook, Rule 64 J (1)–(3). Similar rules exist in most other agreements, although the amount of compensation may differ.
3 "Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival" Accessed July 1, 2012 www. kcactf.org.

CHAPTER NINE

1 Wells, Alexis. Interview with author. December 27, 2019.
2 Masterson, Quinn. Interview with author. December 13, 2015.
3 Franklin, Al. Comments shared with Production Managers Forum (excerpted with permission). June 1, 2012.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Throughout this book, examples have been drawn from several productions of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Department of Theatre Arts, chaired by Joe Anderson. Unless otherwise noted, all production paperwork and images were created by Laurie Kincman, stage manager.

Twelfth Night
Directed by Walter Elder
Scenic Design by Mandy Kolbe
Costume Design by Michelle Collyar
Lighting Design by Nick Mompier
Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers— Cara Cook, Melissa Heller, Quinn Masterson

Big Fish
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Megan Morey
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Hideaki Tsutsui
Projections Design by Ben Golden
Sound Design by Alex Bauerly

Technical Direction by Megan Morey
Assistant Stage Managers—Rachel Krause, Sydney Smith

Chicago
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Ron Stoffregen
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Derrick Falkowski
Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers—Lauren Gingold, Lydia Runge

Proof
Directed by Walter Elder
Scenic Design by Ron Stoffregen
Costume Design by Ali Filipovich
Lighting Design by Derrick Falkowski
Technical Direction by Megan Morey
Assistant Stage Manager—Christine Stein

The Farnsworth Invention
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Mandy Kolbe
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Brent Bankes
Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers—Rachel Holtz, Scott Jenks

Urinetown
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Victoria Halverson
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Mandy Hart & Andrew Appold
Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers—Shelby Krarup, Erica Perrin

Young Frankenstein
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Mandy Kolbe
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Nick Mompier
Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers—Teahlyn Crow, Joe Reuss

Little Shop of Horrors
Directed by Mary Leonard
Scenic Design by Mandy Kolbe
Costume Design by Joe Anderson
Lighting Design by Chad Kolbe

Technical Direction by Ron Stoffregen
Assistant Stage Managers—Lauren Gingold, Melissa Heller, Shelby Krarup

The Tempest
Directed by Walter Elder
Scenic Design by Megan Morey
Costume Design by Michelle Collyar
Lighting Design by Mandy Kolbe
Technical Direction by Grayson Bush
Stage Management Team—Quinn Masterson, Lydia Runge, Tyler Kachel

**this production is featured in the cover image of this book

Glossary

Actor Packet The collection of paperwork given to an actor on the first day of rehearsal, including schedules and forms to be returned. It is also referred to as a welcome packet.

Assistant Stage Manager Secondary managers on a play or musical who organize and oversee technical elements from backstage.

Backing Page A page placed opposite each individual page of the prompt script onto which blocking and other notes will be recorded. Some stage managers call this a **blocking page**, or a **slip sheet** when it is inserted with cut corners rather than copied onto the back of a script page.

Blocking Key A chart which consolidates all of the symbols and abbreviations the stage manager uses in their prompt script while noting blocking.

Blocking The movement of the actors onto, around, and off the stage, which is documented by the stage manager in their script.

Body Language Nonverbal communication consisting of posture, gestures, and facial expressions.

Brush Up Rehearsal a short rehearsal called after a production has opened to clarify or refresh the specifics of particular blocking, choreography, combat, or music. In an academic setting, a brush up rehearsal may be a full run of a show after multiple days off to prepare for an upcoming set of performances.

Callbacks The second phase of an audition process where a director will see a winnowed list of actors, during which they typically read or sing specific material from the show.

Callboard The centralized location on which the stage manager posts information for a production. This may be a physical entity in the theatre, a web-based location, or both.

Center Line The invisible line separating stage left and stage right. It can be used as a Y axis when measuring a groundplan.

Character/Scene Breakdown A page-by-page chart indicating which actors are onstage throughout a play or musical, and which character they are playing at that time if cast in multiple roles.

Chorus The ensemble of a musical. While they may appear in book scenes consisting solely of dialogue, they will be specifically featured in song and dance.

Company Business Meeting The portion of the first day of rehearsal on an Equity show where the Deputy is elected and options regarding the length of the rehearsal day and the breaks within it are voted on. Only Equity members may be present in the room.

Consumable A prop which will be repeatedly used up during a production and need to be replaced. This could be food eaten nightly, an object ripped up or destroyed regularly, or a paper prop such as a letter which could become worn after several performances and need to be replaced repeatedly.

Costume Fitting An actor's appointment with the costume designer and technicians during which the actor will try on various costume pieces so they can be adjusted

Cue (first definition) An individual lighting look, sound effect, or scenic move in a production. A stage manager will "call" the moment of change from one look to another.

Cue (second definition) A visual or verbal prompt which signals to an actor the correct time to enter or speak.

Cue Light A light placed backstage which is wired to a small panel controlled by the stage manager which can be used to indicate when an actor entrance or technical effect should take place. Cue lights are typically used when a

verbal cue over headset is impractical or when an actor cannot easily see or hear activity onstage. The light is turned on as a warning for the upcoming action and turned off when the action should take place.

Cyclorama Commonly referred to as a "cyc," this full-stage, light-colored scenic backdrop can be lit by specific lighting instruments to reinforce location onstage (the illusion of a sky) or emotion (all red in a moment of anger).

Daily Call The schedule for the next rehearsal day, noting the work to be done and when actors will be needed for rehearsals, performances, fittings, or media calls.

Dance Captain The member of the cast of a musical with additional responsibilities to help review dance numbers and maintain their precision during the run of a show.

Deputy A member of an Equity cast elected by his or her fellow actors to ensure that the union rules are followed during the production, and to report violations or inconsistencies should they arise

Dialect Coach A production team member who works with individual actors to help with accents, dialects, or foreign languages they might speak onstage.

Distribution List The collection of personnel to whom a stage manager will send specific categories of production paperwork. The names often change depending on the focus of the document and the frequency with which it is distributed or updated.

Document Design The process of providing structure to a document by considering its format and layout in order to maximize the accessibility of the information it contains.

Dramaturg The production team member who focuses on research and analysis to help the director, designers, actors, and audience understand the script and the context around it.

Emotional Intelligence The capacity to recognize and understand our feelings and those of others, and to manage those feelings to be empathetic, resilient in the face of problems, and successful at relationship building.

Fight Call A brief review of combat sequences in a play, run by the fight captain and the stage manager immediately prior to half hour for each performance, to ensure safety and precision.

Fight Captain The member of the cast of a play or musical with additional responsibilities to help review combat sequences and maintain their precision during the run of a show.

French Scene An informal subdivision within the act of a play not divided formally into scene one, scene two, etc. French scenes can be dictated by the entering or exiting of major characters, or by significant changes in the plot or mood onstage.

Given Circumstances In the language of script analysis, the given circumstances are the known facts when the play begins. In the language of a production, the given circumstances are the details about the venue and personnel which are unlikely to change.

Groundplan A scale scenic drawing which provides a view of the set from above, placing it in context by also including the architecture of the theatre itself (walls, stairs, doors, etc.).

Half Hour The thirty-minute period prior to the start of a performance. On an AEA production, this will be the time at which actors are required to arrive at the theatre unless called early for safety checks or extended costume preparations.

House Manager The staff member tasked with overseeing the audience and their safety.

Hybrid Script Page The page of a stage manager's prompt script for a musical containing parts of both the libretto and the score.

Intimacy Director The production team member who helps to choreograph sexual and other sensitive moments between actors onstage, establishing a procedure to ensure there is consistency, consent, and comfort with the actions.

Lexicon A Shakespeare-specific reference book, which includes pronunciations, definitions, and lists of where a word or phrase appears in multiple plays.

Libretto The script for a musical which contains all of the dialogue and typed-out lyrics of the songs, but no music.

Line Notes Electronic or hard-copy notes taken by the stage management team about errors in lines or wording in order to help actors them to memorize a script precisely

Line Set An individual rope-set system attached to a batten on which lighting instruments or scenic units can be hung. All of the line sets in a theatre will be located along a horizontal pipe or rail known as the **fly rail**. In some theatres, the fly rail is on ground level and in others it is at an elevated position.

Load-in The period of time in which a set will move into the theatre, after which the stage management team will help determine and organize the backstage locations for scenic units, props, and costume pieces.

Model A 3D scale version of the set in the theatre.

Musical Staging Fluid movement during a song which may be less athletic and less specifically timed than choreography.

Page Orientation The formatting direction of a document, determined by the largest measurement: its height (portrait) or by its width (landscape).

Paper Tech A meeting of the director, stage manager, and designers on a production to verbally discuss the placement of technical cues before the first rehearsal in the theatre where those technical elements will be used.

Performance Report The report sent to the production team at the end of each performance, noting absences, illnesses, technical problems, and other theatre-requested details such as temperature or audience size.

Plaster Line The invisible line running along the upstage side of the proscenium arch. It can be used as an X axis when measuring a groundplan.

Post Mortem A final meeting of the personnel involved with a theatrical production to reflect on successes and challenges.

Pre-production The period of time before rehearsals begin when the stage management team will complete preliminary paperwork, prepare the rehearsal room, and attend initial meetings. In many AEA contracts this is referred to as **prep week**.

Preview The performances of a play or musical which take place during the final days or weeks of the rehearsal period. Traditional rehearsals can still be held to make adjustments based on audience feedback during those performances.

Principal Actor A main actor in a play or musical, designated by having a central role in the story and typically a significant number of lines or songs.

Producer The person or team of people providing financial backing for a production.

Production Meeting A conference of the director, designers, stage managers, and technical heads on production, occurring on a regular interval during the period of time in which the show is in rehearsal and being built.

Production Stage Manager A supervisory stage manager, typically with additional administrative responsibilities such as managing a budget, hiring interns, or preparing a tour for the next venue.

Prompt Book The large binder containing the notated script for a production along with the paperwork created by and given to the stage manager.

Prompt Script An enlarged version of the playscript on which the stage manager will note the movement of the actors and the technical cues to be called.

Prop Objects specified by a script with which actors interact onstage. This could be a book, a bouquet of flowers, a cup of coffee, or many other items. In many theatres furniture and set dressing are also considered to be props.

Pulling from Stock Gathering props, furniture pieces, or costume items that a theatre may keep in a permanent collection as opposed to items built or purchased specifically for an individual production.

Put-in Rehearsal A rehearsal in which an understudy is given the chance to work with the principal cast and most if not all of the production elements, prior to appearing onstage as a substitute for the primary actor cast in a role.

Quick Change The change of costume for an actor, generally one minute or less, requiring assistance of the costume crew.

Read-through The first rehearsal of a play when the cast sits around a table to read the dialogue aloud.

Rehearsal Numbers Measure numbers in the score of a musical corresponding to major changes in the music of an individual song. The numbers are typically larger than other measure numbers, and placed in a box to make them more noticeable.

Rehearsal Report The report sent to the production team at the end of each day of rehearsal documenting schedule details, providing updates, and asking questions regarding individual production elements in the context of the work taking place in the rehearsal room.

Remount A secondary presentation of a play or musical after the end of an official run.

Rendering A full-color drawing of an individual costume or scenic piece.

Replacement Pages New pages of a script generated by the playwright during the first production of a play or musical.

Runthrough A continuous review of the entire play in the rehearsal hall, with breaks taken only at intermission points marked in the script.

Scale The fixed ratio between a line or distance on a drawing and the corresponding measurement in real life, used so that large objects and spaces can be presented on a much smaller piece of paper. A ½ inch scale, for example, indicates that every half inch measured on the drawing is equivalent to one foot. A special ruler preprinted with commonly used ratios is used to measure the drawing and make the calculation easier. An **architect's scale** presents these ratios in American (imperial) measurements while an **engineer's scale** presents them using the metric system.

Scene Shift The movement of a piece of scenery or furniture, or the setting or moving of a prop in between scenes in a play or musical.

Score The script for a musical which contains all of the music details for vocalists and instrumentalists, including lyrics and key lines before a song begins, but little to no other information about words spoken onstage.

Section A scale drawing of the set in the theatre through a given plane, usually at the center line, showing the relative heights of scenic units, lighting pipes, the grid, and other architectural elements.

Sides Excerpts of a script read by actors during the audition process.

Sightline The view from particular seats in the audience to the stage, usually at the outer ends of a long aisle, used to determine if any area of the stage will be obstructed from view. Sightlines also exist backstage in the theatre to indicate where an actor should wait for an entrance in order to remain out of view of the audience.

Special Effect The use of fog, pyrotechnics, strobe lights, or other "theatre magic" in a production.

Spike A mark on the stage floor, typically made with cloth tape, indicating the location where an actor should stand or a piece of furniture should be placed.

Split Page The page of a script on which one scene ends and another begins.

Stage Manager The primary manager on a play or musical, most commonly given the main responsibility for recording blocking and calling cues.

Standby (first definition) A warning from the stage manager to alert board operators and other technicians to an upcoming cue or sequence of cues, delivered verbally or with a cue light.

Standby (second definition) An actor who understudies one of the lead roles in the show but is not otherwise a part of the cast.

Strike The removal of production elements from the theatre following the final performance of a play or musical.

Swing A multi-actor understudy who is asked to learn the roles of several (or all) chorus members of their gender and to be prepared to perform for any one of these actors. The collection of roles covered is known as a **track**.

Table work The phase of rehearsal when the actors and director will focus on understanding the themes of the script and the words of the characters.

Tech Rehearsal One or more days of rehearsal during which the production elements are integrated into the show.

Triangulation The method of measuring and taping a groundplan in a non-proscenium theatre based on measurements from two fixed points and not a center line and plaster line.

Understudy A member of the cast who learns the role of another actor and is prepared to step in should the primary actor be unavailable due to illness, injury, or absence.

Union An association of workers who organize and collectively bargain for wages, safety conditions, and other job-specific needs.

Vom Short for vomitorium, an aisle in between banks of seating in a thrust or black box theatre, used both by actors and audience members. Both the term and the architectural feature were first seen in Roman amphitheaters.

White Space Empty space on a document which gives the reader's eye a place to rest and therefore not be overwhelmed by a lot of information or detail.

Workweek The number of days in a given week on which rehearsals and performances can be held. When working under an AEA contract, the number of days will be specified—as well as the required day off in some instances.

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