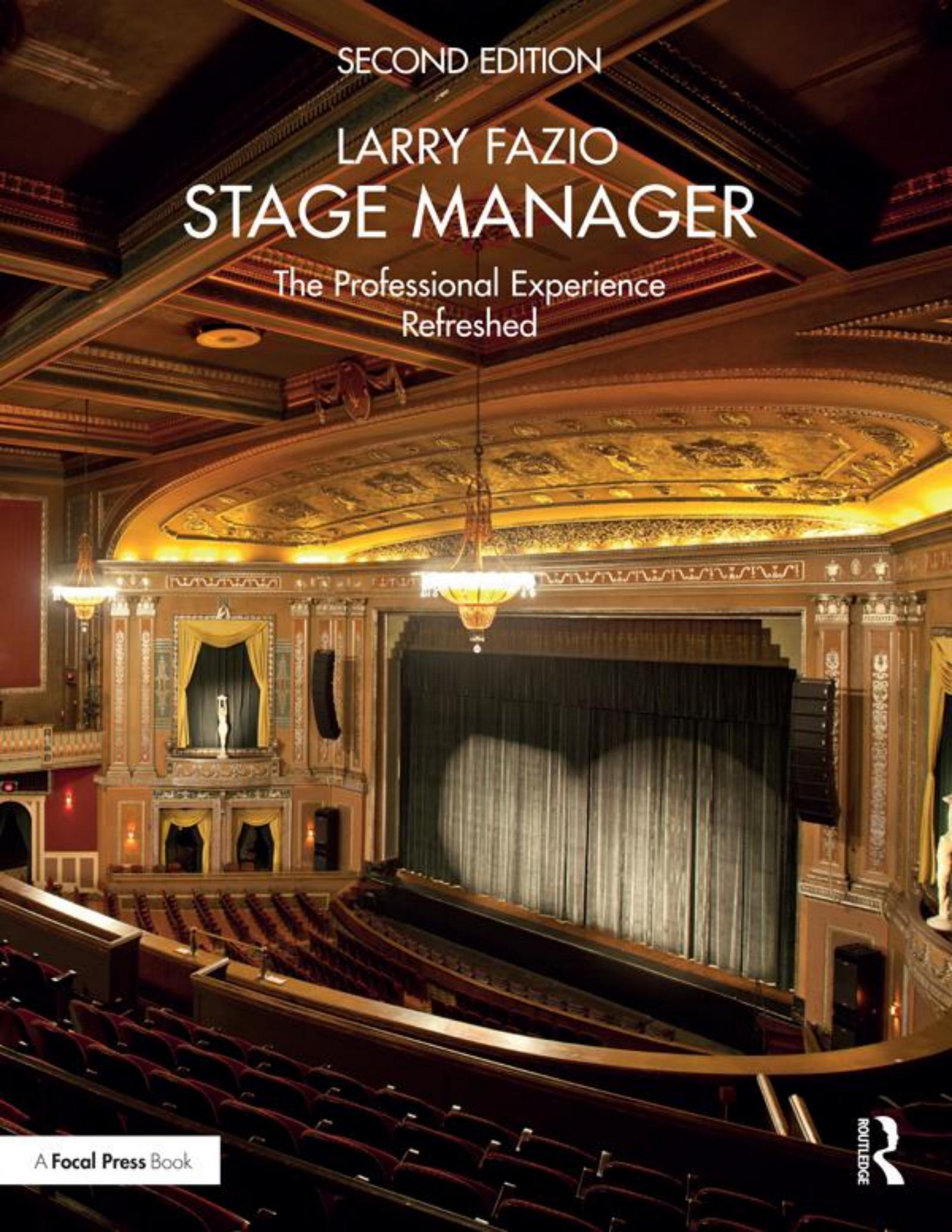


SECOND EDITION

LARRY FAZIO STAGE MANAGER

The Professional Experience
Refreshed



Stage Manager: The Professional Experience—Refreshed

Stage Manager: The Professional Experience—Refreshed takes the reader on a journey through all aspects of the craft of stage management, including the technological advancements that have come to theatre and the stage manager's job.

Chapters are laid out to reflect the order in which stage managers experience and perform their work: what makes a good stage manager, seeking the job, building a resume, interviewing for the job, and getting the job (or not getting the job). Included are chapters on the chain of command, working relationships, tools and supplies, creating charts, plots, plans and lists, the rehearsal period, creating the prompt book, calling cues, and the run of the show. These are just some of the many topics covered in this book. In addition, the author uses interviews with professionals in various stages of production, providing another view of how the stage manager is perceived and what is expected from the work of the stage manager.

Fifteen years after the original publication of *Stage Manager: The Professional Experience*, this new and *refreshed* edition is now in color to help clarify and illustrate points in the text. It is fully updated to reflect the world of computerized technology: smart phones, thinly designed laptops, tablets, use of email and text messaging, storing and sharing files and information in cloud-based apps. Then there are the innovations of *automation*—electronically moving scenery; *scenic projections*—casting images and patterns on the stage; *moving lights*; *LED luminaires*; *lasers*; and greater use of *fog* and *haze* machines.

In addition, the first edition's extensive glossary of more than 600 terms and phrases has been extended to well over 700, providing an excellent professional vocabulary for anyone hoping to be a stage manager or already in the field.

Larry Fazio was born in Providence, Rhode Island, and lives with his wife in Southern California. While serving in the United States Army, he trained as a motion-picture photographer. As fate would have it, he became part of the Department of the Army Entertainment—Special Services. While with this group, he was awarded the Army Oscar, the Irving Berlin Trophy, and the Gold Key Award—a three-year full scholarship to the Pasadena Playhouse in California. On the merits of his grades there, he was then given another scholarship to attend California State University, Fullerton, to finish his bachelor's degree, where he won the Best Director Award. His first big break came with a musical production of *Gone With the Wind* as the second assistant stage manager. Since that time, he has worked professionally in theatre, managing star productions of musicals, dramas, comedies, and magic shows throughout the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe. His purpose in writing this book is to bring to the student and beginning stage manager the world of professional stage managing as he worked it and experienced it.

Stage Manager

The Professional Experience—Refreshed

Larry Fazio



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In dedicating this book, a list of names comes immediately to mind—people who opened doors to me, gave me my first breaks, and supported me in my career. Always, however, there is one person who stands above the others. I don't think they will mind taking second place to her.

I dedicate this book to my wife, **Toby**, who shares my life in all my endeavors.

For this second edition, there is another dedication I would like to make:



To the Pasadena Playhouse—State Theatre of California, in thanks and appreciation for my scholarship, formal education, and early professional experience.

Dedication to the Reader

*An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.*

*The old man crossed in the twilight dim—
That sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.*

*“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting strength in building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?”*

*The builder lifted his old gray head.
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There follows after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.”*

Dromgoole

*This book is my bridge for those who will follow
in the path of being a stage manager.*

Larry Fazio

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Preface to the Second Edition

I begin this preface with a *colored text box*, which you will soon come to recognize as my way of having a personal conversation with you or delivering additional information and experience.

It was with pleasure and excitement that I was asked to do a second edition of this book and bring you into the twenty-first century of theatre. If you happen to be like I was in college, when reading a textbook or self-help book, you might be tempted to flip past the pages at the front and go directly to the first chapter, where I figured the important information started, the stuff on which I would be tested.

Well, you too can do that here, *but* you will miss some good information that will set you up and help you get the most effective use out of this book. So read on with this preface, or skip over it. Either way, I will see you in Chapter 1.

Addendum to this Second Edition

While my intention for the *first edition* of this book was to bring to the reader the “professional experience” (as is still the case with this second edition), I wrote the first edition strictly from the point of view of the stage manager working on a *production contract* because that was my experience. I was fortunate that within two years of completing my studies in theatre I entered the “professional” world, going directly into an *Equity production contract*, and it was there I stayed. What prompted me even to begin writing a book on stage managing was that, when I entered the professional world, I found in many places differences and discrepancies between what I was told in my studies and what I actually had to do while working on a production contract. Having had that experience, I wanted to set the record straight. But in doing so, I left out much about what the student or beginning stage manager must do. I staunchly professed that some of the charts, plots, plans, and lists I was taught I did not use as a professional stage manager, and that was true as long as I worked under a production contract.

However, being a person who enjoys my work and wants continuous employment, I also took jobs that were not on a production contract. Some were lesser Equity contracts in regional theatre, local civic light opera groups, even a ninety-nine-seat house where I worked a full, uncut version of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* starring James Cromwell—and I had to do all those things I said in the first edition the stage manager did not have to do.

With that in mind, in this second edition, you will hear me say that in the “professional experience” you will not be required to create certain charts, plots, plans, or lists that are insisted upon and demanded of you in your studies. *However*, this does not preclude the student or beginning stage manager from learning all the things that in some situations he or she might be required to do. It is the stage manager’s job to do whatever is necessary to keep things organized and running smoothly. If that requires the stage manager to create a *fly cue sheet* or lay out *floor plans for scene shifts* or do a *sound* or *lighting plot*, then that is what the stage manager must do.

Test of Time

It is interesting to note that the “parts” of the stage manager’s job as chronologically laid out in this book have not changed much from what was done yesterday, and possibly from when the job first came into existence. What has changed from the publication of the first edition is the “technology,” which has slowly made its way into *set design*,

the *visual presentation of the play*, and the *tools* that both the stage manager and technicians have at their fingertips to do their jobs and create the magic of theatre. Here are a few examples:

- AUTOMATION—the computerized movement of scenery on and off stage
- PROJECTION of images onto screens and pieces of scenery
- More LASER LIGHTS, FOG machines, and SMOKE units
- More sophisticated MOVING/INTELLIGENT LIGHTS
- CAMERAS and MONITORS for the technicians, stage manager, and performers
- WIRELESS MICROPHONES for practically all speaking and singing parts
- COMPUTER PROGRAMS, APPS, and DIGITAL DEVICES for the stage manager to use in creating lists, forms, charts, plots, schedules, and communications
- And even LISTENING HEADPHONES to enhance the audio part of the theatregoing experience, not only for the general public but for those who might have an impairment. Even more sophisticated are systems that feature an “audio description” for the blind. And more and more producers are incorporating into their presentations a person standing off to the side of the stage *signing* for those hard of hearing (though this has no significant effect on the stage manager’s work other than to make sure the person is in place and lit as the curtain rises for the first act).

Theatres in Transition

For any beginning stage manager or person studying to be a stage manager, it is important to know about the things of yesterday as well as the advancements of today. If your stage managing life and career are true to form, you will work for a good number of producing companies and do shows in many theatres and venues. Some will be supremely equipped with the latest technology, while others will seem to be in the dark ages—mind you, the *dark ages* in theatre technology are not that long ago, perhaps back in the nineties or certainly the eighties and seventies. For the most part, many theatres will be in transition, having the latest technology they can afford. So in the process of reading this book and in learning your craft, do not dismiss knowing about the *rheostat dimmer light board* or the *hand-cranked winch*, the *carbon-arc spotlight, gels*, or the *long-line* and *short-line* on the *rail/fly system*. Somewhere along the way, you will run into and may have to work with these dinosaurs.

Staying Ahead of Technology

From time to time in this second edition, I will remind you that there is no way for any book to *stay ahead of advancing technology*, unless a new edition were printed every other year. Even as these words are being read, something new, better, improved, and more sophisticated has come into play. Some technician, some designer, some stage manger has taken up the latest in technology and put it to the test and, if it has worth and value, you can be sure it will spread throughout theaterland and become part of the working landscape, as have automation, projections, laser lights, fog machines, smoke units, moving lights, video cams, viewing monitors, and wireless mics. So it will be up to *you*, the new and beginning stage manager, to see what is new and keep up with the latest technology to remain current in your field.

He/She, Stagehand/Technician

It has often been common practice in the printed word that when the pronoun *he* is used *she* is implied, and that was pretty much the way it was in the first edition. In the spirit of this second edition being “*refreshed*,” I have also refreshed this common practice and included the pronoun *she* wherever *he* is presented. I have also changed the term *stagehand* to *technician* or *stage technician*.

The Hierarchy of Stage Managers

As you have read through this preface, you may have noticed the number of times the term *stage manager* is used. You can imagine the hundreds of times more it will be stated throughout this second edition. Well, in an effort to save at least the branch of a tree and some of the chemicals used for ink, from here on the acronym *SM* will be used.

In defining and labeling the SM's job and position further, whenever there is more than one SM on a show, the lead SM or head SM is known as the *production stage manager*, which from here on will be *PSM*.

Most always, especially in a musical, there is a second SM—the *assistant SM*, or as it will be from now on, *ASM*.

If by chance there should be a third SM or maybe even a fourth, the titling changes ever so slightly. The ASM becomes the *first ASM*, while the next SM becomes the *second ASM*, and so on. So there is

- The generic term, *SM*
- The honored position of the head SM, *PSM*
- The second and assisting SM, the *ASM*
- And if a third SM is added, then the ASM becomes the *first ASM*, while the next SM becomes the *second ASM*, etc.

While this information is not important among the ranks of SMs, it is important defining information to Actors' Equity and possibly your program.

Actors' Equity

More times than not, whenever cast members, technicians, or the production staff speak of Actors' Equity (the actor's union), they simply call it *Equity*. So shall it be herein.

A Note to the Reader: I wrote the first edition of this book over a period of many years, mostly during times of unemployment. When asked to do this second edition, I became aware of and even overwhelmed at the scope and range of all that is contained herein, but even more, by how the reader/student/beginning SM might feel when taking a look for the first time. Well, let me give you a *hall pass* or a *do not go to jail card* and tell you that this book is purposely designed so you do not have to commit to memory all that is written. Well, actually, if you are a student you may want to, if for no other reason than to please the instructor or get a passing grade in the class. But know that once your study is over and you are out in the world, this book can become your guide, a handbook, and a reference. Each chapter is specifically named and placed in chronological order of the SM's job and life. In addition, each chapter is loaded with headings, subheadings, and even sub-subheadings, taking you through every step of *looking for the job*, *beginning the job*, and *working the job*. Simply turn to the table of contents, run your finger down the page as you might on your smart phone, and touch upon the heading that most suits the information you need at the time. Also, the index and the glossary are provided to help you quickly find what you might need at any time.

The Digital/Computer/Internet SM

While at one time the SM was defined by his expertise and use of the land phone, Xerox machine, electric portable typewriter, three-ring binders, file folders, cassette recorder/player, and stopwatch, he or she is now led and driven by the computer, the smart phone, texting, emailing, the Internet, apps, and the software programs that aid in creating forms, lists, plans, charts, and plots.

The Paperless SM

There is talk and promise of the *paperless SM*. At present, we are smack-dab in between. While most of the charts, plots, plans, and forms presented in Chapter 6, “Hard Copy,” can be created digitally, and while the SM’s filing system is dwindling from manila folders to digital folders stored in some cloud, there are parts of the SM’s job that remain old-school, most notably, the rehearsal/blocking script and the cue/calling script. There are programs that claim they can do the jobs of these two scripts, and if the show on which you are working is a simple one, then they are quite usable. However, with a musical where everything is *more* of everything, these programs do not have the capability, maneuverability, or features to note sufficiently what the SM needs in these two scripts.

Most assuredly, with the improvement of software and with the new generation of SMs such as yourself, there will indeed come a time when the SM will be totally paperless and completely digital. Until that time, this second edition will walk that line between what was done yesterday and what is being done today.

The Work of the SM is Whatever Needs to be Done

In academic theatre, community theatre, little theatre, or even the Equity ninety-nine-seat theatre, SMs are often expected to be responsible for a lot more of the work of the different technical departments. In fact, at times, the SM in these situations might be required to work the light board or run sound cues while calling the cues for the show. The SM may also be responsible for leading the stage crew in building and painting the scenery, and certainly before the performance, he or she more than likely will set props and check the placement of all things important.

It is not a bad thing if in the learning stages of this craft and profession, especially while in study as a student, you learn how to create a list of *fly cues*, do a *light plot*, draw up *floor plans*, or even do a *budget*. Learn how to hang and focus lights, know the operation of wardrobe and costumes, learn the things the stage technicians have to do in their work, and learn how to speak to them in their language and vernacular.

“The Bridge Builder”

You may have noticed and possibly already read my dedication to the reader—“The Bridge Builder.” This was a poem left anonymously on my SM’s console backstage. I quickly read it over and did not study its full meaning and intention. I was, however, attracted to it, so much so that I tucked it away in my personal file folder. I somehow lost track of it. Interestingly, years later, after I had completed writing the first draft for the first edition of this book and was finishing up the dedication and acknowledgments, the poem once again appeared, this time on my desk at home. I neither recognized it nor remembered it, but I read it over with the intention of discarding it after I was through. I read it once and then again, and then was compelled to read it a third time. With each reading it spoke to me. I realized that though I am not as old and gray, I was like the bridge builder in this poem, and this book is my bridge. The poem expresses the impetus for my writing.

Introduction

I mentioned in the Preface that if you are anything like me, you might have skipped over the first pages at the front of the book. If so, there is still time to go back, but if not, here we are at Chapter 1, the “Introduction,” and let’s cut directly to “The Professional Gap.”

The Professional Gap

You are about to journey into professional SMing as it has never before been traveled. Many good books have been written on this subject, so why another? To my knowledge, there is no one book that deals with the *total experience* of a professional SM. I mentioned in the Preface that in full-scale “professional” productions, much of the technical work that might be expected of an SM in academic theatre, community theatre, little theatre, or Equity ninety-nine-seat theatre is the responsibility of the different technical departments and the heads of those departments.

In this book you will not be told to create certain lists, charts, or plans that will be the work of the technical staff. It is this difference between academia and smaller theatre and what I describe as a *full-scale “professional” production* that I call the “professional gap.”

It is important, however, that while a student you learn all these things, for surely, in the beginning years of your work and career, and as you are making your way up to those Equity productions, you will work in places where you will be responsible for creating a list of fly cues, doing a light plot, drawing up floor plans with the placement and measurements of scenery, maybe even creating a budget. It is almost certain you will be hanging and focusing lights, setting the scenery changes, and, even more certain, setting the timing and placement of light cues in the prompt script.

Learning the Hard Way

It wasn’t until I SMed professionally that I came to appreciate knowing all the things I no longer had to do, because the knowledge of those things gave me the ability to understand and communicate with the different department heads in their terms and vernacular.

On occasion, though, I had to learn things the hard way. Believing I had been taught the definitive way, I had some rude awakenings. I was like a floppy, enthusiastic puppy, and I was told (sometimes with a smile, sometimes in a patronizing way) to save myself the work and leave that part for the person who was hired to do the job. I quickly had to learn what things I should and should not do as a professional stage manager.

Note: For your entertainment, and to learn what *not* to do, see “An Embarrassing SM Faux Pas” at the end of this chapter.

The Human and Psychological Side of SMing

Also, in many of the books I read and even in my formal training as an SM, there was little to no discussion of the *people* side of the job. There was very little talk, at least not enough to leave an impression, about working relationships, human behavior, managing people, moving people around, and most of all the psychology of working with people in the theatre—working with stars and, even more, working with egos.

Just as important, I don't remember anything being said about the SM as a person—his or her beliefs, behaviors, conflicts, and struggles, or the biases that might get in the way of the job. I had to experience and learn as I worked in various jobs and situations. I did not want to be saved from my experiences, for they were what made me learn and grow. However, had I been introduced to some of these things, I might not have wandered into as many minefields or left myself open as a target.

Personal Sidebar: I was an idealist. I went into the professional world and did battle with windmills. I believed right triumphed and truth prevailed. I thought rusted shaving pots could be buffed into golden helmets, and I refused to see the truth when people held a mirror up to me. I believed everyone in theatre lived and embraced the same work ethic and professional code as I did. Sometimes it was a difficult journey, and had I crossed that river of experience at a point where there was a bridge built by some other SM, I might have passed over the muddy waters unscathed.

Objective and Intention of This Book

In writing this book, it is my intention to bridge the professional gap, talk about the people with whom the SM works and must have an ongoing relationship, sweep away some of those land mines, point out the danger zones, and avoid the pitfalls. I have made a great effort to describe the total experience and not just the academic view. In many places I share experiences, make observations, and present how it has worked for me and for other stage managers. I write with a positive pen, but from time to time I relate things that will be neither encouraging nor inspiring. Your experience as an SM will be your own. However, all SMs experience similar things. Take what you like. I cannot stress this strongly enough: Take what makes sense to you, take what works for you. Feel free to change and adjust things to suit yourself and the situation in which you are working. My way of doing things may not be your way. As you grow and become experienced, you will create your own forms and do things your own way. Then you too can build a bridge over which other SMs can travel.

It is in my nature to be detailed and thorough, sometimes to a fault. I am also highly visual and write to create a comprehensive picture. Although most books on SMing are handbook size, with my propensity for detail and my quest to describe the entire professional experience, this book has grown in size. Never having had to commit my job to paper, by the end of the first draft I was quite surprised and somewhat overwhelmed by the enormity and responsibility of being an SM. Up to that point, my lack of awareness had been bliss. Writing each chapter was easy. Stepping back and looking at the entire job was frightening. This is how you should approach an SMing job, and this is how you should begin your studies—one chapter at a time.

My intention is not to make you an SM, but rather to help you become an SM. The SM's position is unique. People working in the same show do not see and experience what the SM sees and experiences, including the producer and director. This book is written strictly from the SM's point of view.

The Chapters in This Book

As I have said, the chapters are arranged in the order in which the SM experiences the job and lives a personal life while working on a show. The chapters take the reader through the various stages and development of the production, including rehearsals, opening night, the touring show, and closing the show. The earlier chapters deal with practical and factual things like charts, plots, plans, lists, tools, supplies, and the power structure of a theatrical company—the *chain of command*. Then there are the chapters that make this book unique—the exploration of what makes a good SM, creating a resume, interviewing for the job, getting the job (or *not* getting the job), creating the cueing script and calling the cues for the show, and the all-important study of people working in theatre—their behavior and the SM's

working relationship with them. Again, each chapter will give a comprehensive picture of the total professional experience.

The last chapter in this book is a story based on one SM's experience. It is a compilation of incidents and experiences that reveals what can sometimes happen to an SM.

End-of-Chapter Features

At the end of some chapters, I include a feature called "The Professional Experience." This consists of short stories or accounts of experiences I or some other SMs have had while working.

Another feature found at the end of some chapters is "Interviews." These are excerpts from interviews conducted with producers, directors, and other SMs who corroborate what has already been said in a chapter or bring another point of view. Let me introduce you to these people:

► **Paul Blake**, producer and director of award-winning regional theatre and all-star national tours. Based in New York and California, for twenty-two years he was the executive producer and director of "The Muny" in St. Louis, taking it through its golden years of performances. His latest jewel of achievement is the highly successful, multi-Tony-nominated Broadway show *Beautiful: The Carol King Musical*. He has produced over 150 productions, of which I was with him for nine.

► **Sheldon Epps**, since 1997 artistic director of the renowned Pasadena Playhouse. On Broadway, Sheldon's star has shown bright with his brilliantly created and highly acclaimed musicals *Play On!* and Duke Ellington's *Blues in the Night*, both of which received Tony Award nominations. Across the pond he did a time with the Old Globe Theatre in London as associate artistic director. Television too has felt his power and talent with over 130 TV episodes to his credit, including *Friends*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Evening Shade*, *Smart Guy*, *Sister, Sister*, *Frasier*, *Girlfriends*, and *George Lopez*. In continuing recognition, Sheldon was awarded the James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award for his efforts and accomplishments at the Pasadena Playhouse, and he has been recognized and honored with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Theatre Award.

► **Barbara Beckley**, cofounder and artistic director of the Colony Theatre in "Beautiful Down Town Burbank," California. The Colony started first as a ninety-nine-seat theatre in Silver Lake, California, in 1975. By the year 2000, and then under the leadership and guidance of Barbara as artistic director and with success in both productions and audience attendance, the Colony move into its intimately designed, 268-seat, thrust-stage theatre, with not a bad seat in the house. Raised in New Rochelle, New York, Barbara went with her mother and sister to see all the shows on Broadway that we now think of as part of the golden age of musical theatre. "My first Broadway show was Mary Martin in *Peter Pan*, so is it any wonder I am in theatre?" she asks. She tried college for three semesters but knew academia was not for her. She moved to Manhattan and studied and graduated from the Neighborhood Playhouses, under the great Sandy Meisner. She spent some time in New York but then followed her fellow actors out to Los Angeles. While working as an actress here and there in TV, Barbara and some friends created the Colony Theatre. "It was fun and a place to act when I wasn't pursuing my career. But then somewhere along the way, as John Lennon once said, *life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans*. I found that what I really loved was what Stephen Sondheim wrote into song, *Putting It Together*. I got great satisfaction out of putting all the elements together in a production and watching it meet the audience. So here I am, over 200 shows later, still loving it and still getting great pleasure." The Colony Theatre continues to thrive and has produced every genre of show that theatre has to offer.

► **Brad Enlow**, technical director, Pasadena Playhouse. Brad was born into technical theatre, his father and some uncles being stage technicians. By the age of nine, he illegally worked his first paying job and, by fourteen, he got his legal work permit. All of his training has been on-the-job training. Making his way to California from his home-town of Cincinnati, he landed first in Northern California in Stockton. From there he worked his way down the coast to Los Angeles, where he landed the prize position of technical director for Jason Alexander's Reprise Theatre on the campus of University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In a period of three years, he worked over twelve productions. It was not a long freeway drive from there to Pasadena, where his talents were needed, and he was hired as the technical director at the world-famous Pasadena Playhouse.

► **John Bowab**, director, producer, writer, from Broadway to television and movies. Associate producer for the original productions of *Mame* and *Sweet Charity*, John has directed *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *She Loves Me*, and the 1983 revival of *Mame*. Equally impressive are his television credits: *The Cosby Show*, *Benson*, *The Facts of Life*, and *Soap*.

► **Bill Holland**, producer and PSM. For twelve years, he was producer, associate producer, and PSM for the Los Angeles and San Francisco Civic Light Operas. He has worked over one hundred productions, including the original production of *Gigi* on Broadway, and has worked with a who's who of stars.

► **Lara Teeter**, actor, singer, dancer, director, and choreographer. Lara has performed on Broadway, receiving a Tony Award nomination for his performance in *On Your Toes*, and has toured the country several times over in national shows. I have had the good fortune to work with this quintuple-threat in all of the above. His talents are diverse, his energy boundless, and his spirit... positive! He now brings all of his talents and energy to Webster University in St. Louis as head of the music theatre program.

A Glossary of Words, Terms, Expressions, and Phrases

For a book on SMing to be complete, there must be a list of words and terms that are defined as they are used in theatre. This list traditionally appears at the back of the book in the form of a glossary. What makes the glossary in this book stand out is that in the first edition there were more than 650 words, terms, expressions, and phrases. With this second edition, at least a hundred more have been added. Each is defined from the SM's point of view. It is the SM's working vocabulary. In many of the terms, additional information is given to create a greater picture and understanding for the beginning SM. In some definitions, technical details have been simplified or left out. When an SM is first starting out, a *general* working knowledge and understanding is better than complete technical knowledge. Later on, with experience, the SM's knowledge will become enriched, and the definitions more sophisticated.

Sidebar: In the Preface and at the beginning of this chapter, I shared with you the habit I practiced when younger of passing over the preface, foreword, or introduction of books. I confess I was just as delinquent when it came to the glossary. I went to it only when it was absolutely necessary. As a person who has learned some things the hard way, I strongly recommend that at some point in reading this book you dog-ear or bookmark your place and turn to the glossary. A few each day will... if this was about apples, then I could finish the sentence with *keep the doctor away*. But in terms of the glossary, I can only advise that it will *strengthen the matter in your head that is gray*.

A Definition of Professional

The operative word throughout this book is *professional*. *The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary* has several definitions:

1. *The professional makes a business or trade of something that others might do for pleasure.* There is no question that theatre is a business—*show business*. Also, there is a very thin, almost nonexistent line between what professional people in show business do for pay and what many others do for pleasure.
2. *A professional is a person who belongs to a recognized and organized profession.* As far back as the Greek theatre we see how performers and theatre productions have been organized and considered a profession. Anyone who has worked in a play, from high school to Broadway, knows the organization required to produce a show.
3. *A professional does a job to a high degree and quality.* There is no doubt as to the degree and quality that all people in theatre put into their work and into the productions they present.

For SMs and people in the theatre, I would add this definition:

4. *Being professional means following an honorable code of ethics, practices, and standards, and being responsible to give the best to yourself, to fellow workers, to the employer, to the production, and ultimately, to the people who come to see the show.*

Equity: The Distinguishing Line between *Professional* and *Nonprofessional*

The above definitions of *professional* are all workable, but they apply equally to any group of thespians who work to do their best. Where do we go then to find the distinguishing line between professional and nonprofessional? Definition #2 brings us closest: *a person who belongs to a recognized and organized profession.*

This leads us directly to the unions and guilds to which artists, creators, and technicians belong. In the professional world, it is unions and guilds that people use to distinguish between what is professional and what is nonprofessional. For the actor this is the Actor's Equity Association (AEA), more commonly called Equity. For the technicians this is the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees—IATSE (pronounced *eye-ahtsee*).

For our purposes in this book, people and productions in association with unions and guilds will be the distinguishing line between what is professional and what is nonprofessional. For an SM, the highest attainment in professional work in theatre is to get an Equity show.

The Most Important Work

In many places throughout this book, I have found myself singling out a particular part of the SM's job as being the most important. After a while the statement began to lose its effectiveness. How many parts can be the "most important"? I considered striking the phrase but realized that the part of the job the SM is doing at any one time is the most important. *Each part of an SM's job has an effect on what is happening at the moment and more than likely will affect another important part later.* This is what makes an SM's job intense. This is what makes it exciting, exhilarating, rewarding, energizing, and high-powered. This is what also makes the SM's job stress filled and exhausting.

The Musical Play

The musical show is the ultimate experience for any SM. There are more charts, plots, plans, lists, sets, scene changes, costumes, cues, and people. With a musical, there is more of everything: For example, you can be doing a four-character play like the *Odd Couple* or even one with seven actors such as Terrance McNally's *It's Only a Play*. Those can be, as the saying goes, *a walk in the park* compared to, let's say, *Avenue Q*, which has twelve characters, or *Rent*, with eight characters and an ensemble. So I will take you to those extremes and let you slim your work down to fit the show.

Standard SM Titles and Their Abbreviations

We have already touched upon this subject, but in case there is someone who has skipped over the Preface, it is worth reviewing:

- There is the head SM, the *production stage manager*, referred to in this book as the *PSM*.
- There is the *assistant stage manager*, the *ASM*.

If there should be a third SM or maybe even a fourth, the titling changes ever so slightly.

- The ASM becomes the *first ASM*.
- And the next ASM becomes the *second ASM*, and so on.

The ASM

The lines between the PSM and the ASM become blurred because the division of labor is interchangeable. At any one time the ASM may be the SM who is giving out the next day's rehearsal or calling the cues for the performance, or the one troubleshooting problems, or soothing the nerves or feeling of an actor, or appeasing a stage technician wrongly blamed or mistreated by someone in the cast or production.

The ASM must be capable of doing all that the PSM does. The ASM must be ready to take over the lead position should the PSM become unable to do the job. Throughout this book the term *SM* will be used in the singular form, and all of the information and work duties, though seemingly directed to the head SM (the PSM), should be understood to include the ASM. Only when there is a clear separation of work will the terms *PSM* and *ASM* be used. Generally, the only difference between a good ASM and a PSM is age and the amount of experience.

Women SMs

This book is as much for women who are interested in becoming a professional SM as it is for men. In the first half of the twentieth century, men dominated this field. Cheryl Crawford was one of the first exceptions in the 1930s. It wasn't until World War II while most of the men were away in battle that women were given the opportunity to be SMs and, in some cases, they turned out to be better at it than their male counterparts. By the 1950s, women started taking their place, but the change was long and slow in happening. In Chapter 18, "The Touring Show," we will meet one such person, Anne Sullivan. She will share with us her experience of a day in the life of an SM on a musical show.

The History of the SM

In the final stages of putting this book together, I realized that I wanted to include a section on the history of SMing. In my research, I found only one book that briefly described the evolution of the SM, which started in the seventeenth century during Shakespeare's and Molière's time.

In my heart and in the wilds of my imagination, I know SMs existed long before the 1600s. I am convinced that SMs existed at least as far back as the days of the caveman. Of course there is no documentation to substantiate this, but I am certain that during the time when humans sat around campfires to reenact the thrill of the hunt and to tell of the glory of the kill, there was someone in the group who built the fire, cleared the ground for seating, and handed out, at the most dramatic moment, the spear or rock that killed the beast.

The history of theatre starts with the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Back then productions were simple. There was no scenery. The props were limited to a crown, a chalice, or a mask on a stick, of which the performers were responsible for placement and use. Aside from the basic costume for the character, there might be a cloak and a pair of twelve-inch cothurnus boot-shoes to give the character height and greater stature. The performers managed all things having to do with the production. They had free rein over direction and style, which was usually loud, bombastic, exaggerated, and melodramatic—often including wailing and bellowing. Pantomime was the art of communicating action, and the only movement that might have required organizing and coordinating (not yet called choreography) was the unison movement of the Greek chorus.

In medieval times (give or take a hundred years), there was still no hint of an SM. The performers took over directing, often padding their parts. Rehearsals were argumentative and chaotic. Egos were large and fiery.

By Shakespeare's and Molière's time, the actor and/or playwright was well established as the director of the show, and putting together a production had become more civilized and organized. More props were being used and special costumes were needed to portray the characters. It wasn't until the eighteenth century in England that the term *stage manager* was used instead of *director*. This was the first time a person, separate from the performers and playwright, was hired to *manage* the stage. With the advent of more elaborate sets, multiple costume changes, mechanical scenery and devices, gas lighting, and the limelight spotlight, the playwright's/director's job split into the two positions as we know them today—the director and the SM.

The Professional Experience of the Author

This might be a good time to give you some background on how I became an SM. In this account I minimize the details of the resume and focus more on the progression, evolution, and experience of becoming an SM.

There was never a time when I did not want to be in show business. The feeling was fostered and kept alive throughout my childhood and teen years by going to the movies. Even back then I was interested in the "behind-the-scenes" activities. I knew about directors, producers, and the work they did. Back then my dream was to some day go to Hollywood.

I did not have the opportunity to express my theatrical inclinations until I joined the U.S. Army. I first became a motion-picture photographer stationed out of Fort Meade, Maryland, shooting newsreel events on post and some times in Washington, DC. As fate would have it, I came across a touring musical variety show composed of all military personnel and was extremely fortunate to become a part of that group. The woman in charge, whom we affectionately called Skippy—a nickname from her days as a Radio City Rockette dancer, saw my love and passion for this business, so she took me into the group without any experience other than my having done record pantomimes in high school. Aside from my performing as a singer and dancer, she quickly saw that I was a person who could work behind the scenes. I was organized and efficient. The touring unit traveled with two trucks of show equipment and a bus. We were a one-night touring show. We'd come to the service club or to the different colleges and universities, throw open the bay doors at the back of the theatre, and within an hour or two were set up and ready to perform. Almost immediately I was made assistant to the SM, and by the end of the year I was given full SMing duties. When my time was finished with the military, I was given the Golden Key Award for my work and contributions to the army entertainment program. With the key came a three-year scholarship to study theatre at the world-famous Pasadena Playhouse in California. This was all too good to be true. Not only was I going to study that I loved most, but I was one step closer to Hollywood.

While at the Playhouse, there wasn't an area I didn't explore as a performer, director, and SM. The school and the professional theatre attached to the school recognized my SMing abilities early, and within my first year of study I was brought in as an ASM, a position usually reserved for second- and third-year students. Upon completion of my studies at the Playhouse, I was given a scholarship to California State University, Fullerton, where I finished studies for my bachelor's degree in theatre arts. It was during that time I focused my studies on directing. In my final year, I was awarded the Best Director Award for the year.

After graduation, my wife and I moved to a suburb just north of Hollywood. Hollywood was not impressed with my degree or awards and it took almost three years to get a foot in anyone's door. The opportunity came when a former teacher from the Playhouse recommended me to a civic light opera group as the second ASM on a musical version of *Gone With the Wind*.

I had arrived. I was working with a major Broadway director, with star-name performers, and after a tour across the country, the show was scheduled to open on Broadway. I excelled in my work. Before we finished our run in Los Angeles, I was calling cues for the show and performing many of the first ASM's duties. Unfortunately, the "wind" blew itself out by the time we got to San Francisco, and I never got to Broadway. I did, however, continue to work for the same producing company for the next five years, working on star-name shows and building an impressive resume. In between seasons, I worked for two television producers, moving easily between stage, film, and TV. I worked practically the year round with very little downtime.

Good things come to an end, and sometimes quickly. The light opera closed its doors, the TV producers split up their partnership, and I was fired from a major production having to do with a major star in a major conflict.

I persevered and soon became connected with a producer of touring shows along the West Coast and in the Southwest, but then after several years he moved to the Midwest to produce shows there. At one point there was a

director who hired me for all his shows, but he died of an aneurysm before we could finish out the season, and the new director had his own SM.

In one sweep of fate, my network of employment disintegrated and I remained an unemployed SM for a long time. It was during these unemployed times that I started writing the first edition of this book. While being unemployed from SMing work, I directed shows for civic light opera groups. I tried getting work on Broadway, but Broadway was not impressed with my LA credits. As much as I wanted to be in New York City and do a show on Broadway, I was not too distressed over this fact, because my family and roots were now planted in Los Angeles, and I had been lulled into the comfortable Southern California life.

Throughout these years of SMing and directing, I was also associated with a magician friend. My wife was one of his assistants, and together we traveled throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Eventually my wife and I made a collective decision that I would no longer take shows that took me out of town. I went through another period of unemployment, and it was during this time I completed writing this book. However, bills must be paid. This time I combined my directing and SMing skills and got a job at a world-class theme park just a few miles from my home.

There remains a part of me that still wishes I had done work on Broadway, and why not? It is the pinnacle of theatre. In any event, it has been, and continues to be, a full life. The memories, experiences, and friends remain my reward and treasure. I would change very little in my experience, except perhaps to have made some of those unemployment periods shorter.

The Use of SMing Skills in Life

In looking back at the different work I have done when I was not being an SM, I can see how I brought my knowledge, experience, and way of working as an SM into other parts of life. For several years I worked as a character supervisor at that theme park I mentioned above. Aside from having over a hundred performers, I had to first amass a cache of personal information on each employee under my supervision. Then from that information I had to create the weekly performing schedule, keeping in mind the contractual agreements and requests of each person. When I first came to the job, it was a chaotic mess with much of the information committed to memory. So I designed a form on the computer, using my expertise in form making from my SMing days, and entered all the data that I needed to know on each person. By the sixth month, this scheduling business had become a smooth-running and -operating machine, and all of it was backed up on an external drive.

With my SMing skills, I also worked as a special events coordinator and manager for a writing organization, and also for three years I worked with a producer of an annual national billiards competition held in major cities within the United States. I also take all that I do as an SM into my personal life. On many occasions, when at a birthday party or social gathering, if things are not going right or the timing of events is being poorly handled, I am compelled to step in to manage and direct. Yearly my family snickers and even laughs out loud upon seeing posted on the kitchen door the order in which they should stand in line to get their food from the buffet. On my behalf, I must say that there is a method to my madness. I simply needed to bring order where there would be chaos. Our dinning room is small. Also, there is an order and hierarchy to the seating around the table. People seated in the far corner of the room should take their places first; otherwise people will have to climb over each other to get to their seats. This is what a good SM does whether working on a show or just at home with the family.

An Embarrassing SM Faux Pas

In one of my first jobs as a PSM, when it was time to go into technical rehearsals, being the efficient and timely person I am, I presented a comprehensive list of light cues that would be in the show. It was a straight, one-set play, and as I saw it the lighting cues would be few and simple with lights coming up on the scene and fading out or going into a blackout at the end. I was so proud of myself because I had even put in a *looong* cue to simulate the rising of the sun at the end of the play. I had not, however, considered that the lighting designer and the director of the show might want cues to lower or brighten lights to bring greater focus or emotional feeling.

Humbly, and yet filled with pride, I delivered my work to the lighting director, who was seated at the production table out in the audience.

“What’s this!” he snapped with a slight edge.

“The cues for the show.”

“The cues?” he said with a slight laugh and high tone to his voice.

Being a person who hears well what people say and how they say it, I said nothing. I may even have drawn backward a little because at that moment, from his reaction and response, I knew I had done something laughable and had clearly shown my inexperience as a “professional” SM.

With a slight smirk and with attitude, the lighting director looked into my eyes and said, “Son...”

It was the “son” part that hurt and made me feel small.

“I will be setting the light cues. You just go backstage, get at your console, have your script open to the first page, and I will tell you where the cues go and the timing at which they will happen.”

Totally embarrassed, I could not get out of there fast enough. The only saving grace to the whole incident was that the director and the lighting assistants were not present at the table, but you can be sure they had a good laugh at their first coffee break.

Interviews

Being a longtime veteran of theatre and having had the Broadway experience, John Bowab had a lot to say on “how it was” with SMs back in the 1960s and 70s.

► **John Bowab:** Sammy was the first big-time professional stage manager I worked with. He was a “working” stage manager. Back then he wore a suit and tie. What made Sammy special was that he was extremely professional and he demanded that from everyone else. He was organized and worked well with people, although he had a temper and wouldn’t tolerate a whole lot of bull.

Back then is when we first started calling stage managers “production stage managers.” These were highly sought-after stage managers. Every producer on Broadway had their special favorite and to keep them, they started giving them billing on the title page, on posters, and in front of the theatre.

In those days, stage managers were also very much involved in the casting of the show, which is not done much today. Today we have casting directors. Casting directors came about in the 70s. Back in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, stage managers could control very much who was seen or not seen for an audition. The producing companies sent out “Character Breakdowns” and then the stage manager would get to sort through all the pictures and resumes to save the producer’s and director’s time. Today the stage manager’s job leans more towards the technical, what with electronics, computers, and high tech. Even understudy rehearsals and cast replacements, which the stage manager always did, are now done by the director or assistant director when they are in town or available.

For a stage manager to stay on Broadway, he has to be extremely good because the job is a lot more demanding than in theatre anywhere else. Only the good ones last. You can’t work for big-time Broadway producers, directors, and stars and not come under a strain. The talent around is big and the show is important. If a stage manager can’t deliver, he’s out! It certainly can’t be easy on the home life and the personal life, because so much has to be given to the show.

► **Interviewer:** What is your definition of a stage manager?

► **John Bowab:** The title says it all—the person who manages the stage, and that covers a lot of territory. I believe that a stage manager is responsible for everything that happens on the stage—that is, everything that makes the show function the way the director chooses. As a director and producer, I want to know that my cast is being taken care of and is happy and the stage manager has great influence on that by how he does the job. I want to know that if the toilets won’t work or if it’s freezing because of too much air-conditioning in the mid of winter, the stage manager is there doing something about it, talking to the right people and, at the same time, keeping the show at performance peak the way that it was set.

► **Bill Holland** offered this observation about SMs:

An interesting fact about stage managers is that at our level of stage managing there are only a few good young ones and a lot more older ones? That’s because the not-so-good ones fall by the wayside quickly, sometimes in one or two shows, while the real good ones keep getting work and stay around for a long time. I imagine that there’s burnout too.

The Anatomy of a Good SM

The most well-covered topic of any book on SMing is *what makes a good SM*. There didn't seem to be much more that could be said. I began compiling a list, but that became long and overwhelming. It wasn't anything more than what any person would want to be in a leadership and supervisory position. Then I thought, if I approached this subject in a different way, maybe picking out some of the more prominent qualities I have seen in myself, in other SMs, and with people in leadership positions, a different picture might emerge and bring greater understanding. Being the detailed, visual, and analytical person I am, even before writing this chapter I had in mind the title, "The Anatomy of a Good SM."

It was from there I began breaking down the whole into its parts; after all, *anatomy* is the breakdown, dissection, and separation of things into parts to understand the structure or internal working of things. I quickly saw what makes a good SM divided into three parts:

- The *PRACTICAL APPLICATION* of the SM
- The *QUALITIES* of a Good SM
- And the *SPIRIT* of the SM

This in itself is no great discovery, for these things apply in the anatomy of any person. They are, however, the launching point from which I can write. They are what other writers have written about, what the interviewees at the end of this chapter talked about, and what I came to see in myself, in other SMs with whom I worked, and in still other SMs whom I have simply observed.

The Practical Application

This is the outward part that everyone sees:

- The *charts, plots, plans, lists, schedules, reports, and signs* that the SM creates.
- The *organization* displayed. Never will you see an SM disorganized because disorganized ones are never hired again, and by the time you get into an Equity situation, such SMs are long gone.
- The attention to *detail*. Missing a detail today can cause loss of time and unnecessary money spent later.
- The *thoroughness* and ability to *complete tasks*, leaving no loose ends.
- The *planning and scheduling*, having a good sense of timing and how long it takes to do things.
- The *administrative abilities*, keeping complete and comprehensive files.
- The ability to *communicate* clearly and succinctly, keeping all departments informed and leaving little room for interpretation or misunderstanding.
- The *timekeeping* throughout the day, monitoring how time is being used and if people are working according to schedule. The SM always arrives on time (if not early), starts things on time, and learns how to deal with people who have a propensity for being late.
- The ability to *work spontaneously*, improvising as unscheduled and unplanned problems and situations come up. The SM makes on-the-spot decisions.
- The ability to *delegate*. Sometimes a person will bring to the SM a task or a job that is just outside the bounds of what an SM does. If it is something that can be done quickly, then, yes, the SM jumps in to give support. However, the SM is careful not to get pulled into work that will keep him or her away from what needs to be done. If appropriate, the SM might delegate the job to the ASM, or better still to an intern or even to a technical department, if it fits within their range of work.

The *Qualities* of a Good SM

While practical application is more about charts and plots, being a scheduler and communicator, the qualities of a good SM, though seen and experienced by all, are not always obvious. The *qualities* of any person are the things that make up the personality, the demeanor, the attitude, the approach to life, and how things are done.

The *qualities* of a good SM are what make a producer or a director hire a particular SM over and over. It is the *qualities* of a good SM that make fellow workers and peers feel good about their SM and admire the work being done. It is the good SM that makes his or her cast and company feel comfortable and secure.

Qualities, combined with *practical application*, are what make everyone around say:

“I love him.”

“She’s a good SM.”

“She knows her stuff.”

“I worked with him and he was great!”

Probably the greatest quality a good SM displays, and perhaps even exudes, is *love* for the job. With that love coming from within, there is a wealth of other positive qualities that follow. Having love, consideration, and understanding are gold standards for any SM.

It seems to be a fact that the SM’s job is set up to be like that of a *mother* or *father* to the cast and the show in general, especially when the show gets into performance and the SM is the leader and caretaker of the show. Some go as far as saying an SM’s job is like being a psychiatrist or therapist. I would add it’s also like being a judge or adjudicator.

In my interview with Barbara Beckley artistic director at the Colony Theatre in Burbank, California, when I suggested that the SM was like a mother or father, she quickly disagreed, saying, “No! The director is the parent. He raises the kids, he makes them into adults. The actors run to daddy when they are in trouble. The director reassures them, tells them what to do. The SM is more like an aunt or an uncle... no... a grandparent! Grandma! Yes, grandma! A grandma is loving, nurturing, but takes no nonsense. Grandma is always there, cheering you on, but, oh, you better behave, follow the rules, and be a good person.”

While Barbara presents a great argument, I offer that when the director is gone and the SM is left in charge, the SM takes on the parental role of the director.

Identifying the company as a family seems to be a good analogy. Like any family, there are many parts, and with the number of people that can be in a show, especially a musical, you’ll find the dynamics of any and every family.

Whatever role might be prescribed to the SM, there must be the two parts of any person in charge and in a leadership position. On the one hand, the SM must be *loving, understanding, fair, supportive, helpful, kind, generous, and a friend*. On the other hand, the SM needs to be *firm and judicial*, bringing *censure* and *discipline* to those who disrupt the show, the life backstage, the traditions and expected behaviors of theater, or the rules and regulations of the union and profession.

In bringing censure and discipline, the SM must work from *rule* and *order*, what is written in *union law* and *regulations*, what is *tradition* or *expected professional behavior*. The SM cannot slip into ego or go to a place of mere control, exerting power or satisfying some hidden need deep inside.

The SM does not have to love *everyone*. The SM must, however, set aside any *biases* and follow the same plan of rule and discipline that is demonstrated to those in favor. Being able to act and behave in this way is in itself a great quality.

So, in the end, it will be the qualities that the SM brings to the job that will bring him or her to success as a “good” SM who gets people to say, “I love him”... “She’s a good SM”... “She knows her stuff”... “I worked with him and he was terrific!” And, I will add, who gets producers and directors to hire him or her again and again.

- A good SM sees and *acknowledges* the good work of all with whom he or she works, and whenever possible sings their praises in public as well as in private. The SM gives as much encouragement, compliments, and words of praise as he or she is sometimes compelled to complain, criticize, or give orders.

- All people have a need to be the center of interest or be idolized in some way. SMs are no different. However, the good SM learns how to step aside and *let the others shine*. The SM's moments of glory and notoriety have to come in the quality and merits of the work being done.
- SMs do things without fanfare.
- Being humble too much and too often wears thin quickly. Self-serving humbleness is seen a mile away. Self-deprecation doesn't work either, but having the ability to *admit* when you are *wrong* or make an apology to individuals or the group when a mistake is made is something that stands out and remains in people's minds and hearts.
- The SM must, however, be careful not to become a *caretaker* or *rescuer*. He or she is ever present to lend an ear, provide a shoulder, maybe offer advice, or even give assistance. But the SM also knows when to step back and give a person the responsibility for his or her own problem, situation, or behavior.
- The SM is *focused*, which means being concentrated and "working in the moment." He or she works swiftly but not frantically. In the most stressful of situations, the SM shows neither panic nor signs of being out of control. He or she does not get pulled into drama or hysteria. While everyone around may be losing their heads, the SM maintains enough distance to remain calm and objective, ready to steer the ship through turbulent waters and keep the show and the company afloat. As soon as an SM shows anything less than complete confidence and control, directors become nervous, producers fearful, and performers insecure. The company would rather live under a delusion of strength and security than see their SM display anything less.
- While working "in the moment," there has to be a part of the SM that is also *thinking ahead, anticipating* what is logically coming and also what might be coming. This is a quality that works for any part of the SM's job but is especially impressive to and welcomed by directors.
- Throughout the course of a show, the SM is the person from the production staff who ends up spending the most time with the cast. As in any profession, there are conflicts, disagreements, misunderstandings, and even outright fights. Having been given the harrowing job of caretaker, the SM must try to bring peace, order, and resolution. This is a minefield to travel. The SM must stay at the perimeter at all times. There is no one formula for *resolving conflicts*. SMs have their own way of working. There are some things that can, however, start the resolving process: Should the disturbance have started for all in the company to see, the SM should make an effort to bring things into a more *private place*.
 - The SM needs to give each person or group of people their *moment of expression* (hear them out).
 - Then, right or wrong, the SM gives the different factions a *right to their feelings*. The SM shows understanding.
 - The SM might state the facts as he or she has heard them. Then with *calm* and *logic*, go into the *points of resolve*.
 - In closing, the SM might make an appeal for the *betterment of the show*, to remind those in conflict of the *professional standards* expected of people working in theatre. If it appears that things are coming to a stalemate, it is a good idea to suggest a *cooling-off time* before getting together again, or simply making a *truce, burying the hatchet*, or *agreeing to disagree*.
- The SM is privy to some very *private* and *personal* information and learns things about cast members and star performers that are not for publication in any way, especially not as gossip. It is the SM's job to remain tight lipped, to keep things confidential, and to keep whatever administrative information he or she has on file locked away in the computer and under password.
- The SM learns to *never deliver an angry message* from one person to another. The *art* is to *edit the message, soften the blows*, minimize the intensity, and yet still get the point across. The *craft* is to convey the sender's anger to a lesser degree, perhaps expressing it as annoyance or frustration. The SM doesn't want to metaphorically fall victim to "Off with the Messenger's Head Syndrome."
- An SM knows the *truth* and *myth* of his and her *power* and *position* within the chain of command and also learns how to use effectively whatever little power there is.

There are other "qualities" that could be listed in the anatomy of a good SM, but the above mentioned are a good start. Each SM develops a unique combination of qualities. Take what you like and add it to what you already have. However, before we move on to the next level of understanding in the anatomy of a good SM, there are two more qualities I have saved for last—*leadership* and *humor*.

- Every SM has his or her definition of *leadership*. That definition comes from experience and from the things that will be talked about in the next part in the anatomy of a good SM, the *spirit* of an SM. Leadership is not something the SM thinks about. Leadership comes out of being in control, keeping order, doing what is right, good, and best for all. Leadership is knowing the job well and putting all the things that make a good SM into practical application. Leadership is a hundred and one things: working with people, knowing and loving them, guiding and directing them. Leadership is asking people to follow. Leadership is guiding and traveling people through time, space, and event. Leadership is standing at the front, knowing when to step forward and command and when to remain subordinate and follow. Leadership is taking suggestions and ideas and running with them. It is thanking people and giving them credit for their contributions. Leadership is following the rules, being fair and understanding, and at the same time being strong, firm, and steadfast. It is learning from mistakes and using success to build assurance and confidence. Leadership is being strongly motivated and focused. Leadership for an SM is the sum total of all the things listed in this chapter and throughout this book.
- Surprisingly, a quality that has come up in almost every interview conducted with producers, directors, and other SMs is *having a good sense of humor* and bringing fun to the job. This one quality goes a long way toward creating a happy company. Humor is a quality seldom considered, yet an SM with humor is a joy to have in the good times as well as the stress-filled times. In his interview for this book, Bill Holland said, “I like an SM with a good sense of humor.” Paul Blake agreed, and the others interviewed made it unanimous. They liked having an SM who could generate fun as well as participate in it. They were careful to add, “As long as the humor is done at the right time, appropriately, is not disruptive, harmful to the show, mean-spirited, or at the expense of someone else.”

The *Spirit* of an SM

This last part in the anatomy of a good SM is perhaps the hardest to explore. It comes from deep inside the person. The *spirit* in every person and in every SM is different. It is *highly* individualistic. It is like fingerprints or DNA. It is the core, the foundation, and even the soul. This is so personal and private a place that it is hard to generalize and make a list of things that make a good SM—but I will go ahead and try anyway.

- The spirit is where the *drives* and *motivations* thrive, and where *traits* and *qualities* live in light, joy, hope, fun, and love, moving a person along in life and making them strong, successful, and productive.
- The spirit is also a place where there is *darkness*, where wounds and hurts have been collected from experiences in life. We all know that place inside of us. It is here that experiences remain stored, ready to push up anger, taking good and productive traits and qualities and making them into something unfavorable and destructive.
- There is inside every person a love and a desire to be something in life. As a child it may start out as wanting to be a fire-fighter, a person who takes care of animals, a dancer, maybe a movie star. This is all based on a love inside, wanting to express something. Most people today working as professional SMs did not start out wanting to be an SM. No child has ever said, “I want to be a stage manager when I grow up.” A performer, yes, or maybe a director, but not an SM. For the most part, becoming an SM just happens. One day a person simply begins helping out backstage, maybe on the technical crew or assisting the director, or maybe there’s a chance to be in a show as a performer if the person will also work as an ASM.

This is what Barbara Beckley of the Colony Playhouse in Burbank said when asked, “Why do you think a person becomes a stage manager?”

Number one, I think they want to be in the theatre. They probably started out wanting to be an actor but maybe they found they don't want to be an actor. Maybe they don't have the talent to be a designer or a director, I think you are born with those talents, but they want to be in the theatre and they really, really, really enjoy organizing, being part of the art and creative process that theatre has to offer. [The] SM makes a contribution in calling the cues for the show, the timing... it's like conducting the orchestra... Oh! ... and being in charge! One of the reasons I like what I do is because back when I was an actress, I would see things that I thought should be different, but I couldn't say anything. Being in charge for a SM is making sure it happens the way it is suppose to happen. It takes a special talent of an SM to be a leader but at the same time be a... be a... lieutenant because the director is the leader, the captain, and a good stage manager knows when to lead and when to follow.

For Another Point Of View see the end of this chapter for what Sheldon Epps, director and artistic director for the Pasadena Playhouse, said on this matter.

Having the Right Stuff

There are a few things we can zero in on that seem to be universal for any SM. Having *the right stuff* is probably the first.

Certainly, **leadership** can be the *right stuff*. While leadership has been examined and discussed under the qualities of a good SM, it is part of the “spirit” too. Leadership is taking the helm, guiding the ship, taking a group of people forward into accomplishment and success. Leadership is being in charge and being in authority. Leadership is a position of great responsibility and cannot be taken lightly.

Any person who is in the position of being a leader finds out that it is *tiring, energy draining, and time consuming*. Then, with the producer and director being gone from the show, and with the immediacy of cell phones, texting messaging, and emailing, it can feel like a 24/7 job because the SM is the most available person to turn to in times of... anything.

For the SM there is no escaping leadership. It is like air is to breathing. It must be done. In one way or another, every SM wants to be in the position of leading. There is nothing wrong in liking and wanting to lead. In fact, the person who enjoys being in this position is usually very good at the job—that is the *right stuff*. Some SMs lead with such ease that you hardly know they are there steering and guiding the ship. The problem comes with the SM who uses the position to service, nurture, or satisfy some unhealthy, hidden need, taking what was good and productive over to that dark side.

The first rule of leadership is to know when to lead and when to follow. Another rule is to do the leading within the confines of the SM’s job and not in the director’s job, the producer’s job, the actor’s job, or any of the designers’ and technicians’ jobs. Let those people lead in their departments. See what they want, hear what they are saying and what they are asking for, and then, as the SM, take the lead in executing those things within the confines of your job. Also, the SM leads by demonstration and example. If the SM expects and wants performers to be on time in any part of the schedule, the SM is *always* on time, if not ahead of time. If the SM wants people to be prepared, he or she must first be prepared in every way.

Caveat: While this last statement of leading by demonstration and example is ideal textbook jargon, no SM can *make* others do as he or she does. The SM just has to learn who will be late and who will be prepared to one degree or another and work accordingly.

Neatness and Perfection

Neatness and *perfection* are a great part of the SM’s work and life. It seems every SM—whether PSM, ASM, or first ASM—has a strong need to be *neat*, which turns into *perfection*. They go hand in hand. While these can be included in the list of qualities above, for the SM it is also part of *spirit*. Often, being neat and perfect has been a strong need long before the SM became an SM. Look at any SM’s console backstage, look into the briefcase or computer bag, and you will find order, neatness, and perfection.

Perfection walks a fine line between light and darkness. Of course I speak of the light and darkness inside us all. Perfection can easily be carried over into obsession and compulsion. It can be addictive. When it reaches this point of intensity, it loses its usefulness. Doing things perfectly every time is not humanly possible, and yet, people in the company expect the SM to be perfect and mistake free. Producers and directors especially have very little tolerance or patience for errors the SM might make. However, these same people readily accept their own mistakes and lack of perfection without acknowledgment or apology.

When perfection is coming from that dark place, it can drive everyone crazy. Surprisingly, though, producers and directors can be comfortable with this “crazy” quality. It gives them a security and sense that their show and company

are in good hands. Perfection is the difference between doing a “good” job and doing an “excellent” job. Perfection is going beyond the bounds of expectations and doing something as flawlessly as possible. Perfection is very helpful and useful to an SM. When used in all the best ways, it catapults the SM to excellence.

The *art* of perfection is to strive for it—not live for it. The *craft* of perfection is to benefit from the imperfections, the mistakes made. Try not to make the same mistakes in the same way, but if you do, learn the lesson again and move on without judgment or self-recrimination.

Control

Neatness and perfection are blanketed or under the umbrella of *control*. When a person keeps everything in order and in a perfect state, then that person is in control. The SM’s job is to *control* and be *in control*. SMs make a mistake when they allow control to become the master and motivating force in their work. No SM can be in control of everything that happens within the life of a show. Micromanaging and ruling with an iron fist are exhausting. An SM remains in control by benevolent action, applying what we have discussed above in *practical application*, by cultivating the *qualities* of a good SM and walking carefully that fine line in *spirit* between light and darkness.

Ego

There is one other place that we must go while in the spirit of an SM, and that is *ego*. I tread lightly upon this subject for it is deep, powerful, and highly individualistic. It takes more than a paragraph of discussion to do ego justice. There seems to be only one small part of ego that is good and healthy, and that is the part that makes people stand up for themselves, allows them to step forward and be counted, and makes people want to do their jobs well. This is where the egos of SMs must live. A little ego goes a long way. Too much gets in the way of the job. A large ego in an SM will cloud thinking, dictate decisions, toss fairness out the window, and leave the SM centered on his- or herself rather than on what is right for the moment or the company as a whole.

The members of a company want their SM to be egoless. This, of course, is not humanly possible. What ever size ego an SM has, a concerted effort must be made to shrink it down while on the job. A good SM does not spend time promoting himself, putting herself into the spotlight, or resisting repudiation. In fact, it is ingratiating when an SM takes on someone’s idea, accepts criticism, or apologizes when an error or mistake is made.

SMs will be confronted and challenged by both their own egos and the egos of others. Large and inflated egos do not come only in “star” packages. An SM needs to learn to recognize ego each time it rears its head. Surely ego is found in the highest of positions within the company and chain of command, but be aware, it can come from a production assistant, a vendor who might come by just to drop off a prop, a wardrobe dresser who has been hired for the day, or even the person at the door who is there to keep out the riffraff. Large egos can be voracious and damaging. When having to work with such an animal, the SM must decide when stroking and feeding the beast is right, or when just letting the ego deflate is best.

Anatomy of an ASM

Reader, student, or beginning SM, listen up and take notice of this next paragraph because, more than likely, before you become a solo SM and, even more, before you become a PSM, *you will be an assistant!*

The information in this chapter as well as the information in this entire book applies equally to the ASM. In many respects, the ASM is a mini-PSM. There is, however, something more for the ASM. The ASM must learn how to *assist*. An ASM must learn when to lead—when to take the ball and run—and when to step back and let the PSM be the boss. A part of the ASM’s job is to support and be of service to the PSM. The ASM also learns to take up the slack where there might be slack. If necessary, the ASM saves the PSM from mistakes, failure, or embarrassment, without expectation of recognition or reward. The ASM does this job with the same intensity and authority as the PSM, but stays within the boundaries of an ASM, not threatening the PSM’s pride, position, or ego.

The working relationship between the PSM and the ASM is in many ways like a marriage. There is a relationship to be cultivated and maintained. To help make this relationship work, it is the ASM’s job to learn the ways the PSM likes

to work—the things the PSM expects from an assistant. Learning the PSM's perfection level is important, as is learning the PSM's ego factor. Most PSMs will not stop to think about their assistants in terms of what makes his assistant a good ASM. All the PSM knows is he likes the assistant, feels assured and good about this assistant, and feels the assistant has his or her back, as the saying goes. The PSM also feels well assisted and supported by the ASM, and will work with no other, show after show.

Show Business: A Glamorous Business

It is all true! Being in show business is every bit as glamorous, exciting, and thrilling as everyone imagines. There are parties and gala affairs. You meet the rich and famous, travel, and perform for dignitaries, politicians, and other very important people. You get to ride in limousines, have people wait on you, live in grand hotels, and maybe even have your own fifteen minutes of fame. As an SM you may work directly with the leaders in the entertainment industry, working at a high level of intensity. Your position is important, respected, and often held in esteem. Your work contributes to the performance each night, and you'll have your ego stroked. In short, you get to live on the outer edge and send postcards to all your relatives and unemployed friends.

This is the part the general public and some young aspiring SMs focus on. It is intoxicating to the spirit and draws people in. The rewards and victories of being an SM are rich and sweet. The defeats can be great, lonely, and agonizing. The glamorous part is less than one-fifth of the total experience of being in show business and being an SM. The other four-fifths is what this book is about—read on and be informed!

In Closing

In the final analysis of this chapter, it seems that only generalities and similarities can be made in the anatomy of an SM. Each SM is as different and unique as fingerprints or DNA is to each person.

In conclusion, as one reads this chapter, one might say, "Well, that's not me!"

True, but you have your own set of *qualities*, *spirit*, and *practical application*. So in your journey of becoming an SM, or being a beginning SM, let the information of this chapter stand as *my bridge* in putting forth some of the things I have experienced or observed in what makes a good SM.

Interviews

► **Interviewer:** As a producer or director, how do you choose an SM?

► **Lara Teeter:** I go with somebody I have a certain chemistry with. Somebody who has a love for theatre. I like an SM who is a "people person." Someone who knows how to work with people. Someone who can deal with people in all positions and at all levels—from the executive producer to the man or woman who provides the janitorial services. Someone who likes being part of a family.

► **Interviewer:** What are some of the qualities you look for in an SM?

► **Bill Holland:** I want to know if this SM can work under pressure! While everyone is losing their heads and getting into a state, does this SM remain cool, clear-headed, calm? Also, can this person bend, go with the flow, work under adverse conditions? Can this SM get along with all kinds of people? I look for someone who is assertive, who is up front, present, and clear in thought and conversation. Someone who is *too sharp*, too *Mr. Cool* or *Mr. Experience*, is a turn-off. This is a warning to me because he's got something more to prove. He's not putting his time into the job but into himself. I look for balance.

► **Interviewer:** As a PSM, what do you expect from an assistant?

► **Bill Holland:**

- Healthy assertiveness
- Ability to change
- Knows the job well, the craft
- Can function in all the areas that I as the PSM function
- Can take over for me when I have to be somewhere else
- Knows how to work with performers/stars
- Has an ability to handle all things as I would
- Perhaps most of all, a sense of humor helps a lot!
- In short, my assistant must *know* my job without having my job.

► **Interviewer:** What about a good sense of humor in an SM?

► **Lara Teeter:** Oh god, thank you for that! I forgot all about sense of humor. *Yes*, and that should be at the top of the list for any SM. He must be playful and join in the fun but like a parent he must also know when to bring the kids back to sensibility and the order of the day. Do you know what I mean?

► **Interviewer:** Would you hire someone off the street?

► **John Bowab:** Not as a rule, but this one time I did. I liked him the moment he walked in. The unpretentious way he greeted me, sat down, and presented his resume. It was clean, simple, easy to read. Then on the first day of rehearsals I was really shocked when he had newly sharpened pencils at my table, a clean script if I wanted it, and he knew that I liked working with a tape recorder so there were fresh batteries. The man was a quiet and understated type of person, but he was a *dynamo*, getting the job done with a lot of extra considerations.

► **Interviewer:** Why do you think people become SMs and why is a person *attracted* to becoming an SM?

► **John Bowab:** Most of the SMs I have known started out with another intent—to act, to direct, to produce—and then somewhere they got to be an SM, maybe on a show, or as part of their studies in college. Then there are those people who love it. Why they love it, I don't know; for the most part it is a thankless job. I'm thankful that they do it. Why does someone work on a building, eighty stories up? Some just like putting the show together. Maybe they like the regimentation, the power, the control, the challenge, being at the center of something. I don't think it's because they can't do anything else.

► **Interviewer:** What about ego in an SM?

► **John Bowab:** A good SM must almost always have to *eliminate* ego, because with ego you have to pay a price. People become actors or performers because they need attention, acclaim, confirmation, praise. People behind the scenes don't get that and if that is a driving force in them, then they shouldn't be there. The SM's praise and recognition come from knowing that the show worked—it comes from himself. An SM executes someone else's dream, someone else's vision.

► **Interviewer:** Why do you think people become SMs?

► **Lara Teeter:** I think it's someone who *looooovvvves* being organized. Who likes to get things done. Who loves to compartmentalize—making sure things are together and doing things well. You can see it in the tools they carry: their colored tape, a pencil sharpener, rubber bands in little containers, paper clips, aspirin, Band-Aids. They are ready to do the job and they get gratification.

► **Interviewer:** What are some of the qualities you look for in an SM?

► **Paul Blake:** Aside from all the things an SM must do in the job, I like an SM who is also caring, nurturing, and encouraging.

► **Interviewer:** What qualities do you look for in a stage manager?

► **Sheldon Epps:** There are so many, but I'll tell you one of the qualities I especially like is that I want a stage manager who is a *listener*. Some people are listeners and some are not. Someone who can set him or herself aside and hear what is being said and not filtering it through his or her... ego.

I also want to see that the stage manager is passionate about the work that we do. The work that we do is very, very hard... and demanding, and the reward, yes you get a check each week, but the reward is in getting it right. I want an SM who loves the theatre as much as I do and is not doing it just for a job... and you can sense and feel that when you're interviewing a person. I have had some very able, capable stage managers do the job well, but they were rather passionless. I want a stage manager who really cares about the job—who is invested in creating the same kind of theatre that I am. Take my production stage manager, Red. Red is a perfect example of that. She is invested in the art upon the stage and whatever she can do, whether it is her job or not, to help the work of the stage be better.

► **Interviewer:** Why do you think a person becomes a stage manager?

► **Sheldon Epps:** It is my hope that the person who becomes a stage manager comes to the job with a love for the art of theatre and wants to be a part of that. Maybe they do not have a talent to be an actor or a director or designer, but [he or she] has a very specific talent and ability that makes the person know that being a stage manager is the way to be part of that community to express and make a contribution.

The SM's Chain-of-Command List

The operative word in the title of this chapter is *SM's*. The chain-of-command list presented in this chapter is strictly for the SM's use. It is a reference from which the SM can create his own *chain-of-command list* for the show or production company with which he or she is working.

The list presented here is more informational than practical. It is complete to a fault, which means that *every* position that could be listed is listed. What makes this list even greater is that it includes departments and department heads that would be with a musical, and even more, included are specialty categories such as pyrotechnics, animals, firearms, magic, even stunt people. In your experience as an SM, you may never work for a producing company or theatre that will have *all* of these positions. The closest you might come is if you have the good fortune to work on Broadway, and even then each production house and each theatre company will have their own order, hierarchy, and title for positions.

Upon beginning work for a show and production company, one of the first things the SM should do is create a chain-of-command list. The information for any one particular producing company or show is easily attained in the production office. This tailored list will also become the list of people with whom you will communicate on your daily report, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy." Also, you will refer to this list many times, for any number of reasons: providing program credits to the publicity department, ensuring no one is forgotten, or creating a guest roster for a social event. It is this list offered in this chapter that you should make into a file and keep in a folder. It will be this list from which you will build the chain-of-command list for each production on which you work.

In providing such a long, detailed, and comprehensive list, I consciously chose not to use one of those charts with the rectangle boxes and lines leading down to other boxes. With the amount of positions I have listed, this information is best laid out in list form. Following the list are paragraphs giving a thumbnail sketch of each department, along with the work they do, their importance to the producing company and show, and their relationship with the SM.

1. The Production Executives

- Founder
- Board of Trustees
- General Manager
- Executive Producer
- Producer
- Associate Producer
- Production Manager
- Company Manager/Tour Manager
- Assistants to the above positions

2. The Production Office Staff

- Executive Assistants (once called Secretaries)
- Casting Director
- Publicity/Programs/Press/Photography
- Accounting
- Office Staff

Author's Note: Keep in mind, this list will also include positions in a musical show.

3. The Creators

Book/Script
Music/Score
Lyrics/Words

4. The Designers

Scenic
Props
Costumes/Wardrobe
Visual Effect/Projections
Sound
Lighting
Hair
Makeup

5. The Production Staff

Director
Assistant Director
Musical Director
Assistant Music Director
Conductor
Rehearsal Pianist
Arrangers (vocal, dance, orchestrations, copyist)
Musician's Union
Choreographer
Assistant Choreographer
Dance Captain
Production Stage Manager (PSM)
Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs)
Production Assistant (PA)

6. The Performing Artists and Actors' Equity

Star(s); the Star's Staff and/or Entourage
Principal Performers
Supporting Roles
Children's Roles; Parents, Teachers, Social Workers (required for children performers)
Ensemble Performers: Singers, Dancers, Chorus, Pit Singers, Swing Dancers
Equity Deputies for:
Principal and Supporting Actors
Singers/Chorus
Dancers
Walk-on Roles and/or Extras

7. The Technical Staff

Technical Director (TD)
Department Heads for: Carpentry
Rail (Flys)
Automation
Projection
Electrics
Props
Sound

Costumes/Wardrobe
Child Wrangler
Hair
Makeup
Special Effects
Crew/Stagehands
Stagehands' Union (IATSE)

8. Special Designers, Trainers, and Coaches

Vocal, Speech, Dialects
Films, Slides, Video
Stunts, Animals
Effects, Illusions, Magic
Firearms, Pyrotechnics

9. Shops and Vendors

Costumes (construction/rentals)
Set (construction/rentals)
Electrical (supply/rentals)
Prop Houses (purchase/rentals)
Hair and Supplies
Recording Studios
Makeup and Supplies
Shoes, Boots, and Dance Shoes

10. The Theatre, Performance Site, or Venue

Backstage:

Tech Department Heads
House Crew
Dressers
Doorman/Security
Janitorial Staff

Front-of-the-house:

Box Office
House Manager
Ushering Staff
Parking

11. The Fire Marshall

Brief Profiles

The Production Executives

In a large Broadway show, there is often a long list of producers filling different parts of the producer's job. With other shows, depending on the size of the company and its financial structure, a person might fill one or more of the production executive positions at one time.

► The **Founder**, if still actively working, is usually at the helm running the entire company. This person may fill one or all of the executive positions, possibly also being a director. Other times the founder may have become an inactive figurehead represented only by a life-size portrait hanging in a lobby. The founder's greatest contribution is, of course, having started the organization. Often the founder is the inspiration and guiding force, bringing an artistic vision to light. Usually this person is also good at rallying financial supporters to subsidize the company, especially through the beginning years. Sometimes the SM never meets the founder or just sees him or her in passing. Other times the SM will work as closely with this person as with the director.

► Some production companies may also have a **Board of Trustees**. Other times the production company is led and guided solely by the board. Whatever the setup, the SM has little to no dealings with this group. At most the SM may come to know some of the board members from opening night affairs, in social times, or during a publicity event.

► The **General Manager** is both the overseer and keeper of the production company. This person is the keeper of the purse and is concerned more with the finances and running the entire company than with the individual shows. The general manager leaves the care of the shows to the producers, who in turn are accountable to the general manager. In some situations it may also be the general manager's job to see that the artistic vision, direction, and integrity of the company and the show are maintained once the director and producer have moved on. The general manager is responsible only to the founder and/or board of trustees. As with the founder, the SM may or may not work directly with the general manager.

► In the past, the position of **Executive Producer** was more prominent in film and TV, but the production executives of theatre saw its worth and value and have made it more and more a part of the chain of command. The executive producer may be administrating and budgeting several shows at one time, depending on the workload and structure of the production office. In many ways the executive producer's position is similar to the general manager, but the executive producer has more control over the creation and artistic values of the shows. The executive producer can spend a lot of business time socializing and getting backers and investors interested in the company or in a particular show. Like the figureheads already mentioned, the SM may or may not work directly with this person.

► On many occasions the SM will find that the **Producer** of the show is the highest executive position in the production company. While the creators of a show give birth to the show, the producer is usually the first to have faith in the project, seeing its artistic merit and financial potential. The producer becomes a surrogate parent and primary caretaker who turns the show over to the director and actors for day care, development, and growth to maturity.

The producer often sets the tone and presentation style of the show. This is the person who hires the artists, craftspeople, and talent best suited for the product—those who will bring the artistic vision to light, improving upon what the producer has already imagined.

With any show, the “buck” starts and stops at the producer’s desk—literally as well as metaphorically. The producer has the ultimate power over the show and company. There is a general belief that the producer is the money person—the person who invests money into the show. Most times the producer is merely the custodian of the purse, and just gives the illusion that the money is personally coming from the producer’s own pocket.

In many working situations, the SM has greater contact with this person than with the other executive figure-heads. In some cases, the relationship may grow and extend into social interaction. For the most part, however, the SM communicates with the producer through the director, or has the director’s consent and knowledge of what information is passed between the producer and SM.

► The position of **Associate Producer** also has its roots in film and TV. The associate producer’s work is an extension of what the producer would do. In small production companies, a person might be hired as an associate producer but is often called the assistant to the producer and is paid much less money. With a big show or production company, when the producer’s work becomes too much for one person, the more responsible position of associate producer is adopted.

Primarily, the associate producer transposes the entire production into dollars and cents. The associate producer breaks the budget down into the various departments and must have excellent knowledge of what things truly cost for each department. The associate producer also has detailed knowledge of the working rules for the different unions associated with a production, especially when it comes to pay scales and anything having to do with overtime, penalties, fines, or fees. In many respects, the associate producer’s and SM’s positions run parallel courses. However, the SM may not be as knowledgeable in budgetary matters and, except for Equity, usually has only a general working knowledge of the rules and regulations of the other unions. In the absence of an associate producer, a producer might require the SM to do some of this work.

► In years past, the work of the **Production Manager (PM)** has been part of what the general manager, producer, associate producer, and company manager might do. Only in recent times have the executive figureheads of a production company seen the value and importance of having one person centralizing, organizing, and coordinating all that must be done in putting together the “physical” part of the production. While the producer sits at the top and dictates what is wanted for the production, it is the PM who has the knowledge to go out and get those things done and make things happen. It is the PM’s job to see that the dreams, designs, and creative work of the producer, director, musical director, choreographer, designers, and technical departments are realized, while still working within the schedule and budget of the show. The PM works with all teams and departments to collectively and creatively solve technical and financial problems. He or she will oversee the hiring of staff, the shops, studios, and vendors that will be needed to make/construct the things needed. The PM will also have a strong say in choosing the technical head that will lead, support, and work the show.

While the SM is the foundation and glue upon which the cast and director are cared for, the rehearsals are run, all departments are informed, and the artistic integrity of the show is delivered in each performance, the PM is behind-the-scenes foundation and glue for overseeing staffing, budgeting, obtaining rights and licensing from publishers, and knowing the rules and expenses of the different technical departments. The PM is responsible for the success of the backstage operations of a theatre. He or she sees that the different parts and departments of the production are ready to deliver when their services or craft is needed and put into place. While the SM will suggest production meetings, it is the PM who initiates most of them.

In short, there is not one part of the production with which the PM is not involved or has a say in some way. This is the one person with whom the SM is in constant and continuous contact daily, if not hourly as things change, happen, or occur.

► A lot of the work the PM does today, the **Company Manager** did at one time on large, big-budget shows. Today this position still holds importance with touring shows. It is the company manager’s job to handle all the business that has to do directly with the company (the show) administratively and financially. The company manager sees that the transitions from one city to another go safely and smoothly, dealing with housing, transportation, reservations, and the logistics of moving the company. The company manager also acts as the advance person, going to the next town several days early in preparation for the arrival of the cast, crew, and technical setup of the show. When a show becomes a touring show, the terms *company manager* and *tour manager* sometimes become interchangeable. On a big show with a large cast, another person may be hired and the work of the two positions be divided. On small touring shows, when there is no company or tour manager, the work of these two positions is done by the producer’s office and the PSM.

The Production Office Staff

The production office staff includes all the people who administrate, coordinate, and provide great support to the company and the production.

► Heading this sector in the production company is the **Executive Assistant**, once called the production secretary. Nearly always, this is the producer’s assistant. The executive assistant is the person who starts the wheels of organization turning on a show before the director or SM begins their job. In many ways, the executive assistant’s work is like that of an SM: creating lists, gathering information, making phone calls, organizing, and just generally pulling the production together. Seldom will an SM meet an executive assistant who is not good at the job. Executive assistants are dedicated to their work and can be a great source of information for the SM. It is the wise SM who befriends all executive assistants.

► The position of **Casting Director** most definitely started in films, carried over into TV, and by the early 70s, became more commonplace in theatre. Casting directors are most often found working on big-budget shows or new shows that are heading to Broadway. The casting director is usually an independent outsider, contracted by the producing company for a particular show. The casting director’s responsibility is to gather the talents best suited for the roles in the play. A good casting director has an excellent eye for talent and has a knack for placing actors in roles. The casting director saves the producer and director from having to sit through hundreds of auditions with people who are not right for the show. Prior to the casting director being used in theatre, the SM prescreened the talent—a job that made the SM’s position more prestigious and important. The SM’s work with the casting director is limited and brief, taking place mostly during the audition period.

► Depending on the size and budget of the show and producing company, the **Publicity** sector of the office staff may consist of an entire department with several people, or it may be one desk with one person working on programs, creating press and media exposure, doing photography, and sometimes designing graphic artwork for the program or posters. It is the publicist's job to get the word out on the show, create interest, and draw in a paying audience. The ways of doing this can be as extreme as the publicist, producer, and stars choose. More traditionally, getting the word out is done mostly by advertising, interviews with news and entertainment media special appearances by the stars and selected cast members, and participating in benefits and charity affairs. The SM's most important work with the publicity department comes in giving them correct information on the cast and show, which will be printed in the program, and in working closely with them during photo shoots.

► In some companies, the **Accounting** department may consist of several people, or be a one-desk, one-person operation. This position on the chain-of-command list needs no further introduction other than to say that this is the place from which the paychecks are generated, the bills are paid, and the petty cash is handed out.

Sidebar: While discussing accounting, it is a good time to talk about the *expenses* or *expenditures* that an SM may incur throughout the production. In some working situations, the SM may be given a **petty cash fund**. This may come from the accounting department, or it may come from the production manager's office. Sometimes the money first comes out of the SM's pocket. To be reimbursed or to account for the petty cash given, the SM must turn in *receipts*. It is the wise SM who has a petty cash receipts envelope and is diligent in putting in all receipts; otherwise the money will eventually come out of the SM's own pocket.

The Creators

In the book of Genesis, the Creator of heaven and earth was first and foremost. So it is with the creators in theatre—the writers, composers, and lyricists (the script, music, and words). We know from history that during Egyptian, Greek, and Roman times the author (the playwright) was preeminent, and then came all the other parts of theatre. Today the creators in theatre remain first and foremost. They are still revered and held in high esteem.

► The **Writers, Composers**, and **Lyricists** begin their work alone, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in small groups. The creators conceive the child, give it birth, but they must relinquish the child to others in this chain of command for it to be nurtured and grow. Sometimes the union between the creators and the others is a happy, rewarding, and highly successful experience, with each person making contributions greater than anyone's expectations. Other times, the child is short-lived and the creators return to their quiet place, first to recover and then perhaps to start the creative process over again. The SM's work with this group of people is usually limited to being a "host" during the rehearsal period, seeing that they are included in the loop of daily information and, if needed, have a place for them set up in the rehearsal room where they can continue their work.

The Designers

In doing their work, **Designers** are the bridge between the artistic and technical aspects of the show. They work in close harmony and contact with the production manager. While they have the freedom to creatively and artistically express their design and craft, they are also obligated to study the show and deliver what the show requires—what the producer might want and what the director might dictate. Designers must know their craft as well as having a very good technical knowledge of the medium in which they are working.

Designers bring to the show the same intense artistry, design, and style that are brought by all the others on the creative staff. Their work sets the physical and visual look. They dress up the show, giving it color and its particular look. The look and style for the show is created between the producer and designer, and often includes the director. It is the designer's job to create the illusion of reality and lull the audience into acceptance of theatrical time, place, and space.

The Production Staff

Heading this illustrious group, is the director. People in all walks of life know the importance and power of the director's work. Films are probably most responsible for bringing the director's work to public attention. Television helps keep it there.

► In theatre, **Directors** and their work have always had a place of importance and prominence among their peers and theatregoers. Today the general public gives as much recognition and acknowledgment to the directors of a stage production as they do the performers. Directors of the golden age of theatre include Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Joshua Logan, Michael Bennett, George Abbott, Abe Burrow, Tommy Tune, Harold Prince, Moss Hart, Michael Kidd, Ron Field, and Noel Coward. Into the twenty-first century, renowned directors include Susan Stroman, James Lapine, Baz Luhrmann, Twyla Tharp, Bartlet Sher, Christopher Wheeldon, James Moore, Arthur Laurents, and Kathleen Marshall.

The writers conceive the idea and bring it to term, the producer nurtures the piece, giving it a healthy home and environment, but it is the director who molds and shapes the work, giving it character, personality, and style. It is the director who breathes energy and movement into the piece, giving it greater values and coloring.

The director and SM's work together is like a marriage; however, the relationship is not a fifty-fifty proposition; the SM is there to serve, honor, and obey (lots more to come on this subject).

► In theatre, the **Assistant Director** moves and lives within the shadow of the director. The assistant director is there to assist and serve. Whatever creative or artistic input the assistant director might bring to the production, it is always made through the director. The director often gives the assistant due credit, but ultimately the assistant's contributions are absorbed into the production, and full credit is given to the director. The assistant director's duties are as simple or as involved as the director chooses. Sometimes the director will turn over a whole scene to the assistant, giving the assistant full range for artistic and creative expression. At other times the assistant is allowed to work with the actor only in running the scene and drilling the performers in their parts. At still other times the assistant director is kept more as a personal assistant or secretary to the director, taking notes and giving reminders. If there are many script changes or rewrites, the assistant usually works closely with the director, and then sees that new pages are put into the computer and that copies are made for the next rehearsal. Sometimes the job of making script changes is given over to the SM. The assistant director is usually a good friend to the director or a longtime working associate. In his own right, the assistant director may also be an accomplished actor, director, choreographer, or even an SM. The SM and assistant director work closely together in serving the director.

► When doing musicals, the **Musical Director** is next in a chain-of-command list. This person brings to the music what the director brings to the overall show. However, although the director may take liberties with the author's words, intentions, and interpretation, the musical director remains truer to what the composer has written. In smaller productions, the musical director may also be the rehearsal pianist, vocal coach, and almost certainly the conductor. On larger shows, especially those heading to Broadway, each of these positions may be filled by different qualified individuals. The SM does not work as closely with the musical director as with the director. Nonetheless, the musical director is usually present for each rehearsal, needs to have a workspace (usually close to the piano), and needs to be kept in the loop of information.

► If the **Conductor** is hired simply to conduct the music for the performances, the SM may meet this person only one or two times during the latter part of rehearsals. Otherwise, the conductor will appear in the orchestra pit when the orchestra starts working with the cast. Whatever business needs to be done with the conductor is usually done through the musical director. By performance time, the SM makes certain the conductor has a dressing room. Throughout the run of the show, the SM checks regularly with the conductor to offer assistance, and receives any performance notes the conductor may want the SM to give to cast members.

► The **Rehearsal Pianist** seems to have the most tedious job; the pianist must remain at the piano throughout the entire rehearsal day, waiting and ready to play over and over just a few bars or whole sections of the score. During rehearsals, the rehearsal pianist becomes the orchestra, playing special parts or effects that will be played by other instruments when the full orchestra is together. For the SM, the rehearsal pianist is a low-maintenance person. As long as the rehearsal pianist is informed of each day's schedule, as long as there is electrical power for the keyboard, or if it is an old-fashion upright/spinet piano it is in tune and placed so that the pianist can see the performers, the rehearsal pianist requires little else throughout the day.

- If the show is a new musical or the revival of a musical that is getting a makeover or update, the SM may get to meet and deal with the **Arrangers**, the people who put on paper the musical arrangements of the vocals, orchestra instrumentation, and dance underscoring. You can be sure that they now have their own software programs to do what used to be done by hand. These arrangers do most of their work outside the rehearsal hall and may come to the rehearsal hall one or two times in the last week.
- The **Vocal Arranger** creates the harmony, blend, and overall sound that the performers re-create for each performance.
- The **Dance Arranger** carefully counts out each measure of music to fit the different sections of the dance being performed on the stage. Then the special rhythms, dance times, tempos, beats, accents, and musical effects are noted.
- The information from the vocal and dance arrangers is given to the **Orchestra Arranger**, who transposes everything into the musical instrumentation of the orchestra—the *orchestrations*. It is during this time that the sound of the orchestra and the number of instruments to be used is finalized, and the overture, incidental music, and underscoring are completed.
- Included within this group of musicians is the **Copyist**. After the arrangers have completed their work, the copyist painstakingly transcribes to manuscript paper every note for every instrument in the orchestra, for the entire score. At one time this was done tediously by hand and by many copyists; with the advent of copy machines the job was made easier and less expensive. Now with computer programs, the job has become a one-person operation.
- In being thorough and complete with this chain-of-command list, the musician's union, the **American Federation of Musicians**, might be listed at this point. Any business the SM might have with this union is usually with the musical director or conductor. The SM must, however, learn the rules and regulations of this group that govern work times, breaks, overtime, fees, and penalty payments.
- The **Choreographer** completes the musical portion of the chain-of-command list. The choreographer brings the same kind of creative artistry to the show as does the director and musical director, but the choreographer's job may be a bit more difficult; the director has the script and the musical director has the score, but most of the "text" for the dances must be created from the choreographer's head. Even for shows that have already been choreographed for Broadway, many times the choreographer will reinvent some or all of the dance, while the other parts of the musical remain the same.
- Under the choreographer is the **Dance Captain**. This person is a dancer in the show who has been chosen by the choreographer to oversee and maintain the dances after the choreographer is gone.
- At last we come to the SMs, the **PSM** and the **ASMs**. The SMs are the bonding agents that keep all departments connected. If this position were to be put into one of those rectangle box charts, the SM would appear somewhere in the middle with many, if not all, lines and arrows leading to the position. The SM's work is neither technical nor artistic, though knowledgeable in both areas. In most professional situations, the artists much prefer that the SMs stay off to the sidelines of their area and work only in support. The SM's greatest artistic contribution to the show comes during each performance as they call the cues for the show.
- The **Production Assistant (PA)**, also known as the *runner* or *gofer*, is usually young, filled with ambition, and excited to be working in show business. PAs are willing to put in the time and effort to prove themselves and get that proverbial foot in the door. With that kind of energy, willingness, and enthusiasm, the PA gets to do many things for all people in the production who may need things done. However, the PA works directly with the SM, the director, and the producer. The PA is eternally on the run, with a list of things that must be done within the hour. PAs put in extremely long hours, and the pay is usually below scale and at poverty range; they are assured by everyone that the experience more than makes up for the lack in financial gain.

The Performing Artists and Actors' Equity

It is difficult to place within the SM's chain-of-command list the **Performing Artists** and their union, **Equity**. They are an entity that stands alone, and when following a natural order and placement, all that come before them on this list are in support of them. So while they are being placed at this point, it is not an indication of their importance. Their greatest work and contact and working relationships with people in the company is with the director, stage manager, music director, and choreographer. This group needs no further introduction at this point. In Chapter 7, "Profiles and Working Relationships," you will meet the different groups within the performers and learn more about their working relationships with the SM.

- Performers cannot be discussed without also talking about **Actors' Equity**. In professional theatre, wherever the actor goes, so goes Equity. Membership in Equity has already been established as the dividing line between being a professional and a nonprofessional actor. Equity's purpose is, of course, to work for and protect the performers (including SMs) from substandard working conditions and unscrupulous producers. It is the SM's job to act as "watchdog," seeing that the performers, as well as management, abide by contractual agreements between Equity and the producers.
- The **Equity Deputy** is a cast member chosen by the cast whose job it is to represent the Equity members to management in all union matters, keep the Equity office informed on all business matters, and, like the SM, act as watchdog to ensure that the performers, as well as management, abide by contractual agreements. In a musical or in a show with a large number of cast members, separate deputies are chosen: one to represent the principal performers, others to represent all or various groups of the ensemble performers.

The Technical Staff: Department Heads, Their Assistants, and Stage Technicians

As with the performers, do not let the placement of this group distract you from their importance. Collectively, this grouping of technicians and craftspeople are to the show as a voice is to a singer or fingers are to a pianist. Without them, the illusion of theatre, as we experience it today, would be relegated to Greek and Roman times, when some masks, a few props, and suggested pieces of clothing were used as costumes.

While each department is autonomous and stands alone, they do come under the guidance and leadership of the PM (production manager). It is to the production manager that they must answer. In some working situations, when the SM might have problems with a particular department, it might be best for the SM to turn first to PM to see how things can be resolved.

The technical staff members are the practical applicators, the nuts-and-bolts people, the backstage laborers. After the designers in each technical area have done their work and the shops and vendors have provided what is needed, the department heads and crew take over. It is their job to assemble the physical elements of the production and technically support the show during the performance. No matter how automated or computerized things may become backstage, department heads and crew members are needed to execute the technical effects that create the environment of the play and the illusion of theatre.

In keeping with the "professional" theme of this book, once again it is noted that the SM does not (and cannot, by union rule) do any of the crew's work, nor does the crew do any of the SM's, and yet their jobs are complementary, each needing the other to do their best for the benefit of the show and a smooth-running performance.

- The **Technical Director (TD)** has a good working knowledge of all things technical, coordinates all technical departments, is the leader of the crew, and sees that all the technical elements of the show get into place and become operational. The TD has an even closer working relationship with the PM, for their work goes hand in hand, each dealing with the same technical departments and matters.

The TD leads the stagehands to make repairs, adjustments, or changes. Once the show opens, the TD makes certain that the technical elements are maintained and remain operational throughout the run. The TD is the final word in technical matters backstage.

- The **Head Carpenter** is in charge of the scenery. This person, with an assistant and a portion of the crew, is responsible for putting up the set and taking it down, as well as maintaining the scenery and making all repairs. The head carpenter, along with the crew, is in charge of the scenery moves and executes the scene changes during the performance. Many times, the head carpenter's position and the TD's position are combined.

► In the early days when flying in and out painted drops and pieces of scenery became part of theatre, *sailors* were the first **Flymen** or **Railmen**. They were hired to work this part of the crew because they already had experience in hoisting and letting down sails on ships. To tie off the ropes after a sail had been hoisted or lowered, there was a log or railing with pegs or pins driven through, projecting out on both sides. By winding the rope around both parts of the pins, the sail could be tied off and secured into place. This operation was also applied in theatre. The place or space above the stage where the drops were stored and from which they were flown in and out became known as the *flys* or *fly space*. The place where the sailors stood to tie off the ropes became known as the *rail* or *pin rail*, and the sailors became known as *flymen* or *railmen*. The head of the rail is often the assistant to the head carpenter. Together they work in setting up and striking the set/scenery.

► The newest member of this technical staff is **Automation**. Simply put, it is the *computerize movement* of scenery on and off stage. Basically, it is a collection of motorized *winches*, most of which are on stage level, while up in the flys are *traveler tracks* that slide across the stage flat pieces of scenery, called *sliders*. What once took individual crewmen to operate each wench or traveler now takes one person at a monitor and keyboard, set off into some dark corner backstage.

► Another new member and department added to this part of the SM's chain-of-command list is **Projection**. At one time projection was more of a technical specialty that might have been a still or moving picture. It now has become a major player in set design, projecting onto the stage and scenery all kinds of light patterns, pictures, graphics, and effects to create a more artistic and imaginative look and design to the show.

► The titles of the remaining technical heads and crew members—**Electric, Props, Sound, Costumes/Wardrobe, Child Wrangler, Hair, and Makeup**—describe quite well the work they do. We will get to know them in greater detail in Chapter 7, “Profiles and Working Relationships.”

► The **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)**—the stagehands’ union—is to the stagehands what Actors’ Equity is to the performers, caring for and protecting its membership. The SM must be sure to learn the rules and regulations of this group that deal with work times, breaks, overtime, fees, and penalty payments. The SM must also learn not to do any technical work that has been designated as union stage crew’s work, even if it is something as innocuous as picking up a broom and sweeping.

The Shops and Vendors

The **Shops** and **Vendors** are seldom, if ever, included in the chain of command. However, these are places and people with whom the SM must deal or keep informed (especially during the rehearsal period). The shops and vendors provide the sets, costumes, props, sound, lights, hair, makeup, and anything else needed for the show that is made, constructed, assembled, rented, hired, bought, borrowed, or begged.

The Theatre, Performance Site, or Venue

An SM will work in as many different places as there are different places in which to present live performance: concert halls, arenas, hotels, ballrooms, lobbies, theme parks, trailer beds, ice rinks, domes, bowls, forums, coliseums, amphitheaters, convention centers, converted storefronts, shopping centers, auditoriums, VFW halls, and theatres—famous theatres in major cities, theatres holding 5,000 people, theatres with ninety-nine seats or less, theatres with severely raked stages built in 1886, or a modern civic center theatre designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

At each performance site, there are people both backstage and at the front of the theatre to staff and maintain the venue. Backstage, the SM meets a second group of technical heads:

► The **House Crew** are people hired by the theatre to operate the various technical areas backstage and to support each product that comes to that particular venue. The house crew joins with the show’s technical heads in assembling the show in the theatre, and then during performance becomes part of the crew in running and supporting the show.

► Some house crews may also include a **Doorman** or **Security** people, a **Janitorial** staff, and if needed for the show, **Dressers**. To distinguish more clearly between the people hired by the venue and the technicians who come with the show, the house crew is often called the *local crew*.

► The **Front-of-the-House Staff** may consist of one or two people doing all the jobs needed to run the front of the house, or it may be broken up into the *theatre manager*, *box office workers*, *administrating staff*, *ushering staff*, *concession stand operators*, *parking attendants*, and *additional security*. The people who work the front of the house are the first to meet and greet the audience. In providing quick and courteous service, they help in making the audience receptive to the entertainment and begin the experience of going to the theatre. The SM has a very limited working relationship with this group, but it is good for the SM to make introductions and social contact with them.

► The **Fire Marshal** seldom, if ever, is included in the chain-of-command list. This is the forgotten person who shows up one or two days before the show opens to inspect all flammable items, to see if permits have been obtained, to see if all flammable items have been made fire retardant, and to see if any open flames are being used in the show, such as matches or candles. It is important that the SM keep this person in mind and, once the show gets into technical rehearsals, reminds the various technical heads to be prepared for the fire marshal's last-minute inspection.

In Closing

These are the people with whom every SM works throughout a show and throughout an entire career. With the information from this chapter and what is written in Chapter 7, "Profiles and Working Relationships," you have a well of valuable information. Learn about them now. Take it and use it to move forward into the professional experience.

Note: Once again, *do not* pressure yourself and think you have to know and memorize this outrageously all-inclusive chain-of-command list. With each job, with each show on which you work, you will draw up your own list, using this chain of command as your guide and template.

Stage Manager for Hire

Seeking Work, Getting the Job, Being Hired Again and Again

Being unemployed and looking for work is a fact of life for every SM. It is the nature of SMing work to move from show to show, working for different production companies. Some SMs become associated with a company that produces a season of shows and is brought on for each of those shows. This is almost like having a year-round job. However, during times of unemployment, SMs can still live comfortably and effectively if they are good at saving and budgeting their money.

Personal Experience: In my experience, the key for living during unemployed times was that my wife and I lived as frugally when I was working as when I was unemployed. During the times of plenty, after our general expenses were met, we salted away whatever was left. We charged nothing that we could not pay for at the next statement, we bought nothing for which we had not saved, and eating out was not part of our vocabulary. It took several years, but there came a time when we had saved up enough money to live on for three or four months. So while we were living on that money, we were putting away the money I was earning on the job.

During unemployed times I would take on short-term SMing projects, maybe become a production assistant. Should none of those things work out, I was not above doing house painting and home repair, using the technical skills and knowledge I learned backstage in theatre.

Then there are the few SMs, the extremely fortunate ones and probably the elite of the SMing cadre, who get hired for one particular theatre, such as the Pasadena Playhouse in California, not only stage managing the productions that are produced for the theatre but working with the shows that are brought in. These are the *elite* SMs because more than likely they are salaried and have the benefits offered by that producing company. This chapter is not for them. This chapter is dedicated to the SM seeking employment and the things the SM can do while unemployed.

How Do I Get the Job?

One of the first things beginning SMs, SMs just out of school, want to know is, “How do I go about getting a job?”

There is no good news here; in fact, there is no prescribed method. There are the conventional ways of getting jobs—answering ads in the trade papers, sending out resumes, and even calling and asking for an interview. That’s the way it happens in movies and in textbooks. Unlike performers, SMs have no agents to sing their praises, nor can SMs present their abilities and skills in an audition. How then does an SM get jobs? The way it most often happens is by accident, being in the right place at the right time, luck, knowing someone, or someone having seen you work before. Perhaps you did a play at school, at college, or in a small non-Equity theatre, which was low-paying or more than likely nonpaying.

The best I can offer is to say SMs often get jobs by *coming in through the back door*. You take on small jobs, jobs that pay close to nothing, but you do the job as if you were on a Broadway show. You put in time and effort that no normal or sane person would put into a job, especially for the amount of pay you might or might not be getting. You do it with love and enthusiasm. More than likely you do a bang-up job and maybe someone high up on the production staff or some person you hardly knew recommends you for another job. You then do a bang-up job there and maybe a couple of more shows for those people. You build up a resume. You build up a network of people. You answer adds in

the trade papers and go on to the Equity site to see what jobs are listed there. Then maybe one day you hear through the grapevine or through your network of people of another, maybe more important, better-paying job. and that is how it all starts.

The key here is that you *applied what you knew* and you did a *bang-up job*. Also, you have to have inside of you a love and drive to want to be in theatre and, more specifically, to do the kind of work an SM must do. I might also add that you also took on some of the attributes and qualities discussed in Chapter 2, “The Anatomy of a Good SM.” The best advice offered here is for you to go out there with drive, persistence, and fortitude—follow the journey to what is your destiny.

My Destiny: My destiny was to be an SM, and evidently to write this book. I would have never thought so, especially from my grades in high-school English. I just blindly followed my heart and traveled the road set before me. Oftentimes it was bleak, emotionally and financially, but this was what I wanted and I was determined to do nothing else. If this is what you have inside of you, then forge on; if not, take your experience, training, and knowledge and go off into some other field of work. All is not lost because what you have learned and experience in exploring this world of SMing you can take out into the world and apply to a number of good and rewarding positions: supervising, organizing, leading, corporate managing, office managing, special events coordinating, wedding planning, heading a charitable organization, maybe even organizing and running a political campaign, although I imagine SMing would be easier.

Networking

Networking is making telephone calls, socializing, doing benefit shows, staying in touch with friends, business associates, producers, directors, performers, other SMs, and sending out resumes or little reminder notes that you are available and looking for work. SMs need to create a network of people who can give them a job, lead them to a job, or personally recommend them to others: socialize with groups of people—people in the “business,” as the saying goes—and not only with SMs but with performers too, and technical people.

Word of Caution: Surround yourself with supportive people, people who are creative and inventive, have hope, are mostly positive, and are not always griping about how bad things are.

Building a Resume

The resume is the door opener—the passport and entry into the minds of prospective employers. While performers can also use pictures, videos, and auditions, an SM has only a resume with which to make an introduction and create interest.

On Resumes: Here is what Barbara Beckley, artistic director of the Colony Theatre (Burbank CA), had to say about the resume. Her words mirror pretty much what other producers and directors have said.

Interviewer: What is your first impression of a resume?

Barbara Beckley: Oh, I absolutely get a first impression when I look at the resume. How well organized it is. Is it pleasing to look at? Do they know how to lay out a resume so that I can read it and quickly get information from it? That impresses me right away.

Presentation of the Resume

Even before it is read, the overall look of the resume sets the first impression. Figure 4-1 was created simply on a spreadsheet program (Excel), manipulating fonts, text sizes, and bolding, sectioning off blocks of information, making information uniform, and easily extracting information so it is noticeable at a glance. A little color may be a nice touch too. However, notice the use of a single color and the subdued tone. You are applying for an important position. A circus of color will be an eye-catcher but might not make the impression you are hoping for.

The Layout

Important to the resume is how things are laid out on the page. Even the order in which the information appears can

SARAH JOHNSTONE STAGE MANAGER		
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MUSICALS		Star Performers
GONE WITH THE WIND	Leslie A. Warren/Pernel Roberts	Producers/Directors
THE KING AND I	Ricardo Montalban/Sally A. Howes	Joe Layton, LA/SF/Tour
ANNIE GET YOUR GUN	Debbie Reynolds/Gavin Mac Leod	Joseph Hardy, LA/SF/Tour
KISMET	Rhonda Fleming/John Reardon	Gower Champion, LA-CLO/SF Tour
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF	Robert Merrill	Albert Marr, LA-CLO/SF Tour
HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS	Robert Morse/Rudy Vallee	Steven H. Bohm, LA-CLO/SF Tour
SHE LOVES ME	Pam Dawber/Joel Higgins	Robert Morse, LA-CLO/SF Tour
GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN	JoAnne Worley/Marcia Wallace	Paul Blake, Ahmanson, LA
MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS	Debbie Boone	Paul Blake, Santa Barbara/SF
MY ONE AND ONLY	Cynthia Ferrer/Dick Lumbard	Paul Blake, National Tour
GUYS AND DOLLS	Jack Jones/Nancy Ringham	Jack Bunch, San Bernardino-CLO
BIG RIVER	Jym Diablis	Jack Bunch, San Bernardino-CLO
SINGING IN THE RAIN	Cynthia Ferrer/Kirby Ward	Jack Bunch, San Bernardino-CLO
MAN OF LA MANCHA	Jon Cypher/Marilyn McCoo	Dan Mojica, San Bernardino-CLO
DRAMA/COMEDY		Gary Davis, Calif. Music Theatre
IT HAD TO BE YOU	Jean Smart/Richard Gilliland	
SAME TIME NEXT YEAR	Marriett Hartley/Earl Holliman	
DRACULA	Michael Ansara/Werner Klemperer	
DEATHTRAP	Robert Reed	
ODD COUPLE (Female)	Lee Meriweather/Marcia Wallace	
VARIETY, CLUBS, INDUSTRIALS, AWARDS, BENEFITS		
BURLESQUE - USA	Red Buttons/Eddie Bracken	Paul Blake, GFI Productions, Tour
HOLIDAY MAGIC	Blackstone/Burton/Jones/etc.	Tom Troupe, Empire Productions, LA
WORDS AND MUSIC	Sammy Cahn	Ezra Stone, National Tour
HEALTH CARE-COMIC RELIEF	Chevy Chase/JoAnne Worley	Harvey Medlinsky, Empire Productions
UNI-HEALTH AWARDS SHOW	Bonnie Franklin/Christine Ebersole	Jack Bunch, Empire Productions, LA
AIDS BENEFIT	Joel Gray, Twiggy, Gene Kelly	
ABC-TV & FILMS		
(6) Pilots	Industry Actor's Showcase	Barry Ashton, Las Vegas, Tahoe, Reno
MacNamara's Band, Mini Series	Holiday Magic Tour	Canada, Australia, NZ, England
(3) Midnite Spcls. "LV Showgirls"	Gypsy, Fiddler, West SideStory	Paul Blake, National Tour
DIRECTING		Peter Rank Prdns., Bev.Hls.
		Jeff Calhoun, Peter Rank, Bev.Hls.
		Tommy Tune, Peter Rank, Bev.Hls.
REFERENCES		
Paul Blake, 213-555-1234		
Peter Rak, 310-555-1234		
Bill Holland, 818-555-1234		

Figure 4-1 Sarah Johnston's SM resume.

have a psychological effect on the reader. Keep the resume simple, neat, and easy to read. Readers of resumes do not want to study the resume, but rather extract from it in a single glance the type and caliber of shows, where the shows were done, for whom, and whether any star performers were involved. From this quick glance, the readers will determine if you are what they want for their shows, and if you are worth their time for further consideration.

The Credits

If you have come this far in your interest in theatre and SMing, more than likely you already have some credits, even if they happen to be high school, college, or community theatre credits. We all start somewhere, and in the beginning no credit is too small or insignificant to list. As your credits get more impressive, place the most impressive at the top and start eliminating the lesser ones from the bottom.

One-Page Resumes

Make it a standing rule to have your resume no longer than one page. It is a natural inclination to want to list every credit. Listing more credits will not sell you any better than having an impressive few. If the reader must turn the page, it becomes overwhelming, too much to take in. You run the risk of losing their attention.

Slanting the Resume and Listing Secondary Credits

Take a closer look at Sarah Johnstone's resume (Fig. 4-1). As you can see, Sarah has slanted her resume toward musicals. She also has extensive experience in straight dramas and comedies and has listed those credits in a second heading and under a third heading, "Variety, Clubs, etc." Sometimes in a show for which you are applying, a *secondary element* such as magic, vaudeville, or variety is important to the play. If the SM happens to have a credit listed that is similar to what is needed in the show being applied for, this could become a factor in being chosen for the job.

Remember! If you're creating a new resume in the same document, when it is time to save, be sure to "Save as" so as not to lose the original resume. We all know this, but I cannot tell you the number of times I have forgotten and clicked on "Save"!

With the resume on file in a computer, slanting and tailoring is easily done simply by creating a new file and copying and pasting in those credits that exemplify the show for which you are applying.

Repetitive Credits

It is also impressive and reassuring to the reader of the resume to see the names of directors, producers, or production companies listed two or more times. Sarah has made a point of doing this despite the fact that the shows listed are not in the chronological order in which she worked them. Having repetitive names is an eye-catcher and quickly points out that this particular SM gets hired again and again by the same companies and people.

Absence of Dates

Notice that dates have been omitted from Sarah's resume. For the sake of simplicity and the limited space on the page, dates can be eliminated. In fact, it is best to leave this information out entirely. When dates are included, people start counting, calculating, and passing judgment. Any credit older than five years has less impact. Although people hiring for a show refuse to believe it of themselves, it is a well-established axiom in entertainment that you are only as good as your last or most recent credits. Producers and directors want to be assured that the SM they are choosing is a currently working SM, highly regarded, and in great demand. Only in the interview does an SM talk about dates and, even then, only after being asked a specific question.

Further Experience

Notice also that at the bottom of the resume, in smaller print, credits are listed for television, film, and directing. These seemingly unrelated credits further guide the reader into knowing Sarah's experience and versatility. Aside from being technically knowledgeable, some directors and producers like their SMs to know about directing. They are then assured that their SM can communicate with actors, keep the show at performance level, and work closely with the director during rehearsals. They do not, however, want an SM who wants to be a director. If directing credits are listed, they should be few in number and placed in a subordinate position.

References

Including references on a resume is a strong feature. Listing three or four names is enough. Whenever possible, it is good to list various types of people in the industry: a director, a producer, perhaps a star name, and even another SM. This list invites prospective employers to call the references and shows that the SM is confident enough about past work to have it checked out. It also directs the prospective employer to people whom the SM knows will give a good reference.

Your Equity Affiliation

You may have noticed in Sarah Johnston's resume that there is no mention of being a member of Actors' Equity. With the credits listed and the celebrity performers named, there can be no doubt of Sarah's professional standing. However, for beginning SMs, listing less prominent credits with production companies and production houses in regional theatre, civic light opera groups, or local home-town theatres, if indeed you are a member of Equity, it should be proudly noted at the top of the resume, and in the case of Sarah Johnston's resume, it might look good to list it alongside "Stage Manager."

If by chance you are part of the **Equity Membership Candidate Program (EMC)**, and in the process of building your credits and putting your time into the program to qualify as an Equity SM, then certainly that should be noted in the heading of the resume, and in the case of Sarah's resume, it might look good just under the notation "Stage Manager." (More about the EMC program later in this chapter.)

Contact Information

Be sure to list your phone number and email address at the top of the resume. It is no longer necessary to include a business address.

Hobbies and Recreation

If there is space at the bottom of the page, you may choose to list hobbies or special interests as long as they don't appear sophomoric. On some occasions during interviews this information can spark interest or conversation with the interviewer.

Establishing a Good Reputation

Building a *circle of fame* is among the things an SM must do to help in finding and getting work. This is not the fame a performer or director might achieve, but is rather the *reputation* among peers and associates as being a *good and reliable SM*. Establishing a good reputation begins on the first day of the first job with the first employer, and continues with every job thereafter. A good SM is judged by character as well as by excellence in work. Achieving a good reputation is not something for which an SM works directly, but is the result of providing good work and all the things discussed in Chapter 2, "The Anatomy of a Good SM."

Good Word-of-Mouth

An SM has a resume and good reputation to help in job searches, but that does not complete the circle of getting the job. The SM also needs *good word-of-mouth*. Remember that SMs have limited ways by which to present their talent, craft, and skills. There is no way to display organizational and administrative skills, show how well they work with people, or show their excellence in calling cues, so SMs need other people to *sing their praises, trumpet their call*. Most definitely, producers and directors check out the references or others listed on the SM's resume. Job openings for an SM spring up quietly and often behind closed doors. Hiring an SM is as difficult for producers and directors as it sometimes is for an SM to get the job. Most producers and directors will turn first to an SM with whom they have worked and have had a positive experience. If that person is not available, the producer or director will turn to friends, business associates, and even performers for a recommendation. SMs want their names to be first on those people's lists.

Interviewing for the Job

The number of times an SM will interview will be greater than the number of jobs actually gotten throughout a career. Interviewing can be an art and a craft. There are some excellent books written on how to get a job, and although they are not geared toward SMs or other people in the entertainment industry, they have some very good suggestions on how to dress and how to handle yourself. It is worth your time to read one or two of these books or to take a seminar or workshop on the subject. A word of warning, though: do not go into an interview leading with all that you have read. Those things are the foundation upon which you conduct yourself.

Gut Feeling

Interviews for SMs are conducted by the producer or director or both. Oftentimes these interviews can be casual and informal; after reviewing the credits, the conversation may go in any direction. The credits have played a major part in getting the SM to the interview and they are what assure the producer and/or director that the SM is qualified. The conversation during the interview and the SM's self-presentation further direct the interviewers into making a decision. However, even with impressive credits and high recommendations, the producer and/or director often choose an SM on their *gut feeling*—how good or how comfortable they feel with this particular person.

Controlling the Interview and the Outcome

It is not a good idea to go into the interview with preconceived ideas of how it should go. Let the interviewer set the style, pace, and tone. Each interview will be as different as are the people doing the interviewing. The best thing that SMs can do is to go into the interview with resume in hand, feeling good about their credits, knowing they are good at the job, and present themselves in the best light possible. Be as you would if you were at a social gathering meeting people for the first time. Be open and conversational. Listen to the person speaking, enjoy whatever humor might be interjected and maybe even contribute, but this is not the time to take center stage and go into a long narration about yourself, an experience, or some funny story. A short, quick anecdote appropriate for the moment is fine, but let the interviewer take the lead.

Often, there is no rhyme or reason to the outcome. Sometimes you get the job when you feel the interview was disastrous. Other times the interview goes very well, you are certain you have the job, but you don't. Don't even try to figure it out—half of the time getting or not getting the job has nothing to do with you or your credits. It's the person who did the interviewing and what was going on inside of him or her. With the same credits, in another interview, you will find a producer or director who will welcome you and even hire you on the spot.

However, it is also prudent that if you don't get the job, you might want to review how the interview went. Look to see if there was anything with which you were uncomfortable. Evaluate your contribution to those moments. Learn from those things to prepare you for the next interview. As certain as there is air to breathe, there will be more

interviews. Do not go back looking for feedback on why you did not get the job. That is something for you to do for yourself or to talk over with a friend, mentor, or confidant.

Wanting the Job

The SM job market is limited and the competition is stiff. Although there are several possible roles for performers with each show, there are only two possible positions for the SM—the PSM and the ASM. When interviewing for a job, the SM usually is out of work and may have been so for an extended time. The need and want for the job are great, but if desperation is taken into the interview, it will get in the way. It is perfectly acceptable to express your interest in the job and state your desire to have it, but do not sound desperate for work. Interviews should remain clear and focused on the present, and you should display confidence, asserting that you are good at your work and would be an asset to the show.

First Impressions

As much as people try not to let a first impression affect their judgment and decision making, it is a wise SM who knows that the first impression is important and lasting. The first impression is probably the only part of an interview over which an SM has some control.

When entering the room for an interview, the SM should appear confident and self-assured. Entering with an abundance of energy and high spirit is great for a performer auditioning for a role, but you are there applying for an important and responsible position.

Again, I offer the suggestion that you enter as you would a person's home for a social evening, being greeted by your host and hostess: graciously, pleasantly, with presence of self and openness.

Dressing the Part

How the SM dresses is probably the most important part of the first impression. It is the jacket cover to the book, the billboard or marquee poster that catches the eye and draws a person's interest. Gone are the days when an SM is expected to wear at least a dress shirt and tie if not a business suit, but with the casual style of dress today, it is best the SM appears to be *of the people* and not *something other than the people*. SMs should dress to satisfy their own personality and style, but must keep in mind that they are applying for a very responsible position and being chosen to lead an entire company of people. Dress that is too stylish, too trendy, or too funky can be a deterrent in getting the job, even if the producer or director dresses in an extreme fashion. On the other hand, dressing without style or awareness of the trend of the day can also have an adverse effect. There is a middle road to be traveled in the SM's fashion and style of dress: neither too far "in" nor too far "out."

At one time, if a person had a *tattoo* it was usually covered up, even with a short-sleeve shirt. Inking bodies has become the fashion of the day and is a common and accepted part of the time. More than likely, young, aspiring SMs now interviewing may have one or two, if not a sleeve or legging full (ladies included). This is who you are and a personal expression. There is no great need to cover it up, and yet there is no need to show it all. Producers and directors tend to be at least a generation older than the beginning SM. They may still carry beliefs and preferences from their time. Just know your subject and dress the part.

The Chit-Chat Part of the Interview

Once past the introductory stage and review of credits, there comes a time when the conversation becomes more informal and the interviewer wants to settle in for a little chit-chat. Sometimes this takes the form of shoptalk or becomes an exchange of theatre stories. Other times the conversation may turn toward gossip. The interviewer may be very direct or ask leading questions. Regardless of the conversation, the SM should be careful not to give more information than is necessary to keep the conversation alive. The SM should never become involved in political, religious, or opinionated conversation. On occasion, an interviewer will see a name on the resume and ask, "I see

you've worked with so-and-so. How did you find him? I hear he's very difficult?" Beware! Whether this is a test or just time to gossip, keep it brief and simple. If in your experience you found the person named to be difficult, you can say so, leaving out the tabloid-like details. On the other hand, if your experience was contrary to popular belief, state that too. You may have some juicy stories to tell, but you should resist the impulse; they will do more harm than good, impairing whatever first impression and credibility you have built.

The Other Side of Interviewing

Keep in mind that as you are being interviewed, you are also doing some interviewing yourself—deciding if this is a company, group of people, or situation you want to work with. You might think that wanting and needing jobs means that an SM does not have the luxury to pick and choose, but you do and should. There will be times in interviews when all indications are that this is not the job for you. Follow your instincts, no matter how badly you may need the job.

The Most Difficult Parts of Interviewing

The two most difficult parts to an interview come after the interview: waiting for the decision, and hearing that you did not get the job—rejection. Waiting for an answer and being rejected are a fact in everyone's life, but for people in show business they happen more often and sometimes feel more personal. All SMs share this with their show-business brothers and sisters. The only protection against such feelings is to be strong and confident in yourself, have the desire and drive to remain working in the entertainment field, and know that what you have to offer is good. As for the rest, just keep networking, sending out resumes, and going to interviews, and the jobs will come.

Getting an Equity Card

In Chapter 1, "Introduction," I said that being a member of Equity makes the difference between being professional and nonprofessional. To get an Equity card, an SM must first be hired by a producer or director who is doing an Equity production. However, most producers and directors doing an Equity production are not willing to hire an SM who is not already Equity, even an ASM or second ASM—the classic catch-22. Remember that producers and directors need the security and assurance of knowing that the SM they choose is experienced and qualified. So how does an SM get an Equity card? Persistence, paying dues, and doing your best!

To dodge that vicious catch-22 and become a member of Equity, a beginning SM must be persistent. Aside from continuing to build credits by working on shows regardless of their nonprofessional status, the aspiring SM also needs to ease into more professional situations, perhaps by working as an intern, a gofer, a production assistant, an intern, or an assistant to a star, director, or producer. The point is to get people to know you and feel comfortable with you, for them to see how you work, and at the same time for you to let your aspirations be known.

With that in mind, know that *luck and being in the right place at the right time* play an important part in success, but it will be patience, persistence, putting in time, and paying those proverbial dues that will make the difference and lead to that first all-important, big-time job as an SM. This of course is predicated on the fact that the person has talent and can deliver.

Getting an Equity card is an important event in an SM's life and should be celebrated. The SM, however, should not be lulled into a false belief that this is the end of job worries. Getting an Equity card is a giant step, a quantum leap into the professional world, but the SM is still faced with all the things we have discussed in this chapter.

The Equity Membership Candidate Program

The *Equity Membership Candidate* (EMC) Program is a ray of light for beginning performers and want-to-be SMs—those looking to be hired by a producer or director who is doing an Equity production but who is not willing to hire an SM who is not already Equity.

This program permits beginning performers and SMs in training to build credits/points with certain approved Equity theatres toward the goal of getting an Equity card. To qualify for the program, a performer must first be hired by a participating theatre. So, in effect, this does not relieve the performer or SM from having to go out and pound the proverbial pavement and do the things already suggested in this chapter. However, by participating in this program, doors are more readily opened with larger, better-paying production companies.

Be sure to check with the local Equity office for the rules and conditions of the EMC program. They are detailed and must be followed to the letter. Being a member of Equity is a standard to the industry that says you are reasonably qualified in your art and craft.

The Terms of the Contract

Once the director or producer decides to hire an SM, the final phase in getting the job is signing the contract. First and foremost, each professional contract with an SM comes under the auspices of Equity, with terms that have already been established and agreed on between Equity and the producer—namely, minimum salary, benefits, and working conditions.

Negotiating

Assuming you are now an Equity SM, this paragraph may still be a little premature, especially if you have only a few Equity shows under your belt. At this point there is little opportunity for “negotiating.” For the sake of conversation and optimism, let’s forge ahead and imagine you have credits enough for a producer to take you on as an ASM or even the head SM or the coveted position of PSM. Now you may have some negotiating power. However, don’t get too excited because producers are notorious for only wanting to pay Equity minimum. Performers usually have agents or managers to help them get more, but SMs have only themselves. There are only a few SMs who have the power to walk in and ask for a sum of money substantially above union minimum. For the rest, an SM must go in with self-confidence, self-assurance, and experience, and then go through the negotiating process. Producers will haggle, bargain, barter, and ping-pong terms back and forth with star performers, but they have little tolerance or patience in playing the same game with SMs. This leaves a very small window of negotiation for the SM.

Before going into the negotiating meeting, the SM must decide on the lowest acceptable amount of salary, which in reality is Equity minimum. If the producer won’t go above union minimum, the SM might suggest some perks instead, asking for title-page credit in the program and on posters, a biographical write-up in the program, or complimentary tickets for several performances.

For the producer these things are not an out-of-pocket expense, and it costs them nothing to give these things. Even if a producer meets the SM’s asking price, it is worth trying to get the perks too. At times an experienced SM with an impressive list of credits may accept minimum terms just to get established with a particular producing company or director. Whatever the case, once the terms have been agreed on and the contract is signed, the SM sets aside all thoughts of compensation, plunges into the work, and does the million-dollar job that is expected even if it might be at Equity minimum.

Personal Financial Planning and Budgeting

There is no prescribed way to begin your financial planning and budgeting when first starting out and looking for work as an SM, especially if you are just coming off your studies and training with a load of student loan debt. Each person takes his and her own path to survival during this beginning time. The one thing I can tell you is to plan out and budget whatever money you will earn. You may have to take jobs completely removed from what you have studied and trained for. For the first two years, I worked by day as a tour guide at Bush Gardens in California and, at the same time, I worked three nights a week as a short-order cook at Howard Johnson’s. Then, in what felt like a break, I became a production assistant for a television producing company. That, however, was seasonal and the pay minimal. Finally, I found work closer to my intended profession as an SM, performer, tour manager, driver, and public

relations person for a magician friend, setting up in malls and performing a kids' magic show—not exactly the big-time I imagined for myself. That too was seasonal. The one thing that saved me during those years was that I lived frugally and sometimes at poverty level. I budgeted, budgeted, budgeted. I lived and spent moderately at all times even when paychecks were rolling in. The wise SM does not change his or her lifestyle and spending to match or complement what is being earned at the time. Also, just as important and yet the hardest thing to do is to take from your paycheck a set amount, putting it into a reserve account. This will be money you will need later to supplement your living when your unemployment runs out, for surely you will be collecting unemployment benefits more times than you would care to admit. Then, if by chance you should get a job before you have to use up all your saved money, take that money and sock it away quickly, before you think of ways it could be spent. Put that money into investments or some kind of a retirement plan.

Retirement??? Who is thinking of retirement at this stage in an SM's life? I admit, *retirement* was not part of my vocabulary back then... financial existence was. However, I wish I had been as disciplined with saving as I was in doing my job and work as an SM.

With this kind of planning and budgeting, you will not have to live on the outer edges. You will not dread the closing of a show; you will live with ease, enjoy the time off, and get caught up on personal things. More important, you can continue to network, interview, and look for work without having to take just any job or do some other kind of work while you wait.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

This section on unemployment insurance benefits (UIB) is neither an endorsement nor an encouragement to collect unemployment benefits, but applying for UIB is another fact of life in show business. Within the first week of a show closing, at least half of the company, if not more, will apply for such benefits. Being unemployed is not an easy or comfortable feeling, but the unemployment system is set up for unemployed people's benefit and is of great financial assistance during the times an SM is seeking work. UIB is a financial assistance, an aid, a subsidy—not a way of life or a source of income.

The SM's Survival Kit

Being unemployed and looking for work is a way of life for SMs and many other people in theatre. Despite a resume full of impressive credits, there comes a time when all SMs wonder if they will ever find another job. If you are the type who needs security, sanity, continuity, and continued employment, then close this book and run to some other profession that ensures yearly employment and a weekly paycheck. Being in show business, and in particular being an SM, is not going to provide such things. To survive, an SM needs persistence, perseverance, fortitude, and lots of confidence. The SM will need to continue the quest for employment, watch personal cash flow, and be regimented in personal budgeting. However, while doing all this, it is also important to retreat, take some days off, collect your thoughts, review priorities, and renew your physical and spiritual energies, so that you can once more go out and fight the dragons and windmills you will encounter in the next job.

The Professional Experience

Proud to Join the Ranks

When I finally moved into PSM status, I proudly wrote at the top of my resume, “Production Stage Manager.” While this was impressive and assuring to producers and directors who were considering hiring me as a PSM, it stopped others from offering me work on major shows as an ASM because they didn’t want to insult me by offering a lesser position, but more than that they were fearful that I would work in conflict with the PSM. Being a person who likes working regularly, I set my pride and ego aside and chose merely to put at the top of the resume, “Stage Manager.” Prospective employers, producers, directors, and PSMs were more comfortable in offering me work as an ASM, and I was happy to receive those offers too.

The Terminator Negotiator

I interviewed with a producer with whom I had immediate rapport. This was one of those interviews that, after I left, I felt certain I had the job. Several days later, the producer’s secretary called and confirmed my feelings. She requested I come in to sign the contract. I told her I had not yet talked terms of the contract or salary and she assured me I could do this at the time of signing.

When I arrived for my meeting with the producer, he was changed. He was annoyed and said abruptly, “My secretary tells me that you want to talk about the contract?”

“Well, yes. We have not talked about salary, and then there are a couple of things I always like to include in my contracts.”

“I don’t know what those things are, but I can tell you off the top, I pay only Equity minimum.”

I was not deterred from my objective because I had heard this many times before. “I understand that, and when I first started stage managing, I used to work for Equity minimum, but today I feel I come with a lot more experience ____”

Before I could finish, the producer cut in, “I don’t think you heard me. I don’t pay above Equity minimum!” I laughed, thinking he was joking, but from the stony expression on his face I could see he was dead serious. A painful and awkward silence filled the room.

“Well,” I sputtered, “is there no room for negotiation?”

The producer said nothing. The silence became more painful. I stammered and sputtered, “Well, I guess this leaves us at a standstill.” By this time I had decided I did not want to work for this person even if he offered me three times the salary.

“Yes, it does! Take it or leave it.” I was taken aback by his approach. I thought to myself, “Whatever happened to negotiating and making counter offers?”

For a short period of time I thought perhaps I was responsible for such an adverse reaction. Several years later I told this story to a fellow SM and he asked, “Was the producer’s name so-and-so?”

“Yes!” I replied in surprise.

“Well, I was the SM who ended up getting that job. It was a job from hell! This guy was a megalomaniac. It was the worst job I ever had. I should have known from the interview not to take it, but I needed it at the time. You were lucky.”

That Gut Feeling

One day a producer of a well-known and established dinner theatre called and asked if I’d be interested in coming in for an interview. The theatre was forty minutes from my home. I had been out on the road doing shows for several years and by this time I was ready to do some work at home base. In addition, the dinner theatre was operational year round. Can you imagine, a job near home and working the year round? This would be too good to be true. I fantasized about it, and by the time I arrived for the interview I wanted this job badly.

The producer was an agreeable sort of person, warm and welcoming. She was highly complimentary, saying she had heard of my work, that I came highly recommended, and that she was anxious to have someone like me come aboard and take over the operation as the PSM. I was of course flattered and I’m sure filled with pride and ego. “Let me show you around,” she said.

As we strolled through the facility, the producer explained, “I’ve made a few changes this past year. The biggest move is to do fewer star shows and give some of the younger performers a chance to perform in lead roles. Also, Equity has agreed that as long as I hire a certain number of Equity performers, I can also use non-Equity performers. This will give these nonunion people credits toward getting their cards!”

As we got into the backstage area, the producer said, "I've made a big change here too which will really be cost effective. No more union stagehands."

"That'll save a lot of money," I joked.

We laughed and she continued, "I have made deals with some of the local colleges and their drama departments to let their tech students work backstage for the run of a show and get college credits."

"But you'll have professionals as heads of the different technical departments?" I asked with terror in my heart.

"Well, not anyone we have to hire. I'll put one of the more knowledgeable kids in charge, but we'll always be here to take care of things."

That worried me. By this time I had learned to be wary of producers and directors who were vague or left dangling alternatives. "I am a bit concerned about the setup backstage. I worked in a theatre where college kids were brought in to do the backstage work: I can tell you that at the drop of a date, a party, or cram-study night, some of these kids will not show up for the performance. I know! I've had it happen! What do we do then?"

"I've got that all figured out too," she assured me again. "I've already started a roster of volunteer people we can call and get into the theatre in five minutes." For me this was a horrible plan, especially when I would be the person confronted with the problem thirty minutes before a performance, but I did not express further my feeling or concerns.

We went up into the technical booth at the back of the house. It was an excellent setup, but I noticed there was only one chair at the lighting console and a place for the spotlight operator.

"Where does the SM sit to call the cues for the show?" I asked. The producer proudly pointed to the chair. "But where does the light board operator and sound person sit?"

"This is the beauty of the new setup," she boasted. "You'll be operating the lights and the sound and for that I will pay you extra. It won't be difficult. The SM who's doing our current show is less experienced and is doing it with no problems. Besides, we've made the shows much simpler. We don't have as many light cues and once the sound levels are set, you just leave them and operate the few sound effects we might have."

Another wave of fear and panic came over me. Despite all the rules I had created for myself about not being negative, challenging, or controversial in interviews, I said, "This worries me. In the past I have been told by producers that things would be easy, but once a director gets working, he wants everything full-scale and at production value. I know the quality of the shows this theatre produces, and a few light cues and setting some sound levels is not going to be enough, especially when doing musicals."

"Don't worry about that! Any director who works for me will know my operation and budget. Besides, you'll be my right-hand man and I'll back you all the way. If we get a show that's busy, or really technically involved, then we'll bring in people to help."

Jokingly, I said, "I think my assistant is going to be one busy person."

"That's another point..." The producer informed me that since making the changes, the theatre now came under a different contract with Equity and, although she had to use some Equity performers, she was no longer required to hire an Equity ASM. Instead, I would have a new apprentice for each show. In that moment my desire for the job tarnished, crashed, and crumbled. I felt sick and empty in my gut.

All the way home I agonized over taking or not taking the job. Each time I decided to take the job I got that sick feeling again. By bedtime I had talked myself into accepting the job. I could not sleep. Finally, around three o'clock, I decided to follow my gut feeling and not take the job. As soon as I made the decision, I felt better and fell asleep. Next morning I reversed my decision, deciding again to take the job. By ten o'clock I was driven to call the producer before I changed my mind again. The producer was thrilled to hear from me so soon and saw this as a good sign. Before she could say another word, I blurted out, "I just called to say that I will not be taking the job." I was shocked to hear the words come out of my mouth, for I had not intended to say them.

"Oh!" the producer responded with what I thought was hurt in her voice. She asked, "May I ask why not?"

Every excuse or reason I gave she assured me my concerns were unfounded. Finally, I said, "I'm just not comfortable with the working setup. I came to you with one expectation, and after we talked I found your setup was different."

She became somewhat defensive. "I know it's not Broadway! Don't you think my plan will work?"

"I'm sure it will," I said. "I just want to work in a more professional situation." With that statement the conversation ended. I felt I closed a door, maybe burned a bridge. I had learned not to do that. One day a person is producing dinner theatre, the next year he is headed to Broadway and looking for an SM. A month later I got another show more to my liking but that took me out on the road again. As far as I know, this producer never went to Broadway, so the bridge burned was not something that came back to haunt me.

Interviews

The people interviewed were asked a series of the same questions.

► **QUESTION #1:** How do you go about finding an SM?

► **Lara Teeter:** First I think back to the people I've worked with, or I call people in the business—other producers, directors. People whose opinions I respect.

► **Bill Holland:** This is a small business. In some way we are all connected. I know somebody who knows somebody.

► **Paul Blake:** I'll tell you, the best people to call are the technical people. The costume people. The sound people. They get everywhere. Nobody sees them as a threat, so a lot of stuff is said and done in front of them that maybe a person would not say or do in front of a director or producer.

► **QUESTION #2:** When you look at a resume, what impresses you? What things do you look for?

► **Lara Teeter:** First, I am impressed with how it's written, how clean and clear it is to read. If I can look at it and in two seconds know this person, then this is a good resume and, right there, that tells me something about the stage manager. If it's printed on nice paper and if it looks like they gave it some thought, then I'm impressed. Presentation of the resume is very important to me.

► **John Bowab:** I check to see if the stage manager has done the kind of show I'm doing. I look to see where the stage manager has worked and with whom. I like to have the directors' names listed as well. This also shows me that the stage manager is not afraid to have me call people about him.

► **Bill Holland:** I look at the experience—the caliber of shows, the type of shows, the stars. I look to see if the person is a seasoned stage manager, capable of doing my shows, or if he is a newcomer.

► **Paul Blake:** You can get a very good idea of what a stage manager is like and what he is capable of, just by the shows listed and, more importantly, the people he's worked with. I usually know how these people work, the kinds of shows they do, and the kinds of people they like to work with! This then tells me a lot about the stage manager.

► **QUESTION #3:** What about the way an SM dresses?

► **Lara Teeter:** It's not about style or fashion! Clean, neat, comfortable, casual. How a person dresses tells me who they are and how they are feeling that day.

► **Paul Blake:** I work on instinct. As soon as the person walks into the room, I know if I'm going to like that person. Sometimes they change my mind but usually I'm right the first time.

► **Lara Teeter:** I have a firm belief that how you dress is how you want to present yourself, and is how people will respond to you! When I first started, stage managers always wore a jacket, shirt, and tie. Today that's not necessary, but I do think it is important for a stage manager to dress up!

► **QUESTION #4:** Do you call and check references?

► **Lara Teeter:** *Absolutely!!!*

► **Bill Holland:** It's like getting a history of the stage manager. How he works under fire, his attitude, work habits, temperament. How he gets along with people, stars, or deals with the temperamental artist.

► **John Bowab:** It's risky not to do some checking. I've had stage managers who are good at giving interviews but then don't deliver—that's why it's important to call people.

► **QUESTION #5:** How do you judge a good SM from an interview?

► **Bill Holland:** With the actors you can see pictures or videotapes, audition them or go see them in a show, but with a stage manager you only get to see them in the interview, and that's a one-shot deal. I've never needed to have a second interview with a stage manager. In the first interview, I see how the person carries himself, how he dresses, the total package. My final decision on a stage manager, after everything else, is gut feeling. If I feel that he is going to serve me, take care of the show and look out for my best interest, including my best financial interest, then he gets hired.

► **Paul Blake:** The most important elements in hiring an SM are the interview, the face-to-face meeting, and the references and recommendations.

► **Interviewer:** How do you go about finding an SM?

► **Sheldon Epps:** In my experience, because I have worked in many theaters, especially with regional theatres, you are assigned the stage managers and those people have repeatedly done shows at that theatre so the bad ones have been weeded out. When I have done things in New York, frankly, I go with somebody I know and trust. Somebody I know who is simpatico with the way that I work. I do, however, let the producers or the production stage manager choose the assistants. I like meeting new assisting stage managers. Some of those assistants I did not know have now become people that I ask for.

► **Interviewer:** Do you check references?

► **Sheldon Epps:** With someone I don't know, I do check references. But mostly I talk with other directors and ask if there is somebody you recommend, somebody you have worked with that you have had a good experience.

► **Interviewer:** I have been asked time and time again, "How does an SM get a job?" How do SMs get jobs?

► **Sheldon Epps:** Jobs are limited. It's not like being an actor where there are at least four in a show. You have to build up to it. You have to start somewhere, small, doing jobs, sometimes for free in a local little theatre, at college, maybe move on up to a regional theatre if there is one nearby, being an assistant, even being an assistant to an assistant if that is what it takes. Then once you are given the chance, you have to deliver, show them the goods. And let's say you have already been a stage manager, to move on up and to get people to know you, you have to be willing to be an assistant all over again, and not let your ego get in the way.

► **Interviewer:** First impression: A prospective SM comes into your office to interview. What things impress you or maybe don't impress you?

► **Sheldon Epps:** I want to see an openness, sense of humor... oh, a sense of humor is *very important*, very important. You're going to need that many times.

► **Interviewer:** How do you feel about a stage manager who has had a directorial background?

► **Sheldon Epps:** I don't mind a stage manager who has had a directorial background, but the stage manager is there to do stage managing. I don't want someone second guessing me and giving his opinion unless I ask for it. If it is going to be a mistake, let it be my mistake. The stage manager is there to support the director's vision and not to have a vision of his own.

► **Interviewer:** But is not a directorial background helpful in understudy rehearsals?

► **Sheldon Epps:** Absolutely! Definitely! But once again, as long as the stage manager maintains my direction, my vision. Also, you want a stage manager who knows how to speak to the actors in a way that is helpful to the performance and also that in rehearsals the stage manager listens so he knows what I was after in a scene or from an actor and that once you get into the run he is able to maintain that, and the best way to do that is for the stage manager knows how to talk to actors. Now he shouldn't redirect the actors, but he should know how to direct the actors after they have been directed.

► **Interviewer:** You have worked with a lot of stage managers. How do you go about finding a stage manager?

► **Barbara Beckley:** Recommendations *only*.

► **Interviewer:** After recommendation, do you interview the person?

► **Barbara Beckley:** Yes. They bring in a resume, but everybody's got a resume. Honestly, with me it has more to do with feeling, chemistry. Here at the Colony we are family oriented. We are working together and it's got to be fun, even if you are doing *Long Day's Journey into Night*, it's got to be fun. So when I interview a stage manager and I don't see a sense of "fun" within that person, a spirited energy of *let's all get in here and make this happen*, I tend to pass. As a matter of fact, not too long ago I interviewed two women, both eminently qualified. Both were recommended by people I trusted. One of them was *extremely* reserved, rarely smiled, didn't appear to have much of a sense of humor. With the other woman, she was fun. Immediately we hit it off. I felt that she would become part of our family here at the Colony, so she was the one I hired.

► **Interviewer:** Do you check recommendations?

► **Barbara Beckley:** Not really because it's always been a recommendation from somebody that I trust.

► **Interviewer:** What about the credit on the resume?

► **Barbara Beckley:** Well, first I look for AEA (Actors Equity Association). I was told once that "stage management is not an entry position," so I need to see Equity credits. I say that but I do hire non-Equity stage managers. This one woman I told you about who was fun and you could tell that she was ready to get in there and do the job had a lot of good non-Equity credits. But she said to me that she had been doing a lot of things in the theatre and realized that she got the greatest satisfaction and pleasure out of stage managing and that stage managing was her career path. I could see she was serious and wasn't dabbling in being a stage manager. She had the background, she had the drive and the desire, and in addition to that she came *highly* recommended by someone I really trusted, a sound designer.

► **Interviewer:** A sound designer? That seems to be a little off the beaten track from where a recommendation might come for a stage manager.

► **Barbara Beckley:** Yes, a sound designer, and lighting designers too. You see lighting and sound designers work closely with the stage manager all through tech. They are there in the trenches of technical rehearsals. They get to see the stage manager moment by moment in how they work, their temperament, their behavior, how organized, efficient, and can she call a show. I tell you, for a stage manager, technical rehearsals is where the rubber meets the road.

An SM's Story of Will, Desire, Wanting, Determination, Drive, and a Great Love for Theatre

I have in several places within this chapter said that there is no one way or formula to becoming an SM. If at this moment you are in your studies on this subject or reading this book by recommendation, that is a beginning. Mine came by recommendation from a school administrator whom I knew only in passing. Several years after finishing up for my degree in theatre arts, this person was working for a producing company in Los Angeles and was in need of an SM. Remembering my work as a student and remembering the time as a student I took over an SMing job on a show one week before opening, this person was impressed enough to remember and recommended me. I think there are as many different ways and stories of how to become an SM as there are people working as SMs.

In my research and interviewing for this second edition, I came across Hethyr "Red" Verhoff and her inspiring story, which is great proof that each person finds his and her way into becoming an SM. With Hethyr it was though shear *will, desire, wanting, determination, drive, and a great love for theatre*. It was through practical application as she walked through the *elephant doors* of the scene shop at the back of the theatre at the Pasadena Playhouse, but I will let her tell it to you:

I was working up the street from the Pasadena Playhouse. It was a burger and taco place. The guys from the technical crew used to come in for lunch. I really had in me a thing of wanting to be in the theatre. So we'd get to talking and I'd ask a bunch of questions. I really didn't know about theatre or how it worked, I just knew I wanted to be working in it. Then one day the technical director, Peter, said, "Why don't you come in and see what we do. I'll give you something to do and see how you like it."

Next day I was there before anyone was due to come in. Right away Peter set me up with an air gun and this bucket full of grimy, gross casters, which were built up with lubrication and dust from years of being used and never having been cleaned

before. By the time I was through that day I was covered with grease and I was hooked. *I loved it!* I was thrilled.

Then, little by little, Peter kept giving me jobs, and I kept eating them up. Then one day he asked me if I wanted to work a show. I didn't know what that meant. Up to that time I had only worked in the scene shop. What it meant was that I was like a production assistant and didn't get paid. I didn't mind even though I was now spending more time at the Playhouse than at my job at the taco-burger place. I guess this was Peter's way of testing the waters with me. With that show he put me up on the rail. *Yeaahh!*

I was assigned to take out the main curtain at the beginning of the show and then bring it in at the end. It was counterweighted, but even with that I struggled, but I was determined to do the job without complaint. I'd stand on the tie-off pin rail and when it was time I'd jump down with my weight and with all my might. I did that for a couple of shows but with each show I was given more and more to do. At the time, the Playhouse had an apprentices program and I was now getting paid a small stipend. Fortunately, I could still do my taco job whenever I wanted, which was during the times when the theatre was *dark*. Yes, I was learning some theatre talk like when there were no performances on Mondays or when there was no show in the theatre. Peter sent me to rigging school, and it was there on the rail that I stayed for a few years, but I'd also work the *deck* wherever they needed someone.

Then one time a show came to the theatre and they needed an *assistant stage manager* and they did not want to go on the search for one, so because of my work at the Playhouse and my knowledge of the technical backstage and my having expressed an interest in stage managing, they gave me a shot. It was an easy show. It was already put together. It was a one-person show so the job was easy. And that was how I got to join Equity.

I was fortunate to be with the Playhouse, and as the shows came in I was put on as the ASM. I worked with tons of PSMs, seeing how they did things. Each one was different but there was a main line, a main course of action to the job, and I knew that someday I could do that. So I sort of came in through the back door. I didn't go to school and all I learned was through practical experience, through doing it and watching other people doing it. Now I have ASMs under me who have academic training and their knowledge of technology and the paperwork they do for me is *brilliant*. But one thing they seem to be lacking is their people skills, the finer points of working with the different groups of people that you find within a theatre company. I guess they are not teaching that in schools, but that is an important part of the job.

A Note of Interest: It is interesting that never once did Hethyr mention her gender as a problem. It was her love for and desire to work in theatre and her tenacity in leaning and doing the best job possible, whether it was cleaning grimy casters or swinging from the rail to bring in or take out the house curtain or standing in the wings to receive a prop from an actor as he came off stage. She put in her time and paid her dues.

The Electronic SM

Tools, Supplies, and Equipment

A Portable Office

There is no getting away from it—every SM needs a *portable office*. Whether working in academic theatre, in community theatre, or in a professional situation, the SM must be ready and equipped to do the job with efficiency and expediency. Like any other profession, there are tools and supplies required. An SM is highly mobile. In the course of a day the SM might work at home, at the production office, at the rehearsal hall, at a business luncheon, and at a production meeting. When on the road with a touring show, the SM becomes even more mobile and must have the office along at the hotel, on a bus or plane, at the theatre, or in the ballroom of some hotel during understudy rehearsals. It should be no surprise to see an SM entering a rehearsal hall or the backstage of a theatre with a bag of electronic devices slung over the shoulder; a briefcase bulging with a couple of three-ring binders, supplies, and manila folders of hard copy; possibly some rolled up floor plans under arm; and maybe a tote bag with lunch and some personal items.

The portable office remains a mainstay in the life and job of an SM. While the necessity of a portable office has not changed, what has changed for the SM of the new millennium is the electronic devices that are now part of it. At one time, this office was divided into three different forms: the **SM's Office Carrying Bag**, the **SM's Storage Box**, and the **SM's Console** backstage. Now another part has been added: let's call it the **SM's Electronic Carrying Case**. This is the case that holds the laptop, chargers, batteries, and whatever other electronic devices the SM has deemed important and necessary in the execution of the job.

The SM's Electronic Carrying Case

The SM's two bags are like appendages. They go wherever the SM goes. They form an office that can be quickly and easily moved from place to place and set up in any situation.

Let's first see what is going on inside the **SM's Electronic Carrying Case**:

► **Laptop:** Now slimmer, lighter, more powerful, and with a long-lasting battery charge. While there are lots of software programs available for the SM, the most important and essential three are a *word processing* program, a *spreadsheet* program, and a program capable of *drawing simple floor plans*. I barely dare to mention any by name because within the next hour something new and better will be available and on the market. But at present the industry standards are Microsoft Word and Excel, and while scenic designers and technical directors often use AutoCAD, lighting designers are favoring Vectorworks.

► **AC Adapter/Power Supply/Charger:** While the laptop is perfectly made to be used without a direct power source, the wise SM plugs in whenever possible. That way the laptop will be charged for any times that it must run on its built-in power.

► **A Sturdy, Three-Prong Electric Extension Cord:** Another piece of necessary equipment that should be in the SM's Electronic Carrying Case is a sturdy, three-prong electric extension cord—not the home-style, zip-cord kind, but the kind used in running hand power tools. Three-prong is important because plugged into this extension cord will be a three-prong...

► **Power Strip with Multiple Outlets:** The power strip is necessary because there will be other electronic devices that need to be plugged in, not to mention what the ASM might have, and even the director. As a luxury service and convenience to the cast, you might set up another power strip in their resting area, for surely they will come to your strip when in need of charging their electronic devices. Be sure to get a power strip that protects against *power surges* because of the many different places you might be using the laptop.

► **Electronic Tablet:** At one time the SM was obliged to carry around a clipboard and pencil or a yellow-lined pad of paper to jot down reminders and make quick notes. Throughout the day there will be a score of people who will ask, want, tell, remind, or suggest something to the SM that cannot be done at that exact moment but nonetheless needs to be done in the next five minutes, later in the day, tomorrow, or next week. There is nothing too small or unimportant to note down. Leave nothing to memory. Forget one thing and it could have serious consequences later. The SM's mind should be free to deal with what's happening at the moment, while other issues become part of the daily reminder list.

So in comes the electronic tablet, where notes can be entered verbally or written out with the virtual keyboard. A tablet is certainly easier to carry around. In many ways it is like having a laptop but without the external keyboard. Even as you read these words, there are laptops with detachable screens that when removed become a tablet. These units are a bit more expensive than a laptop without this feature, but when you consider the price of both items and the convenience of having just the one unit instead of two, then it might be worth the cost.

► **USB Flash Drive/Thumb Drive/Stick Drive:** This is a very convenient item to have, and in fact, the SM should have several. They are a quick and easy way of moving information from one computer to another and are convenient when used as storage or backup. Sound cues could be stored in them and then played during the rehearsal from the laptop. In some working situations the production office may have a Xerox machine with USB ports where the information on these drives can be inserted into the machine and the document printed out.

► **Useful Apps for the SM.** On your laptop browser, type in “useful apps for stage managers” and see a wealth of choices for the picking.

► **Extra Batteries:** With any and all battery-operated devices, there is an absolute need for the SM to have in storage extra batteries, at least one or two of each kind. There is nothing more inconvenient and embarrassing than having an electronic or digital device go dead in the middle of a particular piece of business with no replacement battery close at hand.

► **Backing Up Show Files:** Back in the dark ages (premillennium), all show files were kept in manila folders in the SM's office carrying bag or storage box, and unless they were lost in some way or burned in a fire, they were pretty safe and there was little concern of not having them. Today, with the uncertainty of crashes and viruses and for protection and insurance, the SM must have a way of backing up all files. There are three:

- The Cloud—e.g. Dropbox
- Thumb/Stick/Flash Drives
- The ASM

1. At present, **Dropbox** has gained favor with SMs and production staff members. It is free, acts as a backup for your files, and at the same time allows the SM to share large files with the production people, whereas email is limited to the amount of data that can be sent in one email. However, upon joining up with this free service, be sure to check its limitations for the amount of data that can be stored and for the duration a file can remain. If you are working with a major production with lots of data to be uploaded, you may have to switch to a paying form of Dropbox or some other cloud service. Also, if sharing large files such as images or videos, you might want to look for a service that is geared to such sharing. This might be a good time to approach the producing company to see if they will pay for the service.

2. **Thumb/Stick/Flash Drives:** These handy devices are another choice for backing up the show files. There are some that can store up to 128 GBs of data. The good part is that they are small and add no discernable weight to the SM's electronic carrying case. The notso-good part is that they are easily misplaced. Great care needs to be taken so that they are put into a tight and secure place in the bag and, after use, even greater care given to return them to their safe place. Also, with multiple drives, it's a good idea to mark them and catalogue the information on each drive in some way.

3. **The ASM:** It stands to reason that whatever the PSM will have on his or her laptop, so should the ASM. So the ASM's files can also act as the backup. This is a practical approach, though not as safe and secure as the Cloud. Should this be the choice, information will be shared mostly by email, which, as we know, has its limits as to the amount of data that you can send. Also, to make this system work, whenever files are made or changed by either the PSM or the ASM, at the end of the day an exchange should be made to keep both computers up to date.

There is still one more item inside the SM's electronic carrying case that must be listed. Actually, it never really finds its way into the bag because it never leaves the SM's side. It is, of course, the *smart phone!* It has become the lifeline of the SM's job.

► **The Smart Phone:** Like the brand name Scotch Tape for cellophane tape, or Kleenex for facial tissue, the smart phone is often referred to as an **iPhone**. If the SM does not have a top pocket in which to put the phone, it should be attached in some way so that it is easily and quickly retrieved, and so that the slightest and mildest vibrations can be felt.

Suggestion: Put your smart phone on vibrate so as not to disturb the rehearsal or a meeting with a ring of some kind, no matter how pleasant or funny.

There are some very good apps for smart phones that can aid the SM in many ways. Global positioning system (GPS) seems to be a standard, but there are other useful apps; search your browser for “useful apps for stage managers.”

► **Data Plan:** Everyone who holds a smart phone to ear or speaks into it knows about the data plan in addition to the voice plan, and the premium paid each month to be in full operation. If the feature of a **hotspot** is not part of the data plan, then be sure to take the extra steps to have the feature as part of the smart phone setup. Being able to connect to the Internet at any moment, in any place where there is cell phone service, is an absolute necessity. Having a hotspot on your smart phone is like carrying around your own private modem, and with a laptop set up for wireless, the SM does not have to worry about being somewhere with no Wi-Fi.

► **A “Production” Smart Phone:** For SMs who are working on a large production, perhaps a musical or even a brand-new musical where there are a lot more people with which the SM must be in contact, it might be a good idea to get or suggest to the production office a “production” smart phone, with the SM keeping his or her own phone for the personal part of his and her life. If not, and if the job is paying well enough, it might be worth having the second phone anyway. This out-of-pocket expense may be worth it. The extra phone and hotspot can be a business expense and possibly a deductible item at the end of the tax year. Consult with your accountant or tax preparer for certainty on this matter.

An Inconvenience: Having to carry two phones around all day can a bit cumbersome, but for a PSM on a large production and for someone like me who chooses to compartmentalize, it's a welcome feature.

► **Visual Communication—Use of Smart Phone or Laptop:** Built into every smart phone and laptop is a means of visual communication that the SM can use in delivering information, perhaps information that is better deciphered in the form of a still picture instead of written out in text, or perhaps a video, and maybe even more direct, a face-to-face chat. At the publication of this second edition, Microsoft **Skype** is available in a free version.

► **The Scanner/Printer:** Surprisingly and thankfully, producers are seeing the value of having a scanner/printer available in the rehearsal room, which can then be switched over to the theatre, but SMs shouldn't dismiss the idea of having one of their own as part of their arsenal of tools. When the time is right and you can afford still another piece of equipment, you might purchase one and keep it at home. Better still, put some money aside, and when you come across a production that has not supplied you with one, you can bring your old one from home and purchase a new and updated one for your office. This too could be a business tax write-off, but once again, consult your accountant or

tax preparer. Having a printer/scanner in the rehearsal hall and then at the theatre will help the SM in many ways, saving time and certainly adding convenience in not having to run to someplace where there is a copying machine.

Note: For a student or beginning SM, this electronic carrying case may feel a bit daunting and perhaps costly. Remember, this list is put together for the SM who is working a production outside of academic theatre, community theatre, and even the Basic Showcase Code or Equity Waver Theatre. Working in these situations are not as demanding. The producers are often working on a shoestring budget, so they are happy with whatever new technology you bring in to do the job. Also, it is almost certain you already have a laptop and, even more certain, a smart phone. Then as jobs get better and even start paying, you can add to your arsenal of technology. As a final thought, even when you reach that “professional” status for which this book is written, you will more than likely be starting out as an ASM, who will probably work with the list of things the PSM has accumulated.

The SM's Office Carrying Bag

Just like the SM's electronic carrying case, the **SM's Office Carrying Bag** is like an appendage that travels with the SM. It can come in the form of a bulging briefcase, a stuffed attaché case, or a shoulder bag filled with all that the SM needs. For our purposes throughout this book, we will imagine it as a large, sturdy, shoulder-carrying bag with at least two main zippered sections to house three-ring binders and a limited hard-copy filing system. In addition, this bag must have other sections and side pockets for holding smaller office supplies.

Note: This list, though aimed at the PSM, is also for the beginning SM and ASM, for surely anyone who has reached the position of head SM, or the only SM on a show, will find these items important to have.

Contents of the SM's Office Carrying Bag

Fasten your seat belts; this list is long and comprehensive. These supplies, however, are all necessary, no matter what kind of theatre situation in which you are working. Not only that, after reading all that is listed, you will wonder, “How can all of this fit into one bag?” Well, it can. I did it for years. It was a blessing to have it all at hand. It was also impressive to performers, directors, and producers when I was able to provide hole reinforcements for a page that had fallen out of a script, or an X-Acto knife for some nonmedical surgical operation, or a sharpener for a blunt or pointless pencil. As much as possible, the things put in this bag should be lightweight, scaled down, and not as plentiful as would be in a desk or office.

1. **Hardcover Three-Ring Binder for the Rehearsal/Blocking Script:** The pages to this script should never be bound in any way. They must be removable so they can be changed or rearranged at any time. The different scenes can be separated with a tabbed card-stock page for easy maneuvering throughout the script while in rehearsals. The tabs should *not* be attached to the first page of the script, as for one reason or another that page will likely be removed and inserted with another with script changes or by the SM to make cleaner and clearer notes.

For convenience, the cover should be hard. At times in rehearsals, the SM will fill in for a missing actor, reading the actor’s lines and doing the blocking. The hard cover allows the SM to hold the script in one hand while using a prop in the other. The hard cover also gives the SM a backing against which to write blocking notations or changes in the script while still standing and filling in.

2. **Three-Ring Binder for the Cueing Script (Prompt Book):** Once technical rehearsals begin, the SM will be creating this script in a three-ring binder. It can, however, be put into a binder with a lightweight, more flexible cover because it will always be used on the desktop of the SM’s console backstage or in a booth. This binder is discussed in detail in Chapter 13, “The **Cueing/Calling/Prompt** Script.”

The Production Notebook

In days of old and in the first edition of this book, at this point there was listed a third three-ring binder, the *production notebook*. This binder was put together to hold all the SM's charts, plots, plans, lists, schedules, and the like that were created or collected for the production. It was a collection of information that became the foundation and spine of the SM's job in administrating, organizing, and archiving, and it was filled with everything you ever wanted to know about the production. Well, all of this still holds true, only now it is a folder on the laptop with other subfolders for what were once tabbed sections in the three-ring binder. While this now-extinct physical binder is no longer part of the SM's office carrying bag, its "contents" are still important:

- ▶ **Schedule:** Placed within this folder are copies of the *block calendar*, the *Scene/Character breakdown chart*, and the *schedule reminder list*. These are kept for reference when creating the *daily schedule*, which will also become a folder within the main folder.

Note: All the charts, lists, and schedules mentioned in this section will be discussed in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy."

- ▶ **Address Lists:** This folder contains separate files of the cast and staff address lists, noting names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails of all in the company.

- ▶ **Vendors:** For the sake of organizing and for easy access of information, this should be in a folder of its own. This is a collection of shops, vendors, rental houses, coaches, trainers, artisans, and craftspeople having to do not only with the current production but with past productions. In times of need or emergency, these lists can be more valuable than gold.

- ▶ **Chain-of-Command List:** This list too should stand in a folder of its own.

- ▶ **Props:** The SM creates this list during rehearsals, and then turns it over to the prop department before going into technical rehearsals.

- ▶ **Sets/Scenery/Automation:** These are the SM's personal eight-and-a-half-by-eleven-inch floor plans (that will be discussed in Chapter 6). This folder also should house all notes made to the scenic designer and even to the head carpenter, who will oversee the building of the set and be responsible for the scene changes once the show gets into technical rehearsals and in performance.

- ▶ **Lights/Electrics/Projections:** When working in academic, community, or waiver theatre, and depending on how much is expected of the SM in these working situations, the amount of information in this folder will vary.

- ▶ **Sound:** This section primarily includes the list of sound effects (SFX) for the show and possibly information having to do with recording. You might also have here the *Scene/Character Tracking Chart* (explained in detail in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy").

- ▶ **Costumes/Wardrobe:** Keep here a copy of the *Scene/Character Tracking Chart*, which can be a help in setting up for quick changes and dressing room assignments.

- ▶ **Wigs/Hair:** Information on wigs, hairstyles, and special supplies.

- ▶ **Running Times—Rehearsals and Performance:** In Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," you will find a template for keeping *running times* (Fig. 6-26). This chart can be used in rehearsals as well as during performance. It is designed to note the timings for scenes, acts, and the entire show. During rehearsals, from time to time the director will want to know the timing of things. On occasion, wardrobe will want to know the length of a scene to determine how much time they have for a quick change, and even the house manager will want to know timings of some parts of the play to determine what he or she must do in his or her job.

As I have said in many places now, these lists are merely a collection of information from which you will draw to create your own way of organizing and working. We are not, however, finished with the SM's office carrying bag. We

just took a side trip when we came upon the demise of a three-ring binder that transitioned from hard copy into electronic file. Let us continue with those other office supplies needed by the SM or that make the SM shine with thoroughness and efficiency.

Continuation of the SM's Office Carrying Bag

3. **Three-Hole Punch:** So far there has been no technological advancement on this device. It remains as manual as it has been since its invention. While three-hole paper is in common supply when making copies of scripts or script changes, from time to time changes will be printed on pages that have not been punched with three holes. Since these pages need to be placed into the SM's binders, the wise and organized SM owns a punch and gets these pages into the script on the spot. The smart SM also sees that the actor's pages get punched and placed securely into their scripts before they lose them.

4. **Pencil Sharpener:** A dull or broken pencil tip may seem small and inconsequential, but in a rehearsal during moments of creativity and fast-paced work, a nonfunctioning pencil can become a crisis.

5. **School-Box Ruler, or Better Still, a Triangle Scale Ruler:** A ruler is not only good for getting measurements from scenic scale drawings, but also good as a straight edge for hand printing.

6. **Stapler (with Refill Staples):** This can be miniature size. Staples keep things bonded together more permanently than a paper clip and prevent pages of information from getting separated.

7. **Dictionary:** Here is another item that has transitioned into an app on the laptop, into the tablet, or on the smart phone. For some SMs, this will be something that will simply take up space on their electronic device. For SMs like me, it will vibrate and tingle with use at nearly every sitting at the keyboard.

8. **Logbook:** This item has also transitioned into a folder on the computer. Before this book became a mass of binary number, it was a blank-page book the SM purchased and wrote into each day, usually at the end of the day or after each performance. Its purpose was for the SM to note things and events that take place—things that are out of the ordinary, unusual, or unscheduled. Entries could be of good and fun things, but also things that are not so good, like infractions or misbehaviors, failures in professionalism, things that go wrong beyond anyone's control, or things that are injurious to the show or to the company in some way. More about logbook entries in Chapter 17, "Run of the Show."

Much of what was written in the logbook is now part of the *daily report* and, when the show is in performance, the *running time chart*; however, in my opinion, there are "personal" items that are not for general publication. The logbook is where this information is noted. These items are noted and reported in a journalistic fashion, without opinion or bias. Then, in a closing paragraph, the SM makes comment, gives opinion, expresses feelings, and writes down observation. The producer or director may be privy to the contents but no one else, unless the information is needed by Equity about one of its members, in a dispute between the employer and employee, or in a court of law as evidenced by the story at the end of this chapter, "Logbook, the Star Witness."

So it is my recommendation that the SM keep on the computer an "electronic logbook" in which such information can be noted and be given *only* to the right people upon request.

9. **Daily Report:** At one time this might have been a tabbed section in the technical notebook. This too is now a file in the SM's laptop. The daily report is mainly to inform everyone of the progress being made in rehearsals and to communicate with the different technical departments things that affect them. While some of the information in the daily report is entered into the logbook, the SM is careful not to put into the daily report some of the sensitive information that might be put into the logbook.

10. **Actor's Equity Rulebook and the SM's Equity Packet:** The rulebook is the SM's guide and bible to seeing that the actors, as well as the producer, follow union rules and agreements. The SM's Equity Packet details things the SM must do and things the SM must know about what is expected of the performers as well as management. There are reports to be made and forms to be distributed or filled out. Both the rulebook and the packet are must-read requirements. They can be downloaded from the Equity website and should be kept in a file on the SM's laptop. While

these documents are on the laptop, the SM is also given hard copies with each Equity show. In the event of infractions, it is sometimes more ominous to open up the actual book rather than bringing up the file on the laptop screen.

11. Personal Address Book: This book too can now be a file on the SM's laptop. At one time it was an actual hand-size, alphabetically tabbed address book that the SM kept tucked away in the office carrying bag. With each show, an SM meets people with whom he or she becomes more than just working associates. They become part of the SM's network, which is an important part of being in show business. At times, situations arise in a show on which an SM is working. A personal address book enables the SM to contact the people who might be able to resolve the problem at hand. Whenever working a new production, this personal address list can be loaded into the smart phone and be there ready to use at a moment's notice.

12. Petty Cash Envelope: This particular item (accordion pleated with several pockets, about six by twelve inches) is important because there are several aspects to handling the producer's money. The SM will receive advance money or petty cash, which can be kept in one of the pockets of this accordion-pleated envelope. As the money is spent, receipts need to be kept to account for the petty cash spent. For the sake of organization, these receipts should be kept in another pocket of this accordion envelope. Other people in the company will spend money out of their own pockets as well and then turn in receipts for reimbursement. The SM should annotate the receipt with the person's name and then have them sign as having received payment.

Also, the SM may give people in the company *advance money* out of the petty cash fund. With each advancement, the SM needs to have the individual sign a piece of paper, a *chit*, noting the date and amount, and then have the person sign the chit. When the person either pays back the money or gives the SM a sales receipt for whatever has been purchased, the SM either tears up the chit in front of the person or has the person date it and sign it as having received the money. The SM then keeps this receipt in still another section of the petty cash envelope as a matter of record should the person claim he or she was not reimbursed.

13. Pocket-Size Calculator: Another item of extinction, now digitally encased within the laptop or the smart phone or, more than likely, both. This is still something needed mostly in totaling up of petty cash expenses and double-checking other people's petty cash receipts turned in to the SM.

14. Postage Stamps: While text messaging and emailing are standard, every now and then the postal service is the only way to deliver a bit of information. Keep these stamps in a concealed place—they are as good as money.

15. Tape Measure: This tool (carpenter's cloth or metal, thirty to fifty feet) is used mainly for measuring the dimensions of the set on to the rehearsal room floor. When traveling with a show, the SM uses the tape measure at each new performance site in laying out the spike marks on the stage.

16. Stopwatch: Used for timing scenes, acts, or the entire show. A wristwatch with a second hand is workable, but a stopwatch allows the SM to continue doing other parts of the job while timing. Then, at the moment of completion, the watch can be stopped and an accurate account of the minutes as well as the seconds is displayed. The stopwatch should have a lace or chain attached to it to place around the SM's neck while the watch is being used. When not in use, the watch should be put away in a safe place. This is an item to which people are attracted, and if so inclined, the watch can go missing. I know; I have spent a small fortune on stopwatches. Today there are apps that can do the same job, so it becomes a choice as to which the SM will choose to use.

17. Small Flashlight: This item too is featured on smart phones, but its light is generally too spread out and not suitable for backstage use. The flashlight is convenient at the SM's console in aiding performers and stage technicians during the performance. ASMs have an even greater need for a flashlight to do pretty much the same for the performers and technicians. The flashlight should be small and not project too bright a beam because the light can spill on to the stage and be seen by the audience.

18. Extra Pair of Eyeglasses: As needed.

19. Permanent Ink, Felt-Tip Pens, and Markers: An SM needs a variety of these pens and markers, ranging from a razor-thin line to a bold wide tip. Having the different primary colors, along with black, is useful and practical. The pens should be in permanent ink so the writing will not become smudged or water damaged.

20. **Extra Pencils, #2 Lead:** Despite all that is now being typed into the computer, smart phone, or tablet, the pencil is still a very important item, especially for writing down blocking and making quick, handwritten changes on hard copy before making the change on the computer. The SM should have a pencil in hand at all times or one resting conveniently on the ear for easy access.

An SM can never have too many pencils; however, a box of twelve should be enough. Do not keep these pencils out and in view or the box will be emptied before the day is over. Throughout the workday the SM will need to supply either the performers or the director with a pencil during the rehearsal.

21. **Colored Pencils:** These pencils will be used in creating the cueing script.

22. **Ballpoint Pens or Fine-Tip, Permanent Ink, Marking Pens:** As a rule, SMs do not write with anything that cannot easily be erased. There are times, however, when the SM needs to document in ink, such as in the logbook if it is not a file in a laptop. One or two pens are good to have as part of the supplies in this portable office bag.

23. **Erasers:** Change is constant throughout the day. While the pencil-tip eraser is convenient, a good smudge-proof eraser that won't wear holes or tear the page is preferred. This is an item that will be set out on the SM's table in rehearsals and at the console.

24. **Scissors:** Technology has not yet changed this item.

25. **Artists' X-Acto Knife:** Used for fine cutting when the scissors won't do the job.

26. **Cellophane Tape (Scotch Tape):** Three-quarter-inch and half-inch with dispensers. It is important to get the frosted kind, which is easily written on and is practically invisible to the copying machine.

27. **Masking Tape:** A roll of half-inch, and if there is room in the portable office, a roll of two-inch. Also, consider using the *blue painters trim tape*. Though not as strong as the regular cream-colored masking tape, it is good for temporary use and peels off much easier than the regular masking tape when left on for a prolonged length of time. The stronger tapes such as gaffer's tape will be carried in the SM's storage box (discussed below).

28. **White Glue, Cement Glue, or Epoxy Glue:** The quick-dry bonding kind.

29. **Paper Clips:** Large and small. The plastic-coated kind is favored. Be sure they are stored in a container that cannot become easily opened. Nothing can be messier or more annoying than digging out paper clips from the bottom of your carrying bag. Have also on hand a few of the squeeze, clamp-on kind to hold a script or a large amount of paper together.

30. **Script Binding Brads:** These brads have round tops with a stem, which is placed through the holes of the script and then spread apart to hold the script together. They are good for binding extra copies of scripts together before they are handed out, or for performers who have not considered putting their scripts into a binder.

31. **Pushpins:** Used mostly for the callboard, but also useful for putting blueprint drawings and sketches of the set and costume design up on the rehearsal room walls.

32. **Rubber Bands:** Various sizes.

33. **Blank Address Labels or Package Labels:** These should be address size, four by two inches, and self-adhesive. Also, when touring with a show, the large five-by-three-inch labels in bright colors are great for labeling the SM's boxes for quick identification.

34. **Hole Reinforcements (Self-Adhesive):** An important item, especially when the pages of a performer's script are falling out or the pages in the SM's three-ring binders wear loose.

35. **White-Out or Liquid Paper:** Thanks to spell check, this item is in less demand. However, it is still very useful in making small changes in scripts or on the SM's personal floor plans before Xeroxing new copies. It needs to be fast drying and easily written upon.

36. **Post-Its:** A couple of sizes. Great for pasting notes on scripts, marking things that need to be copied, writing notes to the director, or as reminder notes along the edge of the SM's laptop.

37. **Blackboard Chalk:** When taping the outline of the set on to the rehearsal room floor the chalk is used to mark the measuring points in preparation for laying in the tape. Chalk is also good to make quick and temporary spike marks on stage during technical rehearsals, until the ASM or prop person can make them more permanent with colored tape or paint.

38. **Sturdy String:** About twenty-five feet. With chalk tied at one end, this string is used as a compass for drawing on the rehearsal room floor circles or parts of circles that might be part of the set design, such as a turntable. Once the circle is drawn with chalk, the cloth tape is laid over it, which can withstand the wear and tear of the actors walking on it during rehearsals.

39. **Sturdy, Heavy-Duty, Ziploc Bags:** Twelve by six inch or 8-inch square. The kind found at stationery stores, not grocery stores. These bags are the departmentalizing structure to the SM's carrying bag. They are what keeps all small things together and separated from other things. Without them, there would be chaos. Each bag can have its own category of items. They can easily be retrieved from the SM's office bag and will save the SM from having to search for things buried at the bottom.

This list of items and supplies for the SM's office bag comes with a guarantee: Any SM, beginner, or old-timer, who has these items as part of a portable office will be ready and able to do the job effectively and efficiently, on the spot, and at every moment.

The SM's Storage Box

The PSM cannot live by office bag alone. There are additional tools and supplies the PSM must keep for the show, things that are either not practical to carry all the time in the portable office bag or are not needed at a moment's notice to do the job swiftly and effectively. These things are kept in the **SM's Storage Box**. This storage box can be a wooden shipping crate or a sturdy fiberglass foot-locker or trunk that holds everything the SM needs. Often these boxes are improved upon simply by adding casters for easy moving. Become buddies with the carpentry department and for a birthday wish they can fit you with a set. With each show, the SM takes this box to the rehearsal hall, and then at the end of rehearsals, the prop department will move it to the theatre for technical rehearsals. Should the show become a touring show, the prop department will move it from theatre to theatre.

Contents of the SM's Storage Box

The SM's Filing System: While most if not all of the files are stored within the laptop and backed up in some way, and while the SM has hard copies of the more immediately needed files in the SM's office carrying bag, any extra copies are filed away into the SM's storage box.

At one time a filing system was an important part of the storage box. Tucked away in one corner were the originals and copies of all the paperwork that was created or gathered for the show. Today, with files being stored in the computer, this corner has dwindled to simply storing multiple copies of things or hard copy that is not a file in the computer. Here are items that might be in the SM's storage files:

1. One of the first manila file folders to be found in this space contains the **Weekly Rehearsal Sign-In Sheets** and **Performance Sign-In Sheets** (see Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," Figs. 6-8 and 6-9). At the end of each week, these sheets are filed away and kept for reference should there be a question of a performer's attendance or lateness. While these sheets can be filed away in the SM's storage box, a more "computerized" SM could each week scan them into the laptop as a PDF file. This would of course require a scanner and a connection to the laptop. So what will it be, scanner/PDF file, or tucked away in the SM's storage box? It's the SM's choice.

2. **Scripts:** Probably the largest and most important part of this filing system, and the part that will take up the most space, is scripts. Whether the entire script or parts of the script (in the form of script changes) are in the computer, the

SM must *always* have stored away copies of the script and the changes to be handed out at a moment's notice. This will be the place to store them.

► **Original Script Copy:** Whenever making copies, the SM should work from what has been deemed an *original*. Experience proves that with each copy, there is a generational loss in print quality. Also, the SM should keep a copy of the script as it was originally written, before any changes or rewrites were ever made.

► **Script Copies:** For numerous reasons, the SM should have on hand at least two or three updated hard copies of the script.

► **Latest Script Changes:** After distribution of the latest script changes, the SM needs to have filed away in this storage box at least two copies, once again for quick hand out.

► **Old Script Changes:** The pages in the script that are replaced by the new script changes need to be kept on file. The SM keeps a copy of old script changes as a matter of record, for future reference, or should the producer, director, or writers want to go back to them.

3. **Copies of the SM's Personalized Floor Plans:** When doing a musical with many scene changes, it is extremely helpful to have a couple of sets of these floor plans put together, but also copies of the individual floor plan. You never know when a set needs to be handed out, or one copy is needed to add to or replace one that is already in the rehearsal blocking script.

4. **Technical Departments:** Another part of this filing system should be devoted to the technical departments. The manila folders for this section can be added as they are needed. Much of the communication with these departments will be done through the daily report, email, or Dropbox, and all that information will be filed within the computer.

5. **Equity:** Certainly Equity needs a manila file folder all its own because, from time to time, Equity will send *official notices* that the SM must post on the callboard. After a while, old notices are taken down to make room for new ones. The old notices should be kept on file for future reference. These too could be scanned and filed electronically. Once again, it's the SM's choice. Also, at one time the Equity medical insurance forms were kept in this file ready to be handed out to any performer. Now these forms are easily gotten online, but for convenience and as a service to the performers, the SM might print out several copies and have them ready to hand out upon request.

► **The Equity Callboard:** All official notices or information sent by Equity first must be posted, and then after a while, when they are no longer pertinent or have outlived their use, they should be kept on file for future reference until the end of the run. This file is especially useful when touring with a show. By Equity rule, a call-board is set up at each performance site. When leaving one location, the information on the callboard is taken down and filed away into the storage box. On arrival at the new location, the information is put up on the new callboard set up by the SM.

6. **Music:** This file is the least used by the SM, except to store chorus parts and perhaps an extra copy of the conductor's score.

7. **Envelopes:** Letter, business, and script size.

8. **Paper:** For photocopies and computer printouts.

9. **File Folders:** Letter size.

The preceding list of files is a good beginning for any SM and guarantees success. SMs eventually create their own file names and arrangement.

Other Items in the SM's Box

► **Extra Batteries:** Already mentioned in the SM's office carrying bag are batteries. With so many different sizes used, see what sizes your devices take. Then keep at least two of each kind. Then, when you use one, you still have another until you have time to purchase a replacement.

► **Extra Laptop Battery:** This is a costly proposition but is worth the insurance should the battery for your laptop go out in the middle of the day, or become entirely unchargeable.

► **Rolls of Colored Cloth Tape and Gaffer's Tape:** The colored cloth tape will be used for taping on to the rehearsal room floor the floor plan of the set. Do not use the typical cream-colored masking tape, cheap paper tape, or plastic tape because none of those can withstand the traffic and abuse they will get in the rehearsal room. Also, at the end of the rehearsal period, the SM must take up this tape, and paper or plastic tape will require the SM to spend three times the amount of time on hands and knees scraping. The cloth tape, even if torn and tattered, will easily pull up. If doing a musical or a multiset show, each set taped on the floor needs to be in a different color. The choice of colors should be bright and quite distinguishable from one another because the different settings will be laid over each other. As the different rolls of colored tape are used up, there will remain a small amount of tape at the end of the roll. Save those tapes. Join them together with a rope or chain. Have this gathering of tapes in the SM's storage box or hanging on the SM's console backstage. You cannot know how useful and accommodating it will be to have this collection of tape conveniently placed to make spike marks on the stage or rehearsal room floor for the placement of furniture, props, and important places where a performer must stand. It is also useful and helpful to have "gaffer's" tape: white, black, silver, and red.

► **First-Aid Kit:** Though it is a requirement made of the producer, it is the SM's job to see that there is a well-supplied first-aid kit available and accessible at a moment's notice, be it at the rehearsal hall or backstage at the performance site:

- Gauze roll and pads
- Antiseptic spray or cream
- Spray for burns
- Cold packs and hot packs
- Cleaning pads/towelettes
- Smelling salts
- Band-Aids
- Roll of medical tape
- Roll of compression wrap for sprains
- Eye drops/Eye wash
- Aspirin, buffered aspirin, and menstrual pain reliever
- Antiseptic wash
- Cotton—rolls and balls
- Small scissors
- Instant ice pack
- Aside from having some basic first-aid knowledge, it is important that the SM take some classes in performing CPR and the Heimlich maneuver.

Extra Office Supplies

The SM should make an effort to keep just enough extra supplies in this storage box so that items are always available. The job of an SM is fast-paced and intensive. Things need to be done expediently and with efficiency. Even a small thing like not having paper clips or pencils can slow down the work process and be annoying to everyone involved.

► **General Office Supplies:** There is in the SM's office carrying bag a limited amount of office supplies, but it is in this box that the greater supply is kept: pencils, pens, paper clips, squeeze-type clips, pushpins, rubber bands, Post-Its, stick-on labels, felt-tip marking pens (various tip sizes), paper for printing out files from the computer, maybe a package of different colored paper, card stock for sign making, maybe a lined yellow pad, extra manila file folders, stick-on page tabs, postage stamps, envelopes of varying sizes, Scotch tap (half inch and quarter inch), scissors, an X-Acto cutting pen, different types of glue, colored pencils, maybe an extra three-ring binder, fingertip moistener for sorting out large numbers of pages, staples, a full-size stapler... just to name a few things.

► **Workman's Tools:** An odd suggestion? Not at all! Useful, handy, and impressive to pull out of the SM's storage box when needed. A *hammer*, *combination wire cutter and pliers*, *bull-nose pliers*, *combination wrench*, *box cutter*, and *combination screwdriver* with different size changeable heads, one to accommodate Philips head screws and one for flat-head screws. For the sake of higher tech, you might want to invest in a cordless battery-operated screwdriver with interchangeable heads.

► **Electrical Extension Zip-Cords:** This item has already been discussed in the SM's electronic case. It does not, however, hurt to have two more six-foot, home-style, zip-line, brown extension cords. You will be glad to have them.

► **Sturdy Three-Prong Electric Extension Cord:** There is already one included in the SM's electronic case. Dare this even be included here? Perhaps a bit excessive, but when doing a musical with a number of creators, technicians, and designers coming to the rehearsal room, this cord may prove its worth in every foot you have available. Consider it and see if, in a big-time show, it is worth having in the SM's storage box.

► **Power Strip with Multiple Outlets:** There cannot be an extra three-prong electric extension cord in the storage box without having a power strip with multiple outlets. So if one has been chosen, the other should follow.

► **Reading Light for the SM's Console:** An inexpensive utility lamp can be found in hardware stores, along with a dimmer switch, which can be spliced into the wire to control the amount of power going to the bulb. More stylish ones, with the dimmer control built in, can be found in stationery or office supply stores. However, the pièce de résistance is to have one of those slim, gooseneck, free-standing, clip-on, or permanent-mount LED reading lamps with a dimmer control, and a choice of blue or warm light.

This item is important once the SM gets into the theatre and begins calling cues during technical rehearsals and performances. All SM consoles in theatres have a light to read the script by during the performance, but they are usually too bright, and they may flood over on to more area than is necessary, or they may be hard to position just onto the cueing script.

The SM may not be aware of the brightness until a blackout is called and the SM looks at the stage only to see colored spots instead of the darkened stage. With the dimmer control, the SM can adjust the light reflecting on the cueing script to a lower intensity at the start of the show. The SM's eyes get used to that intensity, and when a blackout comes they can quickly adjust to the darkness.

► **A Lightweight Headset:** For calling cues and communicating with the various technical departments during performance. This too is one of those items that may become part of the SM's arsenal of equipment with higher-paying Equity jobs. However, today many theatres are set up with comfortable wireless, in-house communication systems, and only if the SM has had some painful experiences with house equipment might a personal headset be a consideration.

The SM's Console

Sooner or later there comes into the SM's life the **SM's Console**. This is usually set backstage and is the place from which the SM calls all the cues for each performance. This console can already be part of the equipment that comes with the theatre, or it can be a unit that the SM has had custom built. Traditionally, the built unit is brought in and set up a day or two before technical rehearsals begin.

If indeed the SM's console is already part of the theatre, it can be simply a podium with an array of electronics devices, stacked on top of one another, placed before the SM, which might include two or three video monitors, sound monitors, a communication headset system to all technical departments backstage, a panel of cue light switches, a slanted area upon which the cueing script is placed, a reading-type lamp that projects light onto the script, and a tall stool. When custom-built, the console becomes a piece of sturdy equipment, usually set on swivel, lockdown casters for easy moving. It is in no way a fancy piece of furniture but rather a utility cabinet with compartments, shelves, drawers, a holding bin, and doors with locks.

If the SM's console is this custom-built unit, then all that is listed above for the SM's storage box could be put into this cabinet. On a short-run show or on the revival of a well-known, tried-and-true show where there are no changes to be made during the run, the custom-built console easily becomes the SM's office. However, on a new show, especially

a musical, the SM will need a room just off the backstage to set up office with all the electronic equipment. Keep in mind, though, that the SM's office carrying bag and the electronic case remain intact and are still part of the SM's anatomy. It is these carrying conveyances that are taken home each night so that in the morning the SM can continue with work, either finishing up from last night's performance or doing work in preparation for the day ahead.

Another feature of this custom-built console involves an important piece of work the SM completes about a half hour before each performance. By Equity rule, the SM is required to go around and collect in some kind of a container all valuables that the performers wish to have put into a safe place. By further Equity rule, this container of valuables must be locked up, and what better place than in the SM's custom-built console, where the SM will be throughout the entire performance.

This custom-made unit can be brought into the rehearsal hall but is usually kept in storage until the beginning of technical rehearsals. When moving from one city to the next with a touring show, this unit should lock up tight and be moved by the prop department.

The Professional Experience

Tax Tip—Deductible Business Expenses

If you are a student SM or just beginning your career, I suspect that as you read the above list of tools, supplies, and equipment, you thought about the expense of having all these things. As stated earlier, the items listed are what the seasoned PSM will have gathered. As a beginning SM, you more than likely already have a laptop and smart phone. Then, as I said, as jobs get better and even start paying, you can add to your arsenal of supplies and technology. But even with that there will be times when you will be paying out a chunk of money, maybe to update your equipment or add a better service to your smart phone, or to get the latest software. Then there will be those little expenses that we don't pay much attention to, things like the general office supplies or workmen's tools. As a point of interest, go up through the lists above again and see how those little things will add up.

Well, there is light in all the darkness that comes with financial concerns. This light may not shine as you are paying out the money, but at the end of the calendar year, when it is time to do your taxes, much of what you have spent throughout the year while working as an SM can be written off, deducted as a "business expense." *Save your receipts!* Keep track of your business miles. Be sure to check with your accountant or tax preparer. If you use one that works only with people in show business, he or she will know exactly the thing you can legitimately deduct and save you from having to pay Uncle Sam a large sum, or maybe even get you money back.

The Well-Supplied SM

On the first day of my first big-time professional job, I showed up with a slim-line attaché case. All the electronic equipment mentioned in this chapter had not yet become a standard working part of the SM's job. I did have a desktop computer at home, but I had not yet begun creating my lists, charts, and plans on it. Inside my attaché case I had the show script placed into a three-ring binder, a clipboard with a notepad, some pencils, a ruler, an eraser, a small flashlight, Scotch tape, paper clips, a pair of scissors, and a pocket-size dictionary. I felt proud, confident, ready to do the job, and I knew I would impress my new boss, the PSM.

On that particular day it was only myself and the PSM at the rehearsal hall. We were there to tape the set on to the floor. The PSM too was ready to do the job. He showed up with an attaché twice the thickness of mine and it bulged from its contents. In addition, he carried a briefcase just as full. He had the blueprint floor plans rolled under his arm, a brown paper-bag lunch gripped in the hand that held the attaché case, and rolls of colored tape chained together, swinging from the handle of the briefcase.

Our first task was to round up and set up tables to work on. We found a banquet-type table on which the PSM spread the blueprints and the items we needed to do the job. I settled in at the far end. As the PSM laid out the blueprints, he suggested I get out my tape measure.

"I don't have one," I replied.

"Okay, then we'll use mine," he said agreeably, "but you'll need to get yourself one."

I wrote myself a note on my clipboard pad. I felt redeemed because the PSM complimented me on having a notepad and expressed the importance of making notes to myself. I felt further redeemed when the PSM asked me to get out my ruler to take the measurements of the set from the blueprints as he measured them out on the floor. I noticed the PSM reaching into the corner of his briefcase and pulling out a box of children's blackboard chalk, which he used to mark the floor as I gave him the measurements. When he wasn't looking, I quickly added chalk to my notepad. The show was a musical. We had six different sets to lay out on the floor. At one point we used up the PSM's red quarter-inch tape. He asked, "You wouldn't by chance have some red tape?" Apologetically, embarrassed, shamefully, sheepishly, I said no.

The morning passed quickly. For lunch the PSM opened his brown bag lunch, placed his cup of yogurt and fruit next to the blueprints, took a spoonful of food, and continued working. There was no time to stop for a lunch. Fortunately, a catering truck appeared outside the rehearsal hall, as it did every day, and I was able to get a sandwich and return to continue my work.

We also had a second rehearsal room in which the choreographer would do most of his work. In this room we had to lay out on the floor only the dimensions of the stage. It was my job to start this work and the PSM would join me after he finished putting in the dance numbers at the foot of the stage in the first rehearsal room. He loaned me his tape measure and gave me the half-inch white tape that he always used to tape out the parameters of the stage. I had to ask for some chalk, to which he gave no reaction or comment. For that I was thankful. I worked diligently by myself and when the PSM joined me, he was once again complimentary. As an added touch to help the choreographer know the amount of space he had for each dance number, the PSM decided to indicate on the floor the places where each drop was placed on stage. So in the middle of the stage, at each point where the drop was placed, we laid a strip of white tape, about eighteen inches long. The PSM then asked me to write on each strip, in bold letters, with a wide-tip marking pen, the names of the different drops. I was quite capable of doing this except for one thing—I had no marking pen. Once again I had to borrow from the PSM, and once again I added to my list.

By the end of the day I had quite a list of things to buy. They were small things—things to which I had previously given little consideration or importance. Nonetheless, they were tools or supplies I needed with me regardless of their limited use in doing my job. What I realized that day and in the days to follow was that the SM needs to have many things with him or her at all times. Producers, directors, and actors are not willing to wait for the SM to run off to the production office to get supplies. They expect the SM to have the necessary tools and supplies, and to be ready to do the job and meet their needs.

Halfway through the rehearsal period on that first job, I retired my slim-line attaché case for a much wider one, and in addition purchased a sturdy leather shoulder bag with several divisions, zippered sections, and side pockets. This bag did not bulge as fiercely as the PSM's, but I was on my way.

Logbook, the Star Witness

This next story was told to me by an associate SM. It shows the importance and effect that the SM's logbook can have. At the time that this story took place, the SM's logbook was a small six-by-eight, nicely bound and covered, blank-page book into which the SM noted the particulars of the day as well as any out-of-the-ordinary happenings. I have excluded names to protect myself, my associate, and the two star performers involved.

This is how it was told to me:

The stars of the show were husband and wife. Both were renowned for their work in some very classic and now famous Broadway shows. They made a wonderful starring team and when they performed together, they filled the theatre each night.

They were wonderful to work with. The rehearsal period was a joy and pleasure. However, once the show went into performance, the working relationships between the husband and wife and SMs took a turn. We could hear the husband and wife arguing behind closed dressing room doors, and they were continually late getting into places for the top of the show. One time we had to hold the curtain for twenty minutes. It seems the husband started drinking again. We had been warned of his drinking problem, but it escaped our minds because there had been no indication of it during rehearsals. For a while the wife was able to cover for him.

At first I entered each incident into the stage manager's logbook and left it at that. But when the incidents became more frequent and severe, I started sending copies of my entries to the producer and to Equity. Toward the end of the run the husband was drunk practically every performance. It was like a bad movie with all the classic symptoms of an alcoholic performer. The wife's performance suffered, as did the rest of the cast. We were glad to have the show complete its run. Several weeks later we heard the couple had separated and then one day I was subpoenaed along

with my logbook to give deposition and eventually testify in divorce court. The logbook had some pretty damaging evidence against the husband and played a very important part in the judge's decision to grant the wife the divorce.

Hard Copy

Transitioning to Electronic Files—Charts, Plots, Plans, Lists, Schedules, Signs, and Reports

Before getting into the detailed layouts of the charts, plots, plans, lists, and so on, let us talk about the software that now makes all this *hard copy* that is so necessary in the SM's work.

Basically, at the time of publication of this second edition, Microsoft Word and Excel, along with AutoCAD and Vectorworks, are the most favored programs. However, don't blink or linger too long because no sooner will you turn the page than there will be something fresher, newer, friendlier, quicker, and with more applications and features.

So what programs should student and beginning SMs use to do their work? Here is what **Brad Enlow**, technical director at the world-famous Pasadena Playhouse, suggests in my interview with him. Normally, I save the interviewing feature for the ends of the chapters, but what Brad had to say is what I heard over and over in other interviews:

The best approach to find what will work for you is to ask around, talk with technical heads, go to your local community theatres. If you are in the student stage of becoming a stage manager, talk with your instructor, see what he or she suggests. In making your own floor plans choose a program that provides module drawings and templates where you can lift and drag onto your floor plan, then make them smaller or larger, and angle them in any way you need to fit into the set on which you are working. But no matter what program you choose, there will be a learning time, so shop around to make sure that this is the program for you because once you learn it, more than likely this will be the program you will use for a long time.

A very important part of the SM's job, especially in the first two weeks of working on a show (the SM's preproduction time before rehearsals begin), is gathering, compiling, and noting information. The SM must put this information in *comprehensible* form and distribute when it is needed. Failure in any part of this job leaves giant holes in the organization and communication of a show.

There are no standard forms from which an SM works. Go on the Internet. Search for some generic words like "Forms, Theatre Stage Managers," and you will see a parade of forms. Every SM has his or her own idea of the best form to use. The forms presented in this chapter are the forms I used, and they have worked for me in a *big way!* I confess, though, they are forms I have taken, borrowed, and even stolen from other SMs and made into my own. You will and should do the same.

Each SM learns what forms to use through academic studies and through working with other SMs. An SM learns what makes good and workable charts, plots, plans, lists, and so forth. You can create some pretty impressive-looking hard copy, but if the information is incomplete, poorly laid out, difficult to understand, or requires study to extract information, then the piece does not stand and deliver. The text and the abbreviations need to be understandable for *anybody*. A guide to seeing if your paperwork is serving its purpose is to observe the people to whom a copy is given. If you find some of them seeking information you've already noted, then it is time to go back to the drawing board and redesign.

Create an Identifying Heading—a Letterhead

With the ease of scanning, copying, imaging, and even clip art, SMs today can easily create a letterhead design that can appear on all of the charts, plots, plans, lists, schedules, signs, reports, and communiqués generated for a particular show. Easiest of all can be the logo used for the original production, or the artwork being created for the present production.

Furthermore, it can be printed out in color or the classic black and white.

Forms Defined

Among the thirty definitions given in the *World Book Dictionary* for *form*, the best elements to include in an SM's definition are:

- appearance, neatness, and shape
- order and arrangement of parts
- content
- to bring from a scattered state into organization
- inner structure and composition.

I would add:

- clarity
- conciseness
- thoroughness
- ease in reading
- ease in extracting information quickly without having to study
- understandability.

The Scene/Character Tracking Chart

Let's start with the **Scene/Character Tracking Chart** (abbreviated as Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr.). This is a time-consuming, painstaking chart to produce, and it should be created in a quiet setting where concentration is possible. I have always, for every show, created this chart at home. The chart is detailed and has a wealth of information that needs to be entered so that later it can be extracted in a single glance. Creating this chart is like knitting a sweater, one stich at a time, or in more technological terms, one byte of information at a time.

Sidebar: I was introduced to this chart on the first day of my first professional job. The PSM handed me a copy from a previous show and instructed me to create a similar chart for the show on which we were presently working. Since that time, I have used the Sc./Chctr. Track.Chr. for *every* show. Back then, the Sc./Chctr. Track.Chr. was done by hand. The one I present here is done in Excel. Through the years, I have changed it enough to call it my own.

Our Imaginary Play

Using an imaginary play, *John and Mary*, we will build this magnificent chart.

The Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr. is designed to:

- *Track the scenes* in the play.
- *List the characters* in the play.
- *Show which characters appear in which scenes.*

To begin construction of this chart, I have created a simple two-act, one-set comedy play titled *John and Mary*. I will use this imaginary play in many places as the bases for certain charts, plots, plans, lists, and the like.

If this play were published, the SM would first read it through for its entertainment value. On the second read, the SM would begin to create the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. Here are the characters in the play:

John and Mary: husband and wife (the lead characters)

George: John and Mary's best friend, financial adviser, and attorney

Alice: George's zany girlfriend

Florence: the maid, who acts as if John and Mary's home is her own

Frieda: Mary's nurturing but overbearing mother

The smaller or cameo roles are:

POSTMAN

SUPERINTENDENT of the apartment

DELIVERY MAN

FIRE MARSHAL

REPAIR SERVICE MAN

A GIRL SCOUT: a seven-year-old child selling cookies

Delivery Man Helper: a ten-second walk-on part that will be played by the ASM

Beginning the Scene/Character Tracking Chart

We start by listing the characters' names across the top of the page (see Fig. 6-1).

Note the design and layout. At the top of the chart, the list of characters in the play starts with the starring and leading roles and ends with the ten-second, walk-on part of the Delivery Man Helper. To be complete and thorough, all characters who appear on stage or whose voices are performed live (not recorded) must be listed. The SM cannot depend totally on the list of characters printed at the front of the script. It is not always complete, especially when it comes to the small, walk-on parts. The SM must read through the entire play to make sure all characters are listed in this Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt.

Note: In laying out the form and for the sake of space on the printed page, SMs may abbreviate words as they choose, as long as the readers of this chart can understand the abbreviations.

Sometimes in musicals where the cast of characters is greater, the SM lays out the page horizontally, choosing "landscape" on the computer so that all the names will fit across the top.

A Refinement

Before developing this chart further, let's refine the work already done, giving the readers of this chart more clarity, greater understanding, and the ability to extract information at a single glance. In this production of *John and Mary*, the producer and director have signed a comedian-actor who is well known from television and plays many different

characters on his show. Our play is a perfect vehicle for this actor and he is signed to play the roles of the Postman, Superintendent, Delivery Man, Fire Marshal, and Repair Service Man. The script calls for a child between seven and ten years old to play the Girl Scout. However, there are state laws governing child actors that require a parent/guardian to be present at all times and possibly an academic instructor at rehearsals and performances. The producer is not willing to pay those weekly expenses. He and the director decide the TV comedian will also play the role of the Girl Scout. To convey this information, on the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. we can refine and modify the chart as shown in Figure 6-2.

Any person reading this chart can see in a single glance the working situation of this particular production. Note also the use of bold lines, thin lines, and shading to group or separate information. It is this kind of tailoring, refinement, and modification that helps make this chart easy to read and makes the chart stand and deliver.

The Heading—the *Archival Text*

Besides the “logo” heading we talked about at the top of this chapter, every chart, plot, plan, or list needs to have what I like to call the “archival text,” that is, at the top of the page there is the name identifying the document followed by the date and information pertinent to the particular production. In my head I label this text “archival” because once this show closes, the files and hardcopy created for the production will go into some kind of an archival state, be it on a disc, on the producer’s shelf, in the basement of some theatre, maybe in a library, and oftentimes in a closet at the SM’s home.

In the layout of our Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt., this information is placed in the left-hand corner, before the character names (see Figure 6-3).

<i>John</i>	<i>Mary</i>	<i>George</i>	<i>Alice</i>	<i>Florence</i>	<i>Frieda</i>	<i>Postman</i>	<i>Superint.</i>	<i>Dlvry.Mn.</i>	<i>Fir.Mrshl.</i>	<i>Repr.Mn.</i>	<i>GrlScut</i>	<i>Dlv.Hpr</i>

Figure 6-1 First step in creating the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt: the layout of character names across the top of the chart starting with the lead characters.

						ONE ACTOR						
John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	Postman	Superint.	Dixy.Mr.	Ely.Mrs.H.	Rsp.Mr.	Gd.c	Dly.Hpr.

Figure 6-2 Refining the chart to group together the multiple roles the one actor will play, using bold and fine lines along with shadow areas to separate information to make it easier to extract information in a single glance.

Scene/Character Tracking Chart

John and Mary

Empress Productions

Main Street Theatre

June - 1998

Director: Paul Grossman

						ONE ACTOR						
John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	Postman	Superint.	Dixy.Mr.	Ely.Mrs.H.	Rsp.	Gd.c	Dly.Hpr.

Figure 6-3 Adding the archival heading to the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr. with identifying information about the production.

Scene/Character Tracking Chart

John and Mary

Empress Productions

Main Street Theatre

June - 1998

Director: Paul Grossman

Act I, Scn.1 (Apartment)

						ONE ACTOR						
John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	Postman	Superint.	Dixy.Mr.	Ely.Mrs.H.	Rsp.	Gd.c	Dly.Hpr.
X	X											

Figure 6-4 Listing the first part of the first scene in the play, the “Apartment.” Mark an X in the boxes under the names of the characters who appear in the scene.

Breaking Down the Play by Scenes

Under the heading and along the left side of the page, the acts along with their scene numbers should be listed. In addition, either in parenthesis or in quotes, the scenes are *tagged* with a name, location, or title that further identifies the scene. In our imaginary play, the first part of Scene One has no strong identification other than it being in the apartment and establishing John's and Mary's characters and relationship. The tag for this part of Scene One is simply *Apartment*.

With each scene written in the left-hand column, a grid of boxes forms across the rest of the page connecting the names of the characters with the scenes. An X is put in each box that corresponds to the characters who appear in the scene (Fig. 6-4).

Subdivision of Scenes, or French Scenes

This first scene in our imaginary play has many parts. Somewhere on page six, the character George (John and Mary's business manager) enters. According to the script, we are still in Scene One until page thirty-two. Within those thirty-two pages, all the main characters in the play make an entrance. If we were to merely list Scene One as the apartment and put an X in the characters' corresponding boxes, we would not know when the character enters the scene and generally what is taking place during that time. To be complete and thorough and to make the chart highly usable, the entrances of each character must be noted and their portions of the scene identified with a tag.

With the entrance of a character a subscene within Scene One is created. These divisions within a scene are called *French scenes*. French scenes begin when a character enters the stage or when a character on stage exits. In the case of our play, the next portion of Scene One, or the first French scene, begins when George enters on page six. Figure 6-5 shows how we would note it on the chart.

Note: In addition to tagging George's entrance, the **page number** is included. This is extremely helpful to the SM, director, and actors in quickly leading them to the correct part of the script without their having to flip through the pages.

Naming or Tagging a Scene

George has come to talk business. The scene is named or tagged accordingly, "Talk Business." This identifies the scene, gives the reader of this chart an idea of what the scene is about, and at the same time gives the SM, director, and performers an identifying mark. For example, when the director says to the SM as they create the schedule for the next day, "At 11:15, I want to rehearse George's Talk Business scene," the SM need not go any further. There it is on the Sc./Chtr.Track.Chr.: page 6, the name of the scene, and the performers who need to be scheduled, John, Mary, George, and Florence. *Florence?* Yes, Florence. She has no dialogue but passes through the apartment.

When making up the Sc./Chtr.Track.Chr., many times the SM creates the name or tag for a scene. Sometimes the scenes are famous, such as the one in the musical play *Man of La Mancha* in which the character Sancho (Don Quixote's manservant) reads a love letter to the character Aldonza (Quixote's love interest). In the play, the love letter is referred to as a "missive." So in rehearsals it is commonly called the "Missive Scene." There are scenes in other shows with a notoriety all their own: of course, the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, the spaghetti scene or the twins scene from *The Odd Couple*, or the washroom scene and boardroom scene from *How to Succeed in Business*.

So far we have plotted the first French scene, which opens the play with John and Mary, and then, in the next French scene, George enters to talk business and somewhere in the scene Florence the maid makes an appearance but has no lines.

Now we can fill in all the French scenes as characters come and go in Scene One (Fig. 6-6).

Scene/Character Tracking Chart

John and Mary

Empress Productions

Main Street Theatre

June - 1998

Director: Paul Grossman

	John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	Postman	Superint.	Dlry.Mn.	Tit.Mish.	Rape.Mn.	Grl.Scen.	Dly.Hlpr.
Act I, Scn.1 (Apartment)	X	X											
p.6, Geo. Enters, "Talk Business"	X	X	X										

Figure 6-5 Writing in the next part of Scene One, "Talk Business," noting the page number, and putting Xs for the characters appearing in this French scene.

So, in a single glance, we now know which characters are involved in the first scene and approximately how long they remain on stage, and we have some idea of the content of the various portions of Scene One. We can also see that Scene One is over thirty pages long, which means in manuscript form it runs between twenty to thirty minutes. (As a general rule, with scripts in manuscript form, allow one minute for each page of dialogue.)

Scene/Character Tracking Chart

John and Mary

Empress Productions

Main Street Theatre

June - 1998

Director: Paul Grossman

	John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	Postman	Superint.	Dlry.Mn.	Tit.Mish.	Rape.Mn.	Grl.Scen.	Dly.Hlpr.
Act I, Scn.1. (Apartment)	X	X											
p.6, Geo. Enters, "Talk Business"	X	X	X			X							
p.7, Interruptions, "Frieda Phone Call"	X	X	X			X	X						
p.10, Florence, "Mi Casa, Su Casa"	X	X	X			X							
p.13, Geo., "Down To Brass Taxes"	X	X	X										
p.21, Alice, "Whirlwind Entrance" "Shopping Spree"	X	X	X	X	X								
p.23, Geo., "Doomsday Speach"	X	X	X										
p.30, Postman, "Letter from IRS"	X	X	X			X							X

Figure 6-6 Writing in the remaining French scenes for Scene One and marking Xs for the characters appearing in each part.

This Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr. is an invaluable piece of hard copy. Copies should be kept at the beginning of the SM's rehearsal script, in the cueing script, and in the SM's production notebook or laptop under the heading "Schedule." This chart aids the SM and director in creating the daily schedule. It is also useful to the SM on those days when in the middle of the rehearsal the director decides to abandon the daily schedule and wants to rehearse a scene that has not been scheduled. At those times the director expects the SM to make the change in as little time as possible. With the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr., the SM merely runs a finger down the left-hand column to find the selected scene and page number, and then across to see which characters/actors must be gathered for that scene.

Copies of this chart are given to the director and actors, with the suggestion that they too place it at the front of their scripts. The costume/wardrobe department is glad to receive a copy, which they use to check against the charts they have or will create for themselves. The Sc./Chctr. Track.Chrt. is also a useful tool to the sound department for tracking body mics that might be used in each scene. Likewise, the publicity department finds it extremely helpful in deciding which shots they will want to take when scheduling for production photos.

We are now ready to note the rest of Act I and begin Act II (see Fig. 6-7). Notice that bold lines and spacing are used to group and separate information. Also, the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. is most effective when all the information appears on one page.

In the interest of times past (and perhaps a good laugh), Figure 6-7a is a hand-drawn copy of a Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. from *The Odd Couple*.

The Character/Actor-Actor/Character List

In the musical *Big River* there are fifteen principal roles and sixty-five smaller roles to be played. Depending on the size of the cast, actors in the company may each play three or four roles. The situation is similar in the two-part epic *Nicholas Nickelby*. When working a show of such proportions, the SM needs to lists the characters and the names of the actors playing the characters. This is the **Character/Actor List**. This list will be of great service to the SM when the director asks in the middle of a rehearsal or in some meeting, “Who have I assigned to the role of so and so?” The SM has only to run a finger down the list to the character and give the actor’s name, “John Jones.” Directors expect the SM to have such information readily available and deliver it within seconds.

This, however, is only half the information the SM needs to have on this matter. The director may reverse the question and ask, “What roles are John Jones playing?” Instead of having to go down the list of characters to find each time John Jones’s name appears, the SM needs to have assembled a corresponding list naming the actors in the company and the characters they are playing. This is the **Actor/Character List**. With shows like *Big River* and *Nicholas Nickelby*, it is almost certain the department creating the program will be looking to the SM to provide such a list. Thus, the character/actor–actor/character list is ready to do service, no matter how the director or anyone in the company asks for this information.

Scene/Character Tracking Chart

John and Mary
 Empress Productions
 Main Street Theatre
 June - 1998
 Director: Paul Grossman

	John	Mary	George	Alice	Florence	Frieda	ONE ACTOR						
	X	X					Postman	Superint.	Dlvry.Mn.	Elfr.Msbl.	Rpr.Mn.	Grd.Scen.	Dly.Hlpx.
Act I, Scn.1. (Apartment)	X	X											
p.6, Geo. Enters, "Talk Business"	X	X	X			X							
p.7, Interruptions, "Frieda Phone Call"	X	X	X			X	X						
p.10, Florence, "Mi Casa, Su Casa"	X	X	X			X							
p.13, Geo., "Down To Brass Taxes"	X	X	X										
p.21, Alice, "Whirlwind Entrance" "Shopping Spree"				X	X								
p.23, Geo., "Doomsday Speach"	X	X	X										
p.30, Postman, "Letter from IRS"	X	X	X		X			X					
p.32, SCN. 2., "Guy Talk"	X		X										
p.41, Girls Enter, "Girl Talk"		X		X									
p.44, "Girls Against The Guys"	X	X	X	X									
p.47, Superintendent, "The Lease"	X	X	X	X				X					
p.50, SCN.3., "Women's Lib"			X		X	X	X						
p.59, Dlvry.Man, "The Package"		X		X	X	X			X			X	
ACT II													
p.61. Scn.1., "Trial Separation"	X	X	X	X	X	X				X			
etc.													
etc., to end of play													

Figure 6-7 Writing in the French scenes for all of Act I and beginning to note the French scenes for Act II.

The Rehearsal Sign-in Sheet

The **Rehearsal Sign-in Sheet** is easily made in a spreadsheet program such as Excel. I am told that such a list can also be created in Word using the tabbed feature “Tables.” For simpler forms such as the sign-in sheets, this is quite usable, but for more complicated forms such as the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chr., the spreadsheet program offers better manipulation in making a more sophisticated form.

This again will be one of those times where you will experiment and decide for yourself which you will use.

Once the form, such as the one in Figure 6-8, is created, it becomes a file and template on the computer. It then can be used for each show, tailoring only the text to suit the current production. The sign-in sheet is designed for the actors to sign each time they come to rehearsals.

The Archival Heading for the Rehearsal Sign-in Sheet

Notice that it has all the identifying information needed to tell anyone what this form is about and its use. Also, it is clearly noted with names and dates so when it becomes archived into a file in the SM’s storage box, and if it needs to be referred to at a later time, the information is easily extracted without having to search elsewhere.

CHARACTER/SCENE BREAKDOWN	OLIVE	FLORENCE	SYLVIE	VERA	RENE	MICKEY	MANDO	JESUS	
"THE ODD COUPLE" (FEMALE) SAM BERNARDINO-CLUE, MAR 9D									
ACT I									
P.7. TRIVIAL PURSUIT			X X	X X	X X				
P.10. OLIVE ENTR. INTO HOME	X		X X	X X	X X				
P.12. FLORENCE ENTR.	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X				
P.30. BLV/FLO SCEN. "INVITE FLO TO STAY"	X X								
ACT II									
P.41. SCEN. 1. TRIV. PORS. II	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X				
P.47. OLV/FLO SCEN. "GETTING ON MY NEAVES" "SETTING OF THE DATE"	X X								
II SCEN. 2.									
P.54. LATE FOR DINNER	X X								
P.58. THE DATES	X X					X X			
P.64. FLORENCE + THE BOYS	X X					X X			
P.70. BLV. ENTR. CRING SCEN.	X X					X X			
P.71. BOYS LEAVE - END OF SCEN.	X X								
II SCENE 3.									
P.73. NOT TALKING/SPEG SCEN.	X X								
P.75 TELLING EACH OTHER BFF	X X								
P.79 THROWING FLO DOT	X X								
P.80 VERA+MICKEY ENTER + OTHERS ENTER	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X				
P.92 MANDO ENTR W/ PLOTS JESUS TO FOLLOW	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X		
P.94 THE BOYS LEAVE/END OF PLAY	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X				

Figure 6-7a This was done for a production of the female version of *The Odd Couple*. Though nicely and neatly done, it is somewhat primitive by today's electronic standards.

Adding Color to Your Forms

For the first edition, **color** was not an option (budget considerations), but times have changed and in this second edition **color** is used when needed. Not only is it pleasant to the eye, but it helps separate sections of information, which makes it easier for the reader to extract information. If you are more traditional in your approach, then by all means **black** and white is the way to go. It is not the **color** that is important, but the layout of the form and the ease with which the information can be extracted.

Color Choice: I am partial to using COLOR; however, it should not dominate or distract. It is better to use the more pale shades, and perhaps mute them a little by sliding the color dot on the color circle more into the graying area.

Continuing with the Rehearsal Sign-in Sheet

Let's take a moment to break down and analyze the content of this rehearsal sign-in sheet in Figure 6-8.

Figure 6-8 The rehearsal sign-in sheet, designed for the actors to note their initials in the correct boxes when they first arrive for rehearsals and when they return from their midday break.

- Notice just under the archive heading the banner of text that runs across the entire form. Between the division of text and coloring, the form has been broken down into its specific parts, which in turn has created the columns.
 - Also notice the use of some bold lines along with thinner lines. Once again, the bold lines are to separate blocks of information, which tends to lead the eye easily.
 - In the first column on the left side is where the SM types in the cast members' names—the Equity performers who are required to sign in upon entry into the rehearsal hall.
 - Notice within that banner of information the order of the days of the week. Equity and management have agreed the workweek starts on Monday and ends on Sunday, so the form starts with Monday and ends with Sunday.
 - Notice under each day of the week the column is divided into two sections with each column having the abbreviated notation “morn.” and “brk.”
 - Just under the morn. and the brk. notations are columns of little boxes. This is where the performers will enter in their *initials* upon arrival at the first part of the rehearsal day, and then upon returning from the midday meal (or “break”), the performers are required to initial again.

This form, like all the forms you will create, will be time-consuming the first time. Take heart! Once you have designed your own, you will keep it on your computer as a template and use it for the rest of your SMing career.

Change of Mind: I have mentioned in the past that on some forms I choose to list the cast members by the roles being played rather than listing everyone in alphabetical order. Well, in the case of the sign-in sheet, I choose to

break with my tradition and list all cast members alphabetically. I expect that when you are in the position of having to make this form or any of the forms, that you will take what you like and leave the rest behind.

The rehearsal sign-in sheet is to be posted in a place where it is easily seen and accessible, which usually is on the callboard. Originally, the sign-in sheet was a sheet of paper the SM posted daily but has since evolved into a weekly form.

This is the form from which the SM checks to see that all performers are present and ready for rehearsals. This is also the form on which the SM will make the dreaded **LITTLE RED BOX** should a performer be late or should they habitually forget to sign in.

Day Off while in Rehearsals

The one feature not yet indicated on this rehearsal sign-in sheet (Fig. 6-8) is the *day off*. Equity has agreed that the performer shall have one day off within a workweek. Traditionally, workweeks start on Monday, which means Sunday is the day off. However, you may work for a producer and/or director who will choose otherwise. So before printing out your rehearsal sign-in sheet each week, find out which day is the allocated day off and then shadow in the columns under that day. Now your form is complete and ready to be posted on the callboard. To complicate things a little more, the director may choose to give groups of people different days off while working with some other group. This is where the SM's skills will be put to the test. Also, if such a situation exists, the SMs too may end up having different days off.

The *Performance Sign-in Sheet*

Once you have created the rehearsal sign-in sheet, the **Performance Sign-in Sheet** is, as the saying goes, *a walk in the park* (see Fig. 6-9). Of course you will have to be fairly knowledgeable in working your spreadsheet program to be able to make the subtle changes. Both forms are very similar in appearance. So in creating the performance sign-in sheet, make sure there is enough difference between the two. A change in color helps.

Floating Matinee Days

The most identifying feature in the performance sign-in sheet will be the *matinee performances*. Traditionally, matinee performances were always on Wednesdays and Sundays. Somewhere along the way producers found they had a greater audience turnout if the matinees were on Saturdays and Sundays. More than likely this began in regional and community theatre, where most members of the community were off on weekends. Soon Broadway tried it out. Today is it a mixed bag depending on the show and the demographics for the show. Producers everywhere are continually experimenting to see what day is best for attendance, and you can be sure wherever the money is, that is where the matinee performances will be.

A Shock to the System: I remember when I first encountered the idea of having matinee performances on Saturday and Sunday. It was a shock to my system. It was like a marathon of performances starting with one on Friday night, and then coming in twelve hours later on Saturday for a matinee and then an evening performance, and then doing it all over on Sunday for a matinee and an evening performance. In two and a half days we did five shows. Come Monday, we were all glad to have our day off.

So with the uncertainty of when the matinee days will be, before the SM creates the performance sign-in sheet, he or she needs to find out the producer's choice.

Days Off during Performance

Another difference in the performance sign-in sheet will be the day off. A tradition that has remained pretty constant is having the theatre *dark* on Monday, which becomes the cast's day off, but this too can vary depending on the theatre and the type of Equity contract under which the performers are working. Basically, the rule states that by the end of the eighth performance the cast members will have a day off or be paid overtime. As part of this time off from performances, Equity further states that the actors cannot be called back to the theatre until the time they are to be there for the first performance of the new workweek. With this rule in effect, you get the feeling of having two days off because the performers have had a good portion of the second day to relax or do personal business.

Figure 6-9 The performance sign-in sheet, on which performers place their initials when they first arrive at the performance site.

This form too can list the performers in alphabetical order.

A Word of Advice: I have already talked about this in an earlier chapter, but it bears repeating because I have fallen victim to it *many* times. SAVE AS, SAVE AS, SAVE AS. I cannot tell you how many times I have brought up a form or template from my files, proceeded to fill in the text, and then clicked on the “Save” icon! As you know, now the blank form or template is no longer in existence. To save yourself such hardship, first make a copy of the template. Then fill in the text on the copy while sending the original template back into file. That way you do not have to worry about “Save as.” Mind you, to have lost the original form is not disastrous because the form is still there. It is now just filled with text. Make a copy of this *texted form* and in the copy *delete* all the text. You now have your blank form/template once again. Save it, and let it be a lesson for the next time, to **SAVE AS**.

The Cast, Technical Heads, and Production Staff Address Lists

For the sake of organization and compartmentalizing, while this should be one big list on the laptop, it should also be broken up into sections, listing the cast in one, the technical heads in another, and the production staff in still another. It is much easier to go to the separate parts rather than going down one big list with every name in alphabetical order.

The information for these lists is available initially from the production office/production assistant; however, the SM is obligated to call each person to get:

- The correct spelling and professional name of each person as it will appear in the program
- The role being played (or for a staff person, the position held)
- Home address or business address (both if the SM wants to be thorough, especially if the person also works from out of an office)
- Home or landline phone and cell phone
- Manager's or agent's contact information (if applicable)
- Email address—very important. There are other ways of sending/exchanging electronic files. Not everyone in the company will be set up or savvy to electronic communication, but *everyone* has email.

Home Address—SM's Choice: At one time it was good additional information to have a home address. Sometimes scripts had to be delivered, and maybe the costumer would do measurements or fittings at the principal performer's home, especially if that performer is of star status. Today, however, that information is needed less and some SMs are not including it in their address list.

Exception to the Email Rule: I take it back, not everyone will have email. At one time or another the SM may have an elderly character actor in the show who has not made his or her way into the cyber world. Then it comes to listing contact information the old-fashioned way, noting the landline home phone (that may have a recorded answering machine attached). In addition, perhaps an agent, a manager, or even a nearby relative could be listed.

The Cast Address List

There is no specific layout or form in creating the **Cast Address List**. It is whatever the SM creates to suit the production. It can be done in a word processing document or a spreadsheet. Figure 6-10 was created using Excel. The important part is that the information is clearly noted, can be extracted in a single glance, that all the names are spelled correctly, and that there are multiple ways of being in touch with a performer at any time.

I have chosen to list the cast members of our imaginary play *John and Mary* for the presentation of a cast list because there are only a few actors/characters to be listed. As much as possible I like to have my cast address list on one page and in portrait orientation. While the listing of the performers in Figure 6-10 is nicely and spaciously laid, on a show with a larger cast, the information would have to be a lot closer. In musical productions with ensemble performers as well as leads and major roles, I might orient the page to landscape, use a smaller font, and list all the information for each performer in one line across the page.

Once again, notice I have listed the actors/characters starting with the star/lead roles, working on down to the supporting and smaller roles, and not in alphabetical order. Again, this conforms to my sense of orientation and organization. You will find your own creation, and once you do it can become a template for other shows, where all you will have to do is fill in the new information.

CAST ADDRESS LIST

John and Mary

Refreshed Production

- Celebrity Series

Producer: Carol J. Flagger

Date: June 2017

Director: Terry Milton

West Coast/South East Tour

KAREN RUTH (Mary)

krstar@comquest.net

5031 Crescent Place

Bev.Hls., CA 90210

(Prvt/Prsonl) 310-555-2839

(Cell) 310-555-0112

Agent: Karla-Jean Agncy - Teri Nightingale

8600 Sunset Blvd., W. Hollywood CA 90069

obachanson.gnycy@series.com

(O) 323-555-3447 (cell) 323-555-1209

Manager: Terry Myers (husband)

8650 Sunset Blvd., W. Hollywood CA 90069

West.Mgr@broadcast.net

(O) 323-555- 9910 (cell) 323-555-3498

STEPHEN BIRD (John)

birdman@telstar.com

24378 Canyon Ridge

Cedar Ranch, CA 91355

(H) 661-555-2039

(Cell) 310-555-6785

Earl-Henry Curtis (George)

ivyhenry3@gmail.com

4958 Bellflower Ct.

Studio City, CA 91604

(Cell) 818-555-5629

Gail Angela (Alice)

Iris.Shaddy@yahoo

23678 Westwood Blvd.

Apt. 1022

Los Angeles, CA 96137

(Cell) 401-555-6785

JANETT DEAN (Florence)

Intrdesgn@broadcast.net

15 Portland Cir.

(Cell) 818-555-8137

Calabassas, CA 91320

CALLE ROSE (Frieda)

No email

5826 Tunjunga Ave.

(Land-line) 818-555-0112

Apt. 12

Valley Village, CA 91606

IYRA FRIEDMAN (6 roles)

mishegoss@hotmail.com

13323 Laurel Lane

(Land-line) 818-555-9413

Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

(daughter) 818-555-4459

Figure 6-10 A sample cast address list identifying all cast members and listing their business/home addresses and all phone numbers where they can be easily reached.

The Staff Address List

Whatever form, order, or orientation you choose for your cast address list, the staff list will look pretty much the same if not exactly the same. I also try to keep it on a single page. Once again, I do not go in alphabetical order by name but rather by the order I have created and listed in Chapter 3, “The SM’s Chain-of-Command List.”

A Word of Advice: Address lists contain a lot of personal information that is not for general publication or distribution. They should be distributed only to those people who need to have them, namely, the production office, the director, and the SMs.

The SM’s Group Email List

This is a *time-saving* list. The SM will be sending out information to blocks of people. Sometimes it will be for everyone in the company; other times it will be for specific groups. As with the address lists, it is worth the time to create **Group Email Lists** for the cast, technical heads, production, and so on. This will be an easy task. The email addresses are already noted. It is simply a matter of copying and pasting the emails into their groups. Now, at the end

of the day, when it is time to send out messages to all, or to specific groups, the SM needs only to highlight the group(s) and send the message on its way.

The Contact Sheet

The contact sheet, on the other hand, is designed for general distribution. It is quite different from the cast address lists in that it is in alphabetical order and lists only those people who choose to be on the list and gives only the numbers they choose to have noted. It will contain both the telephone number and an email address, but once again it will be up to each person if they want both or one or the other. The contact sheet is not a workable document for the SM but is generated and distributed as a service to the company and to enhance general communication.

Schedules

The Block Calendar

This form is the backbone of the SM's work in organizing and getting the entire company to work in the same time frame. It is the first step in keeping all departments informed. The **Block Calendar** is designed to give an overall view of the rehearsal period, technical rehearsals, pre-opening performances, and the run of the show. For a detailed breakdown of each day's work, the *daily schedule*, which we will discuss below, is published and distributed each day.

Massive Coordination

In putting together the block calendar, SMs are pushed to the maximum of their coordinating abilities. The SM must first talk with the production office, which is usually the producer's production assistant, extracting the time frame and schedule for the different phases of the production. This information becomes the foundation and framework for the calendar. The SM then meets with the director, who provides more details for the rehearsals and in putting the show together. If the show is a musical, the SM meets with the musical director and choreographer, getting their input. It is important that the SM also talk with the publicity department to see what interviews have been scheduled and if and when publicity photos are to be taken.

The SM then meets with the technical director (TD). In most working situations, the TD has already gotten the schedule information from the production office and has created a schedule for the crew. During this meeting the SM gets from the TD any information not already noted on the block calendar, and checks to see that the TD is working in the same time frame. Having all the information from the TD, the SM still meets or talks with the heads of the different technical departments, just to make contact, get additional input, and be assured they too are working in the same time frame. The SM also meets or talks with the designers of the different departments, once again, just to make contact, get additional input, and be assured they are working in the same time frame.

Publication and Distribution

With the information gathered, the block calendar has pretty much created itself. As the SM assembles the information on the block calendar, each day's entry must be checked to ensure that there are no conflicts in times, dates, or places. The SM is also vigilant in judging the time frames, making sure they are reasonable for the work that needs to be done. Most of all, the SM is expected to know the union rules governing the actors' and technicians' workdays, call times, breaks, and days off. The SM must never schedule a working situation where the producer must pay overtime or penalties, unless approved by the producer.

BLOCK CALENDAR
GENERAL SCHEDULE

John and Mary

Refresh Productions
Producers: Carol J Flagger
Director: Terry Milton

(See Daily Schedule for detailed breakdown)

June - July, 2017

West Coast / South East TOUR

PSM: Sara Johnstone

Maland Rehearsal Studios

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
June -1999	1	2	3	4	5	6
	10:a-11a -EQUITYBIZ. 11a - 7:30p -CAST READ THRU play & begin setting Act I, Sen. 1.	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Cont. setting sens, in Act I Costume measurements at reh. hall	10:a-12:30p -PROD. MEET. all depts. 1:p-9:30p-Cast cont.REH Cont. setting sens, in Act I	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. 11a-1p -John and Mary tape interv at NBC for <i>Today Show</i>	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Finish setting Act I	9:a-5:30p -CAST cont. REI Work & run all sens. in Act II
Cast DAY OFF	7	8	9	10	11	12
	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Begin setting sens, in Act II Begin costume fittings at costume shop	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Cont. setting Act II Cont. costume fittings	10:a-12:30 p-PROD. MEET. all depts. 1p-9:30p-CAST cont. REH. Cont. setting Act II Cont. costume fittings	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Cont. setting Act II Finish costume fittings	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Finish setting Act II & run Act I	9:a-1p -CAST cont. REH. Work and run all sens Act II 2:30p-5:30p Run Acts I & II w/ photog. taking reh.shots
Cast DAY OFF	14	15	16	17	18	19
	10:a-6:30p-CAST cont.REH. Begin clean sens.. Act I & run Act I	10:a-6:30 -CAST cont.REH. Finish clean sens.. Act I & run Act II	10:a-12:30 p-PROD MEET. all depts. 1p-9:30 -Begin clean sens. in Act II & run Act I	10:a-1p -CAST cont.REH. Finish clean sens. Act II 2:30p-6:30p -Run show & notes	10:a-6:30 -CAST cont.REH. Qean & work problem areas 2:30p-6:30p -Run show for Light Dsgnr. & notes after	9:a-1p -CAST cont. REH. Run show & notes 2:p-5:30p -Run show for invited guests & notes after 7:30p-Set ight. cues w/Lght. Dsgnr., Dir., SMs, & Crew
	21	22	23	24	25	26
Begin 10 hr. day out of 12 hrs. 12:30p-12:30a CAST and CREW BEGIN TECH	12:30p-12:30a CAST and CREW cont. TECH and add Act I costumes	12:30p-12:30a CAST and CREW cont. TECH All costms. in afternoon reh. Add makeup in evening reh.	12:30p-5:30p CAST and CREW finish TECH 5:30 p-7:p -MEAL BREAK 7:p -Half-hour call 7:30p -DRESS REH	12:P-1:30p -CAST notes 1:30-2:p -Half-Hour call 2:p -Perf. for Unified Schools. Notes after perf 5:30p-7:p -Meal BREAK 7:p -Half-hour call 7:30p -PREVIEW PERF	2:30p -CAST and CREW Notes & run parts of show 5:p -MEAL BREAK 7:30p -Half-hour call 8:p -OPENING Perf.	2:p -MAT. PERF. 8:p -EVE. PERF.
28	29	30	JULY 1		2	3
2:p -MAT. PERF. 7:30p -EVE. PERF.	Theatre Dark Cast DAY OFF	8:p -EVE. PERF.	8:p -EVE. PERF.		8:p -EVE. PERF.	2:p -MAT. PERF. 8:p -EVE. PERF.

CONTACT NUMBERS:

Production Office: (213) 555-6421 refreshprodns@gmail.com
Director: (310) 555-7239 TerryMilt@gmail.com

Rehearsal Hall: (818) 555-6398

SM (818) 555-1217 sjsumgr@gmail.com

Figure 6-11 An overall view of the work to be done in the first weeks of putting together a show, starting with the first day of rehearsals, going into technical rehearsals, into performance, and then the run of the show.

SCHEDULE
 MAN OF LA MANCHA"
 SAN BERNARDINO-CLOA
 P.O. BOX 606, S.B., CA 92405

OFFICE + B.D. (714) 982-2545
 DIRECTOR: JACK BUNCH (818) 355-1559
 PROD. STG. MGR: LARRY FAZIO (818) 789-0112
 BACKSTAGE: (714) 988-5115

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SEPTEMBER						
	11:FM EQUITY 11 C.DALE WELCOME	11:PM PICTS. 12 FOR SELECTED CHARACTERS	10NC. OFF 13 2:30 ALDONZ + MULETEERS W/BEN 2:30 "I'M ONLY THINK OF HIM" + BEDRM. W/JACK 6:PM DINE 7:30 ADD REST OF CAST 11:PM DISMISS	14 2:30 REH. 6:00 DINE 7:30 REH. 9:30 DISMISS	15PM POSS. PICTS ALL CAST	16 1:PM POSS. PICTS ALL CAST
	2:30 BEGIN REH. 6:00 DINE 7:30 CONT. REH. 11:PM DISMISS.	2:30 REH. 6:00 DINE 7:30 REH. 11:PM DISMISS.			5:00 DINE 6:30 REH. 9:30 DISMISS	5:00 DINE 6:30 REH. 9:30 DISMISS
						9:30-12:30 DREH READ
CAST DAY OFF 17	CAST 18 2:00-5:30 REH. 5:30-7:00 DINE	CAST 19 (SAME)	CAST 20 (SAME)	CAST 21 (SAME)	CAST 22 2:30-5:PM SPOT REH.	2 2:15 CURT (MAT. PERF)
	10:AM CUE TO CUE W/LIGHTS W/DIR. + PSM 12:PN SOUND W/DIR. + PSM 11:00 DISMISS	7:00 BEGIN TECH COSTM. OPTIONAL 11:00 DISMISS	7:00 TECH (CONT.) W/COSTUMES 11:00 DISMISS	7:00 1/2 HR CALL 7:30 RUN THRU W/DREH. COSTUMES + MAKE-UP 11:00 DISMISS	7:00 1/2 HR CALL 8:00 DOWN BEAT FULL DRESS 11:00 DISMISS	7:45 1/2 HR 8:15 CURT. OPEN
2:15 MAT 24 (NO EVE)	DAY OFF 25	8:15 PERF.	8:15 PERF	8:15 PERF	8:15 PERF	2:15 MAT 29 8:15 PERF 3
OCT. 1						
2:15 MAT CLOSE						

Figure 6-11a This hand-drawn, hand-written block schedule was created for a production of *Man of La Mancha*. Though nicely laid out, it is still somewhat primitive by today's electronic standards.

On completion of the block calendar, but before publication and distribution, it is imperative the SM send out (via email) a copy to the people from whom the information was gathered, have them read it over, and get their approval. That being done, if the SM so chooses, text and sections of information can be colorized for greater separation and ease of extracting information in a glance, as demonstrated in Figure 6-11.

This calendar should be given out liberally to everyone in the company, including those who are in any way associated with the production. Whenever possible, the information in the block calendar should appear on one page. This is an involved and complicated calendar to

Helpful Tip: It might be wise when creating the block calendar for the SM first to create the calendar as a template with empty blocks, filling in only the part with the days of the week and a generic archive heading at the top, which can be changed once you are working on a specific show.

produce. Beginning SMs take heart. This is PSM work. You will get your knowledge and experience during your time as an ASM before you will be called upon to make one yourself.

Daily Rehearsal Schedule

This schedule is the soul mate and partner to the block calendar. The **Daily Rehearsal Schedule** gives the details that the block calendar does not provide. In most working situations, the director and SM create this schedule each day for

the next day. In it they detail the entire workday, sometimes down to the minute, specifying the scenes to be worked on, the performers needed for the scenes, the performers' call times, meal breaks, and dismissal time.

By Equity rule, a copy of the next day's schedule must be posted on the callboard before the performers leave at the end of the day, otherwise the SM is required to get that information to cast members by before the end of the day. At one time this was a hardship for the SM because the SM then had to spend a good amount of time "calling" each cast member. Today, from the first day of rehearsals, the SM tells the cast that the schedule will be emailed to them on the evening before the rehearsal for the next day and that they will be responsible to check their messages to get the information.

With this in mind, the first order of business at the end of the day is for the SM and the director to create the schedule and for the SM to get that information organized into the computer and sent out.

Like the address lists, there is no particular form to follow in laying out the daily schedule. The objective, as with all paperwork, is to be simple, clear, straightforward, informative, neat, easy to read, and easy to understand. With this piece of hard copy, more so than some of the others, there is no room for interpretation or misunderstanding of information by the reader, who might mistakenly come to rehearsal at the wrong time or not be prepared for the work to be done on that day.

Whatever form the SM uses in creating the daily schedule, it should be the same for each day. Once the company members become familiar with the format and layout of information, there is less chance for mistakes. In addition to emailing out the schedule, the SM prints out about six additional copies. Whenever possible, the schedule should be on one piece of paper, even if it is printed out on legal-size (eight-and-a-half-by-fourteen-inch) paper. One copy is posted on the callboard, one copy is placed on the SM's worktable, one is placed on the director's worktable, and for a musical copies are given to the musical director and pianist. The remaining copies are kept on hand should someone not on the email list need one.

Daily Schedule for a Musical

When working a musical show, the daily schedule becomes more involved because the choreographer and musical director must also have their workdays scheduled. If there is an assistant director with the show, there can be as many as four rehearsal locations to schedule at one time. The logistics of moving performers and not double-scheduling become a lot more intense. Once again, it is the job of the SM to see that there are no conflicts in scheduling. Once again, the layout and information on this form must be easily read and understood (see Fig. 6-13).

The SM's Daily Report

In companionship to the rehearsal schedule is the **SM's Daily Report**. While the rehearsal schedule is designed to tell you what is to be done during the day, the daily report comes at the end of the day and tells what things have been done and what changes or additions have been made. The daily report is designed to keep everyone informed and get out information to different department heads and is a handy means of communication. It is a good way for all the right hands of the company to know what the left hands are doing. Some producing companies require this daily report from the SM; others, where all are working within the same complex, don't find it a necessity. In such situations, the SM can easily text or email a department head or person in the company with their specific information.

In notating this report, some SM's might become a little too detailed, journalistic, or diary-like in recording what happened throughout the day. The SM needs to be brief, giving just enough text to create the picture. Noting the daily schedule within the daily report is not necessary. The only commentary to be made about the cast is to generalize on their progress and be complimentary. Anything that might be personal about a performer, such as tardiness, absenteeism, injury, illness, or quality of performance, should not be noted and generally distributed. That being the case, the SM might send out one daily report to the tech, administrative, and creative departments and a second daily report for those department heads who need to have the more personal information.

In all practicality, at the end of the day there is a lot for the SM to do in closing up shop. This report should not become a time-consuming burden. First of all, to aid the SM each day, during the *preproduction time* before rehearsals began, the SM should create and put on file the

Daily REHEARSAL Schedule
FRIDAY, June 28, 2017
John and Mary

10:00a - 11:3	Director, in Reh.rm #1, Clean & run..... <u>Act I, Scn. 1., "Down to Brass Taxes" (p.13)</u> <u>Mary, John, George</u>
11:30a - 1:30	Director, in Reh.rm. #1, Clean & run..... <u>Act I, Scn. 2., "Girl Talk" (p.41)</u> <u>Mary & Alice</u> <u>w/ Asst.Director in Reh.rm. #2, Work & run</u> <u>Act I, Scn. 1., "Guy Talk" (p.33)</u> <u>John & George</u>
1:30 LUNCH	
3:00p - 4:30p	
Director, Reh.rm. #1, Set	
<u>Act I, Scn.1., Alice's "Whirlwind Entrance" (p.21)</u> <u>John, Mary, Geo., Alice, Flo.</u>	
4:30 - 5:30	
Director, Reh.rm. #1, Work.....	
<u>Act I, Scn. 1., Frieda's "Phone Call" (p.7)</u> <u>Frieda</u>	
4:30p - 6:30p	
Asst.Director, Reh.rm. #2, Run.....	
<u>Act I, Scn.1., Alice's "Whirlwind Entrance" (p.21)</u> <u>Act I, Scn. 1., "Guy Talk" (p.33)</u> <u>Act I, Scn. 2., "Giri Talk" (p.41)</u> <u>Act I, Scn. 3., "Woman's Lib" (p.52)</u> <u>John,Mary,Geo.,Alice,Flo.,Frieda</u>	
5:30p	
Director, Reh.rm. #1, Work.....	
<u>Act I, Scn.1., Postman's Entrance (p32)</u> <u>Act I, Scn.2., Superintendent (p.51)</u> <u>Act I, Scn.3., Delivery Man w/ assistant (p.59)</u>	
6:30p	
DISMISSED <u>Mary, John, George, Alice, Florence, Frieda</u>	
7:00p	
DISMISSED <u>Actor playing multi roles</u> <u>Postman, Superintendent, Delivery Man</u>	
7:00p	
Director, Asst. Director, & SMs <u>Short PROD. MEET. w/ Costume Designer</u>	

Figure 6-12 The daily rehearsal schedule, broken down into hour increments and detailing the work to be done.

**Daily Rehearsal Schedule
FRIDAY – June 5 2017
*John and Mary – The Musical***

10:00a - 11:00a			12:00p - 1:00p	1:00p - 2:30p		
DIRECTOR		CHOREOGRAPHY		MUSIC DIRECTOR		
10:00a	Reh.rm. #1, clean & run..... Act I, Scn. 1, "Apartment" (p.1) John & Mary	10:00a	Reh.rm. #2, clean & run..... Act I "Closing" (p.59) & set..... "Grl.Talk-BoyTalk" sng.(p.32) w/ Dancers only	10:00a	Music rm., rehearse..... "Doomsday" song (p.23) w/ George	
11:00a	Reh.rm. #1, add..... Act I, Scn.1, "Geo. Entrance"(p.6) John, Mary, George	11:00a	Reh.rm. #2, add to..... "Grl.Talk-BoyTalk" sng.(p.32) Ensemble singers	10:30a	Music rm., rehearse..... "Girl Talk -Boy Talk" song (p.32) w/ Ensemble Singers	
12:noon	Reh.rm. #1, work, run & clean..... "Girl Talk -Boy Talk" song (p.32), w/o John & Mary Geo., Alice, Flo., Frieda, Ensmbl. Sngrs. & Dncrs.			11:00a	Music rm., rehearse..... "Girl Talk -Boy Talk" Song (p.32) w/ Frieda	
12:noon	John & Mary, luncheon & interview at Century City Plaza Hotel			12:noon	Music rm., rehearse..... Act II, Scn. 5, "Grl.Sct. Cookie" sng. (p.87) w/ multi-character actor	
1:00P - 2:30P LUNCH						
2:30p	Costume fitting at Western Costume..... Dexter, Mary Ann, Susan J. & Sue-Ellen			2:30p	Reh.rm. #2, work and run..... "Girl Talk -Boy Talk" Song (p.32)	
2:30p		DIRECTOR & CHOREOGR.			Geo., Alice, Flo., Frieda, Ensmbl. Sngrs & Dncrs..... add John, Mary, & people at costume fittings, as they arrive	
3:30p	Reh.rm. #1, set..... Act I,Scn.3, "Woman's Lib", (p.50) Mary, Alice, Flo., Frieda	3:30p	Reh.rm. #2, clean-work-run..... "Opening" sng. & "Boy Talk- Grl.Talk" sng.w/Sngrs.& Dncrs.	3:30p	Music rm., rehearse..... Act II, Scn. 2, "Pleasure Fare", (p.72) w/ John ** When finished DISMISS	
3:30p	George DISMISSED, doctor's appointment					
BY 6:30P - REST OF CAST DISMISSED OR EARLIER, WHEN FINISHED						
7:00p	STAFF MEETING w/Producer Conference rm., third floor Director, Choreographer, Music Director, SMs, Prod. Sec., Prod. Assists.					

Figure 6-13 The daily rehearsal schedule for a musical show, listing the work to be done by the director, choreographer, and music director.

form or template for this report—one for general distribution and another with space to add in more personal information. Then, at the end of each day, these forms can be brought to screen and filled in.

Note and Word of Advice: Remember to make a *duplicate* of the blank form or template and enter the text on to the duplicate, filing away the original for continued use. To not follow this procedure will create more work as you will then have to bring up the saved, filled-in report and delete the text before you can enter new text for the present day. Figure 6-14 shows such a template.

Daily Report - Day/Date: For Daily Schedule...See Attachment Above	
Name of Show	
Producer:	
Director:	
Stg.Mgr.:	
Stg.Mgr.:	
Location:	
GENERAL NOTES	
SCRIPT	
PROPS	
SCENIC	
Automation	
ELECTRICS	
Projection	
SOUND	
WARDROBE/ COSTUMES	
HAIR	
(Add departments as needed...)	

Figure 6-14 Every SM's daily report is different. There is no standard form to follow. The most important part of this template is the information contained within it.

The SM's Personal Floor Plans

Scenic Drawings/Blueprints

With the **SM's Personal Floor Plans**, we now enter into a whole new world of form making. However, before doing so, we must know about and deal with the set designers *scaled Scenic Drawings*. By the time an SM is hired for a show, the set has been designed and the SM is handed a set of these drawings of the *floor plans* and *elevations*. During the preproduction period before rehearsals begin, the SM must learn about the set and come to know it like the back of his or her hand—in fact, better. This happens mostly by the SM being given the large rolled-up floor plans, which require a tabletop to spread out. Sometimes the SM may get to sit in on a meeting where the set designer presents to the producer and director the drawings, sketches, color renderings, or even a three-dimensional scale model of the set. The scenic drawings give the layout, measurements, and dimensions of the scenery. They also give the placement of any backdrops that might be part of the set design.

Not too long ago, these scenic drawings were called *blueprints*. An SM today may run across this term when possibly working with old-timers. The designs were printed on sheets of blue paper with white lines that defined the set—thus the term *blueprints*. Later, with an improved process, the sheets became white with blue lines. Today, scenic designers create their work electronically and the copies are printed out electronically, so scenic drawings now appear as your basic white sheets with black print.

Scenic Drawings—Visual Orientation, Easy Read

The scenic drawings are not difficult to read. Just keep in mind that the various drawings are all viewed from the audience's point of view. In addition, the floor plans of the scenery are viewed from above looking down on the stage. On the other hand, the *elevation drawings* are drawn to give the heights of the various parts of the set and are viewed from the same audience perspective, but from eye level, head on.

The SM's Knowledge of the Set

Like the script, the SM must study the scenic drawings. Anything the SM doesn't understand in the drawings must be clarified before rehearsals begin. In the absence of the set designer, the technical director is a great help. As the rehearsals progress, everyone will turn to the SM for information about the set and will expect the SM to know as much as the designer. To aid the SM in this effort and to make it easier for the rest of the company to picture the set, the SM gathers and puts up on the rehearsal room walls whatever artist renderings the designer has made, the scenic drawings, and arranges to have a scale model (if there is one) at the rehearsal hall at least for the first week of rehearsals.

The SM's Floor Plans

The scenic drawings generated from the scenic designer are drawn to scale—usually one inch or a half-inch for every foot of real space on the stage. Even with this scaling down in size, these drawings are large. Traditionally, they come rolled up and do not fit in the SM's manila folders, briefcases, or notebooks unless they are folded several times. Today, however, these drawings have been generated electronically, so they are easily reduced in size and can be printed out as eight-and-a-half-by-eleven-inch versions.

Once these personal-size plans have been scaled down, they can be placed in the rehearsal script at the beginning of each scene. The placement of actors at the beginning of the scene can be noted, props listed, and the placement of furniture drawn in. Even more helpful, when the director calls for a particular scene to be set up in rehearsals, the SM can quickly turn the page in the rehearsal script and refer to the personal floor plan without having to roll out the original drawings or go to the wall on which they are hanging. In addition, personal-size floor plans are a helpful piece of hard copy for people in other departments.

Know, also, that if you do not have the convenience or generosity of the scenic designer printing out personal-size floor plans, you can take the large plans to a copy center with a printer to accommodate that size and print out personal-size floor plans.

In the first edition of this book, all floor plans shown were drawn by hand. I had not yet started doing my personalized floor plans electronically. For this edition I have retained those drawings. However, for comparison, the floor plan in Figure 6-15 is presented in Figure 6-15a as generated in AutoCAD. Similarly, the floor plan in

A Personal Preference: If by chance the scenic designer has printed out the personal-size floor plans for me, there is one bit of business I am compelled to do, and that is *white out* many of the measurements or markings. The SM's personal-size floor plans are not for that kind of information. If, on the other hand, I am able to print out my own personal-size plans, then I delete that information before printing them out. I want as much as possible a clear field to note the placement of actors, props, furniture, and set pieces.

Figure 6-17 is presented in Figure 6-17a as generated in AutoCAD. As you can see, there is not a great deal of difference between the hand-drawn floor plans and the electronically created ones. Proudly, I say on my behalf that this is due to the expertise I acquired in drawing many floor plans, especially when doing musicals.

The SM's Floor Plans for *Annie Get Your Gun*

While I had done quite a bit of SMing before my first big-time show, I did not have a whole lot of experience in reading floor plans, except for the ones I used to look at while building houses with my uncle. So when I was first handed a set of blueprint drawings and was told to make my own personal-size floor plans, there was a steep learning curve. I think it is called OJT (on-the-job training). So to help any reader, student, or beginning SM who might be like I was, let us go over this first floor plan in Figure 6-15, the opening scene for a production of *Annie Get Your Gun*. For those of you more familiar with reading floor plans, a little review is good for the soul.

- First there is the layout of the stage with the audience and the edge of the stage across the bottom of the page.
- Then, on both sides of the page, just behind the line for the edge of the stage, are the *show portals*. For this show, this is a painted, flat piece of scenery that carries the design of the set closer to the audience.
- Further up on each side (the short squiggly lines) are the soft legs. These hanging drapes serve first to hide the backstage areas from those audience members who are sitting off to the sides, and just as importantly create entrances and exits for the performers and scenery. These entrances and exits are referred to as the “wings.” Notice there are three sets of these legs/wings along each side of the stage.

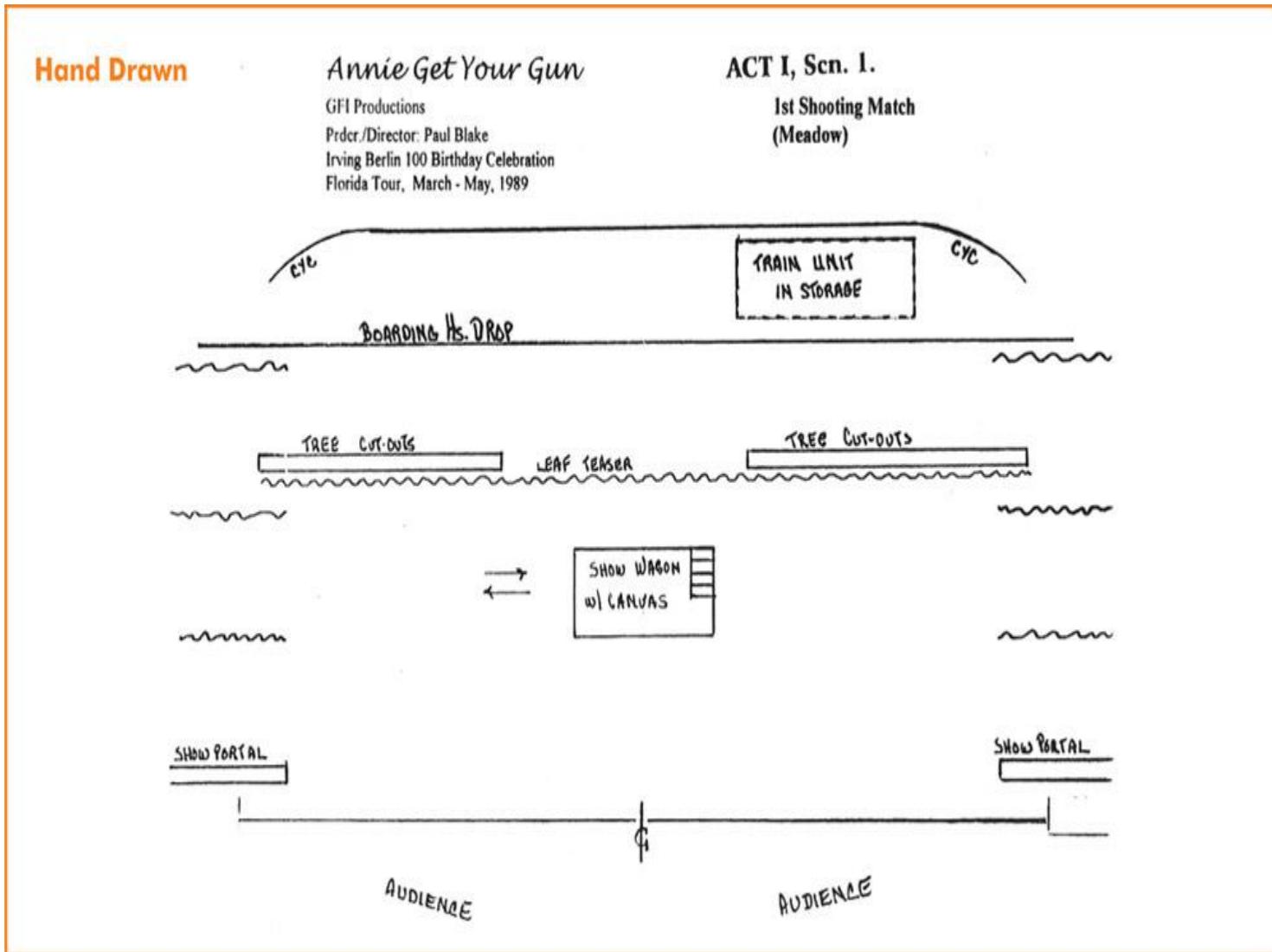


Figure 6-15 Stage manager's **hand-drawn** personal floor plan for the musical *Annie Get Your Gun*, depicting the first setup of the show (the meadow scene), with the scenery/drops in place and the show wagon at center stage.

AutoCad Generated

Annie Get Your Gun
Refreshed Productions
Director: Christopher Paul
West Coast: South East Tour
June - August, 2017

ACT I, Scene 1.
1st Shooting Match
(Meadow)

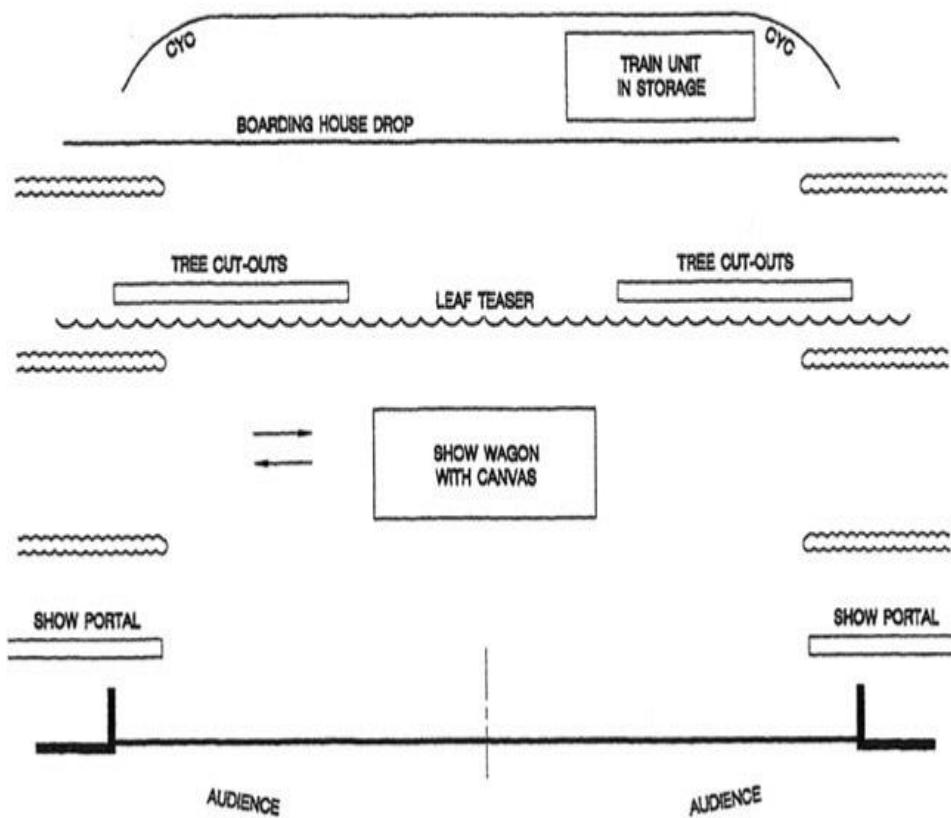


Figure 6-15a This is the same floor plan as in Figure 6-15, but it was **generated in AutoCAD**. Except for the printed text, the differences are subtle. That is due mostly to the fact that by this time the SM had become quite expert at making hand-drawn personalized floor plans.

- Before going into the specifics of the setup in the performing area, let's go all the way back to the cyclorama (cyc); from our view, this is at the top of the page, just under the *archive heading*. This cyc is permanently placed and will appear in every drawing.
- *However*, in this first scene, the cyc is not seen by the audience because of the *boarding house drop*, which is indicated with a bold line across the entire upper part of the stage.
- Also notice the *train unit in storage*, between the cyc and the boarding house drop. Of course, with the drop in place, this unit is hidden from the view of the audience, but it is nonetheless important that the SM draw it into the personal-size floor plan.
- Coming a little farther down from the boarding house drop, notice the two very narrow rectangle boxes that are noted as *tree cut-outs*. These are two hard flats of scenery that are flown in to look like the trunks of trees.
- Drawn very close to these rectangle boxes is a squiggly line going across the entire stage. At first glance it gives the appearance of another drop like the boarding house drop, but notice the notation, *leaf teaser*. Of course, as an SM you know that a teaser can be a short pleated piece of material or a hard piece of scenery that goes across the entire top of the stage. One of its uses is to hide stage lights from the audience, but the other is to add to the scenic design, which in this case is leaves that, combined with the tree cut-outs, give the illusion of full-grown trees in this meadow scene.
- Now all we have left on stage in this opening scene of *Annie Get Your Gun* is the *show wagon* at center with two arrows pointing off in different directions, which indicate that this wagon rolls on and off.

There is one more piece of information to which I would like to direct your attention. I have talked at length about the *archival heading* at the top of the charts, plots plans, and lists. Notice that the text at the left side gives that information. Then, over to the right, a notation gives the placement of the scene in the show (Act I, Scene 1), the

major action taking place in the scene (the first shooting match), and lastly the location (meadow). These are simple notes but are valuable pieces of information to have in the rehearsal script at the beginning of each scene.

While the show opens with the setup in Figure 6-15, let us now move to a setup of the same scene but with the scenery and set pieces having been changed, either by the performers or by the stage technicians on the SM's cue (Fig. 6-16).

The basic scenery pieces of the stage, such as the boarding house drop, the tree cut-outs, and the leaf teaser remain the same, but there is a considerable change in the placement of props or set pieces on the stage deck. So it is important that the SM now make a personalized floor plan for this setup.

As you can see, the show wagon has changed position and the two little rectangle boxes close to the show portal at stage right, labeled *costume trunk*, have been brought on by performers. Up stage left, just at the edge of the second wing, is placed, first, the *gazebo* and, beside it the *boarding house porch* unit. Both units glide into position by automation. Also take note of the very thin rectangle box drawn in just behind the porch. This is a flat piece of scenery with the façade of the Wilson Hotel painted on it. When set behind the porch, it completes the illusion of the hotel with its porch.

Notice in labeling the gazebo that the SM has also noted *w/rooster*. While the rooster on top of the gazebo appears to the audience as a decorative weathervane, it is in actuality a rigged solenoid so that when Annie shoots at it the head pops off.

So now with these two personalized floor plans inserted into the rehearsal script at the beginning of Act I, Scene 1, at any given time in rehearsals when asked to set up for the *top of the show* the SM can easily flip to these two floor plans and know immediately what needs to be set up on the stage and what needs to be in the wings to be brought on during the scene.

I have found these personal-size floor plans invaluable pieces of hard copy and *strongly* recommend that every student and beginning SM make these plans part of their life. With them, I can note the placement of the performers at the top of a large crowd scene. I can note props that appear on stage as well as ones that need to be off in the wings for the particular scene. The choreographer likes having a set of these drawings because it tells him or her where set pieces and large props are placed and allows placement of the dancers in a big ensemble number. I also use them for blocking off large scenes, and additional copies can be found in my rehearsal script in the middle of the scene/dialogue. I offer a copy to the prop department and sometimes they use them extensively and other times they find them useful when they are first learning the placement of props in the show. On several occasions the head carpenter has asked for a set and then has made copies and handed them out to his crew. Without expecting them to be used, I give a set to the director. Sometimes I see each floor plan carefully placed at the beginning of each scene in the director's script, and other times they are loosely thrown in at the back of the script, becoming tattered and dog-eared.

Annie Get Your Gun

GFI Productions
Prdr/Director: Paul Blake
Irving Berlin 100 Birthday Celebration
Florida Tour, March - May, 1989

ACT I, Scn. 1.

Wilson Hotel

Opening song - "Col. Buffalo Bill" "Girl That I Marry"
"Bad Bad Man" "Can't Get A Man With A Gun"
"Doin' What Comes Nat'rly"

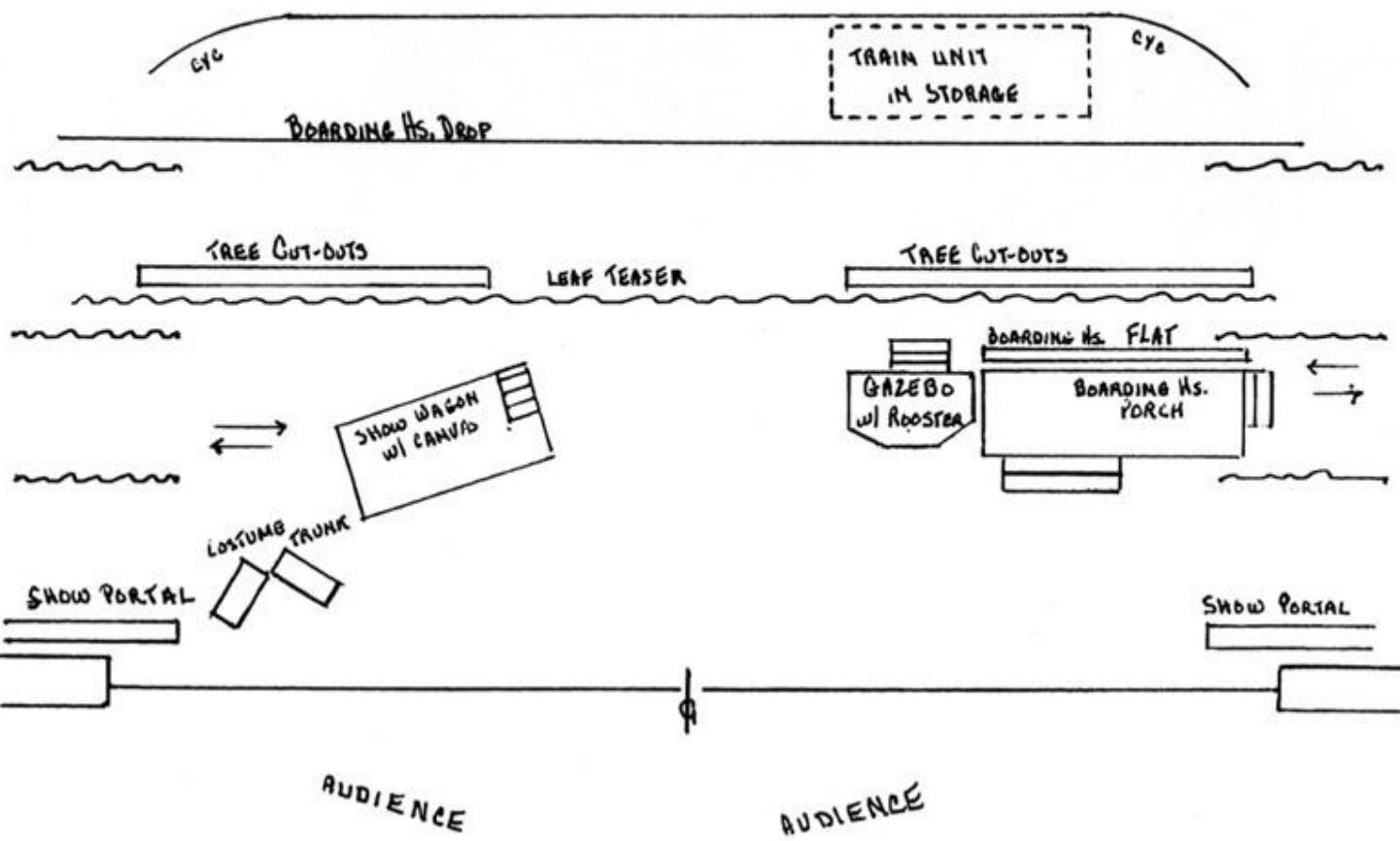


Figure 6-16 Stage manager's **hand-drawn** personal floor plan for the Wilson Hotel scene in the musical *Annie Get Your Gun*. The floor plan depicts the new placement of the show wagon with the added set pieces of the gazebo, boarding house porch, and costume trunk.

Return to the Archive Heading

Notice in Figure 6-16, the information on the right side is changed. It is now titled the *Wilson Hotel*, which certainly mirrors the scenery on the stage. In addition, there are listed five musical numbers that will take place within this setting. Good information to have, because not only does it tell the SM what will be going on in this setting but also the length of time the scene will remain on stage, considering the five musical numbers. I point this out just to show how much information is derived from the SM's notations on personal-size floor plans.

Noting the Acts and Scenes

Once again, back to the archival heading at the top of the SM's floor plans. While the information at the left is informative, take note at the right of the wording and spelling of *act* and abbreviation of *scene*. See how they stand large in size and are bold. This is purposely done to draw the eye of the reader, even the SM who made up this floor plan. Immediately, without having to think much further or search for the information, anyone reading the page knows exactly where this scene and stage setup lies in the show.

There is, however, a difference in how SMs like to note the act and the scene. Some prefer to use act and scene numbers, such as I-1, I-2, II-1, and so on. Others like to circle these figures, as is traditionally done on the professional

blueprint floor plans. I choose to spell it out (ACT I, Scn. 1). That way, any person, civilian, or professional, does not have to think about it.

Personal Floor Plans Void of Measurements

Notice no measurements have been included in the SM's personalized floor plans. For what these plans are used for, that information is not usually needed. At times, the SM will include figures for some important measurements, such as for steps, risers, or platforms. If the SM is working with a director who frequently asks for measurements of things, the SM might make a duplicate copy of each floor plan and on that copy note the measurements. This will save the SM from having to go to the scenic drawings every time the director asks.

Personal Floor Plans Void of Scale Measurement

The SM does not note the scale used to create the personal drawings. The SM's personal floor plans are not meant to have the accuracy and precision of the scenic drawings—although, with computer-generated plans, scale can be pretty accurate. But in making copies with a copying machine, that accuracy is sometimes lost. It is best for the SM not to note the scale, and if anyone wants to know that information, the SM can either give it to them or direct them to the scenic drawings.

A More Involved and Complicated Personal-Sized Floor Plan

Figure 6-17 is the floor plan for *Hello Jerry*, a tribute to Jerry Herman, author of the musical *Hello, Dolly!* On this set, Carol Channing will be performing her famous *eleven o'clock number* “Hello, Dolly!”

Some Theatre Talk: If by chance you do not know what an *eleven o'clock number* is, look it up in the back of the book in the glossary.

As you can see, this personalized floor plan is a little more involved, including a turntable, placement of the musicians on stage, the famous “Hello, Dolly!” staircase, and the ramp that projects out into the audience upon which Carol Channing does her even more famous signature strut.

Basic Elements of the *Hello Jerry* Set

As involved and detailed as this drawing may appear, there should now be some things that are familiar elements:

- Notice, the stage line or apron of the stage, the audience, the rectangle markings of the proscenium, the soft curtain legs on each side of the stage to create the wings, and across the very back the black curtain.
- It is easy to guess that the large circle in the center of the drawing is the turntable.
- Before we leave the turntable, notice there is a back side and a front side. The front side, which is now showing, is the “Hello, Dolly!” entrance, platforms, and stairs leading down on to the main part of the stage.
- In addition, on this floor plan the SM has noted the heights of those platforms: forty inches for the entrance to the platform, then a four-inch step down on each side to thirty-six-inch platforms.
- Then leading down from the forty-inch platform is a staircase of eight steps.
- This brings Miss Channing on to the main floor of the stage, allowing her to make her way down stage and on to the ramp, which projects out into the audience.
- Now what are those large boxes on either side of the turntable? Clearly they are named as “Musician Seating,” which tells us that the musicians will be playing on stage and not in a pit.

- By the numbers (six inches, twelve inches, and eighteen inches) noted in the corner of the platforms, it's obvious that this musician seating is a series of risers at different heights.

Once you see all of this and know the meaning of the squares, the big circle in the middle circle, the lines that represent the stairs, and the part that jets out into the audience, the floor plan becomes an easy read. You can almost see the legendary Carol Channing descending the stairs, gliding across the stage, and strutting over the ramp as she did in the performances of this show.

The Backside to the *Hello Jerry* Set

As the turntable turns to reveal its back side, the stands seating the musicians remain in place while the "Hello, Dolly!" set disappears from view. What is now in view is the grand piano, and along the sides of the turntable are the curving staircases. It is here at this piano that Jerry Herman will sit to play his music as singers and dancers enter from the wings or make their way down the stairs performing whatever musical number is being played.

The SM's work on the floor plans for this show is not complete until the personal-size floor plan for the Jerry Herman side of the set is facing forward, while the Carol Channing side is at the back.

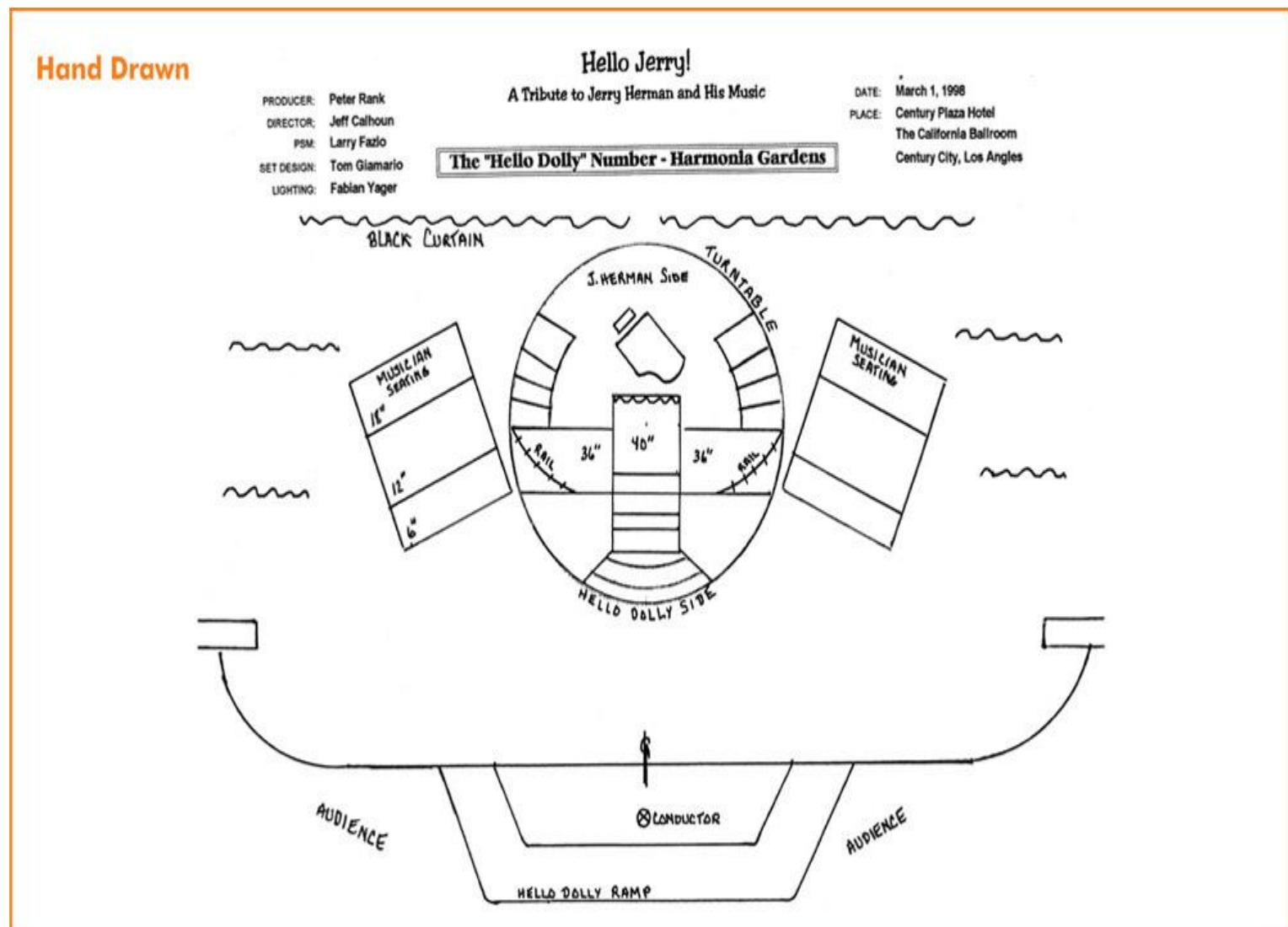


Figure 6-17 The SM's **hand-drawn** personal floor plan for *Hello Jerry*, depicting the setup of scenery on the turntable, the platforms on which the musicians sit, and the "Hello, Dolly!" ramp projecting out into the audience.

AutoCad Generated

Hello Jerry!

The "Hello Dolly" Number - Harmony Garden
Producer: Peter Rank
Director: Jeff Calhoun
PSM: Larry Fazio
Set Design: Tom Giamario
Lighting: Fabian Yager

Date: March 1, 1998
Place: Century Plaza Hotel
The California Ballroom
Century City, Los Angeles

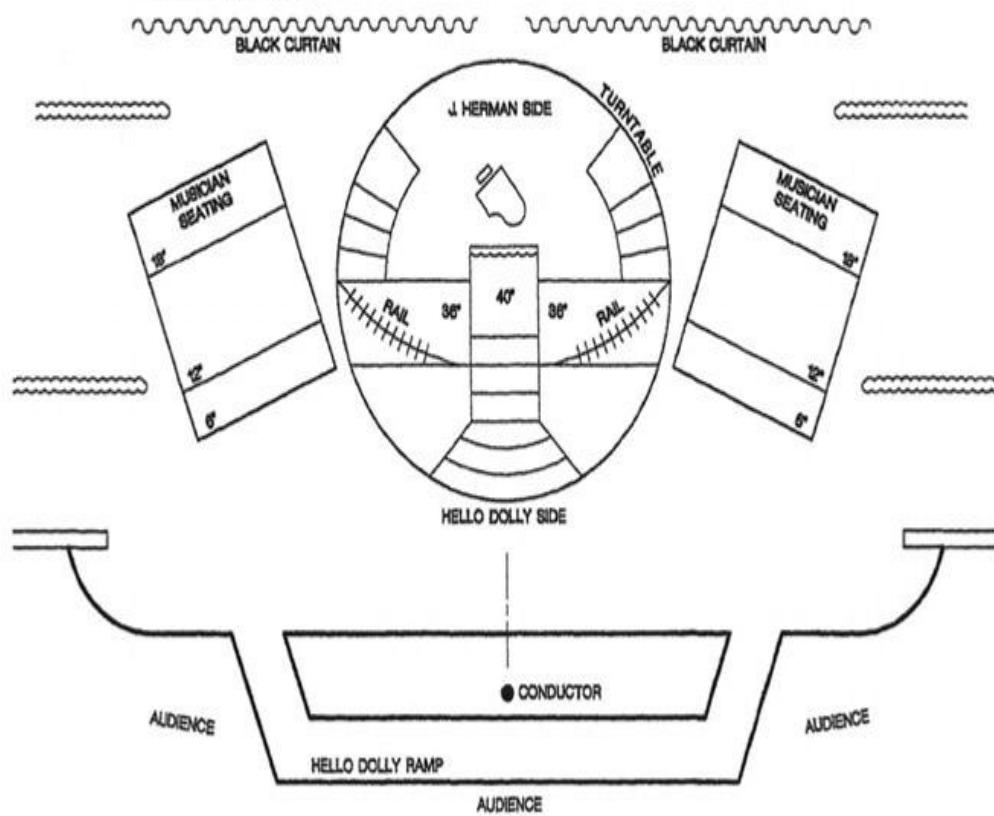


Figure 6-17a This is the same floor plan as in Figure 6-17, but it was generated in AutoCAD. Except for the printed text, the differences are subtle. This is due mostly to the fact that by this time the SM had become quite expert at making hand-drawn personalized floor plans.

Once again, just briefly check out the *archive heading* to this floor plan to get a better idea of what this show was about, where it played, when it played, and who were the contributing staff members.

Personal Floor Plans for the One-Set Comedy *John and Mary*

This is what the SM might have drawn for a personal-size floor plan of *John and Mary*.

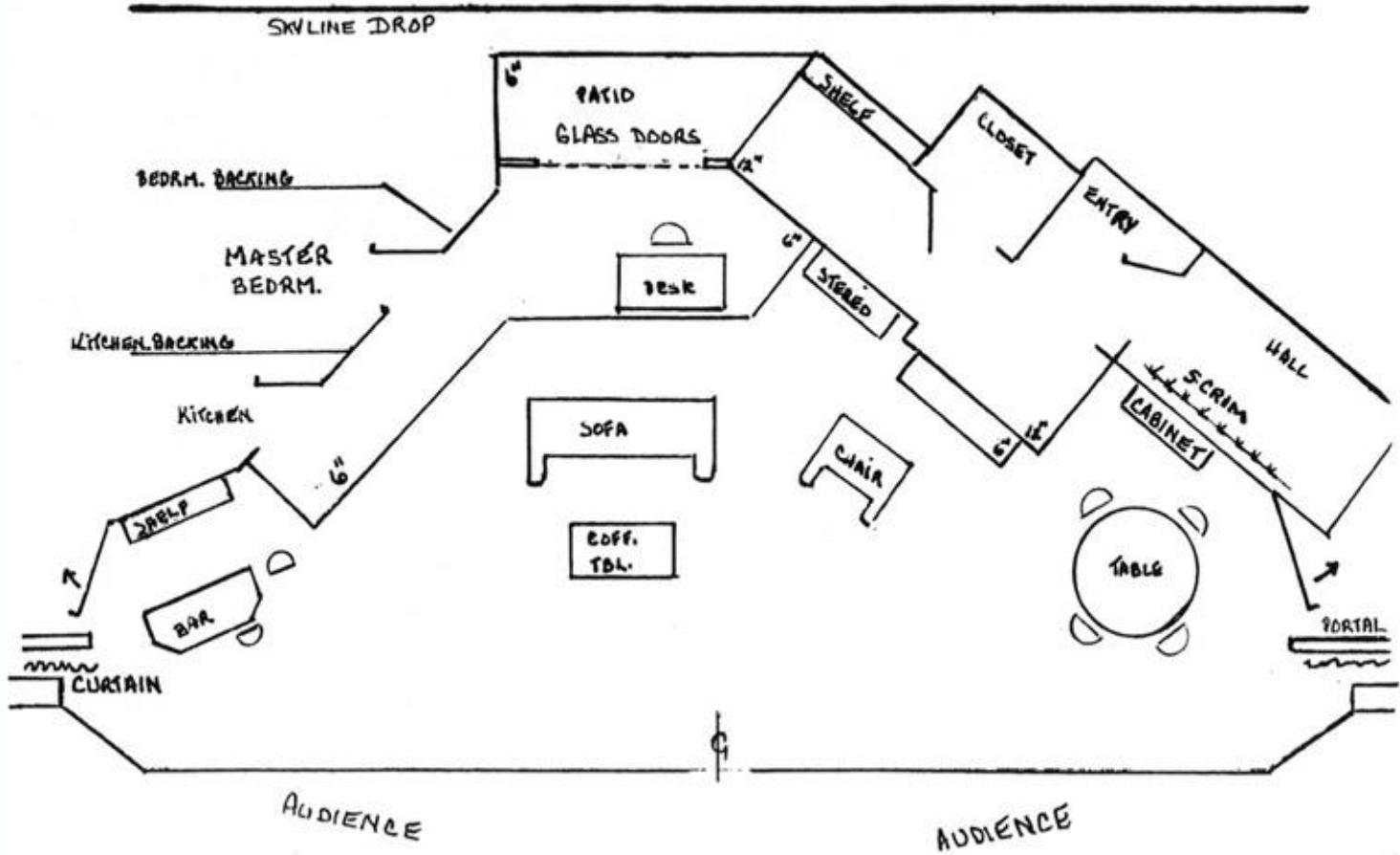


Figure 6-18 The SM's personal floor plans for the one-set comedy of our imaginary play, *John and Mary*.

At first glance this set too may appear complicated, busy, or confusing with all the lines, squares, and rectangles, but once broken down, the floor plan becomes understandable and easy to read. The first thing to notice is that there are three levels of performance:

1. There is the main stage floor on which the bar area is set off to stage right. There is the main performing area at center stage with the couch, chair, and coffee table, and over to the far stage left is a dining area or game table area.
2. The next level or performance area is up on to the six-inch riser/platform that leads off into the kitchen and the master bedroom. Then further over on that same level is a desk set at center stage, and just behind the desk are glass doors leading on to the patio.
3. The third level or performance area is another riser/platform standing at twelve inches above off the main stage floor. For the performer to get up on to this level, there is a six-inch step on the stage level just behind the chair and adjacent to the table. This platform and performance area leads to the entryway, which leads out into the hallway. Notice within the hallway the line with the series of Xes and the notation *Scrim*. With this information, we know that when properly lit, the performers will be seen as they come up the hallway to the entry into the apartment. Then right next to the entry way is a closet and next to that is a shelf.

For measurements and more specific technical information about the set, the SM can consult the scenic drawings and meet with the designer to see sketches, drawings, or possibly a scale model. There is one other notation on this floor plan, and that is the *skyline drop* backing the entire set and completing the stage picture. If you have been able to follow this with ease and see in your mind's eye the layout of this set, then you are on your way to reading other floor plans that will come your way.

Lists

A good SM is a good list maker. Making lists and having them at hand for quick and easy reference relieves the SM from having to remember a great deal of information. No SM can be expected to remember everything about the production. Blessed are those who can. It is the SM's job to commit information to paper for others to use and perhaps look back on at a later time. Making lists frees the SM's mind and preserves energy to work on matters at hand.

The Schedule Reminder List

This list is strictly for the SM's use. On it the SM notes anything that affects the schedule, be it something for the next day, next week, or next month, and then refers to this list each time a schedule must be created. It can be kept as a file on the SM's laptop or printed out and placed in the SM's production notebook under the tabbed section "Schedule."

Throughout the day, at any time, someone in the company will give advance information that will have an effect on the schedule, sometimes to relieve themselves of having to remember, other times to ensure they are included or excluded from the schedule, depending on their needs. The SM is responsible for seeing that all of this information is entered into the schedule at the prescribed times. This information should never be committed to memory. Failure in this area is of grave concern to the people involved and to the organization and coordination of the company and may result in loss of time and money.

Industry Phone Numbers List

This list also is mainly for the SM's use. It is started on the first day of an SM's first professional show. This list too can be kept as a file on the SM's laptop or printed out and placed in the SM's production notebook under the tabbed section "Address Lists."

This list is a collection of phone numbers and addresses of people who were involved with the production in some way, but not enough to be placed on the staff or cast list. Primarily, these are people who may have provided a service, a specialty, or a product: shops, vendors, supply houses, rental places, magic shops, musicians, vocal coaches, dialect coaches, script typists, publishers, publicists, videographers, recording studios, still photographers, prop providers, food services, hair suppliers, printers, fabric shops, shoe stores, repairmen, and so on.

This list can be organized in categories and in alphabetical order. If kept as a hard copy, it can become a series of handwritten notes and taped-in business cards, entered on the list as they were received. The information collected on this list can be a treasure and a lifesaver to both the SM and the show when a problem or need arises.

The Correct-Spelling-of-Names List

This was a list I created for myself. It was not something that I took from other SMs, as I have done with most of the charts, plots, plans, and lists that are in this book. It came about after a couple of times of having a performer's name misspelled on one of my lists or, even more grievously, in the program.

It is important to all people that their names are spelled correctly in print and pronounced correctly when spoken. With people in the entertainment business, fame is the name of the game, and the correct spelling of that name is very important. People in entertainment spend a great amount of time and effort to get their names known both to the people in the industry and to the public at large.

Although no one has ever lost work or fame because their name was misspelled in the program, most actors' reaction to a misspelled name might lead you to believe that their career was in jeopardy. In fact, having a performer's name spelled correctly in the program is important enough to the actors that Equity found it necessary to create a rule with management that if and when misspelling happens, management must correct the problem by reprinting the program or placing an insert sheet in each program giving the correct spelling.

Part of doing the SM job well, and saving the producer from the embarrassment and expense of printing program corrections, includes creating the **Correct-Spelling-of-Names List** (see Fig. 6-19). This will be one of the easier templates to make. The basic template is already on file in the form of the performance sign-in sheet. Fortunately, the

sign-in sheet was done in a spreadsheet program, which will make it easier to reshape. Of course, once the template for this correct-spelling-of-names list is completed, it is saved on the SM's laptop and can be used for many shows to come.

Cast Names CORRECT SPELLING List

Show:

Producer:

Director:

SM:

Figure 6-19 The SM's correct-spelling-of-names list, though not standard hard copy, is created to ensure that performers' names are spelled correctly, especially in the program.

Once all the cast members' names have been listed, the SM prints out a copy and sees that *every* person on the list checks his or her name and, if not spelled correctly, prints it out in the adjacent column. For thoroughness and greater efficiency, the SM may also include the director, choreographer, musical director, rehearsal pianist, SMs, and assistants. The production office will be responsible for getting the correct spelling of the designers, technical heads, their assistants, and crew members.

That being done, all who are listed on this form enter their initials in the last column that is there to show approval, protect the SM, and in the long run save the producer the expense of having to reprint the program or go through the bother of having inserts put into every program.

After every person has checked the spelling, has made a correction (if one was needed), and has entered his or her initials, the SM can scan this document into the laptop and either send it out as a PDF to the production office and other departments or, for greater assurance, hand deliver the document.

The Prop List

Of all the technical departments within the production of a show, the SM is most involved with the internal work of the prop department. While the other technical departments create their own charts, plots, plans, and lists, it is the SM's job to begin creating a **Prop List** during rehearsals, keep it up-to-date, and as soon as the prop master is on the

show, share that information. Then daily, mostly through the daily report, the SM keeps the prop master informed of whatever changes or additions are made. In actuality, the ASM usually is assigned this job and responsibility, while the PSM sees that the job is done accurately, making contributions to the list as information is received, via the scene designer, director, and even the performers.

The prop list starts with the ASM's second reading of the play. In that reading, the ASM, seated at the laptop, notes in bold text the act and scene and under that heading lists the props mentioned. Each day in rehearsals the ASM adds or subtracts from the prop list as the director and actors make their choices. With each prop listed, the ASM notes:

- the character who uses the prop
- if there are any special ways it is used
- if it gets destroyed and whether a new one will be needed for every show
- where the prop starts in the show
- any special needs or descriptions the actors or director may request.

This information is then related to the prop person. In many productions, the union prop person will not join the crew on a regular basis until the last week of rehearsals. By that time the ASM has created and organized a detailed prop list from which both the ASM and the prop department can work. If the ASM is working for a production company that has a theatre as part of its complex and has a prop person on staff, then the ASM can almost daily, through the daily report, note anything having to do with the props. This gives the prop person a heads-up and a head start on gathering the props. The ASM, however, continues building the prop list, even if the prop person is doing one too. When the show gets into technical rehearsals, the ASM and the prop person can compare notes to build a final prop list.

The information on this list must be noted clearly so the props can be set in the same place and in the same way for each rehearsal and subsequently for each performance. There is no particular form to follow in making a prop list, although prop lists from different SMs look similar.

On new shows, shows heading to Broadway, heavy prop shows, or shows with big budgets, the prop person may be hired to gather rehearsal props before rehearsals start. Once rehearsals begin, the prop person or assistant may be required to be at the rehearsals to set up props for each scene.

A “Working” Prop List

About ten minutes before each performance, after the props have been set by the prop department, it is the ASM's job to double-check, seeing that all props are in place. For this, both the prop department and the ASM need a *working* prop list (see Fig. 6-20). A working prop list contains some very specific notes detailing the placement of the props, along with instructions necessary to ensure that the prop is set exactly as it should be. The more academic prop lists found in the back of playbooks purchased from bookstores or on the Internet will have a prop list, but at best this list is sketchy and was created from the original Broadway production. With absolute certainty the prop list for the production on which the ASM is working will be different.

In the prop list for *John and Mary*, the props are listed by the scenes in which they appear and are used. If there are any instructions or details noted, they are followed to the letter. Sometimes a performer, in his or her most vulnerable moment on stage, can be thrown if on one night the prop is placed differently.

Notice at the end of the prop list in Figure 6-20 that the SM also has listed as well the props that are on the prop table on both sides of the stage, or anywhere else in the backstage area. Unofficially, as the ASM goes about the stage checking, he or she also looks to see that the first set pieces that will move on by automation are set up and locked into place.

Note: Set dressing—items the actors do not use or handle but that are present to decorate the stage—are not listed on the prop list. Once set dressing items are set, they remain in place. If they are accidentally moved or not present during the performance, while there is no direct effect on the play in general, the SM will still have to deal with the scenic designer. Remember, it is the SM's job to safeguard the artistic integrity of *all* designers and parts of the show.

Personal Props

There are two kinds of *personal props*. There is the kind that the prop person has procured but is called “personal” because the performer takes responsibility for the prop. This prop is noted on the prop list as *personal*, which tells both the prop person and the SM that they do not hold themselves responsible for the prop nor do they have to make sure the prop is in place before each performance begins. The performer is responsible for either placing the prop on stage or keeping it in their dressing room and will take it on stage when needed. If an actor forgets, the actor has no recourse to the SMs or prop department.

PROP LIST <i>John and Mary</i>		
<u>SET</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
ACT I, Scn. 1., (Apartment)		
ON STAGE	BAR	
S	(SR or.) Ash tray w/ water (SL or.) Cigarette box w/o cigarette & lighter	
	UNDER BAR	
	(3) Small bottles unopened drinking water, (Mary) (personal) Hand towel, (Mary) (SL side) (1) Bar towel, (John) (SR side) Waste paper basket	<i>Be certain top shelf is clear</i>
	SHELF (behind bar)	
	(Bottom Shelf) Martini pitcher w/ (6) martini glasses, (John) (Mid shelf, SL side) (6) Coasters, (Mary) (Top Shelf) Variety of (6) Italian wine bottles, unopened (Frida)	
CENTER	COFFEE TABLE (arrangement)	
		<i>Fresh flowers for each prof.</i>
	(audience)	
	EASY CHAIR	
	Sunday NY Times (John)	<i>Papers spread around chair on floor</i>
SL	TABLE	
	breakfast dishes & juice glasses (John & Mary)	<i>Table messy chairs not in place</i>
	STEREO	
	Practical cassette player w/ New Age music (Alice)	<i>Our tapes to play instantly</i>
UC	DESK	
	Cordless phone Container of (6) sharpened pencils (In SR drawer) File folder with tax forms	<i>Place 1040 form on top</i>
OFF SR PROP TABLE	Crockers & cheese, on slv. tray w/cheese, spuds. (Florence) Feather duster (Florence) Spray polish & dust cloth (Florence)	
CHK: Mary	QUICK-CHNG.RM. for...	
	(wardrobe) Cardigan sweater Skirt, blouse, shoes Fresh drinking water Curling iron - plugged in	
OFF SL PROP TABLE	Brief case w/ documents (George) Sealed Express Mail Envelope w/ IRS forms & letter (Postman)	<i>Black tape over lock</i>
ACT I, Scn. 2., (Apartment)		
	etc., etc., etc.	

Figure 6-20 The “working” prop list for the imaginary play *John and Mary*. This list is used ten minutes before each performance as a double check for the placement of all props.

The second kind of a personal prop is a prop that a performer might have that is unique or maybe very specific to the production—a one-of-a-kind item. If agreed upon by the performer, and if this prop is used in the show, according to Equity rule and agreement with producers the performer must be paid. In conference with the Equity deputy or even the local Equity office, the SM should find out the rate of pay and see to it that this information is sent to accounting or to the department responsible for issuing the weekly paychecks. Similarly, this holds true with personal pieces of clothing or an item the performer may be asked to use in the show.

Sound

The Sound Designer

With all of the technical departments associated with a production, and in all the shows I have worked, my contact with a *sound designer* has been probably limited to an introduction and hellos as our paths crossed. There is little to nothing an SM needs to do to assist or aid the sound designer in his or her job. The quality of the sound is decided upon, the equipment purchased or rented, the stage and body mics set up, the speakers placed throughout the house, and it all happens as the SM continues working with the other technical departments.

Working with the Sound Technicians

This is not to say that the SM does not work or have contact with the sound department. To the contrary, there is plenty to be done. The SM must deliver information to the sound department as detailed and diligently as is done with the prop master and prop department. The list is daunting: prepare a list of all the sounds; make notes of sounds that needed to be recorded, if important to the script or to the moment being acted; and make notes and relate that information. Also, there is the placement of the cues—some are inherent to the script; others are by design dictated by the director and even the performer.

This work is done with the technicians who are setting up the sound, running/mixing the sound, executing the sound cues during performance, and most importantly creating, recording, and editing the sound cues. These are the closest contacts the SM has with the sound department. Then, on productions that might need specialized sound effects, music, voiceover, prerecording, or even a cast recording, the SM's greatest business is to provide information (lists), make schedules, and generally be available to coordinate and troubleshoot.

Creating the Sound/Effects List

Whatever the working situation, throughout the rehearsals, especially during the first days, the SM and sound technician are in close communication creating the sound/effects list and noting any special needs. This list may change radically or remain as it was originally written, depending on the director, actors, and designers as they work and rehearse the show. Then, through the daily report and weekly production meeting, the SM keeps the sound department up to date, with an eye on seeing that things are getting done so that some of the basic sound cues can be executed in the early stages of rehearsals, and that the full collection of cues can be had for the last week of rehearsals in the rehearsal hall.

Three Sound Lists

Sound Plot—Sound to Be Gathered and Recorded

The first list, the **Sound Plot** (Fig. 6-21), is put together to aid and convey to the sound person the sound needs for a production of the show *It Had to Be You*. As you can see, there are some very detailed notes as to the cuts and versions of the one song, “It Had to Be You” (It Had 2 B U). As you read down the list, there is no mistaking what is needed and how it is to be used in the play. This kind of detail was necessary because in many places the director explained to the SM what he wanted. It then became the SM’s job to succinctly note in as few words as possible the details to ensure that the sound person would duplicate what was ordered.

Sound Requirement List

According to the archive heading on the **Sound Requirements List** in Figure 6-22, the play is scheduled to go out on tour, playing the Southwest and West Coast. While the *sound plot* in Figure 6-21 was put together for gathering up the sounds and recording them into cues, this list in Figure 6-22 was for the express purpose of being sent in advance to

the various theatres in which the show would be performing. Due to budgetary considerations, the producer decided it was economical (cheaper) to use the “house” sound system and sound person in each theatre rather than have one travel with the show. While this is good for the producer, it’s not so good for the SM because, upon arrival at the theatre and during the few hours scheduled for technical rehearsals before the first performance, the SM must first keep an eye on the sound

It Had To Be You	
So. West & West Coast Tour	
Sound Plot - Sound to be... Gathered & Recorded	GFI Productions Producer-Director: Paul Blake
ACT I, Sc.1 (Limbo - on apron, front of house curtain)	
1. p.7 Play during opening monologue	Three piano version - “ <i>It Had 2 B U</i> ” - Full Version (16 Bars) - Cut-Off Version (8 bars) - Multiple Version... a. Fast tempo (4 bars) b. Jazzy (4 bars) c. Sweet (4 bars)
2. p.7 End of opening monologue	Tag Music - (Director has music on CD) ACT I, Sc.1a (TV audition studio)
3. p.12 Theda meets Vito	“ <i>It Had 2 B U</i> ” (piano version)
4. p.14 Transition music from ... TV studio to Theda's apartment	Full version (16 bars)
5. p.36 End of scene music Russian dance music	ACT I, Sc.2 (Theda's Apartment) RUSSIAN DANCE MUSIC Complete song Bring choice to director for approval
INTERMISSION	
ACT II, Sc.2 (Theda's Apartment)	
6. p.36 Music to open ACT II and to continue as underscoring for Theda's "Mother Russian" speech	LYRICAL RUSSIAN MUSIC 2-3 minutes (to fade-out on SM's cue) Bring choice to director for approval
7. p.45 Dog barking down the hall (to fade out on SM's cue)	DOG BARKING SERIES - First ONE dog (3 or 4 times) - Add ONE or TWO more barking - Add MORE dogs barking Entire segment, 45 sec.
8. p.50 Radio SFX and Christmas song	SFX RADIO STATIC then... STATION CHANGING, then blending into Johnny Mathis "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (90 sec) (cut off on SM's cue)
etc., etc.	

Figure 6-21 This list is geared and designed for the sound person in aiding him or her to first gather what is needed for the show, and then record the variations in music and sound effects as ordered by the director.

**SOUND
REQUIREMENTS
LIST**

It Had To Be You

**So. West
&
West Coast Tour**

GFI Production

Producer/Director: Paul Blake
(213) 555-1212
pbghi@telsat.net

PSM: Sarah Johnstone
(818) 555-4321
sj.Stgmgr@gmail.com

(2) BODY MICS & (1) SPARE – There are only two actors in the show.
CD PLAYER – For playback of sound cues.

"Hot" MIC at SM's Console w/ "ON" and "OFF" SWITCH (to be controlled by SM).
As part of the play, the SM does dialogue with the actress on stage.

SPEAKERS - The house speakers you use in your theatre.

In addition: **ON STAGE SPEAKERS** placed...

- (1) speaker off stage left for dog barking cue
- (1) speaker up stage right, behind set
- (1) small speaker placed on set, stage right, for radio SFX and music cue

All speakers must work separate of each other, but must also be able to work in combination. In addition, sound played through house speakers must have ability to cross fade or dissolve into speakers on stage.

PHONE RINGS through PHONE ON STAGE

There are (2) phones on stage. The one placed on the desk at stage right will be the phone that rings. (See set floor plan included with this packet of information)

STAGE MANAGER'S COMMUNICATION from CONSOLE

SM must have two-way communication with all technical departments and/or people executing cues.

IN ADDITION: - SM's headset, LEFT ear cup ONLY

Show monitor speaker w/volume control at SM's console

When we first arrive at your theatre...during Technical Rehearsals the Director and Stage Manager needs to have a **COMMUNICATION SETUP in AUDIENCE**:

- Hot mic to communicate with actors on stage
- Headset to communicate with all technical departments
- Desk light

THANKS – We realize the above requirements are specific and detailed. They are also time-consuming in being set up. Upon our arrival, our tech time is extremely limited before the performance on the following day. It would be appreciated and a great help, as much as possible, if things can be set up before our arrival and drag-in into your theater.

Sarah Johnstone

Figure 6-22 Sound requirements list, detailing the sound needs for the play *It Had to Be You* as it travels to each new theatre/performance site.

department in each new venue to see that all gets set up as listed, and then afterward the SM must take the time to rehearse the house sound person for the sound cues.

In anticipation of the limited time for the technical rehearsals and the time that will be needed for the sound department, at the bottom of this sound requirements list the SM personally *thanks* the house sound person in advance and acknowledges the complexity of the setup, but then in the very next breath expresses her hope and expectation that the house sound department will be ready to go upon arrival.

Once again, check the structure and layout of this list. Notice the separation of information. Notice that the use of coloring not only is pleasing but also helps in separating information. Notice, also, the text made bold and sometimes put into upper case. Keep in mind, what is one SM's choice in the makeup and design of a list may not be your choice. As long as in your creations the information is abbreviated, detailed, and succinct, then you are in the ballpark, conveying and delivering information that leaves no room for mistake or misinterpretation. The worst thing an SM can hear is, "It did not say that in your list," or, "Oh, I thought you meant..."

Sound Cues List

The **Sound Cues List** for *It Had to Be You* (Fig. 6-23) was also sent out to the different theatres at which the show would be performing, along with a CD of all the cues in the show, to be executed by the house sound person. Ideally, from this list and the CD, the house sound person will become familiar with the cues and create his or her own sound cue sheet before the show arrives. Often that is the case, *but* there will always be those one or two times when delinquency reigns.

Some of the other SM handbooks say the SM must prepare a sound cue list for each show and hand it over to the sound person. Well, that is only partially true. Yes, the SM does create a list to help the sound person gather and record the sound, and, yes, if the show is touring and the sound information needs to get to each performance site, then the SM does create some kind of sound list. However, for the most part, when the show is first being put together in technical rehearsals, the SM waits and together with the sound person and the director numbers and places the cues into the cueing script.

While I state emphatically that certain lists and plots in professional situations are not made by the SM, as a student and beginning SM you should learn how to make such things, and Figure 6-23 is a perfect example of the importance of the SM having the knowledge to do these things when called upon.

The Body Mic Tracking Chart

At one time, only the lead performers were set up with body mics. Today, practically every speaking part, no matter how small, will be mic'ed. On occasion the sound person may ask the SM for a list of actors in each scene. Before the Scene/Character Tracking Chart (Sc./Chtr. Track.Chr.) became part of the SM's cadre of hard copies, this request from the sound department would have been a chore and would have cut into the SM's time for other things, especially when in rehearsals. However, with a Sc./Chtr.Track.Chr., the request will not even be made because the SM will have sent a copy to the sound person in the first week of rehearsals.

Dressing Room Assignments List

This list must be published and posted on the callboard by the first day the cast comes to the theatre. This can be simply a list with the actors' names and the dressing rooms to which they are assigned, or it can be a simple schematic drawing of the layout of the dressing rooms on each floor, with the actors' names written within the space on the drawing that makes up the dressing room.

A great amount of thought, consideration, and confer-encing with the producer, wardrobe department, and director needs to happen before the information on this list is revealed to the cast. The SM goes first to the producer to see if there are any contractual agreements concerning dressing rooms that must be fulfilled. With the producer's input, the SM creates a handwritten draft of the assignments. The SM then takes this list of assignments to the head of wardrobe to see if there will be any logistical problems between the dressing rooms assigned and the costumes the performers will be wearing. Resolving any problems in this area, the SM revises the list. The SM then goes to the director. This meeting is usually a formality. The list is pretty well established, but the SM looks for any point that might have been overlooked and to get the director's approval. If there is a conflict of ideas between any of the departments, the SM works it out and gets everyone to agree before going to the laptop to publish and post the assignments.

Egos sometimes become involved in dressing room assignments. Some performers may feel they should get a preferred dressing room over other performers. It is

SOUND	It Had To Be You	So. West & West Coast Tour
CUES		
LIST	GFI Production	
Producer/Director: Paul Blake (213) 555-1212 pblgf@telstra.net		
PSM: Sarah Johnstone (818) 555-4321 sj.Stgmr@gmail.com		
NOTE: All cues listed below are called by the stage manager. Sound man responsible for controlling "on", "off", and "gain" for actor's mics and mics on stage.		
ACT I, Scn. 1 (Limbo - front House Curtain), Opening Monologue		NOTES
p.7	SQ1 (3) short versions - PIANO THEME, <i>"It Had 2 B U"</i>	(Continuous Play) !!NO STOPS!!
p.7	SQ2 TAG MUSIC at the end of monologue	Short (15 sec.)
Scn.1a TV Audition Studio, Theda meets Vito		
p.12	SQ3 <i>"It Had 2 B U"</i> (piano theme)	Full version, (16 bars)
<hr/>		
Scn.2 Transition into Theda's Apartment		
p.14	SQ4 From House speakers...Continuous play...(4 bars piano theme, <i>"It Had 2 B U"</i> ...blending into NYC traffic SFX...dissolving into "Deck the Halls w/Holly"...	
	SQ5 THEN ON StgMgr CUE...X-fade from house speakers to stage speakers	
	SQ6 THEN ON StgMgr CUE...Fade-out sound	
<hr/>		
p.36	SQ7 RUSSIAN DANCE Music (22 sec.)...Next cue !! VERY QUICK !!	
	SQ8 TAG and FULL VERSION of Russian Dance ...Music continues into INTERMISSION (3 min., 11 sec.)	
INTERMISSION (15-20 min.)		
<hr/>		
ACT II, Scn. 1 (Theda's Apartment)		
p.37	SQ9 "MOTHER RUSSIA" music	FADE-OUT on SM's cue
p.45	SQ10 DOGS BARKING series	Continuous play FADE-OUT on SM's cue
p.50	SQ11 RADIO SFX (Radio static, station changing, into Johnny Mathis, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas")	
	SQ11 CUT-SOUND , on SM's cue	Etc., etc.

Figure 6-23 A list of sound cues (along with a CD) sent out in advance to the theatres in which the show will be performing, from which the house sound person will create his or her own cue list and become familiar with the effects as recorded on the CD.

important to the SM that the assignments are made with good reasoning and practical forethought and have the support of the SM's superiors. In some cases the SM will need this information to soothe an angry performer and create a win-win situation.

Show Rundown or Running Order

During technical rehearsals, no later than a day or two before dress rehearsals begin, it is very helpful to everyone working backstage if the SM puts up throughout the entire backstage area **Show Rundown Lists** or running orders. They are strategically placed where the cast and crew can easily read them: in the hallways, on staircases, in dressing rooms, in restrooms, on the back of permanent set pieces and curtains, and in the immediate work areas where the crew members are set up to work the show. The show rundown list notes the running order of the acts and scenes. It is printed from the SM's laptop in large, bold letters that can be read in the partial darkness of the backstage during a performance and from two or three feet away.

By dress rehearsal time, the crew's workstations have become defined. The scenery and props have been placed where they work best for the performance. The wardrobe/costume dressers have found their little niches for quick changes. The show rundown or running order is an aid to the cast and crew members who may want to judge their time or who might have a momentary lapse of memory.

The show rundown or running order is an easy list to create. Once again, the SM returns to the Sc./Chtr.Track. Chrt. because there in the first column is listed all the scenes in the play. However, in creating the show rundown list, the information is simplified and does not list every French scene as noted in the Sc./Chtr.Track.Chrt. The show rundown

list notes only the important or most identifiable moments in each scene, which when read by the crew or cast members reminds them of the scene and order of the show. Figure 6-24 is an example of a show rundown list from our imaginary play, *John and Mary*.

For most shows, especially musicals, the SM must print out the show rundown on two pages. Before going to a third page, the SM should make every effort to keep the information confined to two pages (by using legal-size paper, etc.), but not at the expense of clarity or ease of reading. Remember, at times, this list is often read under darkened conditions. People need to extract information from it at a glance or they may miss a cue or be late for an entrance.

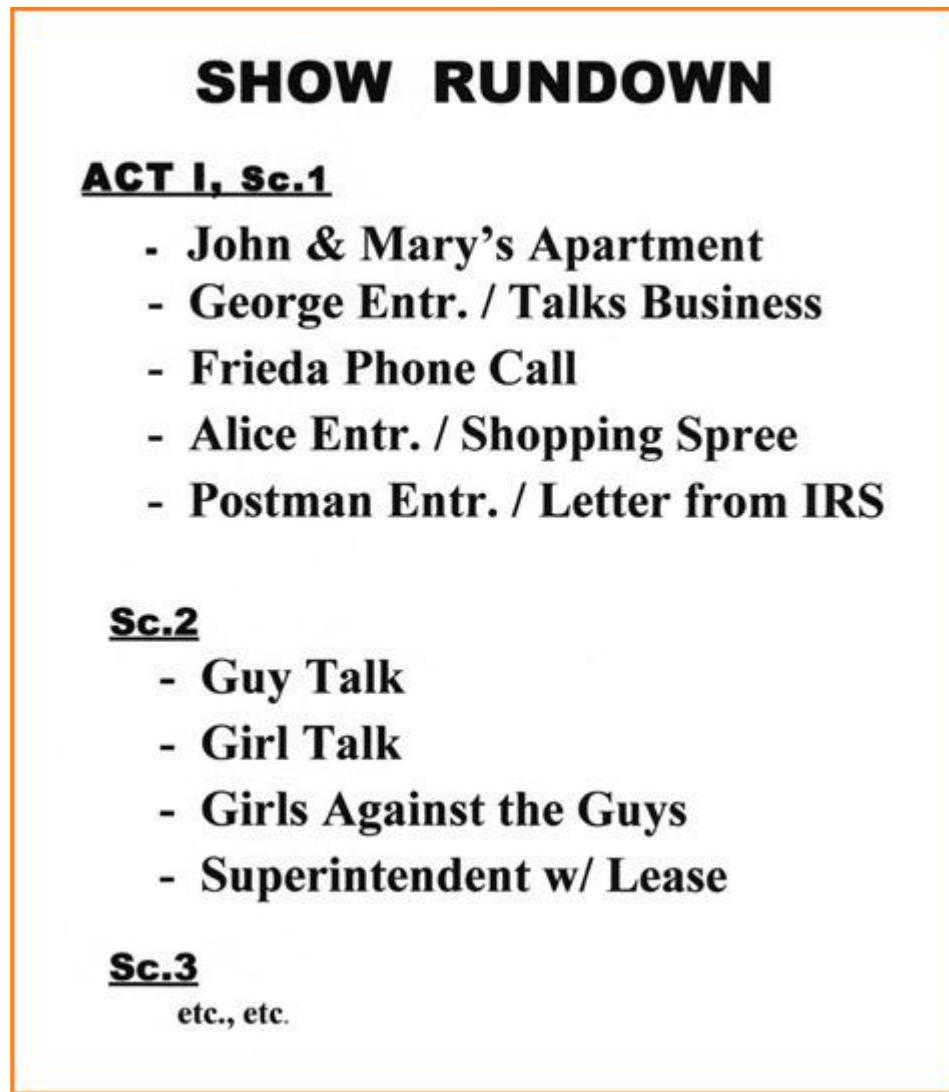


Figure 6-24 The show rundown list for our imaginary play, *John and Mary*. This list is strategically placed throughout the backstage areas to remind the actors and technicians of the order of the show, should they have a lapse in memory at any time during the performance.

The Show Running Order for *Man of La Mancha*

An excellent example of how an SM must sometimes be inventive and creative to service the cast and crew is seen in the show rundown list or running order from the musical *Man of La Mancha* (Fig. 6-25). As originally produced on Broadway, the set consists of a raked platform stage and a drawbridge that is lowered and raised many times throughout the play. There are no major changes of scenery to help the cast and crew easily identify where they are in the show. There is no intermission or designated Act II, and the scenes are not numbered. The show just flows from one moment to the next. During performance, in a moment of distraction, cast and crew members backstage can become momentarily disoriented, sometimes at a crucial moment in the show. Posting running orders everywhere becomes very important.

With the absence of acts and scenes, the SM has only the moments in the play, and even those moments are not named. However, either through text or through the physical action on stage, some scenes speak for themselves and

practically name themselves. Figure 6-25 is the result of one SM's creativity.

RUNNING ORDER	
<i>Man of La Mancha</i>	
1. 1st VAULT SCN.	- Cervante's Play "Man Of La Mancha"
2. ROAD TO LA MANCHA	Fight Windmill Sc.
3. 2nd VAULT & The INN SCN.	"It's All The Same" "Dulcinea"
4. 3rd VAULT & CONFESSONAL & ALONSO HOME	Create Alonso Family Sc. Qrtet: "I'm Only Thinking Of Him"
5. 4th VAULT & INN KITCHEN	Letter Reading Sc. "I Really Like Him"
6. The INN STABLE	"What Do You Want Of Me"
7. 5th VAULT & COURTYARD SCNS.	"Little Bird" "I'm Only Thinking Of Him" "Barber Son." & "Golden Helmet" "To Each Is Dulcinea" My-Lady Sc. & "Impossible Dream" - Farce Fight Sc. - Dubbing Sc.
8. RAPE SCN.	etc., etc.

Figure 6-25 A running order an SM might create for the musical *Man of La Mancha*. The play is continuous and not divided into scene numbers. The SM had to create a list of dividing points and identifying marks.

Performance Running-Time Chart

This chart is created purely for the SM's use and efficiency in documenting the running time of the show and having it available upon request. There are any number of reasons and occasions when someone needs to know the timing of the whole show, portions of the show, or just a particular scene. The only person to turn to is the SM. During rehearsals when the director runs a scene or the entire show nonstop, the SM is expected to get the running time. The SM does not have to do a timing each time the director runs something, but should have two or more timings to refer to and make comparisons.

For each performance of the show, the SM is required to note the starting and ending times of each act and the amount of time taken for intermission. From time to time throughout the run, the SM may be more detailed and get the running time for each scene. The chart in Figure 6-26 is designed to allow the SM to note detailed timings of the scenes or other times—just fill in the starting and ending times of the acts and intermission.

PERFORMANCE "Running Time" CHART

John and Mary

Empress Productions

Main Street Theatre

PSM: Sarah Johnston

DATE	ACT	Scn.	START time	END time	TIME of SCN.	TIME of PLAY	NOTES
	I	1.					
		2.					
		3.					

Act I - TOTAL time: _____

ACT	Scn.	START time	END time	TIME of SCN.	TIME of PLAY	NOTES
	II	1.				
		2.				
		3.				

Act II - TOTAL time: _____

TOTAL time of SHOW: _____						
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Figure 6-26 The performance running-time chart an SM might create and use to note and document detailed timing for the show in general or for a particular performance.

Once again keep in mind that this is one SM's **Performance Running-Time Chart**. You will create your own and create spaces or sections that you feel are necessary to document all that needs to be known about the timing of the show.

While this chart may be created in a spreadsheet program, hard copies are printed out and kept in supply at the SM's console, readily available for each performance. At the end of the show when the form is filled in, it can be put into a file folder in the SM's storage box. Today, these same forms are still kept at the SM's console, but now they are simply used for quick notation until such time after the performance when the SM can enter the information into the computer.

To make things easier, this performance running-time chart can become part of the SM's logbook file. While making notes about the performance or any incidences in the logbook, the SM can also enter the information from the hard copy of the performance running-time chart that was scribbled during the performance.

Show Reports

There is one more piece of hard copy an SM might be required to create. When a show gets to dress rehearsals and in performances, some producers require the SM to fill out and submit a **Show Report** for each and every performance. Some production companies provide the SM with a form they have already created.

Primarily, the producer wants noted on the show report the starting and ending times of the acts and intermission. If timings run short or long, the producer wants an explanation. The producer also wants the SM's commentary on the

actors' performance, the audience's reaction, and an estimated percent of the size of the audience—in essence, anything that is out of the ordinary and not part of the show or the normal routine in running and performing the show.

When the creation of the show report is left to the SM, the SM is free to be either simple or detailed in laying out the form. This report is not for general distribution, so the SM can be candid. It is for the producer's ears only. Also, this report is a good opportunity for the SM to make some positive and complimentary comments about the show, cast, crew, or anyone working backstage.

Changes and Revisions

Change and revision is the only certainty in an SM's life.

Keep this in mind. Some hard copy will go through many changes and revisions, sometimes in form, but most assuredly in information noted, especially if the show is being produced for the first time. With each revision, the SM must distribute the change to all the people it may affect. To eliminate confusion and ensure everyone is working from the same paperwork and from the correct and updated information, the SM must document this revised paperwork in some way.

Some SMs choose to numerically number their revisions (Revision #1, etc.) and some choose to use different colored paper for each revision. For me, the best form of documentation in any working situation is to simply place at the top of the page, in the right-hand corner, in bold print: **REVISED (6-28-2017)sj**. Obviously, the numbers in parentheses are the date of the revision. Placing the date not only gives the chronological order of the revision but provides further documentation by giving a timeline. The lowercase letters following the date are the SM's initials (Sara Johnstone), which provides further detail and leads the reader to the correct person if there are questions to be asked, praise to be given, or blame to be placed.

Suggestion: With this second edition I would add that this revision notation should be made bold and in a bright color: REVISED (6-28-2017)sj or REVISED (6-28-2017)sj so the information of the revision is easily seen as soon as the file is opened or the hard copy is taken up in hand.

In Closing

Some charts, plots, and lists will remain the same throughout an SM's career. Others will change radically, and still others will have to be invented to suit the needs of the show. It is the SM's job to document information and present it where needed. Creating or inventing new hard copy is relatively simple. First there is the information that needs to be documented. Next is the organization and form in which the information is laid out. Adding color is another element. Last is to see if the document does its job—see if it stands and delivers. Is the chart, plot, plan, or list thorough, complete, concise, informative, understandable, and easy to read, and can the information be extracted in a single glance?

An SM quickly learns to commit information to paper and not try to commit it to memory or word-of-mouth. Memory is fleeting—it fades, gets mixed up. Word-of-mouth can be just as troublesome. For any number of reasons, information in a person's mind can easily be changed or get mixed up. When errors occur, a less-responsible person will claim that the information was conveyed incorrectly by the SM. Having hard copy in hand leaves no doubt as to what the SM said, and it keeps the lines of communication open and clean. Good hard copy helps people do their jobs and keeps the business of putting on a show running smoothly, efficiently, effectively, and with less chance of error—errors that in the production of a show can be costly in time and money lost. Finally, with the use of a computer and the software available, there is no reason an SM's hard copy should be any less than print-shop perfect.

Also, keep in mind, all the hardcopy/electronic files the SM creates for a particular production eventually become "archival," which means at the close of the show all these charts, plots, plans, lists, and so on will end up in some production book that the SM puts together, which may end up on a shelf in the producer's office collecting dust. On occasion this archival collection might be extracted and edited by some publisher in creating their own lists to be at

the back of the playbook. There might be a revival of the show, but you can be sure that the SM of that production will create his or her own charts, plots, plans, and lists.

Profiles and Working Relationships

To paraphrase Margo Channing in *All About Eve*, *fasten your seatbelts, this is going to be a long chapter.* This is the chapter I wish had been included in some of the books I read during my formative years when becoming an SM; I might not have led with my chin and so often. We have met most of the people with whom the SM works in Chapter 3, “The SM’s Chain-of-Command List.” To give a comprehensive view of being a professional SM, we will now go into more detail. Once again, our discussion is from the SM’s perspective. Other members of the company dealing with the same people may have a different experience.

Keep in mind that the people and positions listed in the chain-of-command list and the people listed below in this chapter constitute a comprehensive list. Depending on the production company with which you are working and the caliber of the show, you may meet only a few, or you may have chance to encounter each and every one in all their glory and personality.

Each person listed below comes to a production with their own sense of creativity and artistry. They too have pride in their work and their contribution to the show and to the company. In order to do the job well, the SM must have a good understanding of all those within the company and production staff and not only the behavior and temperament of the performing artist.

First and Foremost—You!

Heading the list of people with whom an SM must work over and over is someone who keeps showing up at every job, bringing the same issues, behavior, way of thinking, and way of working. And that is *yourself*. You can be your best friend or you can be your worst enemy. Being your best friend does not mean you live and work from ego, but that you can stand strong and alone with confidence, knowing from your experiences and successes that you are good at your job. Being your worst enemy is when you work in doubt, uncertainty, and low esteem, stand critical of yourself, being indecisive, not taking pleasure in your success and accomplishments, not learning from your failures and then moving on, and most of all allowing the negative words and actions of people to distract you from all that is good. You are not going to do it perfect every time! People will be especially quick to judge the SM, who demands perfection from everyone else. So this is when you have to have a good sense of yourself and your work.

Not only must you be loving and caring of the show and of the company of people left in your charge, but you must also be loving and caring of yourself. In order to know and understand other people, you must first know and understand yourself, and that doesn’t mean you have to go through therapy to find out. In quiet times, go inside, see what makes you successful in your work, and see what brings about the failures. It helps if you know your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes, what triggers your feelings and emotions.

This is a tall order for anyone. To say a person needs to reach perfection and self-knowledge to become a successful SM is unreasonable. However, if you start this exploratory process early in your career, you will come to know things that SMs of more senior experience learn later.

The Three Parts of the Inner Self

As an aid to understanding some of the things that go on inside a person, transactional analysis presents an interpretation that is easy to understand and is a good foundation for SMs to understand themselves and others. Simply stated, transactional analysis talks about the *adult*, the *parent*, and the *child* in all of us.

To Delete or Not to Delete: In writing this second edition, I first intended to delete this next section on the *three parts of the inner self*. I thought it was too analytical. But I could not let go of it because for me, and I hope for you, it creates a simple and clear picture of who we are inside and who all people are inside.

The Adult

The adult is clear, factual, and can tap into all the information necessary to live life normally and sanely. The adult does not let feelings or emotions get in the way of *thinking, acting, reacting, believing, or behaving*. The adult is resourceful, continually seeks to learn more, solicits help when it is necessary, and is good at resolving problems, coming up with solutions, making decisions, and doing business. This sounds like the ideal SM. We could stop here, but people and SMs are not so one-dimensional.

The Parent

The parent is nurturing, instructive, understands with compassion, has empathy, is caring, has great concern, and most of all gives unconditional love. Once again the ideal SM comes to mind, especially when dealing with various dispositions and personalities in the chain of command.

The Child

The child is joyous, carefree, happy, fun-loving, playful, imaginative, creative, artistic, intuitive, inventive, instinctive, sensitive, and lives and reacts from feelings and emotions. This is the artist, the creative person, the people with whom the SM works daily.

Each of these personas is present at every moment in every person. When in balance, they are like overlapping circles with each having equal influence, each taking the lead or becoming a dominant force, depending on the event taking place. For example, during negotiations for a contract, it is best for the adult part to dominate. To have the child lead and negotiate terms could be disastrous for the person negotiating.

When an actor is creating a role or a director is directing, it is the creative, playful, artistic, fun-loving child that dominates for the best results. On the other hand, when dealing with friends and family and in maintaining working relationships, the parent more than likely takes the lead. There are many times within the course of a workday when each of these parts of an SM comes into play. At one moment the SM may need to be all business (the adult). At another moment the SM may be called on to be creative or socially interactive (the child), and in still another moment, the SM will need to be understanding and nurturing to a cast member or someone in the company who needs help or a shoulder to cry on (the parent). In each instance, while one part of the SM dominates, the others remain close at hand ready to express themselves.

However, for any number of social or psychological reasons, these parts can become unbalanced or distorted. One may dominate no matter what event is taking place. An SM who understands these parts of a person gains greater understanding and compassion. An SM who develops these parts of himself or herself and uses them at appropriate times works freely, moving from one to the other without having to think about it.

Personal Belief Systems

Going further into that inner part of ourselves, we will find the *belief system* we all have buried deep. The belief system is the words and thoughts that play daily over and over in a person's head. It begins at birth and is formulated from the experiences in the first years of life. Unfortunately, these beliefs come at a time when we believe we are at the *center of the universe*, so we get a distorted view and believe that things happen because of us, be they good or

bad. If all goes well during those formative years, our beliefs develop somewhat normally and appropriately for living life. When adverse events take place, the baby/child in us takes it personally, perhaps blaming ourselves. Even more unfortunate is the fact that these beliefs become imbedded in us and we take them into our adult life. This is where *imbalanced* steps in, and our way of believing and behaving as an adult goes a little off-kilter or completely awry.

As an SM you are confronted with all combinations and degrees of this balance or imbalance in people. Even more, we have it right inside ourselves. In the SM's workday, things happen quickly and with great intensity. Both the good and old beliefs easily snap into place and the SM reacts according to what is inside.

Making Personal Change

There is hope. If your belief system is adversely affecting your work and life in general, you can make a change. Knowing about the problem is the first step. That, however, is not enough. You must also want to make a change, and more important, you must actively work at making the change. This can be done with professional help or with a good self-help book.

The biggest mistake SMs and people in general make is that we feel we need to change those around us, both in our personal life and in our working environment. We think if we change the world around us, things will be better. As the song goes, *start with the man in the mirror* (ladies, the lyric may say "man," but it's "woman" too). The SM does not have the time and energy to change people or save them from themselves. The most an SM can do is be centered on him- or herself, then work with the expectation that people will act and behave professionally, follow the rules, and honor the working traditions of theatre. If and when that does not happen, the child in the SM does not take it personally. Instead, the adult steps forward, using whatever tools are available to rectify a situation and leave people responsible for their own behavior.

The Spiritual Self

Dare we go into this even more personal part of ourselves? Yes! This too is an important part in the work and world of the SM.

The spiritual self is the foundation on which each of us finds our strength. It is the part that makes us feel supported and not alone. The spiritual self is the inner place where there is calm, peace, unity, and harmony. It is where creativeness, imagination, intuitiveness, artistry, and spontaneity live freely. In it are serenity, security, and renewed energy where we can work without fear or worry. When an SM can have the spiritual self as part of his or her center and way of living, the SM can do all parts of the job without concern or being driven to do the job perfectly. The SM works with confidence that the job will be done well and done with the best of his or her ability and knowledge.

Some people like to call this part of themselves God. Others see it as being the positive energy and loving part of the universe. Some sit calmly in meditation and become one with this part of themselves. Others practice it in ritual or religious service. Still others discount the idea entirely, embracing only an agnostic or atheistic point of view. Whatever perspective, it is important for SMs to be in touch with this part of themselves, to come to terms in choosing what is right for them. The job of being an SM ranges from great joy, success, and satisfaction to moments of frustration, despair, and sometimes loneliness. An SM needs good support from within.

Anger and Fear

It is a known fact in the world of psychology and therapy that behind every anger there is fear. SMs will experience many incidents of anger, from others as well as from within. It will not be easy to understand other people's anger, but we should pause to see what fears are behind our own anger.

The deeper and further we go into self-discovery and exploration, the closer we get to our fears. Often it is at this point that people stop the process of self-discovery, because the feelings are too great. *Fear is always greater in the mind than it is in reality*. If we were to continue just a little further, we would probably find the child part of the self, hurting in some way. This is when the nurturing, parent part of the self needs to step forward to give comfort and

assurance. Whether on the job or anywhere in life, should you be confronted with someone's anger, know that beneath what you are seeing on the outside, there is a fear.

Ego

This is a *big* one! It is highly important for SMs to know and understand ego in both themselves and in others. Ego, a difficult, complicated, and very deep subject to even begin to discuss. Perhaps a standard dictionary definition will give us some kind of a framework from which we can work: *a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance*. This barely scratches the surface, but often seeing the synonyms that follow brings some greater definition and color—*self-worth, self-image, self-confidence*.

From what I know of ego, have studied, and perhaps have experienced in myself as well as in others: *ego is centered within the child part of each person. Regardless of maturation in other parts of a person, the ego never develops past the primal state of believing it is the center of the universe. Ego is designed to make a person feel good. It puts the person first, above all others. When it chooses, it has little regard for social standards, and sometimes it will join forces with the willful part of a person, disregarding moral and ethical standards too. Ego expresses itself as it feels, without concern for the consequences of its actions. If used injudiciously, ego can be harmful and highly destructive to the person it serves. When used appropriately and in good measure, ego can be part of what makes people in theatre highly successful.*

The SM's Ego

Performers and artists are left free to express their egos more than is tolerated in other professions. On the other hand, SMs are expected to show little to no ego. They are to be even-tempered and level-headed, the pillars on which the security of the company rests. Displaying ego can be seen as weak, out of control, and self-serving, and can lead to an SM not being hired again. To ask a person not to express ego is going beyond human possibility. Many people, including SMs, came to show business to nurture and satisfy their egos. SMs must find ways to do this without letting their ego intrude upon their work, the job, or working relationships.

Working with Ego

Ego is not restricted to performers or artists alone. Every day an SM must deal with ego from technicians, department heads, dressers, front-of-the-house people—anyone and everyone. Ego comes in all sizes and in varying degrees of inflation. Ego is delicate and fragile. It is easily hurt and each person has a threshold or fuse for setting it off. An SM should never try to fight ego. An SM must learn to recognize the different faces of ego and see when it is the foundation of a situation or problem. Sometimes ego disguises itself under a banner of righteousness or justice. When minor events of ego break out within the company, the SM deals with it like any other conflict, disagreement, or confrontation. However, a good SM takes greater care in seeing the ego is bruised or hurt as little as possible, or the SM may not get a quick and speedy resolve. There are no specific words of advice to an SM on how to live and deal with ego. With major events of ego, such as what might come from a star, the SM should get support and reinforcement by calling upon the producer, director, or Equity for help.

Saving Face: There were times throughout my career when I could see that if I helped someone *save face*, that would soothe the situation and whatever ego was involved. During those times I was not above taking the responsibility or some of the blame to bring relief. Not only have I done it for performers and stage technicians, but for directors too. Academically, this is not recommended, but as an SM and in the world of human relationships, it can help within the company.

The Issue of Control and Perfection

A great part of the SM's job is of course to be in control—to make things happen and make people do things on schedule. Everyone in the company expects this from their SM. Furthermore, the SM is expected to do all things perfectly. For the SM, control and perfection often go hand in hand. An SM can become obsessed and driven by them. The SM who misuses either one of these things can expect only negative results.

It is the SM's job to oversee and be ever watchful of all aspects of the production, walking a fine line between being directly involved or staying out of every person's business. To get the job done as expected, SMs can easily fall into the trap of ruling with an iron fist and dictating their own will. SMs must learn when to step in and take control and when to exert their will.

Dealing with Disagreement

Disagreement, conflict, and confrontation are present in any relationship, be it personal or in a working situation. Within a community of creators and artists, conflicts take place more frequently and sometimes with greater intensity. Throughout the run of a show, the SM will be placed in situations of disagreement with peers, superiors, or people left in the SM's charge. Sometimes the SM's involvement is direct and personal, and other times it will be as a mediator or arbitrator as others fall into disagreement and confrontation.

The SM should first seek to work out conflicts and bring resolution. Should that not be enough and the SM needs help or an ally, the production manager (PM) is a great source of help. If a position of higher authority is needed, there is the producer.

“You” versus “I”

When SMs sit in mediation or arbitration of a conflict, it becomes their job to try to resolve the matter. To do so, the SM must first set up safe grounds on which the participants can interact and express their differences. Next, see that the word *you* is eliminated from the conversation and *I* put in its place. Get the people involved to express what they felt and experienced, rather than allowing each person to accuse and tell the other person what they did wrong.

When a person speaks from the “I” position, it leaves no room for the other person to argue, because the feelings expressed, whether right or wrong, belong to the individual. When the term *you* is used and directed at the other person, that person may feel attacked and become defensive, which is often a direct path to activating ego.

The Art of Listening

In a confrontation, the parties also need to be instructed to listen as the other person speaks and not interrupt or argue back. The listeners must be assured they will have their chance to speak and express what they experienced and felt.

To bring resolution, the SM too must listen. The SM must hear the words being used, the feelings, intensity, or passion of expression, and learn to read between the lines. If something is not clear, get it clarified. The SM must also watch to see that the participants stay on track, sticking to the points of contention that brought about the conflict and not bringing in issues that can cloud or confuse.

Sometimes the things that are being said, the thing over which the argument is taking place, may not be the root or the core of the conflict. Sometimes, if there is a “history” between the conflicting individuals or groups, there may be a deeper, more hidden reason below. Oftentimes, hidden somewhere within the expression of feelings or words being spoken, the real meaning sneaks in. This is not easily detected but if something is said that doesn't seem to relate to the conflict at hand, then it might be worth the SM prying and exploring a little further to see why such a thing was said.

After the SM has allowed all of the participants to express themselves, each person is asked to restate in abbreviated terms what they heard the other people say. This technique is multilayered; it clears any misunderstandings, it forces

each party to step into the shoes of the other, it makes each party feel they have been heard, and, at the same time, the parties get to hear the sense or nonsense of their own words.

Bringing Closure

When the SM thinks all participants have had their say and have heard the other people involved, the SM then leads the participants toward closure by getting the parties to talk *to* each other and not *at* each other. The SM has each person express what he or she can do to resolve the situation—how he or she can change to make things different. The SM leads the parties to a mutual ground, a place where they might come to some understanding, make compromise, or offer terms for a resolution. If at a stalemate or impasse, the SM reviews each person's rights to their feelings and points of view and asks if they can at least agree to disagree.

Setting Limits, Boundaries, and Expectations

By the time SMs reach PSM status they know the way they like to work, the way they want to be treated, and the way in which they expect people to be professional. In the first meeting with the cast, the PSM establishes the preferred professional working environment. The PSM goes over ground rules—rules that the performers in a company know all too well but for some reason need to be reminded of. People want to know their limits, the boundaries, and what is expected of them. For some it provides an environment of security and harmony. For others it becomes a line up to which they can step. With still others, it becomes a line over which they can step to challenge or break the rules. These people can be frustrating for the SM, especially when one of them is the producer, director, or star.

The Power of an SM

A theme stated from time to time in this book is the power of an SM, and the fact that it is more of an illusion than a reality. The SM is third in the leadership structure of a company, but the power ranks below that of the producer, director, star, creators, designers, and heads of departments. The SM's power comes more as influence. The SM is in a position to make suggestions, express an opinion, and influence, but the SM does not have the power to make the final decree, declaration, or decision. The power an SM shows to the world is borrowed from the producer and director. SMs are not free to exercise their own will in this part of their job. Whatever decisions they appear to make on their own are what they have learned would be choices the producer or director might make.

I Will Step Out and Say that for all intents and purposes, the SM's position is an illusion. The SM works decisively, with authority, and with conviction, giving the appearance of power. The SM uses this illusion to get the job done; however, it is the wise SM who knows the truth. To believe differently is destructive and can feed the SM's vanity, fire the ego, and have a negative effect on the way the job gets done.

Profiles: Superiors, Peers, and Associates Producer

This is the boss—the person who signs the checks. The producer usually is the person who hires the SM (although, whenever possible, the director also has a voice in the selection). It is the SM's job to always work in the best interest of the producer, but not at the expense or detriment of the actors or Equity. The producer is the person to whom the SM ultimately is responsible and to whom the SM must give loyalty. Producers expect their SMs to be their eyes and ears and report back to them anything that concerns the show and the company. SMs who are hired again and again by the same producers may work with only a handful of producers throughout their careers. For the SMs who move from show to show, the list of producers will grow and chances of working with various types will increase. Some

producers will be very classy, honorable, talented, generous, and considerate. Some will be none of the above. Sometimes the SM is in direct contact and relationship with the producer on a daily basis. Other times the SM may see the producer only in passing.

The SM's Conflict of Loyalty—Producer versus Equity

SMs are often put in the position of having to serve two masters. As a member of Actor's Equity, the SM is expected to be responsible, loyal, and work in the best interest of the union and its members while also serving the best interest of the producer. Some producers do not always work in the best interest of performers or within Equity rules. It is the little infractions that are the most problematic for the SM. On occasion producers or "management" want or expect the SM to look the other way. It is the SM's job to monitor all situations, reminding the producer of the infraction. This might be a good time to solicit the help of the PM, as he or she is one step closer to the producer, and where the SM may not be able to convince or get through, the PM might.

If the producer still does not comply, the SM is required to report the matter to Equity. However, before doing that, in matters having to do directly with the performers, the SM has the Equity deputy. The Equity deputy is the liaison between the performers and the union, and it becomes the deputy's job to take up the fight, thus relieving the SM of that part of the job. However, there are plenty more things within the rulebook that the SM must be aware of and keep vigilant watch over while serving both masters. This is where it is important for the SM to get the Equity Rulebook and study it as a student does a textbook or a seminary student the Bible.

Money and the Producer

It is the SM's job to be prudent with the producer's money. While overseeing the workings and operation of the company as prescribed by the job, the SM is obligated to see that the producer does not lose money, or that money is not spent without the producer first knowing about it.

It is the producer's (and in many departments the PM's) job to control and spend money. An SM may not always appreciate the priority on how money is spent; expenses may be manipulated in one part of the budget but then in another part a prop might be purchased from a high-end store when it could have been purchased from a local discount store and looked just as effective and authentic from the stage. Also, lucky is the SM who never works with a producer who lacks ethics and scruples, having no qualms about writing checks with insufficient funds in their accounts. It is because of these few that Equity requires all producers and productions to put up a bond to protect its members.

Not All Producers Are as I Have Portrayed: In my experience I have found producers honorable, a delight to work for, and excellent businesspeople. However, in the course of an SM's career there may come at least one bad apple. I have had the experience of working with two, for one of which Actor's Equity had to close down the show. Fortunately, there was the Equity Bond and eventually I was paid all the monies I was owed and had spent out of pocket on behalf of the producer.

User of People

To produce a show, a producer needs people. It is the producer's job to use people for their talent and to get the best from them while they are in the producer's employ. Most producers are quite adept at getting people to do what they want. Some producers do it honorably, with consideration and generosity—others act with less regard. By the nature of the SM's position and work, the SM is most susceptible to being used and sometimes abused. When starting out, SMs may allow themselves to be used just to get the job or have another credit on their resumes. It is called "paying dues." However, after a while, SMs learn to pick and choose the people by whom they wish to be used.

Salesmanship and the Art of Schmoozing

A good producer is highly persuasive and knows the value of being extremely persistent. Some work like car salesmen, while others have learned the art of schmoozing—pleasant, charming, or manipulative talk. Producers come in all packages, from different educational and social backgrounds. Some have refined their art to a class act; others can be more street savvy. No SM is exempt from working with the latter at least once in a career. Somewhere between the extremes, SMs will find most producers working very hard to put on a show and to bring to the world of theatre a highly successful, artistic, critically acclaimed, and financially rewarding product.

Founder, General Manager, Executive Producer

The profile and SM's working relationship with a producer also applies, with some variation, to the founder of the company, the general manager, or the executive producer. Their jobs are all similar, their work greatly overlaps each other, and the people filling those jobs seem to be cast from the same dye.

Associate Producer

Associate producers seem less intense. They work at a driven pace but are quieter in their approach. Associate producers are just as effective in their work as producers, but are more like accountants as they concentrate on budgets, schedules, unions, and working out the logistics of the production. Associate producers deal with the nuts and bolts of a production. They do much of their work with the technical staff, the crew, the artisans, and craftspeople—the people who put together the physical part of the show.

In many ways associate producers are like the SM. They are thorough, detailed, concentrated, focused, good at completing things, work in real time, and are good at making lists, plans, and schedules. The SM's working relationship with the associate producer may be limited to discussing, comparing, and combining schedules. Their jobs have very little crossover. The associate producer spends most of the time on the phone, in the office, or at the various technical shops, while the SM remains at the rehearsal hall or backstage at the theatre.

Production Manager

As discussed in Chapter 3, “The SM’s Chain-of-Command List,” the position of the production manager (PM) is relatively new in comparison to the other executives of the company. Also discussed is the fact that the PM is the central figure in organizing and coordinating all that must be done in putting together the “physical” part of the production. The PM’s job is to see that the dreams, designs, and creative work of the producer, director, musical director, choreographer, designers, and technical departments are supported and brought to realization while still working within the schedule and budget of the show.

While the SM is the foundation and glue upon which the cast and director are cared for, the rehearsals are run, all departments are informed, and the artistic integrity of the show is delivered for each performance, the PM is behind-the-scenes foundation and glue for overseeing staff, budgeting, obtaining rights and licensing from publishers, and knowing the rules and expenses of the different technical departments. The PM is responsible for the success of the backstage operations of a theatre. He or she sees that the different parts and departments of the production are ready to deliver when their services or craft is needed and put into place. While the SM will suggest production meetings, it is the PM who initiates most of them. The PM is the one person with whom the SM is in continuous daily, if not hourly, contact as things change, happen, or occur.

The work of the SM is an excellent precursor to becoming a production manager.

Company Manager

A lot of the work the PM does today the company manager did at one time on large, big-budget shows. Today, this position still holds importance with touring shows. It is the company manager's job to handle all the administrative and financial business that has to do directly with the company and the show. The company manager organizes, arranges, and coordinates the travel, lodging, and moving of the show from place to place. To get the day's work done, company managers are often seen working with great concentration, at a quick and intense pace, and with a good amount of energy. The job requires work on many parts of the show at the same time, which means company managers must be organized and focused, although from the various piles of papers scattered about their offices, one would get a different impression. The company manager is pictured best with a bulging attaché or briefcase and traveling with a large number of boxes, crates, and cases that when opened convert any empty dressing room, nook, or cranny into an office filled with electronic equipment and devices, sections of accordion-pleated folders bulging with hard copy, and more than likely a vaulted cash box.

Company managers are very comfortable in delegating work to others, especially to SMs. The SM and the company manager are similar in personality traits, ways of working, and maybe even temperament. They work in close communication with each other and though their work and positions are clearly defined and separated, in the absence of a company manager, much of the work may fall to the SM.

The company manager is not always a very popular position. Like the SM, there are times when the company manager must make decisions for the company that may not be popular with some or all of the people. The person filling the position usually is a seasoned veteran who knows what is required to get the job done and knows the temperament and behavior of working with a theatrical group of people. The company manager works with a no-nonsense approach, cutting quickly to the core or bottom line of a matter. This often makes the manager appear impatient and abrupt. Some company managers are remembered as being loving, benevolent, or parent-like. Others are remembered by the company as being stern, manipulative, indirect, stingy, secretive, and seemingly uncaring of those who have been left in their charge.

Producer's Production Assistant

In recent times the title of producer's secretary or production secretary has changed to production assistant. This title is not to be confused with the title given to a young, aspiring fledgling who comes on to a show as a *runner* or *gofer*. For the sake of clarity, the producer's "secretary" will be called the *producer's production assistant*.

When it comes to organizing, administrating, making lists, and getting the job done, the producer's production assistant's work equals that of the SM. The greatest amount of work and contact the SM has with this person is during the two weeks before rehearsals begin. This is the time mandated by Equity for the SM to officially begin work on the show—the SM's *production weeks*. Before the SM begins working on the show, the producer's production assistant has more than likely gathered information that the SM will use in creating some of the charts, plots, plans, and lists.

Once rehearsals begin, and if the office is located away from the rehearsal hall, the SM and the producer's production assistant can become passing ships, maybe talking on the phone, exchanging notes, or having packets of information delivered to each other. The producer's production assistant knows as much about the company as the producer. It is good for the SM to know that the producer's production assistant often has the producer's confidence, can make suggestions or recommendations, and often can get the producer to take action on matters that might take others longer. It is wise and advantageous for the SM to have a friendly and amicable working relationship with the production assistant.

Casting Director

The SM's working relationship with the casting director usually is limited to audition time, which can be as long as ten days or as short as just a few hours on one particular day. Once the roles in the show have been cast and the show goes into rehearsals, the casting director is off to other projects.

Publicity: Press, Programs, and Photography

The SM's working relationship with one or more of these people is often limited to the rehearsal period in working out schedules for photo shoots, interviews, and appearances and in providing information for the program/play-bill. Otherwise, much of this group's work is done at their offices. After the opening of the show, these people usually fade from view and only the effects of their work are felt in the advertisement of the show and the number of people who come to see the show.

The SM can sometimes be confronted with a conflict in scheduling between the director and the publicity department; the director needs the actors for rehearsals, while publicity needs the same people for an interview, appearance, or photo shoot. The performer's rehearsal time each day is regulated by union rules, so when the publicity department has no choice but to cut into that time, the director can become quite unhappy. Directors want all the rehearsal time they can get. When such times arise, the SM needs to be as creative and inventive as possible, working out a schedule that services all parties.

Office Staff

These are the people who sit at their desks in the production office, hour after hour, day after day, doing the detailed work that all organizations need to do to be productive and remain solvent—creating schedules, budgeting, payroll, designing and laying out artwork for advertisements and the program, doing customer service for season tickets, putting together receptions, making opening-night performance gala events, and fund raising. Their work is highly beneficial to the show and to the company, but sometimes it goes unrecognized or is taken for granted. Often, key personnel of the office staff have been with the production company for a long time—some since its inception.

The SM's greatest contact with the staff comes in those two weeks before rehearsals while the SM does the pre-production work, because much of this beginning work is done at the office. The office staffers are usually generous in their help and welcome the SM, providing a workspace, supplies, and office equipment. Their interest and enthusiasm for the show usually are high and, at times, during the rehearsal period or during the run, they know as much about what is going on backstage as the SM. This group can be easily forgotten. At every opportunity, the SM should express to them thanks and appreciation.

Author, Composer, and Lyricist

Only when working a new show does the SM meet and work with some or all of these individuals. They may also take part in the revival or makeover of an old show. The SM's relationship with these people is more as a host in welcoming and accommodating them. When any of the creators are part of the rehearsal, the SM sees that a place is set where they can do their work and watch the rehearsal. The author usually is placed at the director's table or at a separate table near the director. The composer and lyricist are placed with or near the music director and rehearsal pianist. Most times these creators sit quietly and patiently throughout the day, letting everyone do their work while they make notes. From time to time they may have a conference with the director or go off to a private area with the producer and director. The results of those meetings usually are seen the next morning in the form of rewrites or changes. On occasion, the SM may have the opportunity to sit in on such meetings and witness their creative process. It can be quite rewarding and educational, and very exciting.

Director

For better or for worse, the working relationship between the director and the SM is like a marriage. The honeymoon can last forever, with the two working on many shows, or the honeymoon can be over in just a few days, each waiting for the *death do us part* of the relationship. To best work with a director, the SM must zero in on the individual and not make generalizations from having worked with other directors. Also, the SM must keep in mind that this marriage/working relationship is not a fifty-fifty proposition; the director always takes the lead and the SM follows. The SM can be the power behind the throne, but the director is always the king.

For the most part, directors are keyed-in and focused individuals. They seem to be no-nonsense people who like to work at bottom line with the SM. Most directors love their work, and some are driven and obsessed by it. By the time the SM and the director begin working together, the director usually knows the show and what he or she wants. It then

becomes a matter of the director passing that information on to the SM. However, this may not always be the case. Some directors may keep their vision contained and reveal it slowly and only as a thought comes up or *on a need-to-know* basis. If at any time the SM is not sure about something, ask, *inquire!* The best approach is to put the uncertainty on one's self and never in such a way that the director (or anyone else for that matter) is the blame for the uncertainty.

A Further Pledge of Allegiance, or More Conflict in Loyalty

We have already established Equity's and the producer's expectations of loyalty from the SM. Now enters the director, who also wants a pledge of allegiance. When all is going well in the rehearsal and all are working happily together, the SM straddles the fence of loyalty and allegiance with ease. However, if working conditions become less harmonious, the SM is again faced with the conflict of which master to serve. When in such a situation, the best SMs go immediately to neutral ground and place themselves firmly into the adult part of their personality where neither fears nor feelings, neither emotions nor ego, get in the way of their thinking and actions. The position of the SM puts them in the middle of any conflict between people, but they must be careful not to get pulled in. SMs may offer their expertise to help resolve some of the conflict, but must remain free to guide the ship while the captains and the admirals do battle.

The SM must learn to identify what is fact or fiction, drama or gossip, and not get caught up in the mob mentality where a thought or idea is presented and everyone runs with it without first seeing what might be the truth. Fortunately, at the start, student and beginning SMs do not have to deal with such matters, but it is the young and wise SM who stands off to the side listening and observing, seeing the dynamics of the matter and how the experienced SM handles such a situation.

The Pivotal Point

From the SM's point of view, the director is the pivotal point of the production, the leading force creatively and artistically and in expressing technical requirements. The producer has hired the director because the producer knows the director's work and ability. The producer allows the director the freedom to do that work but remains overseer and the artistic and financial controller. If there are differences of opinions between the producer and director, they usually work it out privately. The director's words should not be taken lightly or disregarded, and the SM must follow through on every suggestion and direction the director gives. As long as the director remains on the scene, the SM relinquishes all control to the director. A good SM learns with each director when to lead and when to work in the director's shadow.

Service versus Servant

The SM's working relationship with the director is to be one of *service* and not that of a *servant*. The difference between giving service and being a servant is a theme that will be repeated throughout this book. Directors sometimes forget and easily step over the line, expecting the SM to do things that are not in the line of service or part of the job. An SM must first know the job description well, decide what is service and what is being a servant, and then work firmly within those guidelines. The SM establishes these boundaries early in the working relationship with the director. The SM expresses them first by the way he or she works. If or when the director behaves in a way that is not acceptable to the SM, the SM at that time expresses a preference. Directors have learned that the world must revolve around them to get the job done. An SM must be highly accessible and available to the director, working by the director's side, anticipating the director's needs. An SM who chooses to get a cup of coffee for the director is being of service. Being expected to get the director a cup of coffee every time is being a servant and not part of the SM's job!

The Winging-It Director

No matter how fully prepared a director may be, they all work to some degree spontaneously or in an improvisational way. From time to time, an SM may work with a director who gives the illusion of working spontaneously but who is

in fact winging it, doing the creative work on the spot, while blocking the show with the performers. Some directors' genius lies in working this way. Others do it because they have not done their homework. A director who is good at working this way inspires the cast and everyone else at the rehearsal hall. Those who are not so good at it make the day long, the work tedious, and leave everyone tired and uninspired. An SM must learn to recognize the difference, and when the latter prevails it is the SM's job to talk with the producer and have the producer come to the rehearsals to make an evaluation.

Breaking the Director's Creative Flow

The task of directing a show is monumental, with many things to be thought about, created, designed, and detailed. Throughout the day the director is pulled in all directions, with people demanding his or her attention. During the rehearsal period, the main part of the director's day is to work with the cast in blocking and getting the show on its feet. This is highly creative and focused time. For some directors, this is sacred time. The SM must be sensitive to this and make every effort not to have this time disturbed or interrupted. Some directors can have their creative flow broken, change hats for a moment, and then return to their work with the cast. Others find interruptions highly intrusive and hold the SM responsible each time their creative process is broken.

It is also part of the SM's job, whenever possible, to keep the work process of other parts of the production flowing. There will be many times during the rehearsal period when someone needs to have the director's attention for information that only the director can supply. The SM must learn with each director the best window of opportunity to interrupt. Otherwise, the SM can be targeted and blamed for the interruption and become the target of the director's anger and frustration.

A Breach in Allegiance

Directors can also be indulgent, forgetting time, schedules, breaks, even the budget. The SM must be a watchdog, holding rein on the director in these areas, while looking out for the producer's best interest. This can become an even greater danger area for the SM, because directors expect freedom to do as they choose. A director may feel attacked, betrayed, and spied on by the SM. Most of all, the director may feel the SM's activities are a breach of the SM's allegiance. The SM must learn the tolerance and temperament levels of each director, and then tailor the approach in getting the director to work in the best interest of the show, the company, and the producer.

The Director's Patience Factor

The director's patience factor can vary with different groups or individuals. Directors most often allow the performers a greater amount of time and patience to assimilate, process, and do their jobs. With technical things, directors in general have less patience and expect quicker understanding, execution, and results. With the SM, the director's patience factor can be even less. Directors expect their SMs to be all-knowing about the production, anticipate their needs (if not their thoughts), have on-the-spot information, and just generally stand and deliver whatever is called for or needed at the moment.

SM in the Directorial Arena

Most SMs enter the field with a good working technical background. However, as SMs work on each show, they witness firsthand the creative and artistic process that each director goes through. Eventually, having worked enough shows, many SMs acquire a director's sense of their own. They come to know what works and what doesn't. Many times as the director works on the show, the SM is able to anticipate the director's next choice before the director makes it. Some SMs become skilled enough to go out and direct shows of their own.

Having a good working knowledge of directing is excellent information and skill for an SM, especially when it comes to working with the understudies or putting replacement actors in the show. However, producers, directors, and cast members do not want their SMs to be directors. They do want their SMs to be knowledgeable of directing so they

can maintain the level of performance, anticipate the director's needs and problems, and communicate with the performers in their terms. They don't want the SM's unsolicited opinion, but from time to time they will ask for it. Generally, an SM learns to stay out of the director's arena and, when invited in, expresses an opinion with care, keeping in mind that all artistic and creative work comes from a very personal place within each person. When an SM gives an opinion that might be contrary or critical, that SM is stepping into an ego zone where anything can be and will be taken personally.

Learning and Knowing Each Director

These few paragraphs written on the working relationship between an SM and the director are a good overview, but the SM does not go into the relationship with book in hand and expect things to be as they are written here. The relationship will be much more complicated, with some of the things we have discussed being practically nonexistent while others might be even more pronounced or outrageous. The best an SM can do is go into the relationship with each director being open and alert, ready to serve, doing the best job possible, and allow the relationship to grow professionally and naturally. Every SM does not click with every director. Some SMs and directors will bond and work together on many shows. Others will work together once and, in some of those situations, both will be glad when it is over.

Assistant Director

People who take on the role of an assistant director seem to take on the classical, textbook definition of what is expected from an assistant director: being helpful, assisting, giving service, knowing their place, and never outshining or rising above the director. Assistant directors are usually quiet, ever watchful, do not openly disagree, criticize, contradict, and give all suggestions and ideas in private. It is uncertain if these qualities and behaviors come automatically when a person agrees to be an assistant, or if they are acquired through experience. Perhaps directors choose assistants who already have these qualities. Whatever the case, most assistant directors are often quite capable of directing their own show, but when working as an assistant, choose to remain in the shadow of the director. Many times, only the director knows the assistant's true talent and capability. The SM's working relationship with the assistant director runs a parallel course. Both are present to help, assist, and serve the director, but the work they do seldom overlaps or crosses over.

Music Director

When working on a musical show, the SM will always work with a music director. Music directors seem to be the quieter members of the creative staff. In the rehearsal hall, they usually sit near the rehearsal pianist, waiting for their time to work with the performers. In their working relationship with SMs, music directors are the least demanding, requiring only a workspace in the rehearsal hall and time on the schedule to work with the cast. Most music directors are amicable and agreeable, bending and working around whatever schedule the director might choose for them. Once the music director is set up to work, it is not necessary for the SM to be there at every moment. Most music directors prefer to be the keeper of the score and orchestrations and remain responsible to distribute them to the cast and orchestra members. With such independence, the SM may at times inadvertently forget the music director. It is the SM's job to remember and give to the music director the same attention, service, and consideration given to the other members of the creative staff. On many shows, the music director will also be the conductor, and may also be the rehearsal pianist.

Rehearsal Pianist

This artist does not require a lot of the SM's time and attention. All the rehearsal pianist needs is a piano where the performers can be easily seen and heard and each day a copy of the schedule. On most musical shows there is one rehearsal pianist with the music director filling in when needed. On a large show, a new show, or a show heading for

Broadway, there can be as many as three: one working the main rehearsal room with the director, one with the choreographer, and a floater pianist who fills in wherever needed. Most rehearsal pianists dislike being referred to as the “piano player.” *Pianist* is the operative word.

During rehearsals each day, a good rehearsal pianist knows to stay at the piano and be ready at any moment to play. Sometimes a rehearsal pianist can sit at the piano for as long as an hour without having to play, but must remain there, ready. During these waiting periods, many of them read, do crossword puzzles, note music, or do personal business with a laptop computer. They are careful to do only text messaging and not be on their cell phones in whispered conversation.

Rehearsal pianists take their breaks whenever they can, which is usually when the actors take theirs. However, the SM should not forget the rehearsal pianist entirely. The SM should ask the rehearsal pianists if they have had a break, or thank them for taking breaks on their own and when it is convenient for everyone else.

The biggest problem an SM may have with a rehearsal pianist is a pianist who wanders off without first informing the SM. We know in certain instances and with some people the director’s patience and tolerance level is low, and this is especially true for a rehearsal pianist who is not present. The director will turn to the SM and hold the SM responsible for the pianist not being there.

Music Arrangers: Vocal, Dance, Orchestration, and Copyist

Only when working on a new show or the revival of an old show with new orchestrations and maybe some new songs does the SM get to work with these people, and even then the SM’s working relationship will be limited. The music director usually takes care of the business having to do with this group. From time to time, one or two of them may stop by the rehearsal to observe. It is during those times the SM extends the usual courtesies given to other staff members or visiting guests. For the most part, this group’s work is done outside the rehearsal hall and the results of their work are only heard in the final stages of rehearsals or in performance.

Choreographer

During rehearsals, when it comes time for scheduling and providing rehearsal rooms, the choreographer requires from the SM as much care and attention as does the director. The director’s and choreographer’s work are similar in that they both need time to create, experiment, improvise, teach, and clean up. When putting together the daily schedule, the SM must confer with the director and choreographer, and then carefully coordinate their schedules so there is no overlap or loss of time. Choreographers are agreeable in yielding to the director’s will in setting up the rehearsal schedule and, like the director, display a strong dislike in giving up any rehearsal time.

The Choreographer’s Needs from the SM

The choreographer needs music, which requires a piano and rehearsal pianist. It is the SM’s job to see that these things are provided and set up in the rehearsal room. On small-budget shows with only one pianist, the director and choreographer work out schedules to share. Some choreographers will work from a CD player with music that had been digitally recorded for them by the music director or even the rehearsal pianist. Choreographers may also want an SM to be with them to start and stop the music and to cue to either repeat the music or bring them to another track on the CD.

The choreographer likes to work in a room with mirrors. This works out well, because directors do not like working with mirrors; they feel it distracts the actors, who will watch their performances, sometimes sacrificing their best work in lieu of presenting their best image. The choreographer, on the other hand, wants the dancers to see the physical image they are presenting.

The choreographer also needs to have the outline of the stage taped on the rehearsal room floor, along with the floor plans of the different sets in which the dances take place. In addition, they like the dance numbers to be placed along the edge of the stage. These numbers enable the dancers to spot their positions and find their spacing as they move about in the dances.

The SM is also responsible for having at the rehearsal hall any props that are important to the dance. In most situations, once the choreographer is set up, the SM does not have to remain present at every moment. However, from time to time, either the PSM or the ASM should stop in to see if there is anything the choreographer needs.

Most choreographers bring to rehearsals a high level of energy that is positive and uplifting. Their enthusiasm is catchy. They are themselves dancers (or gypsies, as they affectionately call each other) and know how to work with their peers. Seldom do you hear the dancers complain that the choreographer is working them too hard.

Dance Captain and Swing Dancer

These can be two separate positions or one person performing both jobs, depending on the number of dancers in the show and how complicated the choreography is. In most cases the dance captain is hired as a dancer in the show and is paid extra to be dance captain. The work of the dance captain and swing dancer is very similar, but has different functions. The dance captain is responsible for learning all the choreography in the show. Like the SM, who is responsible for maintaining the blocking and artistic integrity of the show in the absence of the director, the dance captain is responsible for maintaining the staging and integrity of the dances in the absence of the choreographer. If at any time the choreography gets sloppy or needs to be changed, the dance captain can call a rehearsal to make the necessary adjustment.

The swing dancer also learns the choreography—more specifically, the choreography each dancer performs in the show. Then, if a dancer is unable to perform at any time, the swing dancer is put into that position.

In shows with a lot of dancing or a large number of dancers, a male and female swing dancer are hired, sometimes two or more of each. With shows where there is no swing dancer, the dance captain may fill in for a dancer who is missing, or adjust the choreography, cutting out the part for that performance. In situations where there is no dance captain or swing dancer, the dancers themselves will make the changes, with the SM overseeing the work.

The SM's work with the dance captain and swing dancer is mostly as it is with the rest of the performers in the company. When it is necessary for the dance captain or swing dancer to do their jobs, the SM acts more in an accommodating manner, organizing and coordinating, seeing that rehearsal time and space is made available and that the cast members involved are scheduled and informed. As changes are made, the SM sees how the changes affect the different parts of the show, and then informs the rest of the cast and crew. The SM is grateful to have a dance captain and swing dancers with the show. Many times changes that need to be made in the choreography are a last-minute affair due to some emergency. During such times, as the dance captain or swing dancers do their work, the SM continues to keep the company organized and informed and gets the show started with the least delay and trauma to the company.

Performers

The terms *performer*, *actor*, and *player* are used interchangeably, depending on a person's training in theatre and geographical location. The terms are all-encompassing, including stars, principal players, supporting characters, ensemble singers and dancers, walk-on roles, and extras—anyone who appears on the stage during a performance.

With the performer comes the SM's ultimate experience in working relationships. Performers require at all times the best an SM has to give—the best in business and in doing the job, being loving, caring, understanding, compassionate, and nurturing. Just as important, performers want their SM to be playful, fun-loving, and socially active.

Performers are a highly diverse group of individuals who have many similar characteristics, which makes it easy to group them together and generalize. The performers are the breath and character of the show and company. They are often childlike souls in adult bodies. To do their work well, performers must be in close contact with the child inside of them. Sometimes, however, they continue to live at that center, letting the child also dictate and rule in their business, behavior, and personal lives. Oftentimes, this is where the parental part of the SM must come into play, being loving, caring, and guiding, but also being the disciplinarian insisting that rules be followed and that all behave according to the standards of professional theatre.

For the most part, working with the performers will be a rewarding experience for the SM, filled with fond memories, great stories, and some very good friends. They can be a source of great love, fun, and pleasure, and at the same time a reservoir of annoyance, anger, aggravation, and frustration.

Performers: The Illusion of Being the Center

When the company of a show is assembled, performers seem to be the center around which everything revolves. The primary focus for the rehearsal period is the performers. The director appears to give more time and consideration to the performers. Without the performers, the script would not come alive. The costumes are made for the performers, and in most situations they can approve or disapprove a prop they must use. The audience sees the performers as the central figures. The reviews are mostly about the performers, and the more prestigious awards are given to the performers. With so much being directed toward this group of individuals in the company, it is easy to see how performers, to varying degrees, buy into the illusion that they are the center of the production.

The SM, who sees all parts of the production, of course has a wider view. It is important for the SM to be aware of the illusions of the performers and keep a proper perspective and balance in working with the entire company. The truth is, everyone in the company feels their work is central, and each is hoping to have their star shine. In a small way the SM is partially at fault for perpetuating feelings of importance, because in dealing with each person, the SM expresses the importance of their work and is generous with compliments, thanks, and appreciation when they do a good job.

A Double-Edged Life

The performer's life is probably the hardest, most double-edged of all within the company. For the most part, performers have the least power and control over the show, and yet they have placed upon them the greatest demands for its success. Their work is highly visible and each day they must do it with perfection. Here is where the double edge becomes sharper: performers can receive great acclaim for their work and have their careers accelerated to great heights, or, with severe judgment and critical review for one or two shows, their careers can plummet to oblivion. No one else in the company is subject to such scrutiny and loss for the work they do. Producers, directors, creators, or designers who create a theatrical disaster one season can emerge one or two seasons later from the rubble with another product, be acclaimed, and make theatre history.

Continuous Work for the Performer

The performers' feelings and emotions are the tools by which they work. Their bodies are the instruments through which they deliver. At the end of each workday, most members of the company can close their scripts, set aside their tools, and go home. Performers take home with them everything, including their scripts, which they must study to be ready for the next day's rehearsal. For a star, the work and responsibility can be greater and more intense.

Magnifying Feelings, Building into a Frenzy, and Peaking into Mob Mentality

Given the dramatic nature of many performers, in their everyday professional life some will allow their feelings and emotions to become magnified as they do when on stage. This kind of behavior can be carried into the theatre, and sometimes the performers will group together and work themselves into a frenzy over a particular thing. An SM needs to know this about performers, and during times when feelings are running high, the SM must evaluate the situation for its true nature, and then carefully and lovingly bring the performers back to a base of reality. By knowing that some performers have this tendency, the SM can head off situations as they develop. To keep a finger on the pulse of the performers and on the pulse of the company, the SM must establish and maintain open communication where the performers can feel free to express themselves without judgment or recrimination. It helps too if the SM is socially active with the performers.

Putting the SM to the Test

It is in the performer's nature to please, be professional, and do the right thing. There will be some, however, who will put the SM to the test, first by exerting their *will*, and then by seeing how far they can go in bending or breaking the rules. The SM will need to be fair, honest, and understanding and will need to display compassion, but at the same time hold firm to the rules and be consistent in their execution, making them effective for all.

Giving Performance/Acting Notes

It is the SM's job to keep the show intact and at the level of performance set by the director. For the most part, performers do not intentionally change their performances but work to improve them. In their search for perfection, some will take direction from almost anyone who offers it: the SM, another cast member, a member of their family, a fan, or even a maid at the hotel. Sometimes the changes become a departure from what was originally set and intended by the director. Enter the SM to give a performance note.

Most performers are quite receptive to receiving performance notes from the SM. They like having someone watching over the show. However, receiving a performance note is a very personal matter for a performer. Each performance comes from within. Sometimes a judgment or criticism of their work is received and filtered through their feelings or ego. From the start, the SM gives acting notes with great care and concern, being selective in the approach and choice of words. The SM is clear and specific, stating what has been observed and not what the performer did wrong. The SM allows the performer to speak and is careful not to get into a confrontation, even if the performer is heading in that direction. As part of the closure, the SM reminds the performer of how things were originally set by the director and asks if the performer can return to that way. Under no circumstances does the SM try to direct or redirect an actor. If an acting note requires directing, the SM must first confer with the producer and director, then give the note as if it came from the producer or director.

For those performers who receive a performance note from the SM and make a change, be it right or wrong, the SM should acknowledge the performer's efforts, express thanks and appreciation, and take the opportunity to correct anything that is still not right. For those who persist in doing as they choose, it is time for the SM to talk with the director and get a final decision.

Star Performers

All that has been said about the nature of performers applies to star performers as well, but with more of everything. Most star performers live and work at extremes. It seems that everything in their lives is larger, has more importance, and is done with greater intensity.

Stars are very important people to the show. Their power and attraction often are what keep the show alive. Sometimes even a show that should have failed and become part of obscurity is successful because of the star performer. If it were not for this power, producers would not pay star performers the amounts of money they do, nor would they tolerate some of the things that can sometimes come with a star.

Stars, however, do not always make the show. There have been many cases where the show has made the star. The star of a show could also be the writer, composer, director, choreographer, or producer. On one or two occasions, even the sets and costumes have become the stars. However, it is the *performing* star in whom we are most interested.

No two stars are the same. Their backgrounds, personalities, and motivating forces can be extremely varied. The reasons for a star performer's success and rise to stardom can range from being a brilliant, multitalented genius to a complete mystery as to how they became a star in the first place.

Every SM who works "star shows" will come upon a unique combination of star personalities along with a few interesting stories to tell. For the most part, star performers have gotten a bad rap. The few outrageous ones have left a legacy that most other stars must live down. It is for those outrageous few that an SM must go into training and be prepared. When a star is all the wonderful things a star should be, the SM cannot help but want to treat that person with special consideration, sometimes going beyond the line of service. On the other hand, when a star is all the horror stories that have been told, the working situation can become a nightmare for both the SM and the company. Stars often set the tone and atmosphere of the company, in both the performance and backstage. Some stars will keep their dressing room doors open for all to come and visit and chat, while others will create fear and tension, having people walk and talk in whispers, staying mostly behind closed dressing room doors.

A Star's Need for Support

All stars are hardworking individuals who have great demands put on them. The roles they play are usually large and complicated, and sometimes rigorously demanding. Their work often goes beyond the rehearsal hall and stage. The demand for star publicity is never ending. A star's business obligations (that often look social) can take up a good portion of his or her personal time. Ultimately, the success or failure of the show rests upon the star's shoulders. To accomplish and succeed in all parts of their life, star performers need a strong and highly dependable support system both in personal matters and professionally. To ensure their support and success while working in a show, they will often have with them an entourage of people. In addition, everyone in the company must work toward their star's success.

The SM champions star support by first redefining the line between giving service and being a servant. For the star, the SM broadens this scope, providing the star with a little more service. The idea of treating all performers equally does not apply when it comes to star treatment. However, the SM, as well as other people in the company, may overdo this star treatment and extend themselves beyond the call of duty. SMs will have greater success with star performers if they keep their attention and work focused on providing strong support and consideration to the stars, continue to do their job in the professional manner expected by all, and let their relationships with the stars develop naturally.

The Power and Control of the Star

Stars have more power and control over the show, their performance, and their professional lives than do any of the other performers in the show. Some stars use their power with grace and ease, working it to its maximum effectiveness for themselves, for the benefit of the show, and many times for the people around them. Other stars wield their power and control like a terrible, swift sword to satisfy themselves, get what they want, or maintain what they are fearful of losing. Stars have learned what works for them and what keeps them stars. If ego, some dysfunction, fear, and possibly a diminishing career are added into the star's life, an SM may be working with a star who is out of control and abusing power. If the picture painted appears bleak, that is because sometimes it can be.

I Have Seen a star performer rip a costume because she disliked the design. I have seen a star performer fling a prop into the audience during a dress rehearsal with little regard for who was seated in the theatre. I have seen holes cut in sets for new doorways because the side on which the star was entering was not his most flattering side. I have seen beaming lights placed at the foot of the stage, much to the lighting and set designer's horror, so an aging star could maintain some illusion of youth. Much to my surprise, I have witnessed a star performer come off stage in the middle of performance and beat on the SM, calling him some very descriptive and profane names, because she thought he missed a light cue.

Star performers can often get away with things for which another performer would be fired on the spot or at least highly reprimanded, and maybe not hired again. No matter how difficult star performers might be, if they can draw in an audience and make lots of money for the show, they will be hired again and again.

The last chapter of this book is a detailed story about a star performer and the SM.

Giving Stars Performance/Acting Notes

There will come a time in every SM's life when a performance note must be given to a star. Most stars are receptive and appreciative of the SM's work, care, and concern for the show. On occasion they may even ask the SM to pay particular attention to a scene so the SM can give an opinion or make a suggestion. Other times, a star's response to a performance note from the SM is coldness or deadly silence—sometimes both. There is, of course, not much an SM can do about a star's response to a performance note, except continue to do the job of maintaining the performance. However, an SM can deflect or lessen an adverse reaction by first following the same rules as when giving notes to other performers and, second, by staying out of directing or redirecting. In addition, the SM must build with the star performer a performance-note-giving relationship.

In creating a note-giving relationship with a star, the SM starts with notes concerning technical things in the show and at the same time makes complimentary comments on a particular scene, an acting moment, or an audience reaction. The SM lets the star see that these observations are from a professional standard and are not personal or ego related. Most of all, in giving a star a performance note, the SM must keep in mind at all times that star performers have built their fame and success on who and what they are, what they do in a performance, and what the audience expects when they come to see a particular star. The SM must be intrinsically aware of the persona and style of the star and guard against giving notes that criticize or try to change that part of the performance, even if it seems wrong for the show or the character. The SM can express observations and thoughts to the director or producer, but then leaves whatever changes need to be made to either of them. For the most part, star performers stay pretty much within the framework of what was set and agreed on by the director and themselves during rehearsals. During performance, they will refine, improve on, or embellish, but not enough to cause the SM concern.

Delivering Messages to Stars

Delivering messages to the star is a common occurrence for the SM. There will be times when the SM must deliver messages that are from someone else, are of a negative nature, and may illicit an adverse reaction from the star. These kinds of messages often come from the producer or director, who choose not to deliver the message themselves and make it the responsibility of the SM. For anyone else in the company who wants such a message delivered to the star, the SM would merely ask them to deliver their own message. Sometimes a message filled with anger and expletives is given to the SM. SMs who deliver these messages as dictated will surely find themselves victims of “Off with the Messenger’s Head Syndrome.” To protect yourself and lessen an adverse reaction, clean up these messages. Deliver the bottom-line words without the feelings and descriptive adjectives. Before presenting the message, clearly establish who is sending the message and that you are only the messenger.

Each star performer has a unique combination of sanity or madness. An SM’s experience with star performers will be twofold. Some will be warm, loving, and memorable and the star may even become a friend. With others, the SM will be glad to have the show close and hope that their paths never cross again.

Children Performers

With shows like *Matilda the Musical*, *Billy Elliot*, *Fun Home*, *Annie*, *Oliver*, *The Children’s Hour*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The King and I*, the SM is faced with an additional and unique group of performers—children. This is a highly selective group of people. They usually are brighter and more knowledgeable than other children of the same age, and usually are more adult in their manner, speech, and social interactions. At the same time, they remain children.

In dealing with this particular group, the SM must always keep in mind that these are children as well as professional actors. Establish an adult professional working relationship with them, but during times of play, fun, and creativity, allow them to meet the child within yourself. With this group, the SM walks a fine line between the two worlds and is clear when it is time to be adult and work and when it is time to be a kid and play. At times, other members of the company, including the director or producer, may forget that these performers are still children and expect immediate and adult-like results. The SM watches for these moments and, if expectations are too high, reminds the adults that they are dealing with children and asks them for a little more tolerance.

The Parents

With the children come parents. This too is a unique group. Some may be professional stage parents knowing all the rules, regulations, and professional standards governing children, and others will be experiencing their first time with their child in a production. From the start, the SM establishes a caring and respectful working relationship with the parents. In addition, the SM not only displays a loving, caring, and professional attitude toward their children but allows the parent to see the inner child of the SM playing and having fun with their kids.

As a rule, parents are not allowed to sit in the rehearsal room to watch as their children work, unless the child is an infant or under the age of three or four. When parents are present, children work differently. Directors want the child’s

full attention, and they want to be in control without the child looking to the parent for approval. With this in mind, it is the SM's job to set up a room in which the parents can stay if they choose to remain at the rehearsal complex. If at all possible, this should be a place with some comfort and amenities, even if it is as simple as providing them each day with fresh drinking water.

There are many stories to be told of the doting stage parent. Most have been blown up and exaggerated. However, sometime during a career an SM may work with one or two of these stage parents and end up having a few stories of his or her own to tell. In dealing with this kind of a parent, the SM remains neutral, maintaining a civil and professional relationship, keeping the parent out of the rehearsal room, and directing all problems or complaints the SM cannot handle to the producer.

The Teacher/Social Worker

On the days the children are required to be at rehearsals, there are laws in each state that require a teacher and social worker to be present. It is the teacher's job to keep the children up on the studies they would ordinarily be having if they were attending their regular school. The social worker is required to ensure that living and working conditions are suitable for children. In many cases, one person is trained and qualified to perform both jobs, a feature producers prefer (as it saves them from paying two salaries). With the presence of a teacher/social worker, the SM must set up still another room—a room conducive to study and doing schoolwork. Again, the SM is accommodating and considerate of the needs of this particular part of the production.

The Child Wrangler

Besides the social worker/teacher and parents there is the child wrangler, more professionally classified as the *professional guardian*. The term *wrangler* describes the nature of this guardian's work. The wrangler keeps the children (up to sixteen or eighteen years of age, depending on the state in which the child is employed) together (wrangled) and organized. He or she is there to work with the children, aid them personally and professionally, monitor them, help them, and guide them. While the job might appear to be a *babysitting* position, it is much more than that and most professional guardians dislike that description of their work. It probably is best for the SM to stick with the title *professional guardian*, although I suspect the terms *wrangler*, *kid wrangle*, and *child wrangler* will be the ones most commonly used by the people in the company. The wrangler will sit in on rehearsals, sees what the director has directed, and if needed later aid the child in performing his or her part. The child wrangler position has its roots in film and TV, but crossed over when theatre producers saw the value of the work they do. In 2012 they became recognized by IATSE (the stage technician's union) and have been included within the costume/wardrobe department of a production.

The Wrangler's Greatest Help to the SM

The SM does not have the time to deal with the day-to-day, moment-to-moment time that is required in having children in the production, other than dealing with them as the SM does with *all* the performers in the cast. This is where the wrangler steps in. Besides keeping these young performers working in a professional manner, beside seeing that their dressing room is kept orderly and costumes are hung and respected, during the down times, the wrangler sees that homework gets done, and for fun he or she might bring in crafts or games, but *always* being aware of the needs of the production. Even greater help to the SM is during performance, when the wrangler keeps the children together, sees they are properly costumed and dressed, sees they are on stage ready to make their entrances, and is there as they exit to lead them back to their dressing room and out of harm's way backstage.

Actors' Equity

An SM's working relationship with Actors' Equity can be as extensive as each SM chooses. SMs can take an active part on some of Equity's service boards or panels, or can limit contact to the times they are working on shows that

come under Equity contracts.

There are some very specific contractual terms that Equity has established for the SM. It is an absolute order that SMs, beginner or experienced, young or old, come to know this part of the contract as well as that they come to know the play on which they are working.

Equity has created with producers many different types of contracts (more than forty-four) to financially accommodate the producers, depending on the type of show, the venue, its location, and the number of people the theatre is capable of seating. These contracts have many different names, including LORT, HAT, TYA, Waiver, Special, Dinner Theatre, Regional, Stock, Touring, National, and thirty-six others. There is, however, the granddaddy of them all, the one performers and SMs dream of having, a **Broadway production contract**. Each of these contracts has a different pay scale, with the production and Broadway contract paying the highest salaries.

While Actors' Equity's primary function is to negotiate, administrate, mediate, watch over each production seeing that the rules and regulations are followed, and generally guard its members against poor working conditions and unscrupulous producers, through its website Equity also offers information on shows being cast and work available in all parts and regions of the country.

The Equity Deputy

To aid Equity in the monumental task of watching over each company of performers and to keep the performers in direct contact with the Equity office, the performers of each company elect from within their ranks an Equity deputy. In large casts, such as in musicals, two or three deputies may be elected. The deputy is responsible to the cast and Equity, and keeps Equity informed by weekly reports. If a problem among the performers or with the producer arises, the Equity deputy usually is the first to step in trying to resolve the problem before bringing in representatives or officials from the Equity office.

As we know, the SM also works on behalf of Equity and the performers. The SM's greatest contact with the Equity office usually comes during the week before the first rehearsal (the SM's pre-production work). At that time the SM is in contact with the Equity field representative assigned to the show, confirming cast members' names and social security numbers. Then, on the first day of rehearsals, the first hour is devoted to Equity business with the field representative present at the rehearsal hall. The field rep is there to see that all the performers' contracts are signed before they begin rehearsing and to bring all actors up to date on their membership dues. After the first week of rehearsals, the SM deals with Equity on an as-needed basis. If, for the run of the show, things go smoothly and whatever small problems arise are resolved by the Equity deputy, the SM may never need to talk with the Equity office. On the other hand, some productions will require the SM to be on the phone with Equity daily, sometimes two or three times in a day.

Designers

Through pictures, renderings, scale models, floor plans, and plots, designers are to the SM a bridge of understanding as to what things will be and what things will look like before they are made and set up in the theatre. Once the SM has this vision and knowledge in mind, the SM then becomes the bridge to the cast as to what things will be and what things will look like. The SM can do this by bringing in the scale model of the set (if there happens to be one) or pictures of the set, or by hanging costume renderings and floor plans on the rehearsal room wall.

In addition, the SM keeps the designers informed of meetings and schedules and relays all changes that the director might make that affect the designers' work.

Technicians

The technicians' job is more in assembling the technical elements of the show and executing cues than in creating and designing. However, within the scope of their work, technicians need to be creative and artistic to provide what is needed for the show. Technicians are very practical, nuts-and-bolts, bottom-line-type people. They want it said plainly and simply, in terms that leave no room for misunderstanding or interpretation. For example, to explain to a technical department head or to the stage technicians that, in a particular scene change, "The set pieces and backdrop are to

glide off stage as if in a dreamlike state, and are to subconsciously disappear from view without the audience being aware,” is futile dialogue and possible death in the SM’s working relationship with the crew. However, if the SM says the set pieces and backdrop should move off stage slowly, on the SM’s cue, in a ten-count, and asks that the drop and set pieces travel off at the same time, the SM will get the desired results. The SM takes responsibility for the artistic look while the technicians remain responsible for executing the work.

SM—Leader of the Crew?

In all professional situations, the SM is not the leader of the technical departments and crew. Only in some community and academic situations does the SM take on some or all of the leadership of the crew and technical elements of the show. In professional theatre there is a definite separation between the SM’s job and what the technicians do. There is no crossover or overlap of work. The stagehands’ union, IATSE, has clearly defined the work that technicians do. An SM who crosses over this line in any way will be quickly reminded of the line and asked to stop. If the SM continues to overstep the boundaries, the SM will be reported to the producer and IATSE and censured for this behavior. The only working relationship the SM has with the technical departments and crew is to get assurance from the department heads that the technical work will be completed according to schedule and the obligation to provide them with the information they need to do their work. They want the SM to be organized, coordinate their work with the work of the director and actors, see that there are no conflicts or delays, answer their questions, and during the performance call the cues with perfect timing.

The Union Brotherhood: Protective and Defensive

The SM will find the brotherhood of stagehands (stage technicians) strong, protective of its members, and sometimes defensive. The SM will find most department heads and stage technicians extremely professional and proficient in their jobs. From time to time an SM may run into one or two who are less professional, appearing discontented with their jobs. Some will be negative or argumentative while others will seem to question and challenge every request the SM makes. Most times these same people would rather spend an hour telling the SM why a thing cannot be done than spend twenty minutes finding a way to put into effect what has been asked of them. Also, some crew members have learned the art of stretching twenty minutes’ worth of work into an hour. Others have learned the craft of disappearance. This sort of behavior and way of working can be frustrating to the SM, especially when working on a tight schedule or facing a director or producer who is questioning why the work backstage is taking so long to get done.

If the SM finds a stage technician’s poor work is having an effect on any part of the production, the SM never deals directly with the individual but goes to the individual’s supervisor or department head. However, the SM must be prepared. Sometimes, in a line of defense for the union brother, the supervisor or some of the other stagehands will discount the SM’s complaint, perhaps even suggesting that the SM’s observation is incorrect. For the SM to stand and argue is useless and unproductive. The SM gets best results by doing a turnaround, perhaps offering to take a second look. In this retreat, the SM moves into a strong position. The brothers see that the SM is alert, not afraid to stand up for what is needed for the show, and at the same time, they are reminded of the standard and professional quality of work the SM expects. In addition, the brothers usually clean up the deficiency brought to their attention—the SM’s original goal.

Bear in Mind: While I spend time telling what a delinquent stage technician might do, this should not be a reflection on all the other stage technicians. In fact one of the greater pleasures an SM can have is the relationship with the crew. It is just that these delinquents are maddening and frustrating to the SM, who has very little control or recourse in rectifying the situation.

Using Psychology with the Crew

Maintaining a working relationship with the crew and technical department heads sometimes requires psychology. The SM can be assertive but must never show aggression or exert power or control. The wise SM knows when to pull back and not let ego get in the way, when to ask questions, how to point out mistakes, and when and where to tell people they are wrong. The SM must be observant as the crew goes about their work, saying very little and stepping in only when a grievous mistake is about to be made that could cost time, money, or damage. The SM gives an opinion when it is important and knows when it is important to have the other person's opinions be the last word. The SM also knows when to apologize, when to admit to a lack of knowledge or a mistake. In taking this approach, the SM often gets the wanted results, maintains a good working relationship with the crew, and knows inside that he or she is still in control.

Gaining Respect from the Crew

Once the show gets into technical rehearsals and performance, the SM spends most of the working time backstage. The SM and the crew work in parallel positions, each observing the other at work. From the start, department heads and crew members honor the SM's position. With each SM with whom the crew has not previously worked, there is a period of time during which they observe the SM's every move. They want to see if the SM knows the job and does it well. They want to see the SM's temperament, way of working with people, and just generally the kind of a person the SM is. When an SM meets with the crew's approval and gains their respect, that SM gains an army of support that will aid and assist in all technical matters and problems. They will save the SM who calls a poorly timed cue, or maybe misses a cue entirely. They will back him and defend a well-liked SM whose work is being disputed or judged, and they will carry the message of good work to the SM's superiors. On the other hand, if their respect for the SM is less than 100 percent, they will continue to respect the position, continue to do their jobs to the highest professional degree, and never do anything to hurt the show, but they will not lend their aid, support, or backing during the times when the SM might need it most.

Technicians and Artists: Sometimes a Gulf or Separation

Both the cast members and members of the crew are highly social and enjoy having a good time. It is rewarding for the SM to see the cast and crew mixing and socializing. Sometimes, however, there seems to exist an unspoken separation or hidden gulf between the two. The feelings may arise when the SM least expects it. It may occur between two people or one group against the other.

A major cause of this gulf or separation lies in the appearance that the performers seem to get preferential treatment. Perhaps from the crew's point of view, the cast appears to be pampered and gets more time to do their work, receives more credit for the success of the show, or is rewarded in more demonstrative ways. The technicians get a moment of thanks but then seem to be forgotten for their continuous work and are sometimes taken for granted. The gap is widened further when cast members act and behave as if they are privileged and are the center of the production. There is not much an SM can do to change this interaction, except to be watchful, heading off potential situations or soothing over moments before they have time to fester and grow.

A Possible Solution: In thinking ahead on this matter between performer and stage technician, the SM could possibly head off any bad situations if on the last day of rehearsals, just before moving into the theatre, as he or she reminds the cast of the riggers of technical rehearsals, the SM also reminds them that while they have had intensive weeks of rehearsals to learn the show and do their part, the stage technicians are given only a few days to learn and perfect theirs, and that maybe a *moment of thanks* or *expression of appreciation* for their work can go a long way.

The SM can also do his or her part by continually extending to the crew praise, thanks, and appreciation, both personally and publicly. Also, if perhaps the director is not of the mind to have some sort of a meet-and-greet moment between the crew and the cast on the first day of technical rehearsals, the SM might make the suggestion that an hour of time be set aside at the top of the day to do so.

Saving Face

In the world of relationships, the terms *caretaking* and *rescuing* are in most cases negative, especially when they enable another person to continue a behavior that is harmful or destructive. SMs are continually warned against such interaction in their working relationships. It is strongly and wisely suggested that the SM keep all workers responsible for their work, behaviors, and actions. There are times, however, when it is beneficial to the show, the company, working relationships, or just an individual for the SM to break this rule and do a little rescuing or caretaking.

Coming from the traditions of some Asian cultures, the art of *saving face* is an excellent tool in working with the technical crew and, for that matter, with all people in the company. There will be times when people have made a bad judgment, worked in error, or just plain forgotten to do a particular thing and, for whatever reason, are unable to accept the responsibility for their actions; perhaps they are unable to face the pain of shame and embarrassment. The observant SM sees the inner turmoil and quickly determines the severity and importance of the incident. If a little rescuing or caretaking seems beneficial, the SM can step in to help a person save face by diminishing the severity of the incident, offering resolutions or alternatives, or taking the responsibility for the situation. Sometimes those involved are not the least bit aware of the SM's manipulation. Other times, all parties see clearly what is happening and go along, doing a little rescuing and caretaking themselves. There are times when the SM works in unorthodox ways to bring positive results that are beneficial to the show and the members of the company.

Technical Director

The technical director (TD) is the lead technical position backstage, overseeing all the technical aspects of the show. The TD and the PM (production manager) are the right and left hands of the show. Where one's job leaves off, the other's comes in. TDs are hired for their exacting training, experience, skill, and knowledge, and it is the wise PM who knows when to lead and when to step back and take advice.

The TD is in charge of the crew, has the final word on all technical matters, works out the crew's schedules, handles all the crew's business, and is responsible for technically setting up the show and taking it down at the end of its run. The TD, along with the head carpenter, the head of the rail, and the automation operator work out the logistics of the scenery changes. During the performance, the TD oversees, while the carpenter, head of rail, and automation operator work with their crews to execute the cues for the scene changes. These departments all work in close association with each other, especially when setting up the show in the theatre and taking it down—the *drag-in* and *drag-out*, sometimes called the *load-in*, *load-out*, depending on the part of the company in which you are working.

Almost always, the SM defers to the TD's word or decision on technical matters. However, any decisions that affect the artistic integrity of the show, and in the absence of the producer and director, the SM has the final say on. Whenever possible, the artistic integrity of the show should prevail and the TD should defer to the SM. In theory, this is an ideal approach. In reality, the SM may run into times when the TD feels that a technical decision is greater or more important than the artistic integrity and will resist deferment. If a compromise cannot be reached, the matter may have to be brought to the producer. At the end of this chapter there is a story titled "Maintaining Artistic Integrity" that demonstrates such a situation. Of course, in all matters of safety versus artistic integrity, the SM maintains safety first. However, if the SM feel that while maintaining safety, an important element of the show is lost, the SM must talk with the director and producer on choices to be made.

Head Carpenter and Automation Department

While the head carpenter is in charge of the set/scenery moves and the stage technicians who do this work, the head carpenter also works hand in hand and in close proximity with the person running the computerized automation moves.

The carpentry department and automation are responsible for putting up the set, taking it down, and keeping it in repair. Depending on the size of the show and the amount of scenery, the head carpenter may also have an assistant. On touring shows, the head carpenter, the assistant, and the automation operator travel with the show but pick up a crew in each town, which is called the *local crew*. The SM's greatest work and association with the carpenters and automation comes during technical rehearsals when setting cues for the scene changes and during performance should

there be problems in scenery moving. During *techs* (technical rehearsals) these departments decide what pieces of scenery need to be moved first, and it is the SM who writes the cues into the prompt book accordingly.

TD/Head Carpenter Positions Combined

On small shows or shows where the producer is working on a limited budget, the positions of TD and head carpenter may be rolled into one. The producer may pay the individual filling both positions a little more money, but still saves, especially with a touring show where travel and living expenses must be paid to each person traveling.

Head Flyman or Head of the Rail

The head of the rail is in charge of the drops, curtains, pieces of scenery, or things that hang from above the stage and fly in and out during the performance. During the drag-in, because the things that hang in the flies require the entire stage to be empty to be hung, the rail is the first department to set up and, conversely, cannot *strike* until the scenery on the *deck* (stage) is removed.

The SM's greatest amount of work with this department comes during performance when calling cues. The crew members working the rail are often highly dependent on the SM for calling an impeccably well-timed show, because in the execution of many of their cues they are working *blind*—that is, they cannot see when the actors or scenery on the stage are clear and it is safe for them to pull the ropes to execute their cues. On the other hand, the SM is often in a better position to see. If the SM makes a mistake and nearly causes an accident, the head flyman and crew can be very hard on the SM. They are highly concerned about the safety of the people on stage and concerned with protecting the scenery from damage. They allow or accept very little space for error.

Head of Props (Propman, Prop Master, or Property Master)

From what has been covered in this book thus far, it should be obvious that there is a close working relationship between the SM and the prop department. The SM creates the prop list, is responsible during rehearsals to set up the props for the day's work, keeps both the prop master and the prop list up to date, and before each performance checks to see that all props are in place after the prop person has set them. Once the prop master and crew take over, the SM relinquishes control and authority over the props, but continues to keep the prop master informed of all changes. During technical rehearsals and sometimes in the first week of performance, the prop department is often bombarded with changes or gathering more props. In addition, this department is asked to provide personal services to the star, producer, director, and even the SM—services that are not always part of the prop person's job description. A good SM is aware of this, and at every opportunity offers assistance and is free in expressing thanks and appreciation to the prop department.

Electrical Department (Lighting) and Projection

Like the automation department joining forces with the carpenters and scenery moves, the projection department has joined with the electric department. Each has its own technicians who set up the lights and projection units, each has its own operators in executing cues during the performance, and in technical rehearsals, each is set up at their own production table out in the audience as the cues are being set. The SM has very little dealings with the projection department except in technical rehearsals when the cues are being set and written into the SM's prompt script.

Lighting Designer

The SM is tied in a little more with the electric department by way of the lighting designer. In the last week of rehearsals, the SM sets a time for the designer and the designer's assistant to come to the rehearsal hall to see a run-

through of the show so they can possibly tweak their lighting design and also begin setting light cues. In professional shows, the SM is not responsible for anything that has to do with the light design, the light plot, the hanging of lights, or the creation of light cues; the SM's only job is to note the light cues in the calling script, as dictated by the designer and director, and then during the performance call the cues with impeccable timing. Once the show opens, the designer and the designer's assistant's work is done. If by chance you are working in a regional theatre somewhere, the SM may find a more collaborative situation where the lighting director welcomes the SM's input and placement of cues. Never in my experience in any of my production contracts did I find that to be true.

Head Electrician

The SM may meet the head electrician and crew for the first time during the drag-in when the lights are being hung for the show. To hang the lights for a show, the electrical department, like the fly department, needs to have an empty stage. The electrical department is also first in setting up, sharing the empty stage and time with the fly department.

Computer Light Board Operator

Before computers were used to execute the light cues during a performance, the light boards were large and bulky and required several operators. The light board operators included the head electrician, an assistant, and a number of crew members, depending on the size of the show and the number of cues to be executed. Today, the head electrician or assistant are the only individuals needed to operate the lights for the show.

The lighting and movement of lights during a performance are highly visible to the audience and can have a great effect on them emotionally and psychologically. The timing and execution of light cues become very important to the show, and mistakes in this area can take away from the performance. When the old light boards were used, the operators manually worked the levers that faded the lights in and out. Their timing was just as important as the SM's in calling the cues. It was very important that the SM and the head light board operator not only have a good working relationship but also be connected to each other's timing.

Today, computers have the timing for movement of the lights programmed into them, and the simpatico relationship between the SM and light board operator is not as important and has become more one-sided, with the light board operator merely punching a key on the SM's cue. It is the light board operator's job to follow the SM's lead. At the end of this chapter there is another story titled "Electrical Storm" that shows what can sometimes happen in the working relationship between the SM and the light board operator.

Spotlight Operators

Spotlights are almost always used in musical shows. At the beginning of *tech week*, the operators of the *spots* are usually the part of the electrical crew that hangs and focuses lights. Then once the light cues have been set and are ready to be executed, the spotlight operators move up to the spotlight booths, usually at the back of the house, sometimes up in the rafters of the theatre ceiling, and on occasion even above the stage up in the flies.

The lighting designer and director set the spotlight cues with the operators. Most times they make the spotlight operators responsible for executing their cues on their own during the performance. On occasion, the lighting designer or director wants the SM to call all spotlight cues. Calling spotlight cues adds considerably to the SM's workload during a performance. In a show with many cues to call, the SM welcomes the times when the spotlight operators execute their own cues, but when the lighting designer or director decides that the SM must call them, the SM is professionally bound to do as they choose.

Assisting the Electrical Department

On some touring shows where the time between one city and the next is short and the setup of the show must be done within a limited number of hours, the SMs may be asked to assist the electrical department in focusing the lights—that is, help in setting the lights so they shine down on the stage in the proper place, lighting the areas they were designed

to cover. The SM's job is to stand on the stage in the center of each area where the light is to shine and tell the technician above adjusting the light when the hot spot or most intense part of the light is shining into the SM's eyes.

The SM's Working Knowledge of Lighting: While at one time it was good for the SM to have a working knowledge of how the lights were set up and operated, with the technological advancements of moving lights, LED light units, and the small and massive projection units of today, the SM should have at least a general knowledge of how these things work as well as their application in the design of the stage and the play. In academic studies, a person considering becoming an SM can take a lighting course, and in the professional arena, the SM can ask as many questions as necessary to learn more. The lighting designer, head electrician, or any crew member in this department is more than willing to share knowledge and expertise with someone who expresses interest in this work.

Sound Department—Designer and Technical Head

Many theatres, including League of Resident Theatres and Broadway productions, are required to hire IATSE sound designers, especially with an original show. However, the work of the SM with the sound department is more with the technical head and the person who will be running sound during the performance.

As was noted in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," the SM's working relationship with the sound department begins early in rehearsals by providing a list of sound effects for the show and keeping the sound department informed of additional sound effects, the timing of the effects, or any changes the director might make. The head of this department may also be the designer, the person who does the recording, and the person who operates the sound during the show, or there may be a different person for each job. During performance, the SM works closely with the person operating the sound. This is the person who executes the sound effect cues the SM calls. In addition, the sound operator *mixes* the sound, controlling the levels of the various *mics* being used on the stage.

During the setup of a show, the sound department often waits until most of the other technical equipment is set on stage before they lay in their own. Being nearly the last to set up, sometimes when the other departments run into a problem they cut into the sound department's setup time. By this time, according to the schedule, the show should be ready to rehearse or even go into performance. It is the SM's job to be watchful, pushing to bring the work back on schedule, regardless of the problems that have existed. During this time, the SM must approach the sound department with caution and diplomacy. They know they are behind and the SM's presence is an added pressure. An SM who is not careful may bear the brunt of the frustration and anger of the head of sound or the crew.

IATSE: The Stagehand's Union

We cannot talk about technicians, stagehands, or the crew members without having a word about their union. Actors' Equity is to the performers as IATSE is to the stagehands. This union is strong, tolerating little to no bending or infractions of its rules and agreements made with the producers.

An SM's dealings with this union are limited to knowing rules and regulations governing work hours, breaks, mealtime, overtime, golden hours (that means double pay, sometimes triple), and when penalty payments go into effect. A young SM just out of academic or community theatre learns quickly not to do any technical work, even if it's simply to pick up a broom to help sweep. The union's thinking is that if someone other than a union member needs to lend a hand, then the producer needs to hire another union member to handle the workload.

Costume/Wardrobe Department

The costumes for a show are either created by a designer and made from scratch or are chosen from racks at a costume shop/house and rented. While in this stage, these garments are referred to as *costumes* and seldom as *wardrobe*. It is not until they have been assembled, are tailored to fit the various performers, and are at the theatre ready to be used

that the term *wardrobe* is more commonly used. The wardrobe department on a small show may consist of a party of one. On a large musical, there may also be an assistant along with dressers.

Costume Designer

During rehearsals, the SM works in close association with the costume designer and costume shop. The SM schedules the performers first for measurements and then for fittings as the costumes are ready for the performers to try on. Sometimes the costume designer will bring to the rehearsal hall sketches, renderings, and samples of material to show the director or the cast members what the costumes will be like once they are constructed.

Head of Wardrobe

The SM's working relationship with the head of wardrobe begins once the costumes are at the theatre. This relationship goes into full swing at the start of technical rehearsals, continuing until either the show closes or the SM leaves the job. During technical rehearsals the SM and head of wardrobe will be in continuous communication, discussing dressing rooms, placement of costumes backstage during the performance, and quick-change areas. Once the show opens and is in its run and things are running smoothly, the SM has very little dealings with the wardrobe department other than to stop in to say hello and compliment them on their continuous good work. Cleaning and repair of the costumes is a high priority, along with assembling costumes for the understudies.

Covert and Surreptitious Operation: It is the wise SM who schmoozes a little with the dressers or head of wardrobe. Given all the technical people with the show, wardrobe is an ever-present witness to what goes on with the cast, especially if it is a musical with ensemble performers. It is a way for SMs to keep their finger on the pulse of the cast/company and have a heads-up on what might be coming. In doing so, however, the SM must be *very careful* to keep whatever is told in strictest confidence and not make it the basis for further conversation, or a platform for confrontation or disciplinary action. The SM must find his or her own truth.

Dressers

The SM has very little business with the dressers. The head of wardrobe handles all their assignments and business. The dressers are almost always local people who do this work professionally. If a dresser travels with a show, it more than likely is the *star dresser*. The dressers usually are brought in a day or two before dress rehearsal and remain until the show closes or leaves town. When on the road, the head of wardrobe may have an assistant who also is a dresser, but then the rest of the dressers who might be needed for each performance are hired locally.

Wardrobe Department: A Personal Service

The wardrobe department's primary work is to provide service, a personal service that gives the appearance of being servant's work, especially when dressing another person, washing, ironing, sewing clothes, or having drinks of water waiting in the wings or in quick-change rooms. Sometimes the members of the company forget and step over that illusive line between what is providing service and what is being a servant. A good SM is ever watchful of this and is ready to rectify any incidents that might occur in this area.

In theatres where there is no permanent area set up for wardrobe, the wardrobe department may occupy an extra dressing room, be shuffled off into some corner backstage, or be placed down in the basement of the theatre. If sometimes there is a shortage of thanks and appreciation for the work being done by the technical departments, this department appears to receive even less. Again, the SM makes an effort to express thanks and appreciation at every opportunity. Besides, this department is often a good source of home-baked goodies and snack foods, which can be supplied during most performances and intermissions.

Hair Department

Wherever wardrobe is set backstage, usually the hair department is nearby, sometimes sharing the same space. This department too may be a party of one. Only on shows that use many wigs and require period hairstyles is an assistant brought in.

The SM may meet the head of this department once or twice during the rehearsal period, depending on the hair needs of the show. The hair department does most of its work before the cast comes in for each performance. At the half-hour point before each performance, the hair person must be available to fit wigs on the performers, do whatever personal hairstyles need to be done on individuals, and tend to the star's needs. During performance, the lead hair person usually works with the star, especially during quick changes, touching up hair, pinning on hats, and offering a hand to the dressers, if needed. On shows where hair and even makeup are involved and elaborate, the SM works with the technicians of this department in setting up a schedule to get the performers prepared and ready for curtain time.

In less involved and elaborate shows, the hair department can be quiet, unassuming, and the least demanding of all technical departments. This department can be easily forgotten and, once again, the SM should be generous with thanks and appreciation.

Shops and Vendors

Each technical department deals with its own shops and vendors and handles all the business that needs to take place with them. The SM works most with the costume shop. The SM and the director may visit the shop where the set is being constructed one or two times. The SM's primary function with the other shops and vendors is to keep in the production book their addresses, phone numbers, and directions on how to get to their locations.

The Performance Site and Their Personnel

At any of these places, the SM will find a staff of some kind, ranging from one person to a full complement of people. The staff may include backstage crew as well as front-of-the-house staff, security, parking, and janitorial services.

Backstage: The House Crew

The group of technicians hired full-time by a particular theatre or performance site is called the *house crew*. Their job is to head and maintain the various technical departments of the theatre and work in association with the technical heads of the shows that come to their theatre.

The SM's working relationship with the house crew is the same as it is with all technical people we have discussed in this chapter. There is, however, one difference; the SM and the rest of the company must keep in mind that they are guests of the theatre and house crew. The house crew welcomes shows into their theatre. This is how their jobs are maintained. They are used to having shows take over their facility while they remain watchful and protective of their home. Sometimes the house crew is overprotective, keeping things under lock and key. The SM and TD of the show should keep in mind, though, that the producer of their show has paid for the privilege of being at that theatre and has made arrangements to use some or all of their equipment. If a certain item or piece of equipment is withheld and there is doubt or uncertainty as to its use, or if the house crew says that there will be an extra charge for a particular item, either the SM or TD should be on the phone with the producer.

On another matter, often the house maintenance or janitorial services crew is not thought about until there is a need or problem in one of these areas. At the time of need, it is best the SM goes to the head of the house—the house technical director—to get the matter resolved. It is even better if, within the first day or so of arriving at the rented facility, the SM seeks out the head of this maintenance/janitorial department and cultivates a working relationship, especially for clean-up of bathrooms and temperature control.

Front-of-the-House Staff

If a company manager is with the show, the SM has little to no dealings with the box office. If not, the SM's working relationship with this group is still limited, perhaps only setting up or approving *comps* (complimentary tickets), making reservations for house seats for the cast and crew, and sometimes cashing personal checks, either the SM's or other cast members'.

On a touring show and in the absence of the producer or company manager, the SM becomes the producer's representative and liaison with the box office. On occasion the SM may have to deal with receipts of the day or the week. The action of this business is highly regulated by law and is usually a matter of receiving certified paperwork or a cashier's check.

The House Manager

There are two things that the SM must be concerned with when working with the house manager. First is to post the Equity *casting board*. This board lists the performers' names and the roles they are playing in the show. It is an Equity rule that the casting board be placed somewhere in the lobby in clear view as the audience members enter the theatre. Most times the ASM is responsible for seeing that this board is properly placed. To do this, the SM talks with the house manager, who usually provides a stand or easel and already has a perfect spot picked out that meets all Equity requirements.

The second thing the SM must do in working with the house manager is to establish a communication at the half-hour point before the performance is to start. Each theatre and house manager has its own procedure in communicating with the SM to get the house opened, and each SM has a preferred way of working during this time. The SM and house manager must get together and work out what is best. Both the SM and house manager make a great effort to start the show on time or at least to be no more than five minutes late. The house manager also works to seat everyone before the rise of the curtain. For those patrons who arrive after the curtain is up, the house manager establishes with the SM the best time to seat these people without disturbing the performance.

At the beginning of the half hour before the show is to begin, the SM needs to inform the house manager that all is ready backstage and the audience can now be seated. If there is some problem backstage, the SM asks the house manager to delay opening the house, either for a certain amount of time or until the SM calls the house manager again. Once the house is opened, usually the SM does not communicate with the house manager again until the five-minute call before the performance is to start. At this time both parties agree that all can run according to schedule, or can ask for a delay, should there be a last-minute problem backstage or because the audience is late in arriving and being seated. Some SMs like to know the approximate size or percentage of the audience attending. They will ask for this information at this time and enter it into their show report or logbook.

A very large percentage of house managers are good at their work and diligent in communicating with the SM at the prescribed times. A few will be less responsible. The SM learns within two or three performances which kind of house manager is in charge. When working with the lesser kind, the SM reestablishes the calling procedure. If the house manager remains delinquent and does not communicate, especially at the five-minute call, the SM must then inform the house manager that, if a call is not received, the show will start as scheduled.

In Closing

To varying degrees and in different ways, everyone in the company and associated with the production is important and needed, or you can be sure the producer would not have them there, paying that particular salary. People need to receive recognition and validation for their work and want their stars to shine. In seeking out ways to have these needs met, some people's behavior becomes filtered through their feelings, fears, and beliefs, making them act in ways that are not always professional and acceptable. The SM, more than the producer or director, is confronted each day with the different behaviors people bring to their work. It is therefore important for SMs to understand the general profile of the people with whom they must work. The more knowledgeable and aware SMs are in the psychology and behavior of people working in the theatre and of themselves, the more prepared and equipped they are to deal with whatever arises within the company. SMs who are healthily centered within themselves will find the job less stressful and that things will run more smoothly, and they will have longevity as SMs.

The Professional Experience

Throughout a career, each SM collects a number of stories about colleagues. A collection of these could easily fill a volume. Here are only a few.

This first entry is a personal account of how an SM's old belief system, which got established in the first years of his life, got in the way of his work, dictated his actions, shaded his behaviors, and clouded his way of thinking. In addition, his old belief system had great effects on his working relationships, left him with ill feelings, and in general tarnished the love he had for his work.

Personal Beliefs Getting in the Way

For the first three years of my life I was raised in a Catholic orphanage. It was a time when the good nuns believed if the child was picked up and responded to each time he cried, he would be spoiled. Consequently, I spent many hours each day feeling lonely and crying out for attention. It felt as if no one ever responded to me. During those years I formulated in my mind that no matter how long or how loud I cried out, people did not hear me. Even worse, I took it personally. For sure, I did not feel the universe revolved around me.

These things became a truth in my mind and an indelible part of my belief system. Unwittingly, I carried them into adulthood. As an SM, it affected the way I worked and reacted. I became irate when people kept me waiting or showed up late for a rehearsal, even when it was the director or producer. It felt personal and I was compelled to confront them as I spoke from a center of anger. I could get away with this kind of behavior as I worked with late actors, but producers, directors, and stars were not as accepting. Most did not fight back or call me down for my behavior, but I eventually saw that they just didn't hire me again.

My beliefs manifested themselves in other ways, too. When members in the company failed to follow instructions, I felt unheard, misunderstood, even ignored. These feelings did not make sense, but I felt them anyway. To distance myself from these feelings and to ensure relief, I became pedantic in my words and nagging in my approach. I did not allow people to do their jobs without my watching over them every moment. It was tiring working this way and it certainly did not help me in my relationships. I was of the mind that I could not trust anyone to do their jobs. That angered me, because as an SM I had enough to do with my own work.

My beliefs carried over into my life during the times I was unemployed. I'd send out many resumes. If I didn't get a response quickly, my old belief system would kick in and the words would ring out clearly in my head that people do not respond to me. The feelings were just as strong as they had been back in the orphanage. I'd become despondent, give up, and withdraw. Here I was an adult, a professional SM, acting, behaving, and believing like a child. I was unhappy with myself and with being an SM. I blamed everyone and everything around me. It wasn't until I journeyed into myself to explore and discover the things that made me feel bad that I came to know why I thought and acted as I did. It wasn't until I found the spiritual center inside of me that I found peace, contentment, and acceptance. I continue to work as an SM. I relish the good times even more now, and during the not-so-good times I remain centered and healthy. I have made changes in my life, and my love for theatre and the work I do is renewed.

A Central Dance Figure

When profiling choreographers in this chapter, I was about to begin their section by paraphrasing Will Rogers to say there wasn't a choreographer I met who I didn't like. Then I remembered one particular choreographer and changed my mind. However, for all the rest, "There isn't a choreographer with whom I have worked that I didn't like."

Each day this one choreographer brought with him a cloud of doom and a field of negative energy. He had none of the gypsy spirit that other choreographers brought to rehearsals. Nothing was ever good enough for him, including his dancers. He demanded from the SMs more attention, more service, and more time on the schedule than was afforded the director. He had danced on Broadway and at the peak of his career danced in a famous show in which the dancers were as much the stars as the lead actors. He remained with the show for its run on Broadway, moving into the lead dance position and also becoming dance captain. He spent many more years doing national and regional tours of the show, often re-creating the choreography and sometimes directing the show himself. On our production, he was the choreographer while another person was hired to direct.

This choreographer had an air of importance, which he made no effort to disguise. He was painstakingly indulgent in re-creating the dances and drilled his dancers, demanding perfection before he'd move on to the next section. It was evident from the first day of rehearsals the director and this choreographer would not get along. They let their annoyances and disagreements build without confrontation. Instead, they placed the SM in the middle, each making demands on the schedule and for preferential treatment. As the SM, I went to the producer to apprise him of the situation and the effect it was having on the rehearsals and the company. He already knew. Many of the dancers had come to him to complain. The producer assured me he'd take action on the matter. A week went by, and I saw no change. By this time we had only a few more days in the rehearsal hall before we moved into technical rehearsals at the theatre. By the final dress rehearsal, the choreographer was still setting dance. It was a hardship and nightmare for all, causing tension within the company, and taking the joy and excitement out of the opening night. The show opened and the choreographer, above all others, got great reviews.

Star Power

This is the story of a star with whom I regretfully never worked. This story was told to me by a producer in whose theatre the show performed in Los Angeles. It was one of those shows that would have never played on Broadway nor toured the country if it hadn't been for its star performer.

Through the years this renowned star suffered many ailments and afflictions that were debilitating if not cared for and attended to daily. She had done most of her work in films, where she could stop working throughout the day when she felt ill. To work in theatre, the temperature backstage had to be sixty-five degrees—at seventy degrees she was unable to perform. At this particular theatre in Los Angeles, the temperature of the air conditioning backstage could not be turned down without the temperature in the audience also being turned down. Sixty-five degrees was, of course, too cold for the audience. This put the producers in a disabling bind: no audience, no show; no sixty-five degrees backstage, no star performer; no star performer, still no show; no show, no box office receipts. With the possibility of no box office receipts, the producers were quick to put the mother of invention to work. They had a special refrigeration truck parked outside at the back of the theatre and had pumped into the backstage area all the frigid air that was needed. I was told, "It was like a meat storage locker."

It was summer in Los Angeles, but the cast and crew backstage were wearing their winter clothes. People were continually coming down with colds. Paranoid of catching the cold herself, the star insisted the people with colds not come to work until they were better. The dancers seemed to suffer the most. No matter how warmly they dressed or how much they moved and stretched, they could not keep their bodies warm enough to prevent injury. The performers complained individually, in pairs, in groups, and as a company—first to the SM and then to the producers. The producers expressed their sympathy but confessed there was nothing they could do without losing the star. The performers took the matter to Equity. They argued the working conditions were unbearable, injurious to their health, and beyond what was acceptable to Equity in any other situation. They were right. However, in Equity's research they heard testimony from both the star's physicians as well as independent physicians who all said the star could not perform if the temperature was raised. Equity agreed and stated to its members that the temperature backstage must remain. In fairness to everyone, the performers who felt they could not work under these conditions were offered releases from their contracts with two weeks' pay. Only two dancers left—they had another show to go to. The star and her power continued to make the show a financial success and when she left the show it fell into obscurity.

Gypsy—a Real Mama Rose

It was a regional production of the musical *Gypsy*. The role of Baby June is cast with two actresses—one playing a young Baby June and the other playing a Baby June in her teen years. Both actresses need to know how to sing, dance, and do high kicks. The actress hired to play the younger Baby June had performed the role many times before and was expert in the part. Her only problem was that she was slick in her movement and robotic in her acting. She performed the part with physical perfection, but had no heart or soul. Directors in other productions accepted what she had to offer, but our director wanted more. In trying to bring her to a more human level of character and performance, the director continually gave the child acting notes. The parents of the children were allowed to come into the rehearsal room to watch a run-through of the show and then stay for notes from the director. Each time the director gave young Baby June a note, the child looked to her mother. This stage mother was similar in drive and abrasiveness to Baby June's mother in the play, Mama Rose. However, this mother had none of the charm and fun of Mama Rose.

When the director gave her daughter an acting note, she would roll her eyes in annoyance or shift her body in disapproval. For a while the director pretended not to see this. Finally, he spoke to her. As he spoke, she remained cold, silent, and distant. From then on, whenever the director gave Baby June a note, the child stared straight ahead while the mother stiffened in her chair. Finally, one day the mother cracked. “*Stop it!*” she shouted. “How dare you give this child these notes? She has done over one thousand performances of this role. She has tried to give you what you want, but you keep attacking her. Your notes are senseless and unfounded! Could you not feel the electricity in this room this afternoon when she performed? Every eye was on this child as she performed! What is it that you want?”

At first the director was taken aback by the outburst, and then he laughed. “I have this feeling that our production of *Gypsy* is only a play within a play, and that you are the real Mama Rose and that this is the real show.” Then, as he walked out, he turned to the SM and ordered for all to hear, “Have her out of here before I return.”

The director left, but the woman did not budge. By this time her daughter was crying. The SM finally approached the mother saying nothing, but indicating that she leave. “I’m not going. If I go, she goes!” The SM didn’t want or need any more fallout from this incident. “Look, you’re upset right now. This is a matter better handled up in the producer’s office. Why don’t we go up there and you can work things out with him. As for your daughter, I think it is better she stays here so we can finish our work.” The mother would not go unless her daughter went with her. You could see the daughter was terribly embarrassed and did not want to go, but she obeyed. Neither was seen again. Two days later a new young Baby June was brought in. This Baby June had also performed the role many times before, and yes, she too came with a stage mother. However, this mother was more reasonable, realistic, and less driven. She took acting notes with grace and worked toward getting a better performance from her daughter.

Maintaining Artistic Integrity

In the musical stage version of *Meet Me in St. Louis* there is a famous scene and song where Esther Smith sings about and talks with “The Boy Next Door,” John Truitt. In this particular touring production, John’s house is stored off stage right and rolled on to the stage from the number one wing. Similarly, Esther’s house is stored off stage left and rolled on from the number one stage left wing. John’s house was the smaller unit and covered one-third of the stage, while Esther’s house covered the rest. As each unit came together in view of the audience, it covered the interior set of Esther’s house. It was an artistic and effective transition from one scene to the next.

With Esther’s house being the larger unit, this meant more space off stage left was needed to store the unit and to move it on and off stage. At some theatres the backstage area was very limited. The first time we encountered such a situation, the technical director creatively altered the set by not putting together all the pieces of Esther’s house. He left off a good portion of the porch, putting in its place some latticework and greenery. Artistically, the alteration left something to be desired, but for small theatres it was the best we could do.

The TD also found that setting up only half of Esther’s house made the crew’s setup time shorter and workload easier. This was especially beneficial when moving into a new theatre where the scenery arrived late or when the setup time was cut down considerably. As we progressed through the tour, the TD took advantage of this fact more and more, even in situations where the space off stage left was ample and we had plenty of time to set up the whole house.

I preferred using the full set. It looked better and maintained the artistic design and integrity of the designer and the show. As the SM, I spoke with the TD using a textbook approach and expressed my preference. I could tell from the start the TD disagreed with me. He argued with many points, but none were strong enough to convince me differently. Before ending the conversation, I recapped my feelings and desire to have the full house set up in every situation where it could be set up. I was left with the feeling that the TD was going to do as he chose, and he did! I approached him again on this matter. He told me to “lighten up” and stop being such a “stickler.” At the next theatre where there was plenty of space and time and still he set up only half of the house, I approached the TD for the third and last time. “As the stage manager I am responsible for maintaining the artistic integrity of the show. That includes the work the creators have done, the designers, the director, and the work the actors do each performance. I want the full house set up before this evening’s performance and in every other theatre where the whole house can be used. If you disagree, I suggest you call the producer so we can get this straightened out.” The TD looked at me for a moment and then walked away. I was not sure what he was going to do. I watched and waited. All that afternoon he had the crew work on everything but the house. At fifteen minutes before the crew was to break for dinner, I heard the TD ask two of the carpenters to stay over during their meal break to put up the rest of the house.

A week or so later, I got a call from the producer. He wanted to know why he had to pay meal penalty and overtime for two carpenters to put up the house. He had been told by the TD that I had ordered it. It is during these moments the

SM's metal is put to the test. I was able to stay in the adult part of myself, but the child within me was kicking and screaming, wanting to express how I truly felt. With adult composure, I presented my side of the story. The producer agreed with me. He said he would talk with the TD and in the future would never work with this person again. I felt vindicated and appeased. The TD and I remained in a strained relationship for the rest of the tour. Oddly enough, personally and socially, I liked the man. Professionally, he was very good at his work. A year later we worked together again and for the same producer. This time the show played in one theatre. There was less opportunity for our opinions and wills to clash and we did fine.

Electrical Storm

In having light cues called during a performance, the light board operator is obligated to execute the cues as the SM calls them, even if the SM's timing is wrong. In all the shows I have worked and with all the light board operators whom I have called cues to, there have been three who broke this rule.

With the first light board operator, when I called the cue, and then looked up to see the transition of light on the stage, the lights did not change where I expected. "Ooops!" I thought to myself, "I better change my timing," and I did. The next performance, the lights still did not change where I expected. I questioned the operator. In this case, the operator was forthright and said he had changed both the placement of the cue and the timing. My first reaction was to be angry for having my position and authority usurped, but it was early in the run of the show and I wanted to maintain the working relationship. Instead, I asked the operator to execute the cues where I called them, and that if he had any suggestions for change, to talk it over with me, or at least inform me. He was quick to apologize and admit he was wrong.

At the next performance, as we approached this cue, I was curious to see the change the operator had made. I asked him to execute the cue where he thought it should happen. He did, and he was absolutely right! It was the perfect placement and timing. I thanked him and asked if he had any other suggestions.

The second light board operator was not as forthright. He just flatly denied he was executing a light at his own timing, even after I read him my notes from my logbook detailing the three incidents I had experienced. He simply told me I was wrong. His words became a personal assault and I was ready to do battle. Instead I did a turnaround. I told him that I doubted I could be wrong on the three different occasions, but that I would go back to see if he was right. From that point and for the run of the show, the cue and all other cues were executed as I called them, even when I mistakenly called a cue with the wrong timing and the light board operator knew it was wrong.

The third experience was the worst of all. I had been brought in on a show that had been touring Europe. The show was a rock musical and, coincidentally, the light board operator was a would-be rock musician. Though the SM before me called the cues for the performance, she didn't seem to mind having the light board operator do as he chose. I, on the other hand, want to remain responsible for the timing, be it right or wrong. In the six months before I came to the show, the light board operator changed the timing of many of the cues, especially in the musical numbers. In addition, in some performances he would add cues or leave cues out. I was appalled at such unprofessional behavior. I didn't think this was the way they worked in Europe. In fact, I was impressed with how similarly the European and American technicians worked. I worked in textbook fashion in approaching this operator, but to no avail. He told me not to worry. I then decided to learn the operator's timing. As soon as I learned to call a cue where he was executing it, he would change it. He just didn't want me invading his musical and artistic expression. The producer and lighting director were not moved by my complaint of him—in fact, they saw me as an unhappy, discontented SM. I decided to live with the situation but found it extremely difficult to sit backstage and call light cues and have that part of my job usurped from under me. Calling cues was the only artistic contribution I made to the show. I enjoyed calling an impeccable, well-timed show. I lost interest, my mind would wander, and at times I would forget to call a cue, knowing it would happen anyway. However, through the headset I would hear in a very stern and Germanic voice, "Mr. Stage Manager, you didn't call the cue." For that reason and many other reasons with that show, I soon became the unhappy and discontented SM, and eventually I was asked to leave.

Running Equity Auditions

Though this chapter is titled “Running Equity Auditions,” it stands as a template and plan for running any audition.

Auditions are the forum for actors to present their talent to get jobs, a way for producers to find talent to fit their productions, and a part of the SM’s job that at first glance appears simple. Like most of the work an SM does, auditions require a great deal of organization and detail, otherwise the audition can become an embarrassment for the SM, for the director, and most of all for the producing company. Equity and the performers often get their first impression of a producing company from what they experience at the audition.

Auditions are created and tailored to suit the producing company’s needs. They are also set up for the performer. It is the SM’s job to service both, each in their own way, meeting each of their needs and following the Equity rules and regulations. With most auditions, the time, date, and place is set well in advance and oftentimes the SM is brought in only a few days before—sometimes less. An SM who works for a producing company on a regular basis may be asked to take on some of the responsibility that the producing office usually does, such as submitting the required information to Equity: time of audition(s), date(s), place, and, if the production has a limited run, the rehearsal and performance dates. The producer may also want to place ads in the trade papers and require the SM to find audition space. But having to do this work is rare, especially when working under a production contract or for a producing company that has a permanent setup and produces a yearly season of shows.

Before reading what an SM does in running an Equity audition, I recommend going on to the Equity site and downloading a copy of the Equity Rulebook. While there are parts of an SM’s job that can be done without first conferring with the Equity Rulebook, running an audition is not one of them. The Equity contract is of course drawn up between the actors’ union and the producers, so all of what is stated is directed toward the producer. It is not the intention of this chapter to list clause by clause all that is written, but rather to see and discuss that that pertains to the SM in running an Equity audition. As you read through this chapter, you will see that there is a lot more to conducting an audition than just hiring a hall and putting an ad in the paper. Just know that the clauses in the Equity contract are not the results of performers being prima donnas, but most likely have come out of unfavorable conditions in the past. So it should be the SM’s pleasure to host and service the members of his working community.

The Equity Representative

As stated in the Equity contract with producers, an Equity representative must be present at all auditions. This person will more than likely be there before the performers start arriving. The representative is there primarily to see that the Equity rules governing auditions are followed. As part of the setup of the audition space, the SM puts a table and chair at the entrance to the reception area from which the rep can greet the performers, have them sign in, check their Equity standing, keep them gathered in the reception area, and see that they are taken into the audition room in the order in which they have signed in. The SM welcomes having the Equity rep at the auditions. In his absence, the SM would have to do all the rep does in addition to leading the performers in and out of the audition room.

The Auditioning Staff

Once again, Equity is specific as to who can be running the audition:

- The director or assistant director must be present at all the auditions.

- For a musical audition, the musical director or assistant musical director must be present.
- For dance audition, the choreographer or assistant choreographer must be present.

In some situations, the auditioning staff may comprise just the SM and the director or a casting director. In other situations, the auditioning staff can be like a mob scene, especially for a musical that has never before been produced. The SM needs to know who will be viewing the auditions so tables can be set up in the audition room behind which the auditioning staff can sit, spread out the resumes and pictures, and make notes as each performer auditions.

Types of Audition Calls

The Open Call or Cattle Call

For any show produced under the Equity umbrella, producers are required to have an Equity open call. Equity open calls are designed to give all Equity members the opportunity to audition for all roles in the show. Advertisements for these auditions inform the performers of the day, the starting and ending time, and the place. With the number of performers looking for work, this means the SM needs to be organized and prepared, ready to handle and process a large number of performers. Within the time advertised, the performers come at their convenience. At an open call the SM should also be prepared to have a number of non-Equity performers wanting to audition. It is a long-standing rule that all Equity performers audition before non-Equity performers.

Open calls for musicals and shows that are popular and promise long employment often turn into what performers call a *cattle call*. The term is not only derived from the numbers of performers who show up, but from the way the performers feel as they are herded through the audition. With so many people auditioning, the audition staff shorten the audition time—the amount of time the performer has to present the audition. With a singing audition, the performer is told to sing the best *eight bars*. With a nonmusical play, the audition could result in having the performer merely stand before the auditioning staff and be judged by appearance and if they fit the part. In contractual agreement, producers are now obligated to offer the performer at least *two minutes* of time to present themselves. Also, sixteen bars of a song is now standard.

Auditions by Appointment

In addition to the open call, producing companies will also have auditions that are set by appointments. Most of the time, the performers coming to these auditions are coming with a certain role in mind. The appointments usually are set up by agents, managers, casting directors, or a producer who knows an actor's work and asks that person to audition. The SM still needs to be organized and ready to handle the performers as they arrive. However, the pace is slower and the SM, along with the audition staff, spends more personal and social time with each performer. Seldom do these auditions run on schedule, according to the appointed times. At the beginning of the day the audition staff is more cavalier with the amount of time they spend with each performer, even if the SM stands as watchdog over the time. Only after the SM takes on an ominous tone will the auditioning staff cut their *schmoozing* to a social minimum. Also Equity now holds the producer to the standard of not scheduling more than twelve auditions in an hour.

Auditions for Musicals

For performers auditioning for a musical, the routine of arriving, signing in, and going in for the audition is the same as that described above. For the SM, auditions for a musical can be a test of skills. With musicals there is more of everything—more performers, more roles to be cast, more auditioning staff, more audition rooms, more coordinating, more traffic flow, and more regulations set by Equity:

- There must a piano/electronic keyboard along with a professional piano accompanist who can sight-read.

- If the performer is required to learn music, the producer is required to provide the performer with a piano accompaniment, often via electronic means.
- The musical director or assistant musical director must be present for singers.
- If it is a dance audition, the choreographer or assistant choreographer must be present.
- If a singer is also required to audition as a dancer, then the singer must first audition as a singer and then be sent over to the dance audition, and vice versa with a dancer who is required to sing.
- Dance auditions must be conducted on approved dance surfaces.
- The performers shall not be required during the audition to rehearse numbers to be used in the production.

Singing Audition/Readings for a Role

Performers auditioning for a musical must, of course, be able to sing. Before performers can read for an acting scene, they must first audition as a singer. If the audition staff thinks the performer's singing is what they want for the show, the SM returns the performer to the reception room, hands out a copy of a particular scene, and sends the performer off to some quiet space. Meanwhile, the SM continues the auditioning process by bringing in and out of the audition room more performers to sing, some of whom may also be asked to audition with an acting scene.

Ensemble Auditions

At one time, most auditions for the ensemble performers (chorus singers and dancers) were two separate auditions—the singing audition and the dance audition. Singers did not have to know how to dance, just move about the stage with grace and ease, and dancers did not have to know how to sing, just have an ability to carry a tune. Shows having a choral or legitimate/operatic sound are more apt to have separate auditions and not require singers to dance and dancers to sing. This includes shows like *Oklahoma*, *Brigadoon*, *Kismet*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Phantom of the Opera*. However, shows with more contemporary themes like *West Side Story*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Grease*, and *A Chorus Line* make it imperative that the ensemble performers know how to sing *and* dance extremely well.

Today, despite the type of show being produced, many producers around the country, in both large and small productions, find it financially agreeable to their budget to hire singers who can dance and dancers who can sing. Those who don't do both are finding it harder to get regular employment.

For the SM, ensemble auditions can be very simple, with the dancers and singers having separate auditions on different days. In other situations, where the ensemble auditions are all in one day, the SM may end up moving and shuffling people from one part of the audition space to the other. During those times, the SM will need help, either from an ASM or from a knowledgeable and experienced production assistant. The Equity representative is also very helpful.

Dance auditions are easiest for the SM. The SM needs only a room with a floor that meets Equity approval, a piano, and a pianist. More often now the choreographer will have the music on a CD or an iPod. The dancers come at one time. After the SM has signed them in, gathered their pictures and resumes, and herded them into the audition room to learn the dance combination, the SM can rest. As the dancers learn the audition routine, the SM often watches the audition and aids the choreographer in sorting out the pictures and resumes as each dancer performs the combination. Singing auditions for the ensemble performers are the same as for singers also wanting to audition for a role.

- Performers shall not be required, during the audition, to rehearse numbers to be used in the production.

Star and Lead Role Auditions

Stars seldom go through auditions. If they do, the SM is not needed. Only on rare occasions does the SM get to sit in on a star audition. The audition more than likely is held privately with the producer and/or director. If the show is a musical, the session may be more informal, with the star coming to listen to the score and sing some of the songs. However, when auditioning the other lead roles in the show, the SM is needed to perform the same duties as with other auditions. The only difference is that some of these performers may be of semi-star status and performers known

for their excellent work. These auditions are often scheduled with a lot more time in between. The interview portion is more social, and the actor is given preferential and starlike treatment.

- When holding scheduled appointments for the audition, not more than twelve auditions may be scheduled in an hour.

The Performers' Representatives

The performer will sometimes show up with their representative, such as an agent, manager, or if a child/teenager under legal age, a parent. Representatives show up mostly at auditions that are set by appointments. These representatives are, of course, there in the interest of their client or child and go through measures large and small to see that their person gets preferential treatment and strong consideration. The SM is gracious to all and tries to accommodate all requests these reps might make, but is careful to remain within the rules of Equity and the structure of the procedure being followed for that day. In all cases, the reps want entry into the audition room where they can schmooze and sell their client in the way they know best. Before such auditions begin, the SM should ask the audition staff how they want the reps to be handled. Some audition staffs prefer the rep, especially a parent, to wait outside during the audition, and then invite the rep in to talk afterward. The Equity Rulebook says only the agent may accompany their clients into the audition.

Auditions for the Non-Equity Actor

At practically every audition, performers who are not members of Equity will show up wanting to audition. Some will be highly professional, perhaps belonging to some other actors' union. Others will be young and inexperienced, hoping to be discovered. Equity regulations require that all Equity members be auditioned first. If during the day there is a lull and there are no Equity performers waiting, the SM informs the auditioning staff and starts bringing in some of the non-Equity performers until more Equity members arrive. In consideration of those who are members of another actors' union, the SM might put those individuals at the head of the non-Equity list.

Preparing for the Auditions

An SM's work begins as soon as he or she is brought in to work the auditions. More than likely, the ads have already been placed and the time, date, and location of the audition have been set. The SM's first point of business is to talk with the person heading or leading the auditions to see if there is any particular way the auditions are to be conducted.

Becoming Familiar with the Script

At the latest, the SM is brought in two or more days before the audition date. After getting all the particulars of time, date, and place, the next important thing to do is see if scenes of the play will be read as part of the audition. If a straight play, the SM can be sure scenes will be read as part of the audition. The next thing to find is what scenes/characters have been chosen and if the SM will be reading with the performer. If the SM is indeed reading, then the SM should make at least four copies of each scene—three to be handed out to the different performers, and one from which the SM will read. In addition, the SM needs to read the script over several times, learning the storyline, becoming familiar with the characters, and knowing what is going on in the scene being read so that he can read sensibly in response to the performer.

Communicating with the Audition Site

In recent Equity contracts with producers, Equity has become more specific about where auditions can be held:

- Auditions must be held in a theatre, a rehearsal hall, or in some Equity-approved location.

Once the SM has been brought on to work auditions, he or she needs to call the audition site to talk with the people in charge. After introductions, the SM confirms or establishes the following things:

- Time(s), date(s), and type and amount of space.

Auditions Held in a Theatre

- The time the theatre will be opened (hopefully at least an hour before the auditions begin so the SM can set up).
- Is an IATSE electrician required to put on the lights, and if so, has it been arranged for the electrician to be there at least twenty minutes before the auditions are to begin?
- Parking for the audition staff.
- Have arrangements been made to set up an audition table in the audience with electrical power, a light (on and off switch), and a microphone (also with an on and off switch)? Will it be set up and operational at least twenty to thirty minutes before the audition staff arrives?
- Access stairs from the stage to the audience.

Audition Somewhere Other Than a Theatre

- Are there three or four banquet-type tables available along with chairs that can be set up in the reception and audition rooms?
- Is there a copy machine on the premises available for use? In asking this question the SM assures that all copies will be paid for and also finds out the charge for each copy.
- Is there a time, prior to the day of the auditions, when the SM can come to look over the audition site?
- Can the SM come the day before to set up? If not, on the day of the audition it is imperative the SM be allowed an hour or more before auditions begin.
- Heating in the winter, air-conditioning or airflow fans in the summer.
- Bathroom facilities on the premises along with fresh drinking water fountains.

A Note on Drinking Water: Seldom is there not a drinking fountain in a place used for auditions, especially one that has been approved by Equity. However, even with the availability of a water fountain, some producers might agree to have bottled water brought in—usually half-size, eight-ounce bottles. If indeed this is the case, then more than likely it will be the SM's job to purchase a case or two, depending on the predicted turnout. As an added feature, the SM might put some into a cooler, under ice, while having some at room temperature. This is just a suggestion and stands as a nicety that does not go unnoticed by those who have come to audition and puts the producer in good standing.

Auditions for a Musical

- Is there a piano in the audition room, and has it been tuned? If not, will the audition site do this in time for the audition? If not, then the producer needs to be informed and get a piano tuner to the audition site, pronto!
- If on the day of auditions the producer decides an additional room is needed, would there be one available at the last minute? If not, the SM needs to ask the producer what will be needed and if the producer thinks a

second room should be reserved in advance.

Dancing as Part of the Audition

- Have there been other Equity dance auditions in the space? If not, are the floors in the audition room made of wood and not slick tile or cement?
- If the dancing audition room is separate from the room in which the performers are auditioning songs or scenes, is there also a piano (tuned) in that room?

In addition to all that needs to be in the audition rooms, the SM must also inquire as to whether the area for reception/waiting room has ample seating and if the site has more chairs that can be brought in. If not, then should it be needed, is there another room in which the overflow of performers can sit and wait? If there is, then the SM checks with the producer to see if he wants to pay for the extra room. If so, the SM calls the audition site and puts a hold on the room with the condition that it will be used only if necessary. If none of this is possible and the SM is almost certain that this will be a problem with the number of performers coming to audition, it is then part of the SM's job to have a conversation with the producer.

Office Supplies

The SM of course carries to the audition the SM's office carrying bag. In it will be the supplies needed to service the audition. Better still, perhaps some of the supplies could come from the production office. The list is short and seems almost not worth mentioning, but each item serves a great purpose in doing the job efficiently and in an organized way. In the middle of auditions, a paper clip or rubber band may become very important:

- **Pencils:** For the actors to fill out the producer's required paperwork and for the audition staff to use at the audition table. Lay out only a few, and as those pencils disappear, put out a few more.
- **Pencil sharpener:** The SM either has many sharpened pencils in supply or has a pencil sharpener available.
- **Stapler and paper clips:** The resume gets stapled to the back of the performer's picture, while the producer's information sheets get clipped to the resume and picture.
- **Rubber bands:** At the end of the day there will be packets or piles of pictures and resumes—the rejects, the callbacks, various roles, and so on. They will need to be held together for transporting or filing.
- **Writing tablets/pads:** Placed on the audition table for the audition staff to use if they choose.
- **Blank typing paper:** For the SM to make last-minute signs that were not thought of in advance.
- **Marking pens:** Wide and medium tips for correcting signs or making additional signs.
- **White tape:** To mark the spot on the floor where the performers will stand during their audition.
- **Scotch tape and pushpins:** These will aid in posting the directional and instructional signs that the SM will make.

The Producer's Information Cards/Sheets

Most producing companies have an audition form the performers are asked to fill out for information not available on their resumes.

► **Information cards/sheets:** Have these forms set up on the reception table as the performers enter.

► **Large manila envelopes:** At the end of the day the SM needs these envelopes to hold the various piles or packets of resumes and pictures, marking clearly on the outside the name of the packet.

Signs

Once the SM creates on the computer all the signs needed for auditions, they are ready-made, needing only the information pertaining to the production and to be printed out and posted at the audition site.

Signs, signs, signs! Another extremely important part of the SM's job in working auditions. These signs are all in the art of traffic control, directing people, anticipating questions, and giving instructions that will be asked a million times over. Also, having these signs is an indirect bit of caretaking, making the performer's auditioning experience a comforting and pleasant one.

Directional Signs

These signs can be done simply on either eight-and-a-half-by-eleven-inch or legal-size paper. They should be printed out with large, bold letters that can be read from several feet away, giving the name of the show and clearly directing the performers to the reception area. This sign can be printed out in advance. It helps for the SM to have visited the audition site at least the day before. Then the arrows can be pointing in the correct direction. However, if the audition space is not accessible before the day of the audition, the signs can still be printed out and the directional arrows drawn in with a wide, felt-tip magic marker. (See Fig. 8-1.)



Figure 8-1 A sign an SM might create and put up to direct the people coming to the audition, especially if the place is difficult to find within the building.

Posting the Signs

It is important that directional signs are placed where they can be easily seen as a person approaches. They should start on the outside of the building, if necessary up the pathway, up the stairs, at the door as the person enters the building, and even at the entrance to the reception room. The easier the reception area is to find, the fewer signs are needed. The harder it is, the more signs with arrows that need to be posted. So it might be worth having a manila folder with more directional signs than needed.

The Time/Arrival Sign-in Sheet

This is another one of those signs that once it has been produced in the computer can be used for all other auditions. All that needs to be added is the information at the top of the form, giving the name of the show, the producer, the director, and the date. Numbering each sign-in space is important, along with having a column for the arrival time and a place where the performers *print* their names. (See Fig. 8-2.)

Tip: It is important to have the actors *print* their names. Some signatures have become scribbles or scrawls beyond recognition and the SM does not have time to decipher the name or seek out the person.

The Audition Instruction Sheet

Whether or not the SM has an assistant or expects to have the Equity rep at the audition, it is helpful to post instructions asking the performers to sign in and fill out the producer's information cards/sheets, giving any special instructions. This sign should appear on one page, preferably legal size, and the print should be larger than normal for easier reading.

The producer's information cards/sheets can be stacked on the reception table at the entrance. If there is an Equity rep or an ASM, they can hand out the forms. If not, then it is important that the instruction sheet is posted in clear view as the performer approaches the reception table. (See Fig. 8-3.)

PAGE 1

Equity Members ONLY
Audition SIGN-IN SHEET
John and Mary

Producer: _____
Director: _____
Date: _____

PLEASE PRINT

#	TIME	NAME	#	TIME	NAME
1			29		
2			30		
3			31		
4			32		
5			33		
6			34		
7			35		
8			36		
9			37		
10			38		
11			39		
12			40		
ETC., ETC.			ETC., ETC.		

Figure 8-2 The time arrival sign-in sheet is designed in accordance to Equity rule that the performers are taken into the audition room on a *first come, first serve bases*.

John and Mary
Equity Auditions

WELCOME

PLEASE READ -- Sign-In Instructions

-
- 1. SIGN-IN SHEET at reception table**
(Equity List and Non-Equity List)
(PLEASE PRINT)
 - 2. Fill out AUDITION CARDS**
and producer's information sheet
(PLEASE PRINT)
 - 3. TURN IN at reception table**
 - Pict. & Resume
 - Producer's audition information
 - Have Equity Membership Card ready to show.

*You will be taken in the order you have signed in.
All Equity members will be auditioned first*

Thank You

Figure 8-3 An instruction sheet directing the performers to fill out the producer's information card/sheet.

The No Smoking Sign

At one time it was advisable to designate smoking and nonsmoking areas. With laws now prohibiting smoking practically everywhere, it is not unreasonable for the SM to post a sign simply stating there is no smoking inside the building.

The Cell/Smart Phone Sign

As we moved into the twenty-first century, this sign has become a permanent part of the SM's collection. Everyone has a smart phone of one brand or another. Surprisingly, the very things that annoy people about other people misusing their phones in a public space are the same things we seem to forget and create the same annoyance. So it has become necessary for the SM to post a sign reminding everyone of the courtesy and decorum of using the phone while at the audition. (See Fig. 8-4.)

Choosing Scenes for the Audition—Aka “Sides”

Most times, the scenes for the audition have already been chosen by the director or producer. In those cases, the SM prints out enough copies (sides) to pass out to the performers and keeps at least one copy. Also, the SM should note at

the top of each scene the name of the scene so they can be quickly returned to the correct pile on the SM's worktable, ready to be distributed to the next performer. Remember, in a busy audition, even the simple act of noting the name of the scene at the top is a time saver; every second is precious in keeping the audition running smoothly and getting the performers in and out of the audition room. Even more helpful is to have *Stg.Mgr.* written in large red letters across the top of the SM's copies and kept separate from the copies that are being handed out.



Figure 8-4 A sign the SM might post in the audition reception room for people who forget the things that annoy them when someone else misuses their cell phone in a public place.

Also, if the play is new and the characters are unfamiliar, it is extremely helpful to have copies of a character breakdown sheet for the performers to look over. Almost always this information has been compiled by someone in the production office and sent out to the Equity office, casting agents, and services.

On occasion, when an SM has worked with a producer or director on many shows and they have come to respect the SM's artistic choices, they may ask the SM to select the scenes and do the character breakdown. These are the times when the SM must know the script and put into application some knowledge about acting and directing:

- The scenes need to be simple and an exchange between two characters.
- The scene should run no longer than three minutes.
- The scene should feature the character who is being auditioned.
- The scene should have dialogue that shows relationships, expresses feelings, and gives some range and color of the character.
- Scenes with exposition, action, or the use of props are poor choices.

The Audition Space

At one time audition places and spaces were whatever the producer deemed suitable for his needs. This has changed:

- Equity requires that the auditions must be held in a theatre, a rehearsal hall, or in some Equity-approved location.

With approval from Equity, this could also be a gymnasium, a loft, a ballroom, or a basement of a church. Wherever the place, the SM should check out the location before the day of auditions to plan the layout of the different audition areas and think about the logistics for crowd control and efficient movement of the performers. On the day of the auditions the SM should arrive at least an hour early to set up and be ready for the first arrivals.

Dividing the Audition Space

The audition space must be divided into at least two separate areas—the reception area and the audition room. The audition room must be private, closed off from view of the people waiting to audition, and free from the noise that might emanate from the reception area. The reception area should be nearby and can be any space in which the performers can report, sign in, sit, and wait their turn. This could be the green room of the theatre or rehearsal room close by. No longer is a hallway, or an alley adjacent to the theatre, or a stairwell acceptable.

Setting up the Reception Area

The Sign-in Table

As has been mentioned several times now, first comes the reception area/table. It is set up at the entrance where it will be highly visible as the performers arrive. This is where the Equity representative sets up shop, performing a multitude of tasks that the SM would otherwise have to do:

- Greeting performers
- Checking their Equity eligibility
- Having the performers sign the arrival sign-in sheet
- Handing the performer the producer's information card/sheet
- Instructing the performers to fill out the producer's information card/sheet
- Instructing the performers to return the information along with their picture and resume
- Telling the performers to take a seat, assuring them they will be called in the order in which they have signed-in

Taking the information from each performer, the rep paper-clips everything together and stacks the packets into groupings of ten, putting each packet in the order in which the performer has signed-in. The rep then hands the grouping of ten off to the SM, who in turn takes a resume from the top of the pile and calls the performer into the audition room.

This is how it happens in a perfect world, and surprisingly it happens often enough to make auditions easy for the SM. However, the SM be prepared! Expect that at times you will be doing some or all of this yourself. Whatever the prevailing situation, just know that these are the things that need to be done in the reception area as the performers arrive.

Seating in the Reception Room

If a number of performers were expected at the audition, the SM has already made arrangements for either extra seating or another waiting room. At this time the SM has the extra chairs set up in the reception room or sees to it that the extra waiting room has enough seating and is presentable and suitable for the Equity performers.

For some auditions the reception area can become crowded and very noisy. It will be a full-time job keeping things organized and quiet. Hopefully the Equity rep will be there to help, or maybe an ASM; however, don't count on it!

The SM should be prepared to do it all.

Setting up the Audition Area

Whether the audition takes place in a theatre or in a room, producers, directors, and casting people who have conducted many auditions develop certain needs and preferences on how they want the room set up and how the audition should be run. Before the day of the audition, the SM should talk with the person leading the auditions to see if there are any special requirements.

The Setup for Auditions in a Theatre

For auditions held in a theatre, the performers will, of course, stand on the stage while the audition staff will sit in the audience. In this case, the SM sees to it that the area in which the performer is to stand is lit sufficiently so that the auditioning staff can clearly see the actors. The stage should also be clearly marked with white tape where the performer should stand. In such situations, because of the blinding stage light, the performer while on stage will not be able to see the auditioning staff. Performers are used to this from having worked on stage with even more blinding lights. They will, however, be put at ease and made comfortable by hearing the voice of the person holding the audition welcoming them and perhaps asking them for their name.

The Auditioning Staff's Table in the Theatre

The SM makes arrangements with the theatre to have a production table placed in the audience, midway in the orchestra seating, at which the auditioning staff can sit. Needed at this table are:

- power cable with an outlet box (perhaps a power strip) for whatever electronic devices that might be used
- a shaded desk lamp that can be made brighter or dimmer or has an on and off switch
- a microphone (God mic) patched into the house system for the person conducting the auditions to speak to the performers onstage.

Access Stairs to the Stage

Another detail that is often overlooked is to make sure there are stairs for easy access to the stage from the audience so pictures and resumes can be delivered to the audition staff, or any member from the audition staff can come up on the stage to personally talk with the performer.

The Setup in an Audition Room

Placement of the Staff's Audition Table

If the audition takes place in a room, the SM looks over the layout of the room. The first consideration is its length and width. If the room is long and rectangular, the audition table will be placed at one end or the other—preferably at the opposite end from where the actors will enter the room, unless otherwise directed by the leader of the audition. If the room is more a square, the table can be placed on any side; however, there are other factors to think about first.

Lighting

After looking at the shape of the audition room, the SM turns to how the room is lit. Does the lighting come from windows, and if so will the light or the sun at some time of the day come glaring through? In such a case, it is best to place the audition table along the wall with the windows so the glare of the light will not shine into the audition staff's eyes, and at the same time be bright on the performers, for better viewing. If there are no windows, as in most rehearsal halls, the SM puts the performers in the best lighting available in relationship to the audition table. In some situations, the SM might set up some lighting with the use of clip-on spotlights or flood lamps, as long as the equipment is not intrusive or hazardous to anyone.

A Room with Mirrors

If the auditions are taking place in a dance studio, you can almost be certain one wall will be lined with mirrors. Neither the performers nor the staff should be placed facing the mirrors. In such situations the audition table can be placed at one end of the room where there are no mirrors, which puts the mirrors off to the side.

X Marks the Spot

The SM should always tape on the floor of the audition room a highly visible mark (white tape) where the performers should stand to do their auditions. This mark needs to be placed just far enough away so the auditioning staff can see the actors' body movements and yet close enough to see the actors' faces and eyes.

Without this mark, the actors may stand or wander too close to the auditioning staff or stand too far back. Placing this mark relieves most of this problem. Without the mark, and with enough times of having a performer audition too close or too far back, the auditioning staff will become annoyed and more than likely ask the SM to lay in a tape mark.

The SM's Worktable

There are two schools of thought as to where the SM has a worktable. Most naturally placed would be in the reception room near the entrance to the audition room. In this way the SM can continue to orchestrate and keep things organized in the reception room and at the same time quickly lead the performers in and out of the audition room.

However, if an ASM is also working the auditions or the Equity rep is there doing all of that the SM would be doing in greeting and receiving the performers, the SM can have the worktable in the audition room. With setting up base in the audition room, the SM sees both the performers and audition staff at their work. From this position the SM can better judge and control the time being used, and can also keep information and supplies spread on his worktable, away from prying eyes and borrowing hands. This table is set off to the side so the SM is not intrusive or distracting to either the performer or the audition staff. The table should also be placed on the same side of the room as the door through which the SM leads the performers in and out. This way the SM is not constantly crossing in front of the auditioning staff or the performer.

The SM might also set up a chair or small table near the door in the auditioning room or near the SM's table for the performers to place their personal belongings before they begin their auditions. If not, more than likely the SM will find these things on the SM's table anyway.

Art and Craft in Working the Audition Room

With each of the first few performers at the start of an audition, the SM leads the performer into the audition room, introduces the performer by name, and watches the audition staff's approach in greeting and beginning the audition. Performers like to have a moment of introduction, conversation, and personal contact to perhaps impress or help

relieve some of the uneasiness they may be experiencing. If this is also the way the audition staff likes to work, the SM goes with the flow, keeping close watch on the time.

This social approach can change at any time. The SM may be told directly to cut short the social time, or it may be said indirectly, "We need to move things along." This is when the SM takes control to accelerate the audition process. To ride over the entire "greeting" moment and to get directly into the audition, here is an approach:

As the SM and performer enter the room, the SM directs the performer to place all personal belongings on the chair or table that has been set up for that purpose. As the performer is doing this, the SM takes the picture and resume to the leader of the auditioning staff and at the same time announces the performer's name and role for which the performer is auditioning. The SM crosses to the taped spot on the floor and as the performer approaches gestures to the tape. As the SM backs away from the spot he says, "Whenever you're ready we'll begin." This leaves no room for the performer to strike up social conversation. The stage is set and the scene begins.

A singing audition is a little different. The SM brings the performer into the audition, instructs him or her to put personal belongings on the table or chair, and then adds to take the music over to the pianist. As this is being done, the SM takes the picture and resume over to the head of the audition and announces the person's name and crosses over to his worktable. The SM allows time for the performer and pianist to confer. The pianist is also wise in the ways of being accommodating but not letting this time grow into a rehearsal. If the process with the pianist continues and the SM sees that the auditioning staff is becoming impatient, the SM needs to become assertive and announce, "Folks, we need to begin the audition." As soon as the SM sees that the pianist is ready, the SM directs the performer to stand at the white mark and begin when ready.

In doing all of this, the SM is careful not to be rude or abrupt in tone of voice, but through demeanor and businesslike formality leaves no room for the performer to do something other than instructed.

Whatever approach the SM takes in working an audition, it is important to remember that the SM is there to facilitate, keep the audition running smoothly and efficiently, service both the performer and audition staff, and at the same time be a host who is working on behalf of the producer and director. As much as possible, the SM needs to keep the auditions moving along with ease, grace, and protocol appropriate for the occasion.

Serving the Performers

In taking the host approach to the audition, the SM should also see the performers as guests. As much as possible, the SM needs to greet the performers, making them feel welcome, and give them a moment or two of individual attention. To varying degrees, auditions can be stressful to performers and filled with nervousness and anxiety. It is not the SM's job to relieve the performers of their feelings, but rather, through both work and personal contact, to set up a process that is organized and easy to follow, and creates an environment that is pleasant, comfortable, and considerate of the performer.

Reading Scenes with Performers

In reading scenes with performers, the SM will be reading both male and female roles. Most audition staff prefer it this way. It allows them to concentrate and stay focused on the performer auditioning. The SM aids the auditioning staff by standing one or two steps away from the actor than is normal. The SM also stands with his back to the audition staff and is positioned a step or two further downstage of the actor. This keeps the actor facing the audition staff.

When reading a scene, the SM should always read from a separate copy of the script and not share a copy with the performer. The SM's script should be clearly marked at the top of the first page "SM's Copy" and should never be given out. It is annoying and frustrating to all if an SM must stop the audition process to search for another copy of the scene.

Whenever possible the SM should have the first line in the scene. Through the reading of the first line, the SM helps set the tone and energy of the scene. If the performer is nervous or inexperienced, it gives the performer the chance to respond or react first and not have to start acting right away. If the performer is comfortable and experienced, no matter what the SM does, the performer will take the scene and run with it. Throughout the audition, the SM reads the lines with intelligence, making sense of the words, and delivers them with some of the feeling and

intensity that might come from the character. This is why it is important for the SM to have read the play over and know what is going on in the scene.

As the performer responds to the SM's lines, the SM must listen and respond back accordingly and not just do line readings. However, the SM must at all times remember that the audition is for the performer to shine, not the SM. The SM must let the performer lead and take the scene in the direction in which the performer chooses, even if the SM knows it is not right for the scene.

While reading a scene in which the SM is playing a character of the opposite gender, the SM makes no effort to change his or her voice or physical style. If the moment calls for a feminine or masculine quality, the SM should shy away from stereotypical affectations and simply draw from whatever masculinity or femininity we all have within.

Bringing Closure to the Audition

After the audition, the SM must continue by gracefully leading the performer out of the room. With the last line of the scene, the SM turns to the audition staff and asks if there will be anything else. If not, the SM turns to and thanks the performer for coming, leads the performer to his or her personal effects, and then to the door. As they leave the room, the SM might give the performer some kind of timeline for hearing about a callback.

During the time the SM is leading the performer out, the audition staff goes into brief conference, evaluating the audition they have just seen and deciding if this person is to be called back. For the performers being considered for a callback, their pictures and resumes are placed in a pile for further discussion at the end of the day after all the performers have been seen. Meanwhile, the SM has gone back into the reception room and has the next performer ready but does not bring that performer into the audition room until the audition staff is through conferring and is ready.

Performers Wanting a Second Chance

For most performers, auditions are fragile and delicate. The least little thing can throw them off and prevent them from giving what they feel is their best. It is important the SM does not contribute to this by insensitive or rude treatment. On occasion the performer may approach the SM wanting to audition again. This can become a difficult moment of judgment and decision for the SM who is sensitive to the performer's plight. If the SM has seen the individual's audition and feels the audition was unfair in some way, the SM might approach the audition staff and ask on behalf of the performer. If the performer was not right for the part or did not meet the standard of other performers auditioning, the SM should try to discourage the performer with any number of reasonable excuses. If the performer is insistent, the SM takes the issue to the audition staff and lets them decide.

A Standing Rule: An SM never critiques or comments to performers on their audition, even when solicited by the performer. The SM offers an excuse about not being in a good place to have made a judgment.

The SM as a Timekeeper

An Equity rule states if a performer is kept waiting more than three hours, then starting in the fourth hour the performer is to be paid. This has been a rule for some time now. This rule was established because of overlong auditions, due to either the large number of people showing up or the audition staff's indulgence in taking a long time with each person without consideration for the performers waiting out in the reception room. The sign-in sheet with the arrival time noted becomes the SM's guideline by which to judge the time during the audition, and it can become the actor's proof for staking a claim.

It is the SM's job to see that performers do not wait too long. All auditions run behind. Performers expect to wait a reasonable amount of time. Auditions scheduled by appointment are easier for the SM to judge. If things start running

behind, the SM should begin reporting to the staff. This can be a little tricky. The report about timing should be offered not as a warning, but as a statement of fact—as part of keeping the staff informed: “Just to let you know we have about ten people waiting.” Otherwise, the SM will become an annoying intrusion, bringing news the staff does not want to hear.

With the first few warnings, the audition staff may be less responsive because it is early in the day, or they may make an effort to speed up their process but fall back into working at a slower pace. By the third warning, the SM needs to be more impressive—something that will catch their attention like, “Folks, I need to tell you that we are running about an hour behind. We have a bunch of people out there, and if we get any further behind, we are going to have to start paying them.” Mention money and you have everyone’s attention.

A Word of Warning: Before the SM starts delivering any warnings about time and running behind, it is wise to know that the holdup is not due to the SM. The SM must be working at an efficient and accelerated pace, moving performers in and out of the audition room with no time lost in keeping the audition staff waiting. Otherwise, upon the second or third report, someone on the staff will snap back, “We’re only waiting on you!”

Callback Auditions

Actors Getting a Callback

One of the sweeter sounds a performer can hear after having done an audition is, “Are you available to return for a callback audition?” Some audition staffs can decide whether they want an actor to return as soon as they are finished seeing the audition. Others prefer waiting until they have seen everyone, and then at the end of the day they can be more selective.

For those performers who are told on the spot, the SM is organized, making sure the performer’s picture and resume are put into the callback pile, and if the callback times have been set, then before the performer leaves, the SM gives the performer all the information necessary. If not, the SM ensures that the performer receives an email or text message.

The Spirit of Callback Auditions

At callback auditions, the ambiance of the reception room is joyful, spirited, exciting, and filled with hopefulness. For the performers who end up getting the job, the feelings are accelerated and magnified. For those performers who don’t, the feelings can plummet as low as they were high. The SM needs to be aware of both ends of this spectrum. At the beginning of the day the SM joins in the good feelings but remains detached enough to keep the performers grounded and focused on the work to be. For those performers who do not get the part, the SM cannot save the performers from their disappointment, but when the moment is right the SM can offer a good word by reminding them of the nature of the business and that if they had gotten this far in the audition they must have had something to offer.

Working the Callback Auditions

For the SM, callback auditions are set up and conducted in the same way as the initial audition. In most situations, the audition staff sees the performers individually as they did the first time. If the performer is a strong contender, they will ask that performer to wait until they are finished seeing all the others, possibly giving the performer a scene to study as they wait. After all the callback performers have been seen, the SM may read the scenes with those who remain, or the director may pair off the performers and have them read together. But even after that, by day’s end some will know for sure they have gotten the part and others will still have to wait a little longer.

You Got the Job!

On occasion the SM is afforded the pleasure of telling a performer that they got the job. Preferably this should be done by phone in real time. If leaving a message, the SM might ask the performer to call back to ensure the message is received and that further instructions are delivered. This is a call that is always returned. Of course, in the initial call, the SM shares in the joy of getting hired, congratulates the performer, and welcomes them to the company. On the other end of the spectrum, if the SM must tell a performer they did not get the job, he needs to be as comforting and understanding as he was with those at the audition, offering once again the nature-of-the-business facts and that not getting the job had nothing to do with lack of talent. The performer may ask why they weren't chosen. It is not the SM's place to give this information, even if he or she knows. An SM never makes commentary on a performer's audition but turns that responsibility over to the producer or director, suggesting the performer talk with them.

The SM Expressing an Opinion

Among peers and the auditioning staff, it is important for the SM to know when to offer an opinion and when to keep it quiet. After the performer has left the audition room, it is not the SM's job to comment or express an opinion on the audition. SMs cannot help but form opinions. With time and experience, they become as adept in recognizing good talent as any person experienced in casting a show. Only when directly invited does an SM express an opinion, at that time speaking freely and honestly, but briefly and to the point. Producers and directors want their SMs to have an opinion, but they want it expressed when they want to hear it.

In Closing

As an SM, you may find yourself working almost as many auditions as you do shows. With some auditions, you will be free to be creative and inventive in setting up the day and running things as you choose. You may even take part in the selection of callbacks or in casting parts. With other auditions, you may be relegated to being a traffic cop, moving performers in and out of the audition room. At some auditions you will meet stars or respected performers whose work you have admired. Other times you will meet performers who want to be stars or performers who are stars in their own mind—all wanting to be specially treated and accommodated.

Whatever situations and events the SM encounters when running an audition, it is the SM's job to facilitate and serve. You must have a sense of logistics and move people with efficiency. You must remain focused and not be swept into the social climate that can prevail when performers in the same town join together. You must remain a timekeeper and see that all is done in fairness according to the procedure set up for the day and the Equity regulations. You must remain flexible and inventive as the audition staff creates new ways to find the best talent for their show.

There is no one way to run auditions. The ideas in this chapter are a starting point. Each SM finds and develops a preferred approach. Some of the things you read in this chapter you may readily use, lifting them directly from the written page. Some you will change, altering them beyond recognition, and still others you will throw out.

The Professional Experience

An Epic Audition—Part 1

My first big-time professional job was also my first experience working an epic audition. Since then I've had others, but it's the first that remains the most memorable. I had already been hired as an ASM for a musical version of *Gone With the Wind*. It was an open-call audition. The producing company had not anticipated the number of people who would show up, so the PSM was the only SM brought in for the day. The auditions began at 9:00 am. By 9:30 I

received a frantic call from the production office asking if I could come to the audition immediately. It seems over a hundred performers had shown up and more were arriving every minute. Except for the two starring roles of Scarlet and Rhett, all roles were open. For the performers this was the hottest audition in town. Getting a part in this show meant at least a year's employment as the show traveled across the country and then an open-ended run on Broadway. Actors from as far as Athens, Greece, came to audition.

When I arrived, performers filled the reception room and overflowed into the hallway. I had to assertively excuse my way to the reception table. The PSM looked as if he had already put in a full day's work. He was madly juggling his time between processing the actors and getting them into the audition room. For some reason there was no Equity field representative. Perhaps the idea of having a field rep at auditions had not yet been instated. "Am I glad to see you!" the PSM said as he snatched up the next picture and resume and hurriedly led the performer off into the audition room. Before closing the door behind him, he said, "Do something to get things organized out here!"

My first order of business was to get another audition room. I did not seek the producer's approval. Fortunately, there was a room nearby. We called it the holding pen. I quickly hand-printed signs directing all arriving actors down another hall and into the holding-pen room. This changed the flow of traffic and kept the hallway closest to us clear for our immediate use. I ushered whatever actors remained in the reception room to the holding-pen room.

I then quickly processed the next ten actors listed on the sign-in sheet. I gathered their pictures and resumes along with the producer's information sheets, led them into the reception room, sat them in a row of chairs, and told them they would be going into the audition room in the order in which they were seated. When the PSM came out of the audition room, I handed him the ten sets of pictures and resumes. I explained that these were the next ten actors and that their pictures and resumes were in the order in which they were seated.

The person holding the auditions was the director's wife, and she was accompanied by two associates. The director was in New York and his wife knew as much about the show as he did. She was there to seek out the best talent available for the director to see at a later date in callback auditions. Having been a performer herself, the director's wife was sympathetic to the actors' needs. She wanted to give each a fair chance to present themselves. Consequently, she took a good amount of time with each person. These auditions were held at a time when producers did not have to pay actors after being at an audition for three hours, so the director's wife was free to take her time. Periodically throughout the day, she would come out to the holding-pen room to tell the actors that if they were willing to wait, they would all be seen and have a chance to read for a role. This woman was relentless in her pursuit and held true to her word. We finished auditioning the last actor by 11:35 pm. In all, we saw more than 450 performers that day. While everyone fell back in their seats exhausted and in relief, I was energized. I thought every professional audition would be as exciting. Today I am glad that most turned out to be less stimulating. I am, however, thankful for this first experience. It prepared me for the others that came along in my career as a stage manager.

Part 2: A Kiss from Melanie

The auditions for *Gone With the Wind* continued for several days more. The next day was set up by appointments, and there were many. With how the director's wife worked, the time allowed for each appointment was not enough. The PSM decided he would need help. He told me to be at the auditions for the next day by 8:30 am to prepare.

Auditions that day were not as frantic. There was always a good number of performers waiting. Many of them showed up with their agents or managers. This made the reception room more congested. We quickly reestablished the holding-pen room. The PSM and I told each performer and rep the way the director's wife worked and warned they would wait well beyond their scheduled times. What helped relieve some of the pain or annoyance for having to wait was the fact that the director's wife invited each actor's rep to sit with her at the audition table as their client auditioned.

The PSM and I took turns working the audition room. During the times I worked inside the room, I of course also had to read scenes with the performers auditioning. I read both male and female roles. Most performers are used to having an SM read with them in an audition, regardless of the opposite gender. Only two complained that day. They said it "threw" them to have a man reading a woman's part. The director's wife auditioned them again, this time reading the scenes with them herself. They did no better.

There was one actor, above all others, who from the start was able to look past my gender as I read the role of Melanie to his Ashley Wilkes. This actor had done his homework. He was prepared and his portrayal was full. He was focused, concentrated, and worked every moment. At one point in the scene he crossed to me and took my hand. I became a little self-conscious. He smiled and still in character ad-libbed, "It's okay, Melanie." A chuckle came from those in the room, and he continued. At the end of the scene, as per the directions in the script, he drew me close to

him and kissed me on the forehead. There was a long moment of silence in the audition room. I remained frozen in his embrace—no, paralyzed—hoping the director’s wife would yell “cut” or something, anything to break the awkwardness I felt. The director’s wife, however, was enjoying the moment. She knew this was my first professional job, and she wanted me to get the total experience. Finally, she called out, “Alright boys, break it up!” Everyone burst out laughing. The actor nearly got the part. He was, however, too short. Perhaps it was destiny, because a while later he got a series on TV.

Serving the Director’s Audition Needs

Another audition that stands out is one for a show in which I was hired just to work the auditions. It was for the Los Angeles premier production of a Tony Award-winning musical that had been playing on Broadway for almost two years and eventually went on to make theatre history. Like the *Gone With the Wind* auditions, every musical actor in town wanted to be in this show. Anticipating the turnout, the open-call auditions were set on three days and were held in a theatre. Each day the number of actors showing up did not reach the epic proportions of *Gone With the Wind*, but the line did go outside the back door of the theatre, down the alley, and around the building on to Sunset Boulevard.

The director, the one person most responsible for conceiving, creating, and developing this show, was there to personally audition everyone. It was exciting for me to be part of such a prestigious show and work with the director. I was also hoping to be in the right place at the right time and maybe get hired on as one of the SMs.

The director knew exactly what he wanted. He was quick in releasing actors he felt were not right for the show, but with those actors whom he considered a good possibility he took painstaking time.

This director also had some very specific demands and restrictions on the people who worked the audition. He arrived promptly every morning at 9:00 am with an entourage of assistants and associates who surrounded him as if to protect him. Upon his arrival he wanted the first actor ready in the wings waiting to begin, although it always took him fifteen to twenty minutes to get started. I was instructed not to talk to the director, even to say good morning, and if I had any questions, I was to talk to one of his assistants. I could understand and appreciate this. The man was intense, concentrated, and detailed, and did not want anything to disturb his creative time. He was devoted to his show and nothing came above that. I did, however, find the “good morning” part a strange request.

The director liked staying in the darkened theatre, remaining just a voice. There were, however, many times when he came on to the stage to work with the actor. He was sullen in his approach, working intimately and speaking almost in whispers. Being in such admiration of the show and this man’s work, each time he came on the stage I’d draw closer, standing in the wings. At one point one of the assistants saw me. In a panic, he pulled me off into the backstage area, telling me never to stand where the director could see me. It seems the sight of a stranger’s face while the director worked was distracting and upsetting.

I was in the spring of my career and had not yet come to know and understand some of the behaviors of people. I believed that the director’s behavior was due to something I was doing. After about an hour of feeling bad, I asked the assistant if the director was displeased with me or my work. The assistant laughed and assured me that if the director was dissatisfied with either one I would not be there having this conversation with him. I took this as a compliment and continued working the auditions until the end. I did not, however, get a job on the run of the show as an SM.

An Audition Phobia

During the auditions for another show, the director called me to the audition table and asked privately and confidentially, “I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t let the actors shake my hand when they come in. Just have them take their place and begin the audition.” I must have looked surprised or perplexed, maybe both, as I left the audition room, because the production secretary came running after me, being apologetic and explaining that the director was afraid of catching germs. Up to that time, I had not heard of Howard Hughes’s phobia about germs, and Michael Jackson’s phobia was not yet generally known.

I was not sure how I was going to accomplish this task. I could not tell the actors of the director’s phobia. I tried several approaches and each failed miserably. I was apologetic to the director and, despite his affliction, he understood.

My first step was to mark the audition room floor with a large white strip of tape, and then as I led each actor into the room, I’d say we were running short of time, ask the performer to take a place at the taped line, and say that we would begin the audition as soon as the director was through looking over their resume. Most times this worked.

There were, however, those actors who were more assertive and wanted the time to meet and chat with the director. The director had a humor about himself and his request, because when this happened he'd look over at me, smile, and shrug his shoulders. To ensure that no actor would slip through, I soon learned that, once the performer took a place at the taped line, I could cut in front of the performer to deliver the picture and resume to the director, and the opportunity for approaching was blocked. The director helped by turning his attention to the picture and resume. This approach became foolproof, but it felt abrupt and did not transition comfortably into the audition. Going with my intuition, I started announcing the performer's name, and as I moved into place to read the scene with the performer, I gave the name of the scene. It worked well for the rest of the audition and the director complimented me on my tactics. I worked with the director many more times afterward and followed this procedure each time I worked one of his auditions. I found this process also worked well when the auditions were running late and I needed to move actors in and out of the audition room quickly. With refinement and variations, I use this procedure in some way with every audition I work.

The SM's Pre-Production Time

Up to now we have discussed the things that make a good SM, met the different members of the chain of command, talked about getting the job, named the tools and supplies an SM needs, discussed in detail the charts, plots, plans, and lists an SM must create, profiled all the people with whom the SM must work and maintain a working relationship, and talked through the art of running an audition. Now it is time to put all these things together for the SM to begin the work in the SM's pre-production time!

The SM's pre-production time is the first official time the SM goes into full-time action on the show. In most working situations in the past, the SM did not start getting paid until the first day of rehearsals when the performers started. However, many producers expected the SM to have ready whatever things were necessary to launch the first day of rehearsals and begin work on the production. Then Equity negotiated with producers for the SM must be put on the payroll no later than the "week" before rehearsals to begin production work on the show.

No matter what contract under which I was working, I was always thankful for the pre-production time that was allotted to get things organized and pulled together. However, be it one week or two that comes with a production contract, it seemed it was never enough. On really heavy, involved, and complicated shows, I found myself working the full seven days within the week and often-times working at home once I left the production office. The SM does all that it takes to get the job done.

Homework

Script Smart, Set Smart

With this pre-production time having been extended to two weeks, the SM can now do the work that had to be done even before being put on the payroll—namely, becoming *script smart* and *set smart*. Before doing anything else, the SM needs to read over the script several times. The script is the foundation to everything that is about to happen. It is the reason the SM is working and why the show is being

The SM's Working Creed: Before getting into the nitty-gritty of the SM's work in pre-production time, I would like to pass on to any SM, or for that matter to any person in an organizing and supervisory position, a way of working that has served me well.

- Think ahead.
- See the things you know have to be done.
- Do the things that can be done ahead of time.
- Don't wait until the time they have to be done.
- Then, each day as you work, that has been done ahead will easily slip in, giving an ease to the day and, more important, giving an ease to those unscheduled, unplanned things that will enter the day... for surely they will come, requiring the same kind of attention and intensity as everything else.

produced. The SM needs to have in mind all that is within the script so he or she can better understand the casting and the design elements, and begin to answer the barrage of questions that will be asked. To not know the script will be

like working half blind.

In conjunction with becoming script smart, the SM also needs to get with the set designer to generally go over the set, discussing the various parts, especially features that are unique to the design. As soon as possible, the SM needs to begin marrying the set to the script. From this meeting, the SM should also get a set of blueprints/floor plans and ask if the designer can email or put into Dropbox downsized, eight-by-ten floor plans for the various scenes/scene changes.

Beginning Stages of the Charts, Plots, and Lists

Having read through the script, having met with the set designer, and having put in a bid for eight-by-ten downsized floor plans, the SM is now ready to start bringing up onto the laptop screen the templates for the *Scene/Character Tracking Chart*, the *prop list*, and the *sound effects list*. All three can remain on the screen overlapping each other, or they can be minimized and brought up as the SM reads through the script, making notes from the play for each template.

While making notes in the different templates, the SM also starts noting in the right-hand margins of the script cues inherent to the play—light cues that are specific for a moment like lightning, a lamp being turned on or off, or a power failure and sound cues like the ringing of a landline or cell phone, perhaps an offstage crash, or a siren passing. Reading the script and doing this work is best done where the SM cannot be disturbed. The production office is not the place to do this work. It is best done at home and at a time where there are less distractions, if not none at all.

At the Production Office

If this is the first time you will be working for this particular production company, then going into the production office on the first day will be no different than going to the first day of any other job. There will be a mixture of good feelings and excitement along with a measure or two of anticipation and anxiousness. Will this be another one of those glorious experiences where things come together in love, friendship, artistry, and financial success—or will this be the show in which everyone cannot wait for the end?

The pre-production time is when the SM meets and establishes a working relationship with the office staff. In most situations, the office staff is very accommodating. They welcome the SM, providing workspace, making the SM's laptop compatible to the office's electronics, maybe even providing a landline phone and supplies, and gladly share their expertise, advice, and knowledge of the show. After this week and once the show gets into rehearsals, the SM's visits to the office will be brief and the business done quickly.

On the First Day at the Production Office

Having a workspace on the first day is probably the most important thing the SM needs within the first hour of being at the production offices. The SM already has a phone, the laptop, and the script. Sometimes the workspace given will be makeshift, created on the SM's arrival with maybe an office staff member giving up some or all of their own workspace. The SM must be very flexible, work with whatever is provided, and most of all be thankful to those who are providing, putting themselves forward in setting up space. Even with the most ill-equipped office and marginal workspace, the SM has the office-in-a-bag and can begin work and do the job effectively.

The business on the first day will feel scattered, unfocused, unproductive, and perhaps a bit overwhelming. A good part of the day will be spent setting up the office space, gathering information, meeting people, and making telephone calls.

At this early stage in the production, people will have many questions and concerns that they expect the SM to address. More than likely the SM will not have the information or answers. This is when the SM needs to take good notes and promise to get back to people with the answers. Different bits of information will begin to fill the workspace. Some stacked up on the desk in the form of hard copy, while other information will be a transfer of electronic files. This is where the thumb drive comes in handy—moving information from one person's computer to

the SM's laptop. This information will come mostly from the producer's production assistant, including such things as the names of cast members, heads of the technical departments, addresses, and contact numbers. The SM will also be given a list of scripts already given out, time frames of people who cannot meet up with parts of the schedule, perhaps special conditions to a contract of which the SM should be aware, and whatever else that might have piled up and now the production assistant is glad to turn over with relief.

Within a short time, a disabling feeling can consume the SM, a feeling that this load of work is insurmountable. It is at this time the SM must become bipolar, ambidextrous, multitasking, a micromanager, or whatever else it takes to zero in on one thing and yet continue working and dealing with all the other things that will pour in on this day.

The Block Calendar

Getting Information from the Production Office

Once the script and the set design are somewhat committed to memory, the SM needs to move on and zero in on the block calendar, as presented in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," Figure 6-11. Without the information contained in this calendar, the SM is unable to answer a large number of questions that will be asked by the people the SM contacts. In creating the block calendar, the SM starts by gathering information from the producer's production assistant, sometimes the producer himself. The SM takes the information, transposing it on to the block calendar template already on file in the laptop.

Gathering Information from the Director

Once that segment of information is entered into the computer, the SM calls the director to gather rehearsal information. At this time the SM brings up the idea of having a production meeting with the technical and creative staff. Also, the SM asks if the director wants a *table read* of the play and, if so, will it be just the performers and the SMing staff or can the creative heads and technical heads sit in on the reading, too. If the show is a musical, the SM also talks with the choreographer and music director.

Gathering Information from the Rest of the Staff

With the information gathered from the director, music director, and choreographer, the SM can now talk with the technical director (TD), mostly to verify time frames and get any additional information. Also, a call to the lighting designer is beneficial so that this person feels included, and at the same time the SM can get confirmation and approval on whatever information is being included in the block calendar.

Talking with the Costume Shop

In completing this block calendar, it is imperative that the SM also talk with the costume shop to coordinate measurements of the performers. The SM asks if the costume people can come to the rehearsal hall on the first day of rehearsals to get whatever measurements are needed. If the costume shop needs a performer to go to the costume shop before rehearsals, the SM makes a note to call and talk with the performer.

After working out costume measurements and fitting times, the SM also has a conversation with the costume shop about when the costumes need to be finished and in the theatre. This date is entered into the block calendar... but it is not etched in stone. Seldom are the costumes ready before time, and more than likely the shop will struggle to be on time.

Talking with Publicity/Public Relations

Last, the SM talks with the publicity department to note any publicity events or photo sessions that require time

An SM's Time-Saving/Work-Saving Device: In scheduling a performer's visit to the costume shop on their *personal time*, the SM learns to delegate the business of coordinating. Instead of first calling the performer and finding out the performer's time schedule, then calling the costume shop and setting up the appointment, and then having to call the performer back to confirm or give any changes, the SM gives the performer the costume shop's name, the phone number, and the name of the person with whom to speak and lets them work things out. Once things are arranged and the visit is completed, the SM asks the performer to report the date and time to one of the SMs. These are the little things that an SM learns to do to save time and work while moving on to the many things that need attention *now!*

Keep in mind, though, Equity has set up in the performer's contract the number of times the performer can go to the costume shop on their own private time. So the SM may need to create a file in the laptop noting the dates and times of such visits. After the limit has been met, the SM needs to make every effort to have the next costume visits be part of the performer's daily schedule, because after the prescribed number of personal visits, the performer must be paid an additional amount of money for his or her time. This of course does not sit well with the producer, and you can be sure the SM will be *taken to task, called on the carpet, chewed out* (pick one) for not putting costume visits into the schedule.

during the rehearsal period and should be entered on to the block calendar. Also, the SM discusses the performers' bios and pictures: How should they be handled? Can they be sent electronically by the performer, or do they need to be in the hard copies, brought to the SM on the first day of rehearsals, who in turn gets them to the publicity department?

If any of the information gathered from the various departments is in conflict with anything else on the schedule, the SM is quick to see it and work it out. If the SM is unable to resolve any differences, the matter goes to the producer. The producer will dictate the course of action and the final schedule on the block calendar.

Key Information to Include in the Block Calendar

- The rehearsal dates, times, and major run-throughs of acts or the entire play
- The technical rehearsal periods, to include the load-in, invited guest dress rehearsals, preview performances, and opening performance
- Costume measurements and fittings
- Publicity events scheduled at the same time as the rehearsals
- The run of the show, including dates and times for all evening and matinee performances
- Name and address of the rehearsal hall and theatre
- Key contact information: landline, cell phone, fax, and email

Under the SM's Watchful Eyes

The SM watches for the following things on the block schedule:

- Unreasonable time frames for work to be done
- Conflicts or overlaps in schedule
- Events interfering with each other
- Union rules governing the actors' and technicians' workdays, call times, days off, and overtime or penalties

While still in draft form, the calendar is sent out via email to the producer, director, and TD for final approval, asking for a response or approval or disapproval asap. Upon total approval, the final draft is sent out in groupings: to the production staff, the heads of the technical departments, and the cast members. However, the SM also makes hard

copies, most of which will be distributed to the cast members on the first day of rehearsals (even though they have been sent a copy via email) for them to put at the beginning of their scripts. The rest are kept on file in a manila folder for anyone who might need a copy at a moment's notice. This may be the final draft of the block calendar or it may be the beginning of many changes to come. Upon completion of this first major project, the SM has taken the first step in getting the company organized and working in the same direction.

Production Meeting

At one time in this early part of the production, the SM was the initiator of production meetings. Today, with a production manager on staff, the SM confers with this person and together they share and coordinate all that has to be done to make this happen.

In the absence of a production manager, the SM heads this matter. While on the phone with the producer, director, and TD about the block calendar, the SM finds out if they want to have a production meeting. It is important and beneficial that all technical and artistic departments come together organizing and getting everyone working in the same direction and time frame. The right hand gets to see what the left hand is doing. Every department gets a chance to present what work has been done thus far, what things must be done, and whatever problems they think they might encounter. The best time for the SM to have this meeting is at the end of the SM's preproduction time, just before rehearsals begin and at a time when the SM has a good and better grasp on the production and most of the charts, plots, plans, and lists have been completed and can be distributed.

To make this meeting happen, the SM starts early in the pre-production time, first setting a date and time, and then seeing if everyone can make it. The objective is to have 100 percent attendance, even if it means scheduling on a Sunday or early some morning. If a particular person crucial to the meeting cannot be in attendance, setting up a video chat or webcam broadcast could be an alternative in making that person part of the meeting. The writers and composers are seldom asked to this meeting unless the show has never been produced before or if the director or producer specifies they be there. If the show is a musical, the music director and choreographer are often asked to attend.

Video Chat, Webcam Broadcasting

By other names, a *video chat* or *webcam broadcast* is Skype, Facetime, or any of the other programs that will allow for electronic, face-to-face conversation between people who are distances apart. With the advancement of technology, what is favored today can suddenly become yesterday's dinosaurs. So as an SM, if this sort of communication is necessary in getting the designing and technical elements of the show together, then talk with your colleagues or go on the Internet to see the latest and what is being offered.

If there is a production manager (PM) on staff and it is necessary to video chat one or more designing or technical heads, the PM more than likely will have a working knowledge of setting up and using any one of the programs available. If as an SM you are confronted with having to set up one, let's hope it can be simple with only one or two people in conference with only the producer, director, yourself, and the TD. Otherwise, for a meeting with a large group where all can communicate effectively, a much more sophisticated setup is needed.

If the show is a major production or is being produced for the first time, and especially if it is intended for Broadway, most likely all artistic and technical departments are in the same city/town and are geared to be called in for meetings. In regional and smaller theatres where productions are still substantial, but the budgets are less than desirable, known or favored designers from other areas may be asked to work on a production electronically; then any one of the video-chat programs available are an excellent tool.

Enter Ms. Cynthia R. Stillings

For a strong academic view on how video chatting can work, here is someone who has worked the program, failing and succeeding as the technology came into existence: **Cynthia R. Stillings**, professor of theatre at Kent State University. A professional stage manager early in her theatrical experience, she has taught SM courses and trained

SMs for over twenty-five years, is a USA lighting designer, and was the resident lighting designer for a number of years at the Cleveland Opera. She is the former director of the School of Theatre and Dance and currently serves as the associate dean of the College of the Arts at Kent State.

Here is her thumbnail list for having a successful video chat/webcam broadcast meeting:

- Your laptop is not a sound system. It is not meant to broadcast to a room of people. Get speakers.
- Everyone in the conference needs to see everyone else on the other end of the meeting. You need webcams on both ends to take in each grouping.
- Get a good projector and screen (a small boardroom type is good). Having seven or eight people huddled around a laptop screen is futile and unproductive.
- Position the webcam or laptop so the remote participant has a full view of the participants on the other end.
- If a number of remote participants are part of the chat, consider getting a program that allows for a web meeting.
- Make sure the Internet connection is robust enough to deal with video and audio.
- Set up the system and make connections in advance before all are gathered.
- Have the SM or the PM act as the moderator to field questions, keep all on track, and keep conversations clear and separated.
- Establish a protocol for speaking and asking questions so there is no overlapping of conversations: have everyone identify themselves before speaking; ask them to speak a little slower, being a little clearer in their enunciation than they would normally be in conversation.
- What can go wrong... will go wrong.

Student, Beginning, and Even Assistant SMs, Take Heart: There will be plenty of opportunity to witness and apprentice all that is involved in setting up and having a successful and productive video chat/webcam broadcast before you have to do one on your own. Nonetheless, it is the wise young SM who becomes familiar with some of the basics of having a painless and trouble-free electronic chat.

Cast Business: First Contact, General Information, Instructions

The next piece of important business for the SM is to create a comprehensive address list of everyone in the company. Once again, the producer's production assistant more than likely has begun a list of positions with contact numbers and email addresses.

This information is easily transferred from one computer to the next by way of a thumb drive.

The First-Contact Email

To get all the information needed for the cast and staff address lists, and if the show is a musical with a large cast, the SM could easily spend two or three days calling cast members. Once again technology has come to the aid of the SM and made things easier. Now to gather all that is needed the SM can send out what I like to call the *first-contact email*. In it the SM welcomes everyone and lays out some general information:

1. Time and date of the first rehearsal
2. The hours the cast will generally be rehearsing throughout the rehearsal period (i.e. morning–afternoon or afternoon–evening)
3. Place of rehearsals (address, phone number, directions)
4. Parking information (facilities or accommodations)
5. What the cast will be doing on the first day (and if there is anything specific the performers need to do or bring to the rehearsal)
6. Costume measurements will be taken on the first day of rehearsals. Please wear clothing that will make it easy for the costumers to take the measurements.

7. The SM includes the email address of the publicity department, instructing each performer to send a brief biography along with a picture for the program. For those who are not set up to do this electronically, they are asked to bring in this material on the first day of rehearsals.
8. Performers must sign contracts before they can begin rehearsing. The contracts will be signed in the first hours of the first rehearsal.
9. The SM also asks if anyone wants to be included on the contact sheet and if so to list only the information they choose to share, with the understanding that the list will be generally distributed to other cast members.

In the next part of this first-contact email, the SM asks performers to respond to each point below:

1. *Professional name*—the name as listed with Equity and as it will appear in the program. They should be the same. If not, contact Equity to get the matter straightened out.
2. Performer's *home address* (this information will remain confidential and is only for the producer, director, and SM). This information is optional.
3. I already have your email address, but please list any *other contact information* such as landline, cell phone, and any other number at which you can be reached, including agent, manager, or nearby relative.
4. Confirm *role(s)* contracted to play (and/or understudy).
5. Have you received a script? If not, one will be given to you on the first day of rehearsals. If it is absolutely necessary to have one before then one will be mailed or delivered.
6. Your union status (Equity?, non-Equity?). Up-to-date on dues? In good standing with the union? If the answer is no to any of these questions, contact Equity to get business completed before the first day of rehearsals.
7. Stage management will be creating a contact list. If you want to be included on this list, please send the information you choose to have on this contact sheet. Know that the contact sheet will be distributed only to the members of the company.

Upon closing, the SM asks for a quick response to this email. This response ensures that the SM is in direct contact with each performer and aids in completing this part of the job in a timely fashion.

In putting together for the *staff* address list, the SM needs less information: only their names and correct spelling, business addresses, position as it will be noted in the program, and cell/landline/office phone number. The SM also asks this group if they too would like to be included on the contact sheet, giving them the same explanation and assurances as with the cast members.

This electronic way of gathering and delivering information is certainly a great help to the SM, but at one time or another there will be a performer (maybe even two) who live by *land phones* and *snail mail*. With these individuals it is back to the old-school way of communicating.

The Contact Sheet

Notice that the contact sheet is kept separate from the cast and staff address lists. Once all the information is put into the computer and these lists are completed, it is then easy to extract the information needed for the contact sheet. Remember, the contact sheet is made for general distribution and has on it only the contact number that each person has chosen to list.

Contacting the Equity Representative

After completion of the cast address list, it is a good time to talk with the Equity rep. The rep is interested in having a complete list of all cast members, both union and nonunion. Also for greater clarification and identification, the Equity rep likes to have the *social security numbers* of each performer. At one time the SM would ask for this information as part of the information gathered from the performer in their first conversation. As of late, it is much preferred that this information not be put on any list, no matter how confidential, and that it is given directly to the Equity rep by the performer at the Equity meeting on the first day of rehearsals.

Also, in conversation with the Equity rep, the SM gives the time and place of the first rehearsal and assures the rep that the first hour of the day has been set aside to do Equity business. In the final part of this phone conversation with the rep, the SM goes over any other notes having to do with anything that concerns Equity.

Settling into a Calmer Pace

For the SM, the first two days of this pre-production time are usually frantic and maddening. Staff people and performers alike want to know things that the SM is just now learning, gathering, assimilating, and comprehending.

The things discussed thus far are the most important to do on the first days. As you can see, much of the work overlaps, tugging and pulling the SM in different directions. By the third day, the pace usually settles down. Pertinent information has come in, lists and forms are taking shape, and the pending notes on the clipboard or in electronic tablet are getting fewer. This, however, does not mean that there is time for water-cooler talks, extended coffee breaks, or going out to lunch. It will be amazing how quickly this preproduction time passes. The SM must continue to work at an accelerated pace, completing the tasks that must get done and not putting anything off till later.

Character/Actor-Actor/Character List

If the show has a large cast with performers playing multiple roles, as might be the case with *Nicholas Nickleby* or the musical *Big River*, this is a good time for the SM to complete the two parts of this list as discussed in Chapter 6, “Hard Copy.”

The SM’s Personal Floor Plans

The next major project is the SM’s personal floor plans. This project too can be time consuming, especially if the show is a multiset musical. If the show is a one- or two-set comedy or drama, making the personal floor plans during pre-production will not eat up a lot of time. However, when working on a musical, the SM is better off doing some or most of this work at home during off hours, where there is less interruption.

By this time, the SM has met with the set designer and knows the set fairly well. If the set designer was able to give the SM those letter-size floor plans requested in their first meeting, this is now the time to begin working on them, making them into the personalized floor plans discussed in Chapter 6, “Hard Copy,” Figures 6-15 through 6-18.

Advancing Technology: AutoCAD seems to be the most used program for design at this time. You can be sure, however, that by the time of this reading there will be others. Talk with set designers, technical directors, and other SMs to bring yourself up to date and find what works best for you.

Completing the List of Hard-Copy Work

Once the personal floor plans are completed, the remainder of the charts, plots, plans, and lists will not take up as much time.

- Rehearsal and performance sign-in sheets
- Correct-spelling-of-names list
- Sound recording and effects list

- Beginning draft of the prop list
- Schedule reminder list
- Daily schedule for the first day of rehearsals

The work, however, is nowhere near done. What has been done thus far is only the foundation, the groundwork to what has to be done next.

Assembling and Distributing Packets of Information

The only time the office staff may feel inconvenienced with having the SM invade their territory during the production week is when it is time for the SM to monopolize the copy machine to make copies of the gathered and assembled information. In consideration of those in the office, the SM must offer to step aside when someone else needs to use the machine.

From all that has been gathered and copied, the SM now assembles packets that are given to the cast, technical staff, producer, director, and if a musical, the music director and choreographer on the first day of rehearsals. Some of it has already been sent via email, but it helps in keeping things organized and running smoothly if the SM also hands out hard copies that can be inserted into the front part of the scripts. Each packet contains:

- The block calendar
- The schedule for the day
- The contact sheet
- Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt.
- Character/Actor–Actor/Character List (if needed)
- SM's personal floor plans (for those who need them)

Some packets will have additional materials for different people. Variations include the following:

- In addition to the above list, the SM includes in the producer's and director's packets the cast and staff address lists (remember, this list is not given to anyone else). At this point the director already has a script, but the SM may also include in the director's packet an unmarked copy.
- The SM includes in the cast's packets scripts for those who are playing roles but have not yet received a script. Also, payroll deduction forms, medical insurance forms, and any other forms Equity requires from each member, even though these items can be downloaded from the Internet. Parking instructions and a list of places to eat and possibly shop are also helpful.
- Included in the choreographer's packet is also a script.
- Unless the music director specifically asks for a script, the SM does not include one, or a set of the SM's personal floor plans.

For the different technical departments, each packet has in it information suited to its particular needs.

- In addition to the script, and a score if requested, the sound department is given a copy of the Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. This is for the technician running the sound during the performance in aid of creating his own mic tracking chart. If the sound department has already begun its own tracking chart, then the SM's Sc./Chctr.Track.Chrt. is good for checking and comparing.
- The designers' packets also have information added or deleted that is pertinent to their department. The lighting designer definitely needs a clean copy of the script.
- The SM might also include a set of the personal floor plans. Once again, if requested, the SM can provide a copy of the score.
- The SM also needs to go through the chain-of-command list and distribute to those not receiving a packet a block calendar and whatever other information is important or pertinent to their position, operation, and department.

Most of the information will be put into manila envelopes with the person's name nicely printed on the outside, but for those packets of information that really do not need an envelope, a paper clip and a Post-It with the person's name on

it is quite workable.

Revisions Made on Information Already Distributed

It has been said and will be said again that the only constant in an SM's life is *change!* Even after all is done and is said to be written in stone, there will be *change*, or what's more gently called *revisions*, especially with the pages of a script. Any changes or revisions made after distribution of information must be noted at the **top right-hand corner**—and it must be at the top right hand and not at the left because if the page is put into some kind of a binder, that information can become partially covered or not as easily seen. The revision information should be as follows:

- The word REVISION, in uppercase letters,
- followed by the date in parentheses,
- which is followed by the SM's initials,
- all of which is put into a bold font. Example: **REVISION (06-28-2017)sj**

Scripts and Scores

While doing all that must be done in the first couple of days of the pre-production time, the SM must also begin work on generating scripts. Never are there enough scripts. Generating scripts is another one of those time-consuming jobs, but it cannot be done at home on off hours.

Something about the Scores: In all the musical shows I have done, never have I been responsible for the copying and distribution of scores. It has always been the musical director who has handled all that has to do with the music, and this is probably even more true with a new show where the music will be composed, changed, rewritten, and rearranged almost daily. So if any one department or designer has wanted a score, they have gone to the musical director. This is not to say, however, that students and beginning SMs of today will never have to deal with this part of the production. If indeed you are given the job, then handle it just as you would the scripts.

Receiving an Electronic Script

If the show is brand new, never having been produced before, more than likely the script will come to the SM electronically and is usually in some script-writing program such as Final Draft. This means the SM too must have the same script-writing program. Today, this is the most advantageous way of getting the script because copies are easily made from it, as are changes, which are a certainty with a new show.

Scripts and Scores Purchased from a Publisher

Most times, while licensing the play, the producer can purchase or rent scripts and scores. Whether purchased or rented, you can be sure the producer will get only the number required from the publisher. So more scripts will definitely need to be generated. This too is easily done by the SM on the office copying machine, at some commercial copying service, or as a last resort on a scanner/printer. Also, if the scripts and scores are rented, they must be returned to the publisher in good condition or the producer will pay a stiff penalty for which the producer, somewhere in the dark recesses of his mind, will hold the SM responsible.

The Paperback, Booklet-Size Playbook

Worst of all for the SM to receive is the five-by-seven paperback, booklet-size script. While this may be workable for the cast members, even with having to note their blocking, the SM must have the script in manuscript form. Receiving scripts in booklet size does not happen often, but when it does the SM needs to do some serious copying to enlarge the pages and make them into manuscript size to make clear blocking notes and the cueing script. In making these manuscript-sized copies, the SM will need to make copies for the ASM, director, lighting designer, and possibly star performer and other actors playing major roles.

Making the Script into an Editable Document

At present it seems there is no easy way to scan the pages of a manuscript to first get the consecutive pages into one document and also have the ability to edit should changes need to be made. With conventional scans, individual pages are saved either as a PDF file or JPEG with no possibility of editing the pages. There are optical character recognition programs (OCRs) (easily found on the Internet) that can save the scans into a word-processing program such as Word or a spreadsheet program such as Excel. *But* a lot of editing and shifting on each page usually needs to be done to get the text into standard script form. In time, software will be available to make this job easier. It just depends on the demand. So be on the lookout.

Distribution of Scripts

All performers playing a role of course need to have a full script, and not just a copy of the pages of dialogue their character speaks (*sides*).

The Rented Script List

At the beginning of this section on scripts, I said that if the producer “rents” the scripts and scores, they *must* be returned to the publisher in “very good” condition. This means that they must be bound as they were when first given by the publisher, have no dog-eared pages, be free of penciled blocking or notations, and have no torn, tattered, or food-stained pages. If in any way the publisher is dissatisfied, by contractual agreement the producer pays a stiff fine.

To protect the producer from this expense, during this SM’s pre-production time, the SM creates the **Rented Script List**.

First the SM:

1. Lightly numbers each rented script (if they are not already permanently numbered by the publisher).
2. Makes a list of each script.
3. When distributed to a performer places their name alongside that number.

Considering How Many Copies of the Script Are Needed

Before deciding how many scripts are needed to be copied:

- With the scripts already in possession, the SM enters the performer’s name on the rented script list alongside the number of the script that will be given to that performer.
- The SM then counts the number of scripts the rest of the performers will need.

After having calculated the number of scripts for the performers, the SM moves on to others in the company who will need a script.

- In the SM's initial contact with the director, choreographer, lighting designer, creator of projections, and head of sound, the SM asked if they have a script or if they need a script. If they need one, then these scripts are added to the number of scripts that need to be copied.
- It is always wise for the SM to have at least two copies of the script in the SM's storage box, ready to be handed out at a moment's notice.

Copies for the SM's use:

- one copy to keep as an *original* from which all other copies will be made
- one copy for the SM's *rehearsal script* (the script in which the blocking notes are made along with cues inherent to the script and cues the director might add in during rehearsals; this is the script from which the SM did the first readings)

Once the show has been rehearsed, and just before going into technical rehearsals, the SM needs to make three more copies of the script with whatever changes might have been made.

- The *first* is used in technical rehearsals to enter all the cues for the show.
- The *second* is to make a "clean" color-coded copy of the cueing script for the SM to use throughout the run of the show.
- The *third* is a "copy" of the color-coded cueing script and is tucked away in a safe place, maybe in the production office, as insurance should anything happen to script #2.

If the show is in a long run, the SM will want one more copy from which to make a "clean" copy of all final blocking notes (this is the script from which the SM will conduct understudy rehearsals).

Excessive Script Copies? This number of scripts may seem excessive and can become an expense for the production office. As a beginning SM, I asked permission to make extra copies but was often told no. I was fine with that. It saved me a lot of work. But then, as soon as I got into rehearsals, on the first day I found I needed to have copies ready to hand out. In a panic, I'd have the ASM run to the copying machine to rush off copies. This was precious time that could have been used for things more immediate. It was after those few times that I anticipated and calculated what scripts I would need. It was then I formulated the list above, and since then I have not asked permission from the production office.

By the End of the SM's Pre-Production Time

In an Equity production contract with the PSM with two weeks for pre-production time, by the end of the first week the ASM will be coming on board. This is where the ASM can pick up on some of the list making, making copies of the script, and assembling the packets of information that will be handed out to the cast members on the first day of rehearsals.

In smaller contracts, the PSM will have only one week of pre-production, with the ASM coming in two days before the first day of rehearsals. In either case, the PSM needs to have been working judiciously, with organization and efficiency, because the last two or three days of this pre-production time need to be devoted to setting up the rehearsal room.

The Rehearsal Space

The rehearsal space is very important and needs the SM's undivided attention because this will be the home for all those who are part of creating and putting together the show. If the production company has its own rehearsal halls or rooms, and if they are in the same building or complex as the production office, the SM's job is made easier—more than likely the rooms are already equipped with all that is needed to set up for rehearsals. If the rehearsal rooms are in

another location and are being rented, the SM needs to start early in the production time, perhaps on the second day, to make contact with the managers of the rehearsal space and begin a working relationship with them. The first step is to visit the rehearsal location, checking:

- The size of the room(s).
- The type and condition of the floor(s). If indeed this is an Equity-approved place, the floor should be no problem.
- Availability of banquet-type tables and chairs.
- While at one time having access to a telephone in the rehearsal hall was imperative, today that is no longer a concern because practically *everyone* on the staff and among the performers will have one.
- Use of a copy machine on the premises. If by chance the show is a big-time, high-budget show, it could be possible to have in the rehearsal room a scanner/printer unit as part of the SM's workspace. Otherwise, having a copying machine on the premises is valuable, and if one is not there, hopefully there is a commercial copying service nearby.
- An all-important item in today's world of electronics—access to the building's WiFi and the password, if protected.
- Bathroom facilities. I don't believe any rehearsal hall that meets Equity approval lacks a bathroom and a separate place for changing clothes. However, it is good if the SM checks to see how clean and well kept things are.
- Drinking water goes without saying. More than likely there will be a water fountain within the rehearsal facility. Also, it is almost certain that the different cast members will bring in their own bottled water. While the producer is meeting Equity rules by having a drinking fountain nearby, the cast might want, at their own expense, to bring in their own water. On the first day of rehearsals the SM might address this issue with the cast and have them decide among themselves. If indeed they choose to have water brought in, then to save the SM from having to add to the list of things to do, he or she might request that the cast handle both the finances and the procuring of the water.
- Having a refrigerator, a kitchenette, or an area to make coffee and have snacks is always a perfect addition to the rehearsal hall. If there is no such space, the SM could create such a space and at the same time check with the producer to finance such a setup.
- Lighting in the room(s). Most times this is not given a thought until in rehearsals the room seems poorly lit or sunlight is streaking into the director's eyes. For more about the lighting of the room, see the section "The Layout of the Rehearsal Room" below.
- Heat and air-conditioning. Once again, if the rehearsal space is Equity approved, you can be sure there will be adequate heat in the winter and some kind of cooling system in the summer, even if it is only a series of fans. Fans can be annoying, though, especially the large ones made to move lots of air. If such is the case, the SM needs to talk with the rehearsal facility to see if the noisy ones can be replaced with ones that make less noise.
- Parking. If in LA or most other parts of the country, the performers can be sure there is parking as part of the rehearsal structure or conveniently close by. Surprisingly, in NY parking is even less of a problem because of the subway system, taxicabs, and—for those who can afford it—driving services.
- An area in which the actors can rest and socialize when not being used in the rehearsal. This place should be, as much as possible, out of view and earshot of the director. This could possibly be where the kitchen/coffee area is set up. For a rehearsal room where there is no such corner or alcove, the SM might create a space with a table and some chairs off to the side.
- Keys to the rehearsal room or a place to lock up rehearsal props. Most times keys are not necessary for entry into the building, but if the rehearsal room can be locked, that is a plus. And if props can be locked up at night, that is an even greater plus. So if there are keys to be had, be sure to secure two sets, if not three: a set for the SM, a set for the ASM, and if possible a set for the director.

In addition, if the show is a musical:

- Check to see if the producer has reserved enough rooms to accommodate the various parts of the rehearsals—at least two: one as the main rehearsal room and the other for the choreography. A third room would be nice for the music director to rehearse music in.
- There certainly must be a piano in the main rehearsal room, and hopefully in the other rooms, too.
- Just as important, the pianos must be tuned. The SM makes a point of asking when the pianos were last tuned and also asks that, if the tuning does not meet with the music director's approval, can a piano tuner come in

that day or at least before rehearsal begins on the next day. Oftentimes, this is not a problem because either the music director or the pianist will bring in an electronic keyboard.

- When the space for rehearsals is being rented, the SM must determine the earliest day, within the production time, that the SM can get into the rehearsal space to bring in props, set up tables and chairs, tape the floor plan of the set on the floor, and just generally make the space livable and homelike for the company. Ninety-nine percent of the time producers will schedule and start paying for the rehearsal space on the first day of rehearsals, not giving consideration to the time the SM needs to set up the room. If the rehearsal space is not in use by some other party, usually the SM has no problem getting in two or three days before the rehearsals begin. However, on occasion the space is booked solid and the SM is not able to get in until the day before or even the night before. It is the SM's job to have this room ready by that first hour of that first day, even if it requires working into the night.

Taping the Floor Plans on to the Rehearsal Room Floor

Once the SM is able to get into the rehearsal space, the first big task is to tape the floor plan of the set on to the rehearsal room floor. In most cases, taping the set is a two-person job, especially when doing a musical. Before the change in Equity rules, the ASM was not put on to the payroll until the first day of rehearsals. This meant the PSM either had to use a production assistant or an apprentice (that often becomes a teaching job) or more desirably had to coerce the ASM into helping without getting paid, with the promise of a great lunch or time off later in the production.

The Layout of the Rehearsal Room

Placement of the performing area in the rehearsal room and where the staff's production tables will be set is dictated by:

- **The width of the room:** The room needs to be at least wide enough to tape in the entire width of the performance area as it will be in the theatre. Ideally, there is also space on each side of the room to simulate the wings and offstage areas (seldom is that the case). The depth is less important in that the back part of the floor plan of the set and scenery does not have to be taped on the floor.
- **Lighting/Windows:** The greatest amount of light should fall on the performing area. If there are windows in the room, the director's back should be placed against that light so he or she is not blinded by glare, especially if the sun should break through at any part of the day. If the room is poorly lit and if the director or producer gives approval, the SM may set up some scoop flood lamps, which can be purchased at any hardware store. These lights should be set up high, at ceiling level if possible. Actors dislike having the light shining in their eyes as they rehearse even though on the stage they revel in it.
- **Mirrors:** If there are mirrors on one of the rehearsal room walls, regardless of how the room is set up and the stage is laid out, a good section of the mirrors should be covered over. Whether the mirrors are facing the director or the performers, the images reflected become a distraction.

While mirrors may be a distraction in the main rehearsal room, they are a treasure for the choreographer in the dance room. The room should be set up so the dancers can see themselves as they work.

- **The entrance and exit to the room:** As was discussed when setting up the audition room and when setting up the SM's workspace, whenever possible the main rehearsal room should be laid out so that the entrance to the room is off to the side, on the side where the SM has set up this or her workspace, and *never* set where people entering and leaving the rehearsal room have to cross in front of, or in view of, the director and the performers.

Tools Needed for Taping the Floor Plans on to the Rehearsal Room Floor

To do the job right when taping the set on to the rehearsal room floor, the SM needs to have:

- Blueprint floor plans
- Tape measure (twenty-five to fifty feet)
- Chalk
- Ruler
- Various bright colors of quarter-inch cloth tape
- One-inch and two-inch white cloth tape
- Wide-tip, permanent-ink marking pen
- Sturdy string (fifteen to twenty feet) to use as a drafting compass in the event of there being round or circular parts of the set design to be taped on the floor

Cloth Tape

In purchasing the tape for the floor, it is important that the SM get *cloth* tape and not vinyl or paper. Cloth tape is more expensive but can better withstand the wear and tear of the actors, dancers, and rehearsal furniture. At the end of the rehearsal period, the cloth tape is easily pulled up from the floor, while vinyl and paper tape need to be scraped and take double the time. The SM buys bright colors that are easy to see and distinguishable from each other because, in a musical with many scene changes, the lines of the different floor plans will be laid over each other. The purchasing of this tape is definitely at the expense of the production company, so be sure to save the receipts.

Laying in the Floor Plan

With ruler in hand and the blueprints laid out on one of the banquet tables, the SM is now ready to start laying the tape on the floor. Knowing the scale in which the floor plans are drawn on the blueprints, the SM translates inches into feet:

- First the SM puts a temporary tape cross at the center of the *performing area*—the area the performers will use as their performance space in both the rehearsal room and the theatre.
- The SM then lays in with one-inch white tape the outline of the stage, defining the apron of the stage, whether it is a straight line or curved.
- If the apron jets out beyond the proscenium, the SM lays in at center stage a two-foot-long white tape line to represent the proscenium line. The SM then lays in another line perpendicular to this proscenium line, and that becomes the permanent marking for center stage. This marking is important to the performers in the rehearsal room for it will orient them to the center of the performance space in which they will be working in the rehearsal room as well as on set in the theatre.
- If the show is a musical, the SM moves off to each side of the stage and lays in more white tape lines defining the wings, which are used for entrances and exits by the actors and movement of scenery.

With this done, the basic parameters of the stage are now drawn on the rehearsal room floor:

- If the show is a one-set drama or comedy, the SM lays in the details of the scenery, indicating platform levels, stairs, doorways, and even a bay window if it is important to the plot of the play.
- If the show is a multiset musical, the SM lays in the biggest, most used, or most important set first, which in some cases might be a turntable, and then overlays, with the different-colored tapes, the other floor plans of the sets designed for the different scenes.

Indicating Backdrops, Curtains, and Scenery Flown in from Above

In musicals, backdrops, sliders, and curtains that fly in from above or come in from the sides are often a major part of the set design. These drops, sliders, and curtains are placed at various depths on the stage, which in turn dictates the depth of the performance space for the scene. Instead of adding more tape lines across the rehearsal room floor, the SM notes this information off on the stage-right side of the performance area. Wherever a drop or curtain hangs, or the sliders are set, the SM lays in white tape, two inches wide, and about eighteen inches long. On these strips is printed,

with a permanent-ink marking pen, the name of the item along with the act and scene number. During rehearsals, when doing a scene with a particular drop, slider, or curtain, the SM places chairs or objects across the performance area indicating where the drop or curtain hangs, which reminds the actors of the performance space they will have once they are on the stage with the real drop.

Dance/Blocking Numbers

In all musicals, the director and choreographer want dance/blocking numbers placed at the edge of the stage on the apron. There was a time when these numbers were placed strictly for the choreographer's and dancers' use. Today, more and more, directors of straight plays are requesting to have these numbers to help in blocking of the show. These numbers are guide points for the performers in the dances and scenes to maintain placement and stage picture. Large, sticky-back numbers can be purchased at a stationery store; they can be made to size on the computer and then printed out on sticky-back labels or they can be placed on the edge of the stage in the old-fashioned way by laying in four-inch patches of white tape along the edge of the stage and writing in the number with a bold, permanent-ink marking pen.

Whatever method is used, the SM starts at the down-stage, center edge of the stage, laying in the number 0. From that point, and traveling toward stage right, the SM measures off two feet and lays in the number 1. Two feet away from number 1 and continuing toward stage right, the SM lays the number 2, and continues laying in the numbers in consecutive order until reaching the farthest point stage right of the performing area. Returning to center stage and 0, the SM starts the process over, this time traveling off toward stage left.

Once the main rehearsal room is taped, the SM repeats the process in the room in which the choreographer will be working. In this room, too, the SM lays out the parameters of the stage and the stage numbers, but only needs to tape on the floor those sets in which the big dance numbers take place.

Rehearsal Props and Furniture

Before production week, when first reading the play, the SM begins creating a prop list. From this list the SM makes a rehearsal props and furniture list. If the SM has the luxury of a prop person at the beginning of rehearsals, the SM gives this list to the prop person, who is responsible for gathering the props and getting them to the rehearsal hall at least one or two days before the first day of rehearsals, preferably after the SM has taped in the floor plans. If the prop person is not being brought in until the last week of rehearsals, the SM makes either the ASM or production assistant responsible for these props. Gathering rehearsal props and furniture is time-consuming work, and the PSM should not take on this job. Be aware that on smaller productions, to avoid having to pay an additional person, some producers will minimize the PSM's work during the production week and try to get the PSM to do this job. The PSM must evaluate carefully if indeed this is something that can be done in addition to everything else.

If certain props or pieces of furniture are important to the play or intricately used in the blocking, the SM arranges to have brought into the rehearsal hall items that are close to the real thing, such as the bed in the musical *I Do, I Do*. The bed is a major prop and is used extensively. For sure there should be a bed in the rehearsal room, and because there will be dancing on the bed, the SM needs to see that the mattress is boarded underneath for sturdiness.

Other props can be more representational, such as paper plates and plastic cups representing fine chinaware and crystal glasses. If asked or given a choice, the director and actors will opt for the real thing. The SM must check with the producer to see how much the producer is willing to spend on rehearsal props. The decision usually is to work cheaply and generically, with the hope that maybe in the last week the prop person will bring in specialized items.

There are certain generic rehearsal props and pieces of furniture that can be used as different things. In the barest and poorest situations, folding chairs or different-sized wooden boxes or crates can be used to simulate almost anything needed. In rehearsal situations with larger budgets, the following list of items is a good beginning, depending on the needs of the script:

- A six-foot bench
- One or two three-foot benches
- At least six chairs (folding are okay)
- An end table, coffee table, or piano bench

- A small kitchen table
- A card table
- Stools (tall and short)
- Wooden boxes (strong enough to sit, stand, or jump on)
- A multishelf rolling cart
- Music stands

As for the hand props:

- All things plastic (to represent cups, glasses, dishes, etc.)
- Sticks, broom handles, rope
- Items from thrift shops and garage sales
- An old sheet or blanket
- Maybe a couple of towels that can be used as a shawl, apron, or skirt, as well as an actual towel if the script calls for one

When doing a period play, pieces of costumes such as long skirts and jackets may be required to aid the performers in working with such items. Confer with the director on this matter and then talk with the costume people to supply what is needed.

The Equity Callboard

Most important of all, the SM must set up and establish an Equity callboard in the rehearsal space where the daily schedule, sign-in sheet, company notices, official Equity information, blank company accident reports, and blank Equity medical insurance forms are posted. Whenever possible, it should be placed inside the rehearsal room and near the entrance. It should also be placed so it is the first thing the actors see as they come in for rehearsals.

In the process of keeping this board neat, orderly, and up-to-date, the SM can create, from the laptop, headings in large, bold letters under which the different information is posted. The SM establishes from the first day that this is an official Equity/company callboard and that nothing can be added, removed, or changed without the SM's knowledge and approval. For greater separation and control, the SM might set up next to this callboard an area in which the members of the company can post their own notices and information.

Finishing Touches and Checklist on the Rehearsal Room

The rehearsal room should be complete and ready to use before the first day of rehearsals. The SM should not save anything for the first day that can be done beforehand. There will be no time on the first day for adding and putting in the finishing touches.

- Set up the workspace/tables for the director, SMs, music director, and rehearsal pianist.
- Create an area or space for the actors to sit, place their personal items, have coffee and food items, and just generally congregate when they are to remain in the rehearsal room but are not being used by the director. This place needs to be off to the side and, whenever possible, out of the director's line of vision.
- Create places on both sides of the room to set up prop tables and store rehearsal furniture needed for the day but momentarily not being used.
- Hang on the wall scenic floor plans and whatever drawings are available of the set and costumes. If a scale model of the set is available, make arrangements to have it at the rehearsal hall at least on the first day if not for the entire first week.
- Have in the main rehearsal room enough chairs for the performers, staff, and guests.
- Cover mirrors if they are a distraction.
- Double-check to see if pianos have been tuned.

- Have power cables set up, leading to the director's worktable, to the SM's worktable, and, if needed, to where the electronic keyboard will be.
- By Equity rule, have a first-aid kit.
- Check to see bathrooms are clean.
 - * Bring in bottled drinking water, if needed.
- Give a block calendar and daily schedule to the rehearsal hall managers, securing keys (if available) or making arrangements for the rehearsal rooms to be open each day before the rehearsals are to begin.
- Place signs directing people to the rehearsal rooms if they are difficult to find once a person is in the building, and signs on all doors entering the rehearsal room, saying, "QUIET PLEASE! REHEARSAL IN PROGRESS." Also place signs designating the different areas such as the prop areas/tables and the cast's personal area.
- See that floors in rehearsal rooms are clean and possibly wet mopped each day.

In Closing

Sometime toward the end of the pre-production time, the SM might ask the producer or director if they want food brought in on the first day as a welcoming gesture and social amenity. If so, the prop person, production assistant, ASM, or even the company manager can spearhead this project (save all receipts). When the SM has everything in order and under control, he or she should make contact with the producer and director, confirming that all is ready and asking if there are any last-minute instructions.

As described in this chapter, the work that the SM does in the two weeks of pre-production sets the stage for a smooth beginning to a time of hard work where everyone needs to be focused, working in the same direction, and on the same schedule. From the start, the SM lets the left hand know what the right hand is doing and vice versa. It is the SM's job to get the wheels of action and industry moving and keep them moving toward the first day of rehearsals, toward the first day of technical rehearsals, into the opening of the show, and ultimately throughout the run. If the SM lets up in any way or at any point, the results can have a grave effect on the remaining parts of the production, possibly causing delay, inconvenience, or loss of money. It all starts in this first week—the SM's preproduction week!

The Professional Experience

This story came to me during the time when SMs had to call each cast member during the pre-production time, first, to make contact and welcome them, and then to get pertinent information on them to complete the cast address list. Whether today or yesterday, whether through phone call or email, my experience with the next performer, Fritzie, would not have been any different.

Fritzie: A Lasting Impression

As one of the supporting performers in the show, Fritzie's name was included on the cast list given to me during my pre-production time. I didn't remember him from the auditions. He must have auditioned privately or was brought in by the producer or director who already knew his work. From his picture, I could see he was an older, character man. From his resume, he had an impressive list of credits dating as far back as radio and early television. I was looking forward to meeting and working with him. I just knew he had a million theatre stories to tell.

Fritzie was pleasant enough when he answered the phone. I introduced myself. Normally the person is really glad to hear from someone from the show. More than likely their last contact was when they got the job or when they signed the contract. In Fritzie's case, after I introduced myself, there was silence. A red flag went up in my mind and my audio sense became more alert. As I spoke, Fritzie grunted in acknowledgment. I started getting a very dark feeling about this man. When I asked him for his address, he spit out in annoyance, "Kid, don't you have it there? I put it on

the papers your producer made me fill out.” Another red flag went up. It was the way he called me “kid” and said “your producers” that put me on my guard.

“You’re right!” I laughed, making light of the moment. “I have it right here in front of me. I just want to check to see if it’s correct.”

“Of course it’s correct!” he snapped back. “Would I give the wrong address?”

“No, you’re absolutely right,” I said. “Let me read it off to you to make sure I put the correct information into my computer.” The word “computer” set off another grunt.

I set him off once again when I asked if he had an email address. I dared not to ask if he had a cell phone and knew that his only means of communication was through a landline with the same number he has had since moving to Hollywood in the fifties. Our conversation continued as a group of skirmishes. The word *cantankerous* came to mind, and my first impression was well established. I asked him for his social security number. He couldn’t understand why I needed to have it. He said that back in the old days only his accountant got the number. “Now today you have to give it to go to the toilet” (actually, his terminology was more explicit than what I choose to write here).

I must admit, Fritzie pushed me to the limits of my patience and tolerance. I wanted to establish a relationship with this man, but not on the terms he was presenting at the moment. I asked, “Fritzie, is there something wrong? Have I called at a bad time?”

I was just about to establish some boundaries when Fritzie interrupted. It was as if a Pandora’s box had opened. His anger was great and it poured out. “It’s about time someone called me!” Then he went directly to the youth of the producer and director, complaining about how young people do things these days. The producer and director were not so young, but I guess in Fritzie’s eyes they were. It didn’t take much reading between the lines to know where Fritzie was coming from and where he was headed. All I had to do was listen as he talked. In a very strange way, he worked his way into my heart. I could see his hurt and feel his pain. Here was a man who must have been Mr. Big-Time once, and now he was being asked for his address and social security number, something I imagine lesser people in his employ did for him in the past.

Fritzie asked how old I was. Knowing his view on this subject, I was compelled to take whatever curse of youth I might have had and said I was older. It wasn’t old enough for him; he still called me “kid”. I tried reassuring Fritzie that despite the ages of the producer, director, and myself, we would do things professionally and had a good many years of experience.

“Aaah!” Fritzie expelled, revealing more of his New York accent, “I been in the business over seventy years.”

“Seventy years!” I said in great surprise and appreciation. “I can’t believe that! Were you born in a trunk?”

It was at that moment Fritzie blossomed into a human being. He was surprised to hear a kid so young using the term “born in a trunk.” He wondered if I knew what I was talking about. I told him, but he proceeded to give me the history and definition anyway. Fritzie’s parents were vaudevillians and he began performing at the old age of three.

“Wow! Three years old,” I said. “At that age, I was still doing potty in my pants!” If I recall, the term “potty” was not my choice of terminology. I chose to use the same explicit terminology Fritzie had used earlier. He laughed. We bonded and became buddies. This, however, did not excuse me from his attacks and outbursts.

When I hung up, I was drained of energy. This was going to be a high-maintenance person—and he was. He drained the energy out of every rehearsal he attended. He could create conflict from the smallest matter or incident. As a performer, he was no longer as sharp in his craft as he may have been earlier in his career. It took a great amount of time and work from the director, and support from his fellow actors, to get him to performance level.

At one point halfway through the rehearsals, I asked the director why he chose Fritzie. He said that in the thirties, forties, and early fifties, Fritzie was a major player on Broadway—he even went to Hollywood to make some films. The director said Fritzie had always been a character man. He never reached name recognition with the public, but producers and directors sought him out for the particular roles he could play. By the mid-1950s his career had died out. The director said he chose Fritzie for the part in our show because “his name was written all over it,” but admitted confidentially, “Now all I have to do is get him to do it.”

The life of Fritzie is the stuff stories are made of. In some ways, actors like Fritzie are easier to deal with than others. Fritzie was not subtle, polished, or crafty in his approach. What Fritzie said and what Fritzie did is what was on Fritzie’s mind at the time. The SM’s first impression is only the beginning of discovery in getting to know the cast and the rest of the members of the company.

Rehearsals

The writers give birth to the show. The producer becomes the caretaker. As godparents and day-care workers, the artists—the designers, director, and performers—take the show into their care, nurturing and developing it into a mature and highly interesting piece of entertainment. The time set aside to do this is rehearsals. During this period the artists give the show character, color, design, style, personality, and an identity of its own.

The First Day of Rehearsals

This day is often a unique mixture of feelings and experiences for all involved. For the producer, it is the beginning to making a dream and vision come true. It is the culmination of endless planning, licensing, gathering artists, negotiations, emails, text messages, and phone conversations. Now the producer stands to the side watching carefully, hoping the artists will take the show beyond all those dreams and expectations.

To varying degrees, for the director, musical director, and choreographer, no matter how skilled, successful, and experienced they might be, the first day of rehearsals is the time when they must once again step up to their creative and artistic ability and prove themselves. For the performers, too, rehearsals are a time to step up to their creative and artistic abilities, but in the first few hours on this first day, all of that is put aside. There is excitement in the air and a party atmosphere prevails. This day is a birth, a marriage, and a celebration rolled into one. There is great expectation and anticipation, followed by some anxiety for the things to come. There is hope for success, the thrill of having the job, relief to be working again, and a childlike revelry in being the center of attention, for this rehearsal period is intensely focused on them and their work.

The SM is also filled with many of the same feelings. This is a time when SMs, too, must once again step up to their abilities and prove themselves. The work the SM has done during the pre-production time will seem like child's play compared to what is to come. Rehearsals are a time when the SM must remain focused, concentrated, devoted to the job and to the show, and work at an accelerated pace to get things done. There will be little to no time for personal life, and the SM must work as many hours as are necessary to do the job. There will be no let up from this pace and intensity, at least until the show opens, and even then the release is minimal.

On the first day of rehearsals the SM also joins in the celebration, but is only a part-time participant, for work began for the SM with the arrival of the first person. While everyone is meeting and greeting, making new acquaintances and renewing old ones, the SM stays focused on the business at hand. The work in the first few hours on this first day launches the ship, steers it out of port, and directs into the open seas where the director takes over. If the SM has worked well previous to this first day and continues doing so throughout the rehearsals, the launching, departure, and sailing should be calm, smooth, easy, and unnoticed.

The First-Day Rehearsal Hall Setup

It is strongly advisable that the SM get to the rehearsal hall at least an hour before everyone else. Most of the work in setting up the rehearsal hall was done during preproduction, but on this morning the SM sets up the room(s) for the work to be done on this day. Think of it as if you are setting up for guests, making things look as good as possible with what is available in the rehearsal room.

Setting Up for Equity

For the first hour, the Equity representative will come to complete the union business. To do this the SM sets up in the middle of the room two banquet-type tables in a square configuration, giving the feeling of a round table where everyone can see everyone else. If the show is a musical a third table might be needed, or the SM might set up a semicircle of chairs with music stands, all gathered around the musical director, the pianist, and the director's table.

It will be at this table or grouping of chairs and music stands that the Equity representative will complete the union business, and then later on the cast will have their read-through/sing-through of the show, which these days is commonly referred to as the *table read*, a term from TV sitcoms, where each week the cast reads through the script for the first time. At each place the SM sets the packets of information prepared during pre-production time with each performer's name on one. Included with the packets are whatever Equity forms need to be filled out. In placing the performers at each place, the SM is conscious of their groupings or who is sitting next to whom, putting the stars and principal performers in one grouping with the supporting roles on each side of them and then the ensemble to fill in the rest. The SM might also put a pencil at each place, or hold in reserve a box of pencils and distribute them as needed.

Setting Up the Social Amenities

Whether elaborate or simple, whether paid for by the producer or personally supplied by the SM, it is effective and a gracious start to the working relationships to have some coffee brewing, a tea set up, and possibly some goodies—preferably healthy items. Bottled water is a nice feature—some at room temperature and some kept cold in a picnic cooler. If this goodies table is perhaps set with a table cloth and maybe some flowers, all who come will consciously or subconsciously be impressed and feel welcomed and at home. Having background music playing over the laptop as people enter is an excellent added feature, as long as it is not intrusive. Of course, the ASM is right there aiding and assisting.

Additional Setup

Having set up for the Equity hour, the SM checks to see that the director's worktable has a comfortable chair and, if the director will be using a laptop or other electronic devices, the SM sets up accordingly. If the show is a musical, the SM sets a worktable for the music director who will share with the rehearsal pianist. More times than not, the choreographer shares workspace with the director but for the most part will be off in another room. If the music director also works from a laptop, he too will need a direct power source set up. If the show is new, be it a musical or straight play, chances are at one time or another all the other creative artists will be in attendance and will need a workspace too, usually sharing with each other.

The SM's Workspace and Table

Before going into the details, the SM's worktable is *always* set up on the side of the rehearsal room closest to the entrance to the room. From this vantage point the SM can come and go without having to cross in front of the director and performers as they work. Also, it gives the SM the advantage of greeting anyone who enters the room legally or illegally. This is an important factor of consideration.

While the workspaces for the director and other members of the creative staff have a general setup, the SM's workspace becomes a detailed, functioning office. It is a space made only for the PSM and the ASM. The area needs to be set up with everything in its place and a place for everything. Supplies and equipment for immediate use must be set up on the worktable and not in the SM's office bag or in the storage box. Once the rehearsal gets into full swing, the SM does not have time to go searching for items. To be included are:

- The laptop, set and ready to be plugged into a direct power source when needed
- Files open and minimized waiting to be opened with the touch of the mouse pad
- WiFi (if available)

- Smart phone on the SM's person
- "Rehearsal" script out, ready for the table read
- Tablet, if used, out and ready to be picked up
- Ziploc bags holding the different office supplies
- Storage box, opened, set up on a chair, and so organized that the SM could go in there blindfolded

A Word of Advice: For the most part, performers who have worked shows before know the SM's area is sacred space. They know not to enter it unnecessarily, come to sit there or rest their belongings there, and for sure *never* place a drink of any kind on the table, for as sure as there is Murphy's Law, that drink will end up soaking the script or drenching the keyboard, and even if you are willing to play the odds, don't, because if it happens it is disastrous. If at any time some beginning performer should enter this zone, in your finest, most gracious and loving way, let it be known that a major crime has been committed.

All is prepared and the rehearsals room is looking good, neat, and orderly. Be aware, SM, this will not last long, because as soon as the company members start arriving all will change as they make the place their home. Only the SM's area will be as it was set, and that is how it should be.

As a final task, the SM places some signs about:

- Signs to lead people to the rehearsal room
- Perhaps one over the designated prop table
- Maybe a sign asking the cast to keep the coffee area clean
- Maybe a sign on the door as people enter the rehearsal room. Sometimes you might want to put the name of the show with a reminder that a rehearsal is in progress and to enter quietly. Sometimes the producer or director will not want to advertise the name of the show and may also ask that the sign read "Closed Rehearsals."

Arrival of the Cast

For the SM, the arrival of the cast on this first day opens the floodgates of work—action filled with multitasking, intensity, solving problems, and beginning that caretaking talked about in Chapter 2, "The Anatomy of a Good SM." From this point on, every minute will be filled applying all that the SM knows.

With some shows, there will be smooth sailing, but never can the SM operate on automatic pilot and be there just for the ride. With other shows, the rehearsals and even the run of the show can be like a war zone. The SM's ability and character will be tried and tested at every turn of events. Most SMs will rise to the occasion, some will falter and maybe even fail. Enough times of doing this and you can be sure they will not be hired again.

Upon their arrival on this first day, the SM meets and greets the cast members. For the moment, the SM acts as a host, welcoming them as if to a party. Some of them will have been met briefly at the auditions. Others the SM may have talked to on the phone or only communicated with through email or text messaging. Almost always there will be one or more performers with whom the SM has worked in other shows.

Even as the SM plays host and socializes, focus must remain on the business of the moment, which is to introduce the performers as they arrive, lead them to their places at the circle/round table set up, orient them to the schedule for the day, and start them on the paperwork that needs to be filled out for Equity and the production company. Meanwhile, the ASM is also playing host and doing the same as the PSM. At this point in time, the producer, director, and star are often noticeably absent from the Equity hour. The producer and director usually arrive before the hour ends, and if the star is prone to making an entrance, he or she will arrive fashionably late.

The Equity Business Hour

The Equity business is simple. If the SM has done the work well, if the production office has signed most of the contracts in advance and now has prepared the ones that need to be signed on this day, and if the representative is

organized, the Equity business will go smoothly and quickly and can be completed within the hour set aside. On this day, the Equity hour is an additional hour to the actors' normal workday. If the production office is delinquent in having the contracts prepared and the signing is delayed, at the end of the Equity hour the SM starts the *rehearsal clock*, which puts everyone on the producer's time. If the Equity business takes longer than an hour through no fault of the producer or production company, the Equity hour will be extended until the work is completed. The SM informs the cast that the rehearsal time will start when the Equity business is finished and apprises the producer, director, and the rest of the rehearsal staff of the change in schedule.

The Equity Business to Be Done

Following is a list of all the Equity business that must be accomplished.

1. Sign contracts. No Equity member is allowed to start rehearsals until there is a signed contract.
2. Bring all Equity members up to date in their membership. Finalize the induction of new members, fill out the paperwork/forms for candidates within the EMC program (Equity Membership Candidate), and finally make arrangement for payment of dues and fees.
3. Fill out all Equity forms for medical insurance benefits, for pension and welfare, and for updating Equity records.
4. Elect Equity deputies for:
 - Principal and supporting performers
 - Ensemble/chorus performers

Attendance at the Equity Hour

The entire cast is required to be present for the Equity hour. This includes non-Equity performers, if any. In situations where some of the cast members cannot be present, the rep needs to be informed before this day and will take care of business with those individuals at an earlier or later time. The star performer may or may not be present for this meeting. The star's Equity business may be handled separately and at a time convenient to the star.

The SM's Welcoming and Down-to-Business Speech

At the end of the Equity hour, the SM briefly welcomes everyone and lays out some basic ground rules and expectations, most of which have been heard before but somehow need to be said again.

Be Brief: This speech needs to be, filled with business, and to the point. This is not "show time" for the SM. Actually, it is never show time for the SM. That is reserved for the performers, the director, and the producer. If anything, the director is anxious to get to the next part of the day, which is usually the table read.

Points Within The SM's Welcoming Speech

- The SM welcomes everyone, expresses joy and excitement for the project, and might add, "I've seen the auditions so I know we have a great and talented cast."
- The SM reminds everyone, "The SMing staff is here to keep order and run things smoothly. You all know the Equity rules and professional standards expected of you, and if we work within those parameters, we can put all our efforts into the hard parts and the unexpected things that come up."

- The SM points out the packet of information that has been prepared and asks that everyone look over what is inside and maybe put the block calendar into the front part of their scripts, or if they choose, a copy can be sent electronically.
- The SM reminds the company of their responsibility to check the callboard on arrival each day and before leaving at the end of the day.
- And while on the subject of the callboard, the SM reminds the cast and everyone within earshot that the callboard is for official Equity and company business. “Whenever possible I will designate a part of the board off to the side for the cast to post social notices. I will not be posting reviews, even the good ones, unless instructed to do so by the director or producer.”

Now this is where the SM lays down the law, but in a business-like way. This change in tone is to leave an impression and to show that the SM is serious about the next few points to be made:

- “Let’s talk about the daily sign-in sheet. You all know you are required to put your initials in the box corresponding to the beginning of the day and the box when you get back from midday break. Now here is the part for which I have very low tolerance: being late. Always there are good, understandable, and acceptable excuses. But as a check for me, just to see if your being late was a rare occurrence or a way of life, I will outline that box in *red*. By the way, this also includes forgetting to sign in even though you were there on time. This is especially important when we get into the theatre, where I will not have the time to go looking for you. Then after the third *red box* it will be reported to the producer and to Actors’ Equity and I will have them deal with it in their way. I outline that box in red and I keep all sign-in sheets on file so that somewhere down the line when you are confronted with being late for a third and final time, and you doubt my accounting, I will have documentation.
- “Now last on my list is something that has crept in on us and can be a disturbance and annoyance while we are working: *cell phones!* You are asked at the theatre before the play begins and at the movies to turn off all electronic devices. I ask the same of you while in the rehearsal room. Even having them on vibrate can be an intrusion and annoyance. As you know, we are required to have a five-minute break within every hour, so surely whatever calls might come in can wait until break time.”

The SM’s “Rented Script” Speech

Finally, this is where the SM goes into the “Rented Script” Speech, explaining that the scripts have been rented from the publisher and after the run of the show must be returned. The SM explains that the rented scripts are numbered and kept on a list along with the name of the performer to which the script has been given. The SM states further that the scripts must be kept and returned in good condition, asking that blocking notes be written lightly in pencil for they will need to be erased at the end of the run of the show. Continuing on, the SM lists the part about *dog-earing*, *keeping it bound together*, it being *lost*, *coffee stains*, or any other kind of mutilation that can happen to a script in the course of a rehearsal. Then, as a final note, the SM says that a stiff fine will have to be paid for any script not returned or not acceptable to the publisher. If the SM so chooses (as I have done on many occasions), he or she can leave out that it will be the producer who must pay the fine, leaving it to assumption that it will be the performer who pays.

Costume Measurements

In many working situations, the costume people are anxious to get the measurements of the actors so they can begin construction or alterations. Sometimes the actors are instructed to go to the costume shop on their own time, which is acceptable within the Equity agreement. However, the time performers can do this on their own is limited before the performer must either be sent during rehearsal time or get paid for going.

Directors dislike losing actors from rehearsals, and producers dislike having to pay to have this task done. Knowing this, in the first part of the rehearsals the SM tries to save the number of times performers must go on their own by sending them during their rehearsal time when they are not needed. Later on, toward the end of the rehearsal period when the director needs practically everyone at the rehearsals at all times, if necessary the SM has the actors go on their own.

Getting costume measurements from the actors is fairly simple work. To accommodate the costume people and at the same time not use up allotted time, the SM asks the costume people if they can come to the rehearsal hall on the first day of rehearsals to get the actors' measurements. More times than not, the costume people are quite agreeable to this request. The SM arranges for the costume people to set up either in another room or in some private corner of the rehearsal room, instructing the actors to have their measurements taken when they are momentarily free.

With arrangements made for measurements on the first day, the SM's *first-contact email*, you may recall, instructs performers to wear clothing that allows for measuring.

The Correct-Spelling-of-Names List

There is still this one piece of business that may feel unimportant amid all that must be done, but as explained in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," this issue with actors wanting their names spelled correctly in the program was great enough that Equity had to negotiate a clause with producers to make the correction in print or pay a penalty.

So in protection and in the service of the producer, the SM has created the correct-spelling-of-names list (see Fig. 6-19), upon which each performer is noted in alphabetical order. If the name is spelled correctly, the performer passes over the center column in which the corrections would be made and simply initials the last column, signifying that the spelling in the first column is correct. If indeed there is a mistake, the performer prints in the middle column the correct spelling, and then initials the last column.

After all have checked their names and have initialed their approval, the SM can scan the document into the files in the laptop and email a copy to the department putting together the program, which is usually the publicity department.

Enter the Producer, Director, and Star

These people may make their entrances into the rehearsal room on this first day individually or as a group, spectacularly with great fanfare and panache, or quietly and with understatement. Regardless of the nature of their entrance, the business of the moment becomes suspended while the time turns into a social event. There is no preventing it. The SM joins in but monitors the time. When sufficient time has been given, the SM suggests to the director that they begin work. The director will either take the lead, perhaps addressing the cast, or give approval to the SM to direct everyone to the next order of business, which usually is a reading of the play. The SM goes into quick action and sets up the room according to the director's instructions.

The Reading of the Play or Table Read

The reading of the play with the performers who will be playing the parts can happen around that table the SM set up in the middle of the rehearsal room for the Equity hour, or it can happen with chairs placed around in a circle. Today, it happens mostly around the table, another one of those things that has been carried over into theatre from television. This is when the script is given a voice and speaks through this particular group of performers. Each person experiences this reading from a different perspective. For the SM, up to this time the play has been mostly about charts, plots, and lists.

Written into every script are of course the author's descriptions to set the scenes, the mood, action, feelings of the characters, or special cues and effects. During the table read the SM usually reads aloud these bits of information. On occasion the director may choose to do this. From the start, it is important that the SM establish with the cast a presence—a voice they will hear during their creative time, as well as during times when they must do business—but before assuming the job of reading the descriptive text, the SM first asks the director's preference.

Breaks for the Cast

At the end of reading the first act, the SM gives the cast a break. After the break, the reading resumes with Act II.

Equity has some very specific rules governing breaks. *Within every hour of work, the performers must be given a five-minute break.* This means the SM must be ever watchful of the time and, at the fifty-five-minute mark of rehearsing, stop the rehearsal to give the performers a break. For working situations where it is more beneficial to continue working longer, Equity allows *for every hour and thirty minutes worth of work (ninety minutes), the actors are to be given a ten-minute break. No other variations or manipulations of these time periods are permissible.*

The SM comes under all Equity rules and is also entitled to a break at these times. However, the SM needs to be watchful of break times, and also uses the few minutes of a break to regroup thoughts and priorities, check the list of notes, maybe respond to a text message or make a call, or set up the room for the next hour of rehearsals. It is amazing what can be done in these short five minutes. In theory, the SM takes breaks at a different time. In reality, the SM seldom takes breaks.

The Director and Breaks

For the director, breaks are often an intrusion. They stop the work and creative process, which usually is flowing at a peak rate of intensity. As soon as the break is called, that peak diminishes, and on return from the break, it takes time and effort to get it back—sometimes it is lost completely. Directors would rather give breaks when they choose. If they must be restricted to giving breaks at a prescribed time according to Equity rule, they prefer giving them every ninety minutes. However, in this matter it is the SM's job to consider the performers first. This is an option the performer can vote to have, but having breaks after fifty-five minutes of working is often more beneficial in preserving and pacing the performers' energy for the day's rehearsal. Most directors know of the ninety-minute option, but the SM does not offer it. The SM lets the director ask for it and then it is left up to the performers. However, to ease the director's discomfort on this matter, at about five minutes before the break is to be given, the SM informs the director, "We have a break coming up in about five minutes." Then, at the time the break is to be given, the SM says to the director, "We need to take the break," or, "It's time to take the break." If the director is so inclined, the SM lets the director call the break to the performers.

The Stopwatch

This is a highly important tool for the SM. There are many instances when accurate timings must be made within scenes, for sound-effect cues, or just as a general timing for a scene, an act, or the entire show. Just as important, the stopwatch needs to be used for timing breaks. For the cast members, breaks are never long enough and often they question the SM, believing their time is being cut short. To directors, the breaks seem to be longer than five minutes and they too question the SM. To eliminate any doubts, the SM calls a break and makes a point of starting the watch for all to see. This psychological gesture reminds everyone that five minutes is a short period of time, and they must use their time wisely and economically. If they are not back by the end of the five minutes, they are late.

An SM's Secret Gift: On many occasions, especially on a hard day of rehearsals, I will start my stopwatch at the beginning of the break but then let it run two, maybe three minutes longer than the allotted five minutes. Sometimes the director who might be anxious to get started may question the time. I take a look at my stopwatch, study it carefully knowing I am well over the time, and say with assurance. "They've got about forty-five seconds more." Then when the time has passed, I call for places to resume rehearsals. Ashamedly, I have done this often but have never been caught at it or revealed my secret. It was my gift that needed no recognition by anyone, I guess until now.

Most times today's SMs uses the stopwatch feature in their smart phones, while there are others who prefer the sports-type stopwatch attached to a ribbon or strap and carried around the neck. This leaves the SM free to move about the rehearsal space and still monitor the time. Stopwatches are an attractive item, and if left lying around can be misplaced or can permanently disappear (if you know what I mean).

The Midday Meal Break

Equity rule provides that *by the fifth hour of the performers' workday, the performers must receive an hour-and-thirty-minute break for the midday meal*. However, if the director is agreeable, the Equity members can vote to have the midday meal break cut to one hour, with the remaining thirty minutes being given to them at the end of the day, allowing them to be released from rehearsals thirty minutes earlier. This vote must be unanimous. To ensure that all people vote their true choice without feeling peer pressure or being swayed by majority rule, the SM sees to it the vote is done by secret ballot.

During rehearsals, especially in the first week or two, the midday break becomes a welcomed time for the SM, a space to regroup, reorganize, prioritize, check notes, maybe make a couple of calls, send out a text message, and at the same time grab a quick lunch. At this stage in rehearsals, there is no time for the SM to go out for lunch and maybe bond with some of the cast members. However, SMs should not forego some kind of a break, even if it is simply to go into another room where they cannot be found or behind some prop or scenery flat where they cannot be seen, turn off the cell phone, and just have some quiet time. SMs definitely need this short period of time to relax and restore their energy, mentally and physically.

After Midday Break

On the first day when returning from the midday break, the detailed work needed in bringing the show to life begins. If the play is a musical, often the ensemble performers will go off into another room with the music director to work on music, the choreographer may work with a principal on dance, and the director will remain in the main rehearsal room working with some of the principal performers to begin blocking a dialogue scene. If the show is a drama or comedy, the SM sets the rehearsal room for one of the scenes in the play, usually the first scene, and work begins on blocking the show. For the rest of the rehearsal days, after the midday break, rehearsal continues according to the daily schedule.

More on the Director and SM's Working Relationship

This might be a good time to continue conversation on the relationship between the director and the SM from what has already been said in Chapter 7, "Profiles and Working Relationships."

The working relationship between the director and the SM is a marriage, and by the end of the first day the wedding has taken place and the honeymoon has begun. There is much the SM must do to learn about the director to make this union a workable and successful one. This will not be a fifty-fifty proposition. The SM does not look to see what the director is doing to make this relationship a success, but rather forges ahead, doing the SM's part.

The SM must be a quick study of the director, observing everything, picking up clues on the director's temperament, personality, energy, pace, demeanor, likes, and dislikes—the director's acceptance level, patience threshold, tolerance factor, causes of anger, or triggers of ego. If the director acts, behaves, or works in ways that are different or out of the ordinary, or if the director seems to have some hidden agendas or issues, the SM tries to understand them and works with them.

If the SM is uncertain about anything in this working relationship with the director, the SM initiates open conversation. The SM must be direct, making no assumptions and not letting things slide for another time. However, the SM must be careful not to come off as combative or on the attack. Diplomacy and tact are the best approach. Even better, in the course of conversation, the SM states his thoughts and feelings using "I": *I feel this... I experience*

that... I am uncomfortable with... Always the words of expression; the sentences are built around “I,” never “you,” telling the director the things he is doing to make you feel this way.

As the SM and director work together in these first days, they establish between them the working rules. In all situations, the SM lets the director set the rules. The SM is free to express opinions and see if the director is agreeable. Within professional reason, the director is to be served in the way the director chooses, not in the way the SM wants. A good and compatible working situation between the director and SM in rehearsals is when the SM is in charge while the director leads and remains in control.

A Nightmare SM–Director Relationship

An incompatible director–SM relationship can be one of those nightmare stories theatre people tell as they sit around to socialize and unwind after a show. The nightmare part is that the SM and director are stuck with each other. If the relationship between a director and SM needs to be broken up, almost always it is the SM who is removed from the equation. However, the rehearsal period is not an easy time to remove the PSM from the show. Rehearsals can last from ten days to four weeks. By the time it becomes evident that the PSM–director relationship is not working and is having an adverse effect on the show, the rehearsal period is at least half over. If the ASM is capable of taking over and the producer is confident, a change may be made, but most producers are not willing to do so during such a crucial time in the development of the show. Instead, the producer talks with each party, trying to keep the status quo, knowing that the show will soon be opened and the PSM and director will naturally be separated. Thus, the director and SM usually are stuck with each other, just waiting for the time when they will not have to work together daily and the nightmare will be over.

What Directors Expect from Their SMs

In Chapter 7, “Profiles and Working Relationships,” the apparent double standard of work and expectations that directors practice when working with the cast and when working with the SM was noted. With the performers, the director appears benevolent, understanding, and patient. The director appears to allow greater time for learning and experimenting, seems to be more accepting of the performers’ shortcomings, will apply greater effort in helping the performer to do their job, and is tolerant of a difference in opinion or a display of their ego. In effect this is what a director is supposed to do, is what makes a good director and gets the best job out of the performers.

On the other hand, the director’s expectations and way of working with the SM is usually quite different. The director expects the SM to do the job quickly, calmly, quietly, smoothly, proficiently, efficiently, effectively, and perfectly. And guess what? This is the SM’s description job. However, the director has little tolerance for personality or individuality in the SM and wants no ego displayed. The director expects the SM to be a step ahead, anticipating all needs and wants. When the director asks a question or wants a bit of information, the SM is expected to have the response ready to be delivered within seconds. The SM can do this and accommodate the director if the SM has the work area set up as described above. The director who finds such an SM finds a personal treasure. As much as possible the director holds on to this SM, hiring him or her again and again.

Some directors are not above abusing their SMs, taking out their angers, annoyances, or frustrations on them. There is a fine line every SM travels in accepting this kind of behavior. It is up to the individual SM to know what is acceptable and what is not, and to communicate this to a director who works in this way. If this doesn’t work, then the SM needs to talk with the producer, but remember what was said earlier: from the producer’s prospective it is much easier for the SM to be taken out of the equation than the director. If the situation is too intolerable, the SM needs to take steps to get out of the job. Conditions will never change and often get worse. I know this from experience.

The Director’s Rehearsal Time

Directors hate having their creative time in rehearsals with the cast disturbed. We have touched on the director’s feelings and reactions for having to stop to give breaks. When it comes to being disturbed with matters or business other than the immediate work with the cast, some directors can be even less tolerant or become even more annoyed.

It seems to be a general quality of directors that no matter how much time they have to rehearse, they complain it's not enough. Some directors become guarded and protective, resisting those times when other business must be done during rehearsal hours, such as when performers have to go to costume fittings or publicity events, or take time out of the rehearsal day to do personal business.

Every SM must know this of directors. It then becomes the SM's job not to save the director from these feelings or to change the director's way of behaving, but rather to be creative and manipulative in scheduling so such infringements or disturbances to the director are kept to a minimum.

Breaking into the Director's Creative Process

Throughout the rehearsal day, it is the SM's job to handle all business and answer all questions that come into the rehearsal room. That is why it is so important for the SM to know as much about the production as possible. It is the SM's job to keep information flowing and keep the wheels of progress and industry turning. From the information the SM gives out on any given day, other departments are often able to continue their work without having to disturb the director. With the use of emailing, text messaging, or even a quick call on the cell phone, this is easily done. This is why it is so important for the SM to know as much as possible about the entire production. This is also what makes an SM invaluable to a director.

There will be times, however, when the SM is absolutely unable to answer a question or give information that only the director can deliver and the information needed or question to be answered needs to be delivered right now! If the SM cannot persuade the person demanding the information or asking the question to wait until later, the SM has no choice but to disturb the director in the middle of rehearsal. In working with any director, the SM learns the right window of time to step in, saying, "Forgive me for breaking in, but this matter cannot wait and you are the only one who can provide the information." The SM needs to be concise and brief in asking for what is needed. Get all the information surrounding the subject and make sure it is understood, because once the director returns to his work with the cast, it will be even more of a disturbance to the director to be interrupted on the same matter.

The SM's Notepad

During rehearsals, and in fact during any point in a production, people throughout the company and throughout the day will be making requests or passing on information to the SM and the SM will need to follow through on seeing that these things are handled and the information is deciphered and distributed. Only foolish and unwise SMs think their memory is so great that they do not need to make notes. The number of things an SM will jot down in a day or even in an hour is sometimes too numerous to try to commit to memory. Unless an SM has an absolutely photographic memory, no SM should use energy for such work. There are too many little things that can slip through the cracks and be forgotten. Making a note to purchase herbal tea for the cast is just as important as jotting down the flight number and arrival time of the star and passing that information on to the limousine service.

At one time SMs simply used a tablet of paper or a clipboard on which to jot down every single thing to do or remember. Today, this note taking can be done electronically in several ways, depending on what is most comfortable and convenient. Some SMs still prefer the old paper tablet or clipboard, while others choose to finger-peck the text into their electronic tablet. Some have found a pocket-size digital recorder useful or speaking into their smart phone or tablet, taking advantage of the voice-to-text feature. However, this verbal way can be a disturbance when it has to be done in rehearsals.

Making the Daily Schedule

A major task each day is for the SM to get from the director a schedule for the next day. Some directors can create a daily schedule for the entire week at the beginning of each week and follow it to the letter. In most instances directors prefer creating the daily schedule after they have finished the work for the day.

There was a time when the SM made a great effort to get the director to create the next day's schedule during the midday meal break. By Equity rule, the SM is required to have the next day's schedule posted on the callboard before the cast leaves at the end of their day. If the information is not available before the cast leaves, the SM is required to call and give that information within a reasonable time. Before group emailing, this was a time-consuming task that had to be one of the first things the SMs did after everyone went home. For a play with five or six characters, no problem—but with musical shows having thirty or more cast and staff members, this chore could easily be taken home and extended into the evening hours.

Once again technology has come to the SM's rescue. Today it seems to be standard operating procedure (SOP) for the SM and director to put together the next day's schedule after all have left for the day. Then, with a rehearsal schedule template on the laptop on to which the information can be entered, the schedule is easily sent off via *group email*.

Putting Together and Distributing the Daily Schedule

The general belief that the SM makes up the daily schedule is true in every part except for the actual creation of the schedule—the events that appear on the schedule. The SM facilitates the making of the schedule by getting the director, choreographer, and music director to meet and decide on what they want.

At this meeting the SM takes copious notes. While using a tablet, smart phone, or digital recorder to make notes is very “today,” it seems that the old paper-and-pencil way is more efficient. As quickly as a note is given and written down, it can be changed in the order of the schedule, or in the timing, or even in what will be rehearsed. Making notes electronically is all well and good while in the meeting, but later when the SM has gone off to enter the information into the laptop, it will be easier to see past the penciled notes on the paper rather than having to search for the pertinent notes electronically.

While creating the daily schedule, the SM has at hand the block calendar, the schedule reminder list, and the Scene/Character Tracking Chart. As the creative heads plot out their part of the schedule, the SM is checking the schedule reminder list, making sure there is nothing that will effect the schedule for the next day. Also the SM uses the Scn./Chctr.Track.Chrt. to see that there are no parts of the show being missed or neglected. Last of all, the SM uses the block calendar to see if the work being done, and the work to be done, is fitting within the time frame of the overall schedule. The SM also watches to see that there are no conflicting times when one actor is expected in two places at the same time.

Once the schedule is electronically complete and distributed by email, the SM also prints out copies. One copy is posted on the callboard, another placed on the SM's worktable, and even though the director, choreographer, music director, and rehearsal pianist have all been emailed a copy, hard copies are placed at each of their workplaces for quick and easy reference throughout the day. While it appears that the daily schedule is only for the cast, it is all-inclusive and is for the entire company.

Working in Realistic Time

In all matters having to do with the company, the SM must have a *realistic* sense of time—the time it truly takes to perform a task or complete an event. Many people in the company will have their own version of how much time it takes to do things, sometimes minimizing or inflating the time to suit their particular needs or purpose. In times when it matters, as in making the daily schedule, if the staff members are working in fantasy time or wishful-thinking time, it is the SM's job to step in and guide them to realistic time.

Poor Use of Time

SMs must also be watchful of people in the company who use their time poorly—people who become indulgent in their work, forgetting the overall picture and time schedule. This even goes for the creative and technical department outside the rehearsal hall. Of course during the rehearsal period it is much harder to evaluate the progress of the different areas when the SM is witness to their progress only if the SM happens to be at their shops or offices. This is

when the SM must confer with someone on the production staff who might have a better working knowledge and is able to make a better judgment call.

Directors too can be negligent with their time. It then becomes the SM's job to step in, reminding the director of the overall time frame and schedule. Some directors are thankful and work accordingly. With other directors, this may become an annoyance that can put a strain on the relationship, especially when the director is having a problem in rehearsals and is not getting the desired results. So the SM must find the right window of opportunity to remind the director of the fleeting time. After having reminded the director over and over and still the schedule is falling behind, the SM must have a conversation with the producer. This too can add further harm in the SM's relationship with the director, especially if the producer is not careful in his approach to the director and indicates in some way that it was the SM who brought this matter to his attention.

Considering the Performers in the Schedule

Instead of putting the daily schedule in time frames and having the performers come only at the times when they are needed, some directors choose to have the entire cast come to rehearsals each day. This leaves the director free to work on whatever he or she chooses. Depending on the show, especially in ensemble performing shows where the characters in the play appear in groups, frequently on and off stage or in and out of scenes, the SM has no choice but to schedule a block or group of performers and keep them waiting off to the sides until they are needed. This, however, is not a good working situation. It is tiring and boring to the performers who must sit and wait for their time to work. It also puts the SM in a babysitting situation. No matter how disciplined and professional the performers might be, little coffee clutches and discussion groups develop, which become annoying to the director and the other performers working. After a while some of the performers will wander, and just when the director wants to rehearse with a person, that person will be off to the bathroom or out in the hall on the cell phone. In annoyance, the director may turn to the SM demanding the person's presence immediately, and may even remind the SM that it is the SM's job to keep the performers standing by.

When working with such a director, whenever possible, the SM tries to get the director to set time frames for the actors to rehearse. However, as is the case with all things concerning directors, some will graciously comply while others will resist and continue to work as they have always worked. This is where the SM works as the director chooses, servicing the director's whims and idiosyncrasies.

Dealing with People Being Late

Late Performers

Being prompt and on time starts with the SM, who is always early enough to have the rehearsal room set up and ready for work and starts the rehearsal promptly with the performers, even if the director has not yet arrived. As discussed on the first day of rehearsals, the "**little red box**" goes into application, whether returning from the midday meal late or being there but forgetting to sign in. The SM must follow through on this matter. Ninety-nine percent of the performers will be on time and ready to work. It is the remaining percent that, if left unchecked, can send the message it is acceptable to arrive late. Being late is like a highly infectious disease. It can spread throughout the company like influenza, infecting the promptest of individuals.

All offenders are sorrowful and offer powerful excuses. Those who are late for the first time will ask for consideration to not have this offense counted against them. With love and care, the SM explains to the individuals that if being late is not a problem with them, this one red mark will not mean much and the matter will be closed. However, if the individual has a tendency to be late, this will be the beginning of keeping a record.

With individuals who establish themselves as late-comers and are about to receive their third red box, the SM must counsel the individual, expressing concern. The SM may try to get the person to see what things contribute to the regular lateness, or maybe the reason the person is choosing to be late. The SM may offer suggestions on how the person might better schedule time. As a final gesture, the SM might offer to overlook this third offense, assuring the performer that with the next incident punitive action will be taken. In addition to this consultation, the SM should

record in the logbook an accurate and detailed account of each incident and what was said in meeting with the individual. On the next and final offense, the SM has no recourse but to report the individual to Actors' Equity and to the producer.

Late Director or Stars

Rank has its privileges, and if the director or star chooses to be late, the SM has no course of action as with the cast members. The SM may express to them in private the SM's efforts in making the cast members be on time and might appeal to them to set the same standard, but should not let their arriving late stop the rehearsals and keep everyone else waiting. In times when the director is late, the SM needs to hold the schedule at bay and have the performers run a scene, or if the show is a musical, have them work on dance or music. In taking this course of action, the SM must make sure the work is worthwhile and productive, and not just busy work.

The Equity Rulebook

As discussed earlier in Chapter 8, "Running Equity Auditions," the Equity Rulebook is the bible of agreements, rules, laws, bylaws, and regulations that have been made and agreed on between Equity and producers. This book provides all the details governing the employment and treatment of all Equity members. It is an absolute given that the SM has downloaded into the laptop a copy of this rulebook. Sometimes the book provides answers and information within seconds. Sometimes the rules are simple and straightforward. Others are complex, detailed, involved, cross-referenced, and have exceptions, variations, or special circumstances. Also, the same rules may vary according to the type of contract under which the show is working.

When the book was provided by Equity in hard copy, the SM could easily dog-ear pages on which certain rules were noted. Today, the SM can do something similar by color-backing important text, or putting the text itself in color, or even shifting down a couple of spaces within the text and putting in **bold** key words that tell which rule is being singled out.

The Day's End

By the end of the first day of rehearsals, the SM has begun a working relationship with both the cast and director, set the ground rules, and just generally established the professional way the SM will work and the way the SM expects the cast members to work and behave. No matter how thrilled people are to be working in theatre and how dedicated they are to their profession, by day's end everyone is looking forward to going home. As the rehearsal draws to a close, in the final hour the SM checks the schedule to see what work remains. If some performers are not going to be used for the rest of the day, the SM does these performers a great service by dismissing them early. The SM, however, does not make this decision alone but rather confers with the director to get approval.

The last hour in the day can also become an hour lost. The creative level has dropped and most thoughts are being directed toward going home. Most assuredly, the SM too is looking toward this time. However, it is the SM's job to keep everyone focused and use the time remaining. When things are beginning to lag or the director and performers seem to be wandering aimlessly, the SM might suggest reviewing a scene, working on a song, or running a dance before everyone is dismissed.

The SM's Day's End

The day's end is indeed a welcome time for the SMs too, but there is still work to be done. The performers have gone home but the director, choreographer, and musical director remain for a little while longer. The first order of business is to create the schedule for the next day. While this is being done, the ASM and the PA (production assistant) close up

shop, so to speak, by putting away props, locking them up if that is possible, and just generally straightening up the room.

If the ASM is well versed and capable of translating the PSM's notes for the next day's schedule, then he or she may be sent off to enter the information into the computer for the final draft. Otherwise, that is the PSM's next order of business. But even before any more work is done on the schedule, the PSM and the director go over notes, do business that could not have been done while the director worked with the performers, tie up loose ends, or possibly decide on a production meeting with the technical staff. Without becoming aware, it is during this time that the relationship between the SM and director grows and develops (for better or for worse).

Once the director has gone, the SMs and the PA meet to complete their business for the day, organize their notes, prioritize, make calls, send out emails, plan for the next day, and just generally tie up all loose ends. If the rehearsal room can be secured for the evening, the ASM and the PA might also set the props and furniture for the first work to be done the next day while the PSM starts work on the next day's schedule or begins work on the daily report and entry into the SM's logbook.

Upon completion of the next day's schedule, it can be the ASM's job of emailing the schedule to the different groups and then making the hard copies that will be distributed before everyone comes in for rehearsals on the next day.

After the first few days of rehearsals, all that must be done at the end of the each day after the performers have gone home should become routine, with the SMs and PA working efficiently so that all can go home at a reasonable hour.

By this time in the day, the temptation will be to put off some things till tomorrow. Under no circumstance should the PSM make this part of the regular way of working or allow an assistant to do the same. The SM must make it a working rule to complete all of the day's business. Tomorrow will be filled with its own notes and list of things to do. There will be no room or time to do things left over from the day before.

At last the SM comes to the end of the day. Sometimes there is no choice but to take work home and finish the business there. In fact, the daily report and the SM's logbook entries can be done at home. One thing is for sure, during the first week or two of rehearsals the SM's social life is tremendously curtailed. Having dinner, taking a shower, and possibly falling asleep in front of the TV are about as social or eventful as an SM can be.

Production Meetings

Production meetings throughout the rehearsal period are an absolute necessity. If the director is not prone to making this a part of the work schedule, it is the SM's job to suggest having production meetings, making time in the schedule, whether they are held before rehearsal or after.

The purpose of the initial production meeting during the SM's pre-production time is to bring together all of the artistic and technical elements of the show, allowing each department to present its design, plan, and needs, and confirming to the producer and director that all departments are working toward the same artistic goals. Subsequent production meetings throughout the rehearsal period are held for some or all of the departments to present their progress, reveal any particular problems they might have, and once again ensure artistic integrity, time frame, and schedule. In short, production meetings are designed to let the right hand know what the left hand is doing.

Even with the ease and convenience of texting, emailing, the daily report, and sharing of files in Dropbox, production meetings remain a necessity. The simplicity or complexity of the show will dictate the number of meetings to have. There is no formula for how a production meeting is conducted. A brand-new production or the remake of a show may require some sort of production meeting every few days. The revival of a show that is to be a copy of what has already been designed and produced may require an initial meeting, perhaps one in the middle of the rehearsal period, and for sure one just before technical rehearsals begin.

Most times it is the SM who initiates the production meetings, but then steps aside and lets the director or producer take the lead. The SM becomes an observer and makes notes on anything that affects the schedule or is significant to the production. The SM pays attention to all departments as they speak, learning different facts, little things, seeing how the parts of the whole are coming together, and possibly seeing if there might be a problem or conflict. Between either the SM or the production manager, it is a good idea for a summary of the different discussions and decisions made to be put into a report and sent out to all staff, head technicians, and designers.

During the meeting the SM might intrude, asking questions to probe, clarify information, keep the meeting focused, or just generally play the devil's advocate to open the conversation or to bring in another point of view. Anything

more from the SM can become intrusive and perhaps self-serving. Once again it is not the SM's job to be at the center but rather to be the backbone that holds everything else in place.

The SM's Work—Continuing and Endless

The SM's work in rehearsals is continuous and endless. An SM must have the ability to keep the business at hand going while attending to and dealing with whatever other matters come up moment to moment, including:

- Monitoring and screening phone calls and then responding in order of importance
- Answering questions and passing on information
- Meeting the performers' needs and dealing with the problems they may present
- Keeping performers busy at productive things whenever they are not working with the director
- Following script
- Taking down blocking
- Writing in cues
- Noting all changes
- Making notes on the notepad
- Tracking props and adding new props to the list
- Standing in and reading roles of actors who are not present
- Checking in with the production office from time to time
- Keeping the ASM and the PA busy and productive
- Dealing with people who come into the rehearsal room
- Keeping everyone quiet and focused
- Changing rehearsal furniture and setting up other scenes to be rehearsed
- And the ever-constant service and attention that must be given to the director

The information in this chapter is only part of the work the SM must do during rehearsals. There are still three more chapters of work to be done at the rehearsal hall before the rehearsals transition to the theatre and technical rehearsals.

Good News for ASMs and Beginning SMs: Once again, I offer to the reader and beginning SM that if all of what you have been reading feels overwhelming and impossible to achieve, I strongly suggest you stop and take a breath. All of which I speak is for the seasoned and experienced PSM. In your beginning years as an assistant, little by little these things will become part of your SMing work. Meanwhile, enjoy the comfort of being an ASM and serving a PSM who more than likely will lead you in the best of times and the worst of times. And if by chance one of your first jobs makes you the only SM, then you have this book to refer back to. This book is so well indexed through the table of contents and at the back that you can check out any subject to refresh what you may have forgotten.

Sound Bite—Barbara Beckley

In my interview with **Barbara Beckley**, cofounder and artistic director of the Colony Theatre, Burbank, California, I asked...

"Of all the SMs with whom you have worked, what one thing stands out that makes you remember them and want to hire them again?"

Barbara thought for a moment, and then replied simply, "Going the *extra mile*."

She paused once more, but only to take a breath and not to think. She was on a roll and knew exactly what she had to say.

"Little things besides doing what is required in the job. A coffee and tea setup for the cast members. Finds out the kind of snacks they like and then goes out and gets them. If an actor is hurt or ill, calling them to see how they are doing.

"What I like about a stage manager is one that is there to serve the production, which means supporting the directors, the designers, the stage hands. The stage manager is willing to go that... *extra mile*. We are all in this together and that is what makes me remember the stage managers I have on my team and hire again and again."

The Rehearsal/Blocking Script

The rehearsal script is the script the SM creates during the rehearsal period at the rehearsal hall. It is the SM's bible to what the performers will do in the show and what the director has conceived. In it are noted the actors' blocking, technical cues, prop placement, preliminary notes on some of the scene change moves, characterization and motivation notes prescribed by the director, all changes the director might make in the dialogue or script, and a copy of the SM's personal floor plans.

Learning the Show and Gathering Information

Before work can begin on the rehearsal script, the SM must become knowledgeable of all parts of the show. This is accomplished by reading the script the first time as an entertainment piece, and then by gathering whatever information can be gathered from the producer, director, designers, and heads of the different technical departments.

This information may come in giant chunks or dribbles. At this point the SM has a "sketchy" idea of the play. Now it is time to start putting the pieces together, and that starts with the second and even third reading of the play: the plot development, the sequences of events, the action, the characters, and the journey the characters take. From these next readings, the SM creates beginning drafts of the prop list, character list, and the Scene/Character Tracking Chart, with which by now you should be quite familiar (see Chapter 6, "Hard Copy"). During these first readings, the SM notes in the script, in the right-hand margin, all technical cues inherent to the script, such as a doorbell ring, telephone ring, offstage sound-effect cue, lighting effect, blackouts, and so on. With the first note the SM makes in the script, it becomes the rehearsal script. (See Fig. 11-25 later in this chapter.)

Set Design

Before rehearsals begin, the SM must know as much about the design and layout of the set as the set designer. The SM must mentally marry the design of the set to the script and be ready to answer any question that might come up in the rehearsal hall. From the set designer, the SM gets scenic drawings, the floor plans, and whatever sketches or scale models the designer might have made. From this information, the SM creates personal floor plans, which we also worked through in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy."

Costumes

The more knowledge the SM has about the production before going into rehearsals, the better. The SM might want to set up a meeting with the costume designer. If the show is a contemporary piece, this meeting may not be necessary. However, if the show is a period piece, the SM should get an idea of how cumbersome or restrictive the costumes might be. Also, the SM might now consider making arrangements to have long rehearsal skirts for the ladies, and if for the men a cape or hat is part of the business or action of the scene, then have those things too. The SM might also ask the designer about the footwear, and if wearing them is going to need some getting used to, the SM might ask if some facsimile could be had for rehearsals. With all of that being done, the SM should also ask the designer for any sketches or renderings that could be put up on display in the rehearsal hall for at least a couple of days.

Music

If the show is a musical that has already been produced, the SM should become as familiar with the music as with the script. More than likely there is an original cast album that can be purchased, if the SM does not already have it. If the musical show is being produced for the first time, more than likely the SM, along with the cast, will be learning it for the first time as it is played in a first reading or as it is being learned in the rehearsal room.

The SM's quest for knowledge and information on the show is endless, but with just this suggested amount of information and work done, and with the rehearsal script in hand, the SM is ready to begin rehearsals. Remember, the rehearsal hall has already been set up in the last couple of days of the SM's pre-production time.

Enter the Rehearsal/Blocking Script

The rehearsal script too was put together during the SM's pre-production time. It now becomes the center of attention for the SM. A great part of the job now is to be seated at the SM's worktable with pencil in hand noting the *blocking*. The greatest amount of information gathered and entered in the rehearsal script is the blocking of the show, so much so that the rehearsal script is also called the blocking script. Oftentimes noting the blocking can become the ASM's job while the PSM is tending to all of the business surrounding the day and the production. So while this chapter is directed to a PSM, ASMs take note and follow along, because if put into this position, you will be required to do all that is said here.

Noting Choreography: Never in any musical production on which I have worked as the SM have I been required to note the choreography. I might on my personal-size floor plans note opening positions/picture of the performers/dancers, or possibly an important picture or placement of the dancers within the dance, and perhaps the closing picture, but never was I responsible for noting the actual steps, movement, and placement of the dancers. Now, with songs, I have noted within the written lyrics on the page the places on stage to which the singer moved, but nothing more.

Blocking is the noting and recording of all the movement, action, and business in the show, as set and agreed on by the director and actors. Blocking is noted in the rehearsal script for the express purpose of:

- Remembering all that was set and aiding the director and actors should they happen to forget
- Aiding the SM in preparing the understudies and putting in replacement actors
- For a new play, keeping a record of the director's creation and invention
- Keeping an accurate account of the blocking as a historical account for the archives, for prosperity, and in part for the publication of the play (but the blocking notes included in the published script are never as detailed and extensive as the SM's notes are in the blocking/rehearsal script)

While the actors write their own blocking on their personal scripts, the SM's notes the blocking for every actor/character in the rehearsal script.

In professional situations and in most academic and community theatre, when a director directs a show that has been previously produced, the blocking that is printed in the published script is seldom if ever used. If a director refers to the blocking done in another production, it is merely to see how another director handled a particular moment or difficult piece of business.

A Definition of Blocking

The *World Book Dictionary* has no definition for the word *blocking* as it is used in theatre. Under the term "block," this definition is given in reference to blocking a hat: *to give form and shape; to mount, mold, and shape*. For an SM's

definition, this is a good beginning. Perhaps if we list some of the theatrical terms used around blocking we can come to a closer definition:

- staging
- stage directions
- stage business
- stage movement
- stage action
- stage picture
- timing
- traffic pattern
- shtick (comic business)

In more detail:

- Blocking is the *visual design of movement* in the play. It is the moving pictures and composition on the stage that enhance the play, the storyline, the action, the characters, the actors' performances, and the entertainment value for the audience.
- Blocking is movement, action, and business deliberately set for each actor/character who appears on the stage.
- Blocking is set by the director and implemented, enhanced, and embellished by the actors.
- Blocking is the traffic pattern or floor plan of movement that takes place on the stage and within the scenery or stage setting.
- Blocking is handling props or moving furniture and set pieces during the performance, as seen by the audience.
- Blocking is doing *bits of business*, be it comic or dramatic.

Personal Blocking

There is also *personal blocking*—bits of business or action an actor does such as making a hand gesture or taking one or two steps. The SM might note this blocking in the script but would not try to impose it on another actor performing the same part.

Famous Blocking

Throughout the history of theatre, there are many famous and iconic scenes and bits of blocking or staging:

- The classic *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scene
- Many scenes in *Fiddler on the Roof* and *A Chorus Line*
- Hedda Gabbler burning the Lovborg manuscript
- The “head higher than king” scene between Anna and the King of Siam
- Finch’s scaffolding entrance at the beginning of *How to Succeed in Business*

It is important for the SM to know and understand blocking. It is an important part of the job that the SM must deal with throughout the rehearsal period and watch over during the run of the show.

The SM's Responsibility for Noting Blocking

The actors are responsible for noting their blocking in their own scripts. From the first blocking rehearsal, the SM establishes that the blocking will be noted in the rehearsal script but reminds the actors of their responsibility for doing the same. If an SM should happen to work with a performer who insists the SM take down his or her blocking,

and if the director approves of this way of working, the SM complies. However, as soon as possible, the SM sees that this information is also entered into the performer's personal script. Even when the actors write in their own blocking, the director and actors are highly dependent on the SM for blocking information, especially when first running scenes without use of their scripts. They expect the SM to do this job thoroughly, accurately, completely, and to have the correct, most recent, and updated changes.

This is a monumental task that requires the SM to be seated at the SM's worktable concentrated and noting into the blocking script all that is set. The SM's greatest and most important tool while doing this part of the job is a sharpened pencil and a great big eraser—the kind that is smudge-proof, similar to the art gum that sketch artists use, and not the eraser on the other end of the pencil, which are notorious for digging into the paper. The one thing the SM can count on with noting blocking is that there will be *change*—if not within the next moment, surely down the line, be it the next day, two weeks later, or even after the show gets into the theatre and on the stage. Once again, I repeat: when there are two SMs on the show, this job is given to the ASM while the PSM is handling all other business.

The Speed Required for Making Blocking Notes

Noting blocking during rehearsals is one of the more challenging jobs. The SM must be totally focused and concentrated, watching and listening to everything the director and actors say and do as they work in the rehearsal. Neither the actors nor the director will stop their work to allow the SM time to take notes. The SM is expected to take notes without infringement or distraction on the actors' and director's time. All notes of blocking are done on the run, which means that anything missed by the SM must be gotten when the scene is run again on that day or in the next rehearsal days later, or by getting together with the actor at some other time when the actor is not rehearsing.

Noting Blocking Electronically

While there is talk of computer programs that can be used for noting blocking, I firmly believe that this is *only* for noting blocking *after* the show is open and after the show has become frozen. Unless the SM is a wiz at fingering the keyboard, it seems almost impossible to be entering blocking electronically and still keep up with the performers and the director as they create, change, go back, change, and re-create. At best, at this time, if an SM wants to have a blocking script that is completely digital, it appears that first the blocking needs to be noted manually, with pencil and eraser, and then once the show is set, these notes can be entered into the computer.

Regardless of whether things are done electronically or by hand, the vocabulary, the abbreviations, and the symbols needed to efficiently note blocking so that it can be read at a latter time and re-created as directed are what we will be dealing with in this chapter.

The SM's Shorthand

With this kind of pace, the SM needs to have a quick method of noting—a shorthand. In addition to the limited time, the space on each page of the script for making the blocking notes is limited. To get the blocking noted, the SM must be brief and concise in the notes and at the same time provide the most detailed information so that it can be read and understood at a later time.

Noting blocking is a world of abbreviations, symbols, and handwritten diagrams. There is no standard written language or form to follow. There are some basic symbols or abbreviations used in theatre, but for the most part SMs develop their own. They learn from many sources: from their academic studies, from books such as this, from working with other SMs, and by making up their own.

The first and most basic knowledge every SM must have is the area breakdown of the stage and the abbreviations noting each area. Most people in theatre already know this information. However, let's review, starting simply, and then becoming more detailed.

Knowing Your Right from Your Left

Above all things in the world of blocking, the SM must know which is *stage right* (SR) and which is *stage left* (SL). This must be firmly planted in every SM's head. As well as knowing your name, you must also know that

- SR is always the actor's right as the actor stands on the stage facing the audience.
- Conversely, SL is always the actor's left as the actor stands on the stage facing the audience.

This reverse orientation in the natural order of things can be confusing to the beginning SM or any newcomer to the theatre. While noting blocking, it would be natural to use one's own right or left. Don't! Once again, ***SR is always the actor's right as the actor stands on the stage facing the audience, and SL is always the actor's left as the actor stands on the stage facing the audience.*** This also applies to when reading scenic drawings/floor plans, looking at artists' renderings, or viewing a scale model.

House Right and House Left

To complicate this matter further, when talking about the placement of things in the audience (the *house*):

- The right side of the house (house right) is as a person sits in the audience to view the stage.
- Conversely, the left side of the house (house left) is as a person sits in the audience to view the stage.

It is especially important that the SM have these two areas firmly planted in mind because the SM, above most others, will be dealing with both areas.

To distinguish between what is right and left on stage and what is right and left in the audience (the house), and to be clear in communication, whether it be in noting blocking or having conversation, when the SM talks about the placement of things on the stage they are always described as *stage right* (SR) or *stage left* (SL). When talking about things in the audience, the SM always says *house right* (hs.R) or *house left* (hs.L).

Notice: While discussing the right and left of things, you have also been exposed to some of the SM's shorthand notations: *stage right* (SR), *stage left* (SL), *house right* (hs.R), and *house left* (hs.L).

The Stage Breakdown

The Basic Parts

More than likely you already have a working knowledge of the terms and abbreviations that the SM will use in noting blocking or in communication. But for the sake of being thorough and complete, as is the nature of SMs, let's start with the basic stage as shown in Figure 11-1.

The Center Stage Line

The imaginary vertical line that travels from the audience up to the back of the stage and cuts the stage in half is the **center stage** line (see Fig. 11-2). If an actor were to stand at any point on this line facing out to the audience, everything to the actor's right would be SR and anything to the left is SL. Note the symbol or letter C at the bottom of the dividing line. This is the abbreviation the SM uses in blocking notes to note the center position on the stage. The symbol for this center position is often written in one of three ways, as shown in Figure 11-3.

BACKDROP

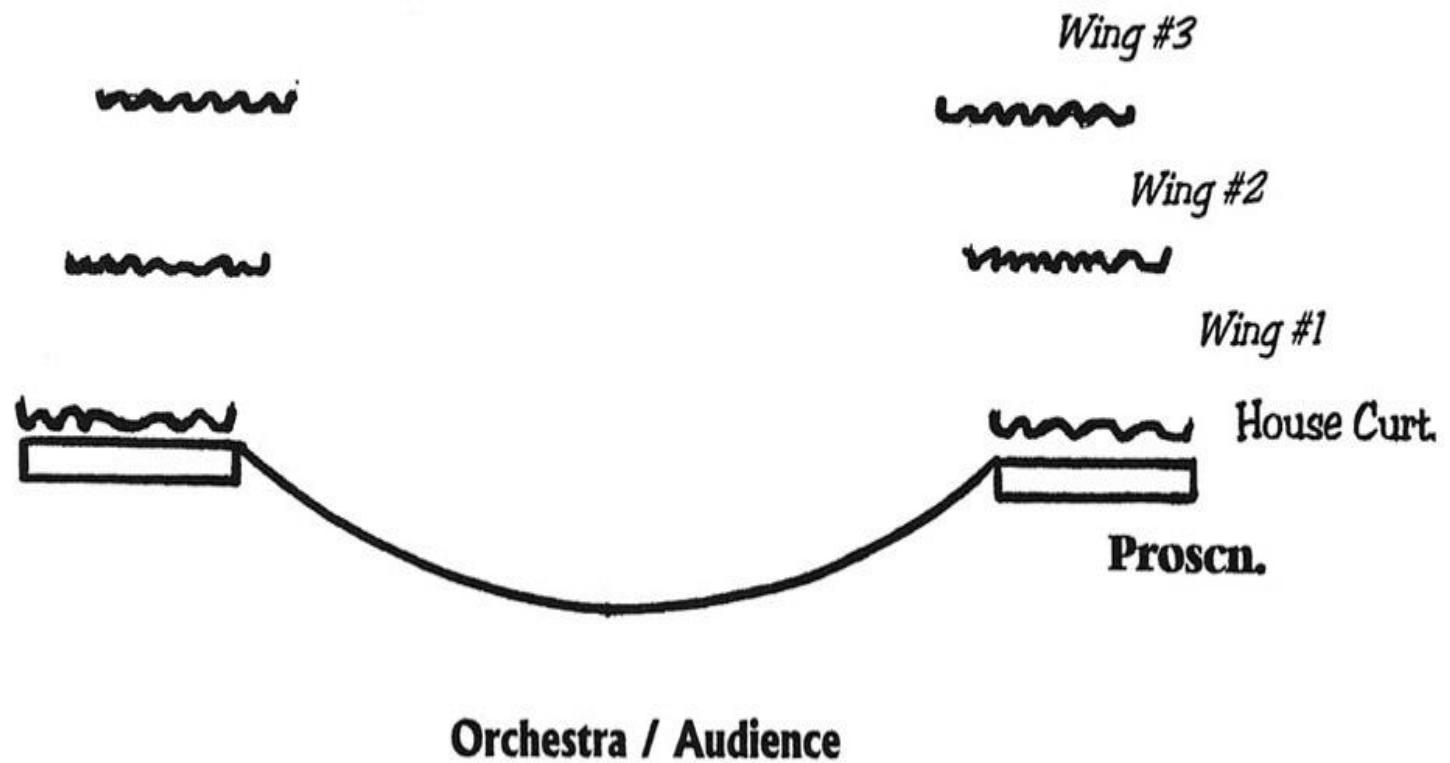


Figure 11-1 The basic parts of a stage.

The proscenium = proscn. The house curtain = hs.crt. Wings #1, #2, #3 = #lwng, etc

BACKDROP

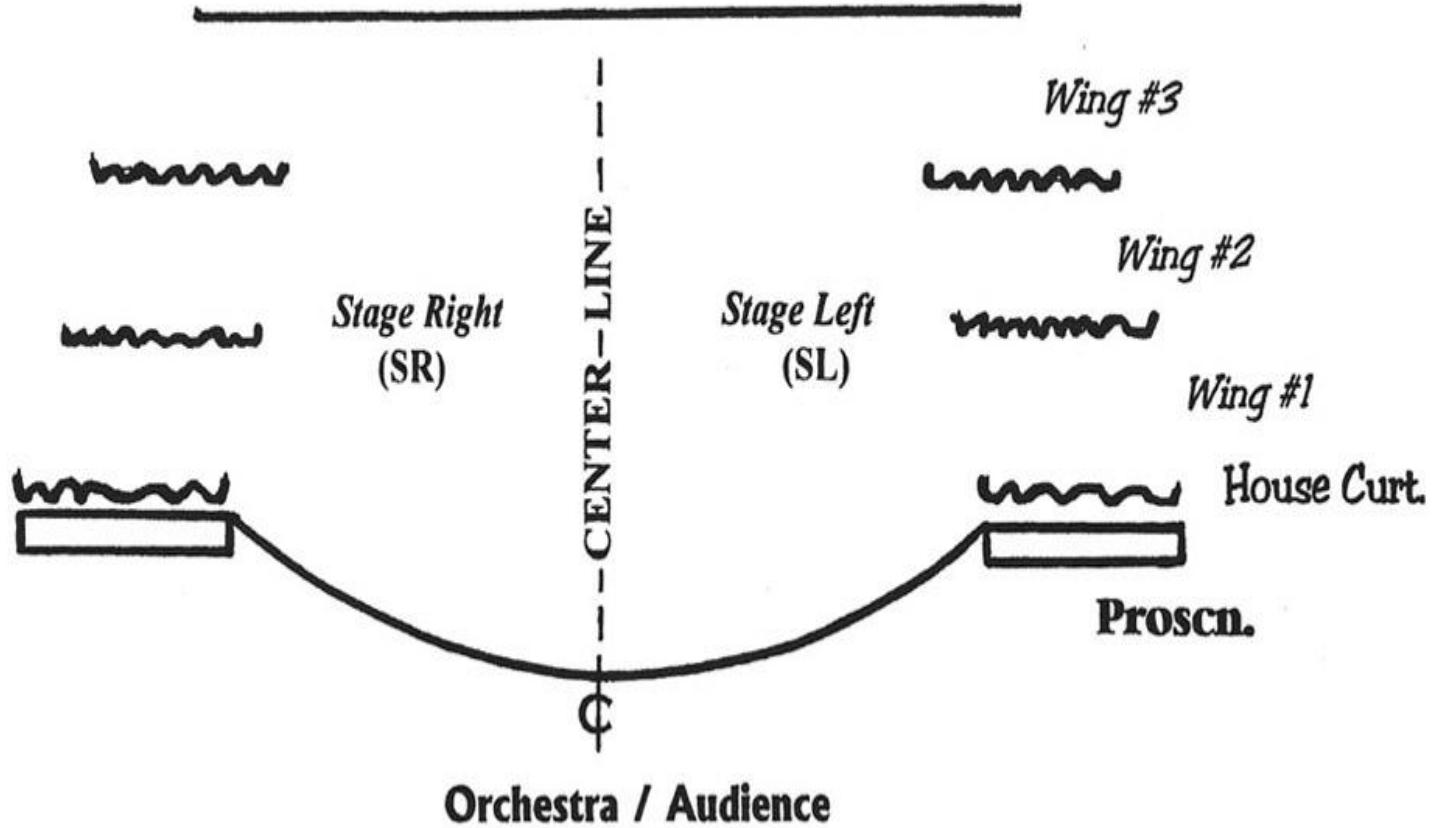


Figure 11-2 The center line vertically dividing the stage in half and creating stage right and stage left.

Different Symbols Used for Center Stage



Figure 11-3 The three different ways the center position of the stage is written.

Creating Up Stage and Down Stage

If the stage is divided in half horizontally, anything above the dividing line is up stage (**US**) and anything below is down stage (**DS**) (see Fig. 11-4). In addition to being areas on the stage, the terms *upstage* and *downstage* are also used to describe the direction in which anything travels on the stage. Anything on stage that moves away from the audience is traveling US. Conversely, anything that moves toward the audience is traveling DS.

Stage Divided Horizontally and Vertically

When the stage is divided with the *vertical* line and the *horizontal* line, four major playing/performing areas are created, as shown in Figure 11-5. With these imaginary lines drawn, you now have four performing areas:

Down Stage Right = **DSR**

Down Stage Left = **DSL**

Up Stage Right = **USR**

Up Stage Left = **USL**

In addition, three more performing areas are created and can be used in notating blocking:

- Up Center = **UC** (anything placed on that center line above the horizontal line, be it an actor, prop, or scenery)
- Down Center = **DC** (similarly, anything placed on this center line below the horizontal line, be it an actor, prop, or scenery)
- Dead Center = **C** (where the horizontal line and the vertical line cross, this becomes the *center* of the entire stage)

Remember these abbreviations; they will forever be part of your SMing life.

The Apron

The apron (**aprn**) of the stage is the part closest to the audience. It is the part that projects past the proscenium

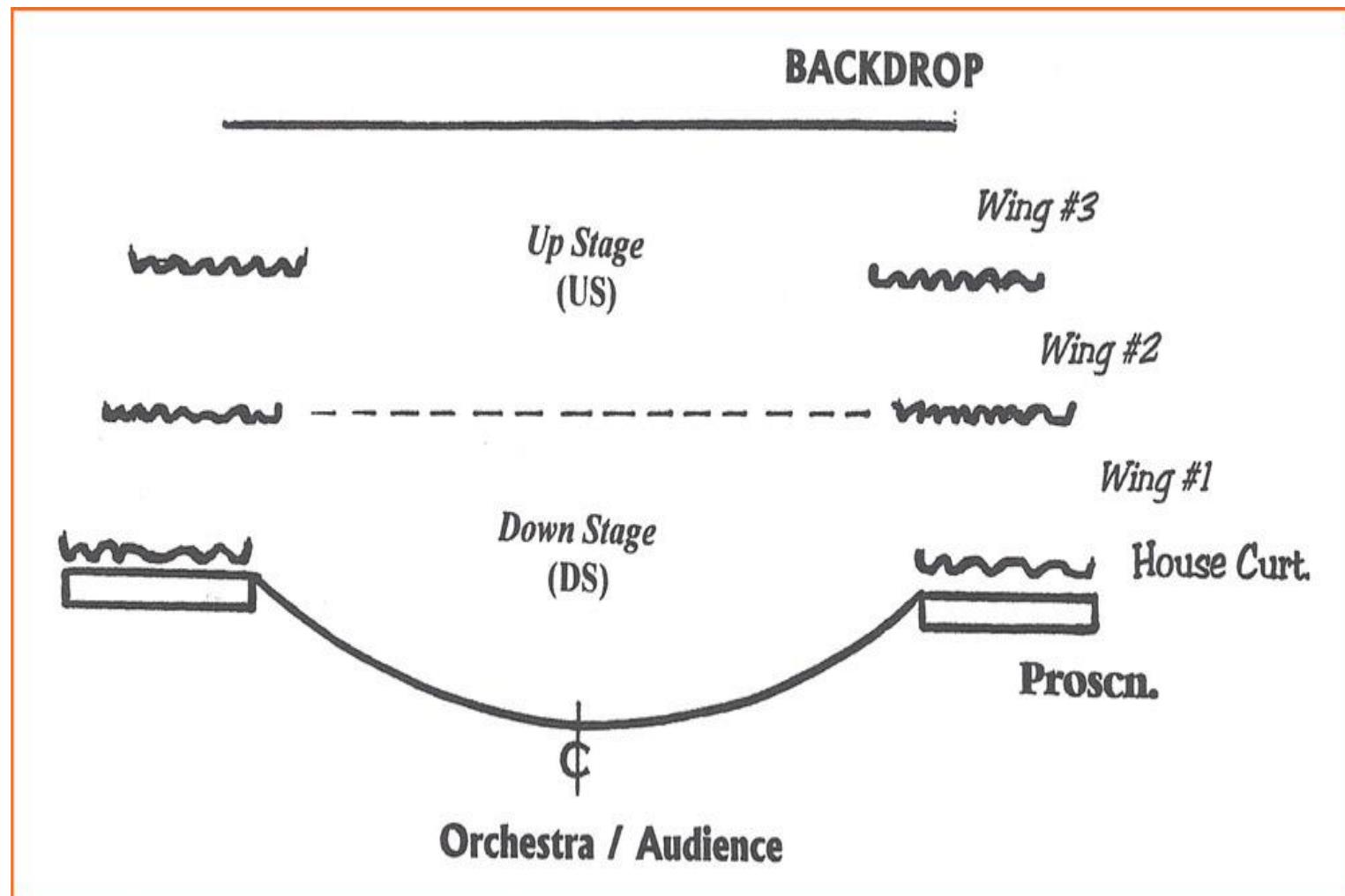
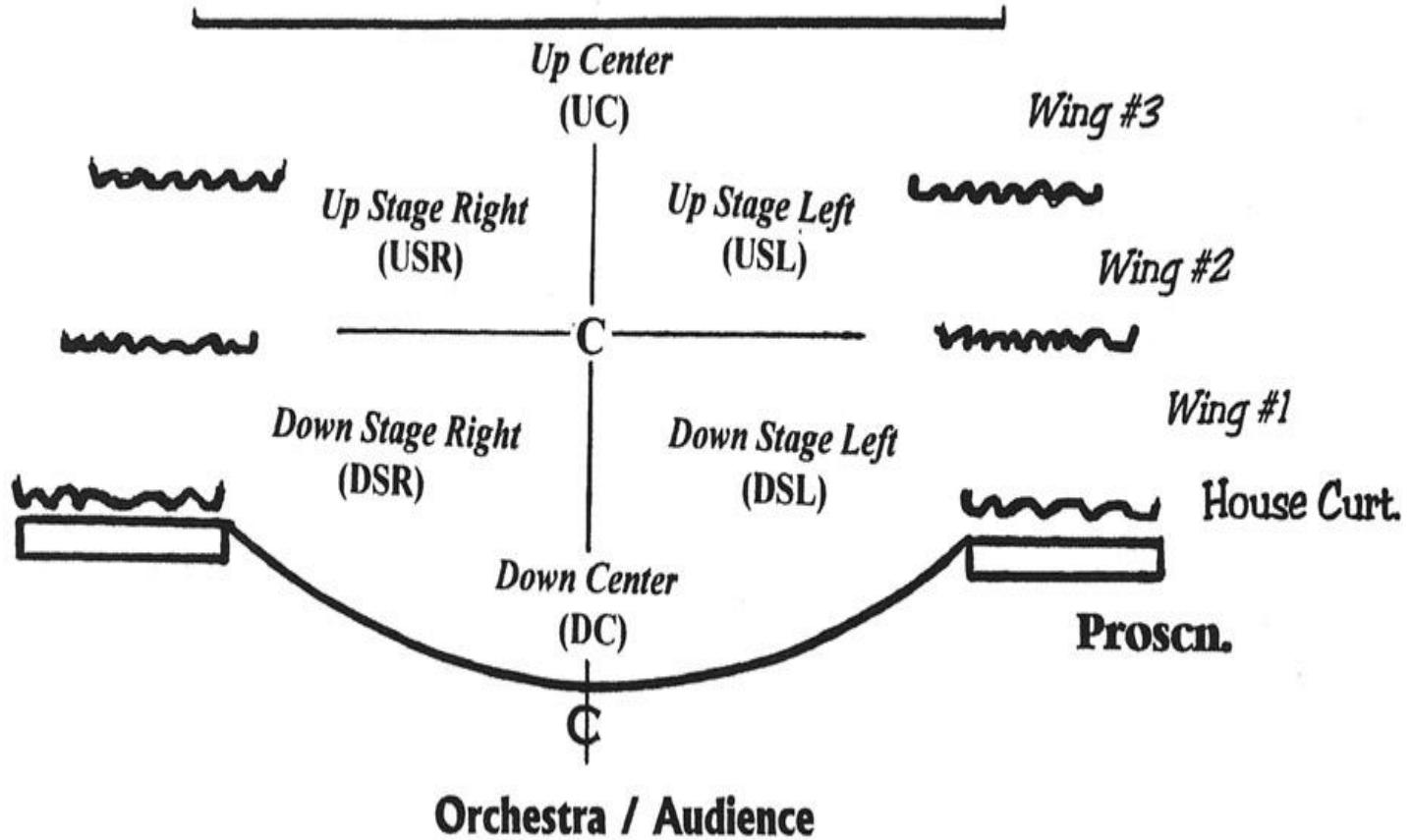


Figure 11-4 Horizontally dividing the stage in half, creating the upstage (US) area and the downstage (DS) area.

BACKDROP



Orchestra / Audience

Figure 11-5 Dividing the stage with the vertical and horizontal lines, creating four major performing areas on the stage. Where the two dividing lines meet, that point becomes the center (C) of the stage. Anything above this center point is called *up center* (UC), and anything below is *down center* (DC).

BACKDROP

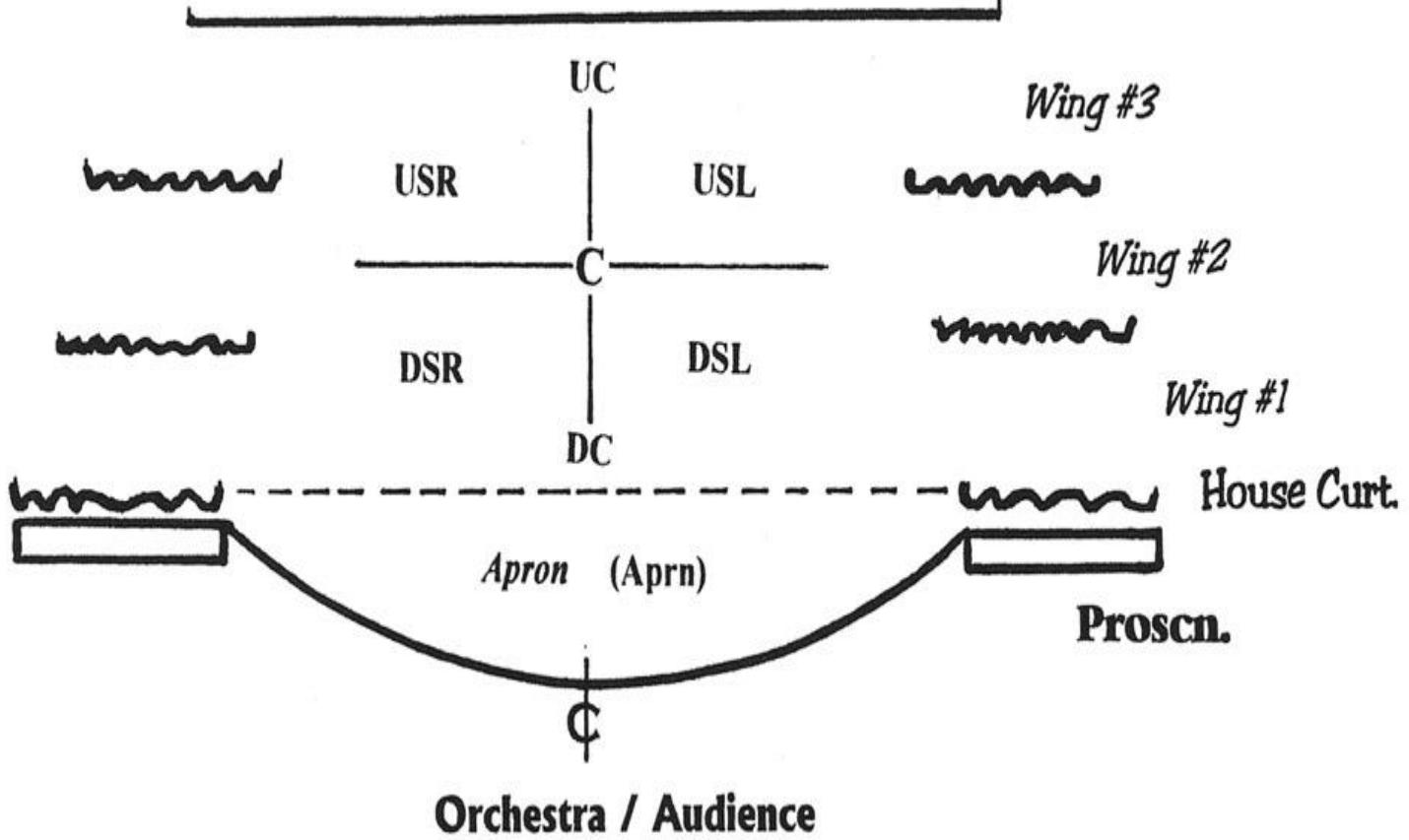


Figure 11-6 Creating the apron (Aprn) part of the stage.

arch out into the audience (see Fig. 11-6). When the house curtain is drawn across the proscenium opening, the apron is that part of the stage floor that remains in view of the audience. It can be several feet deep, or be as narrow as a few inches. It can arch out into the audience (as in our diagrams), it can be straight across, or it can be constructed to suit the imagination of a designer. In dramas and comedies with traditionally designed sets, such as the interior of a room or apartment, this part of the stage is seldom used. Broadway musical shows will use this area more, while variety art and vaudeville shows put this space to greatest use.

Greater Division of the Stage—Cutting the Stage Horizontally

The stage as it is divided thus far does not give enough reference points for the SM to take down detailed and accurate blocking. The stage needs to be divided in two more ways: first, *horizontally*, as in Figure 11-7. Note the areas now created on each side of the stage.

Cutting the Stage Vertically

Then in Figure 11-8, by *vertically* cutting the stage right side of the stage and by vertically cutting the left side of the stage, even more areas are now created that can be noted into the blocking script.

New Center Point

With cutting the stage horizontally and vertically, some new *center points* are created. See Figure 11-9.

Full-View Drawing—Blocking Areas and Center Points

There is no need to divide the stage any further. If perhaps what we have done so far seems a bit overwhelming, wait until you see Figure 11-10 with all areas and center points noted. The best test given to determine good blocking notes is when an SM, a director, or an actor can go back to the notes a day later or years later, read them, understand them, and re-create the blocking as originally directed.

Take Heart: The drawing in Figure 11-10 is one I had laid out on my worktable for a good five or six shows whenever I was in rehearsals notating blocking. Photocopy this drawing and slip it into one of those plastic sheet protectors with a three-hole side tab that enables you to put it at the beginning of your rehearsal/blocking script. Then have it there in front of you whenever you are noting blocking.

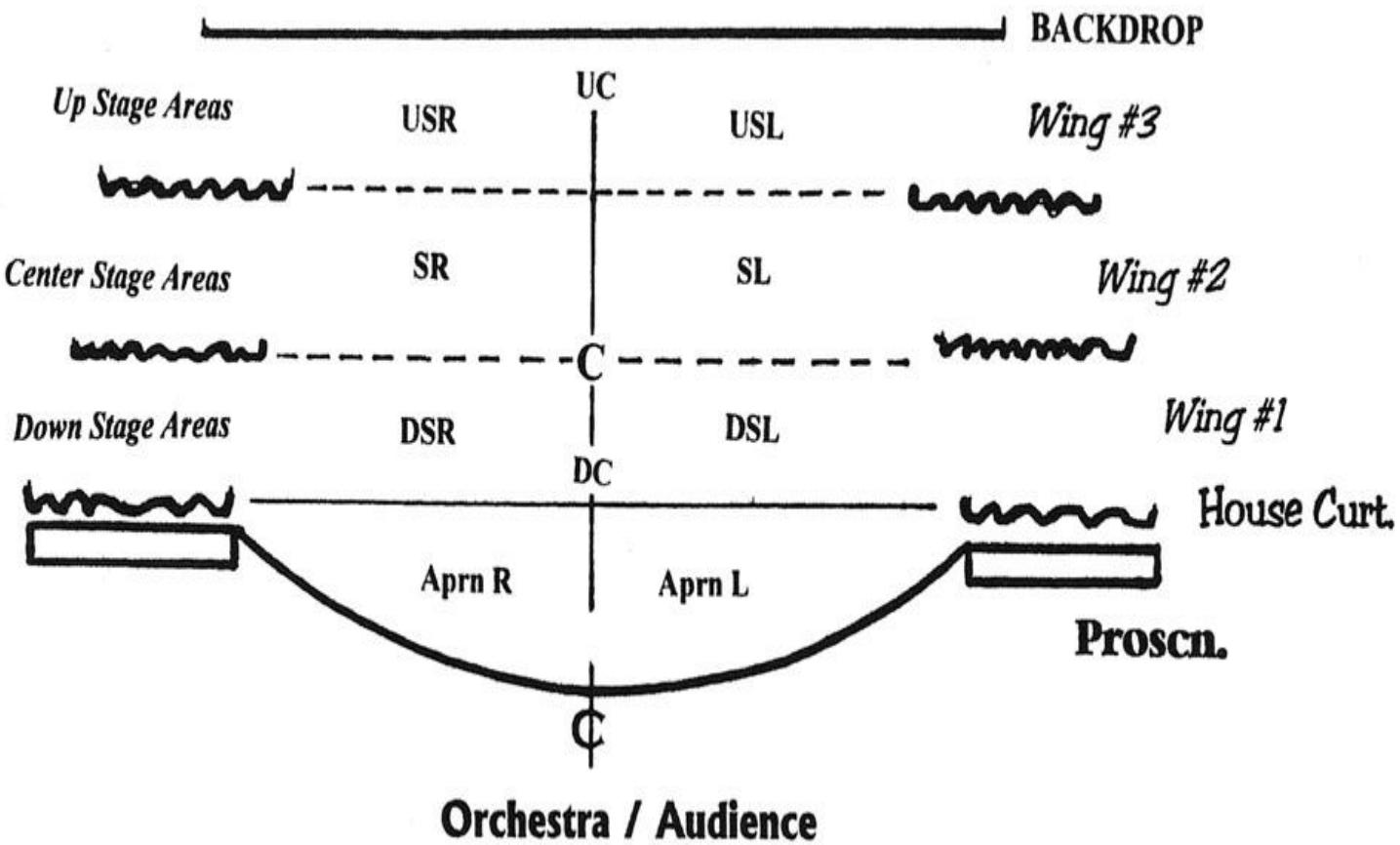


Figure 11-7 Greater horizontal division of the stage, breaking it down into smaller playing areas.

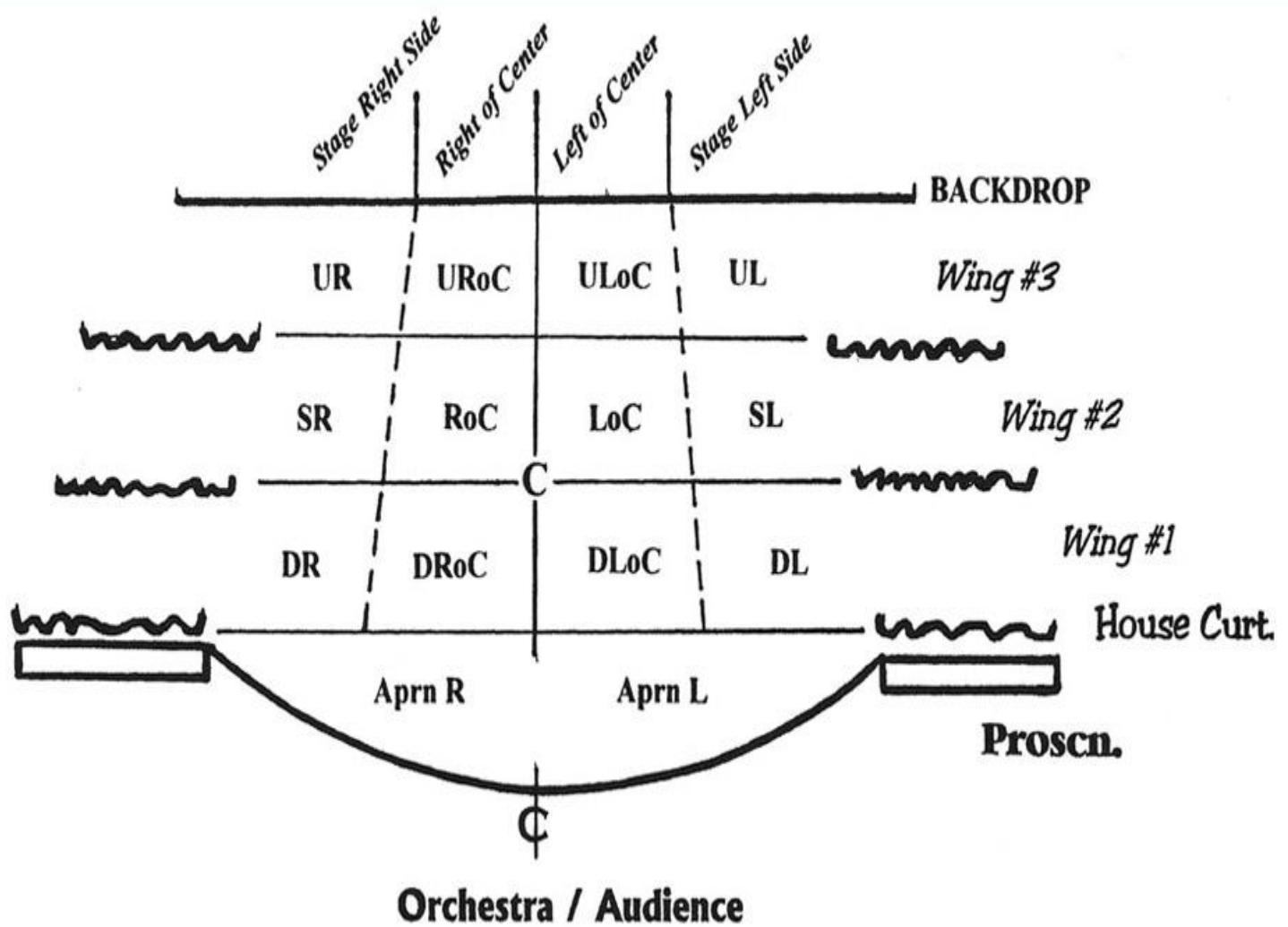


Figure 11-8 Greater vertical division of the stage, breaking it down into even smaller playing areas.

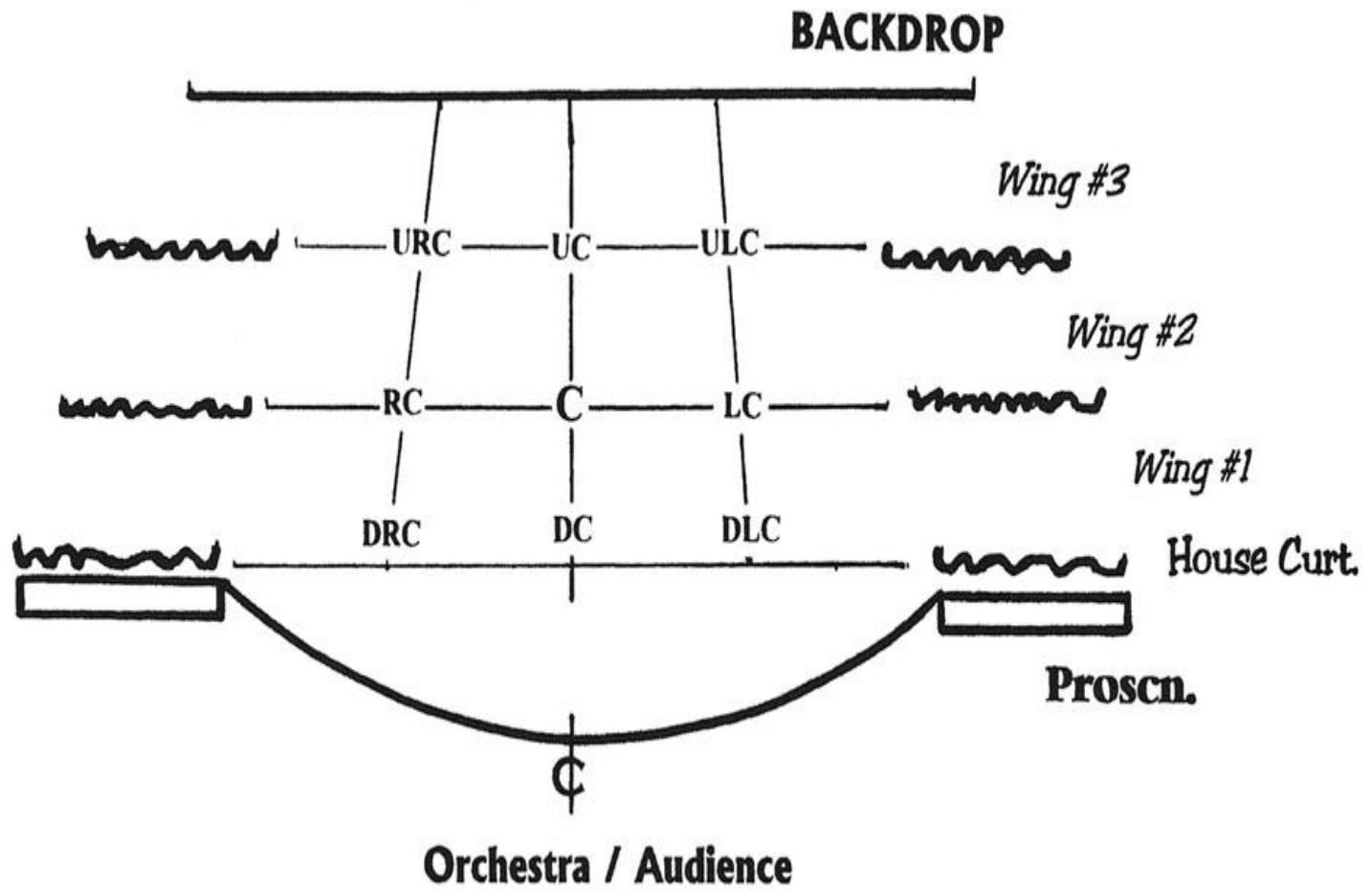


Figure 11-9 New center points created where the various dividing lines intersect.

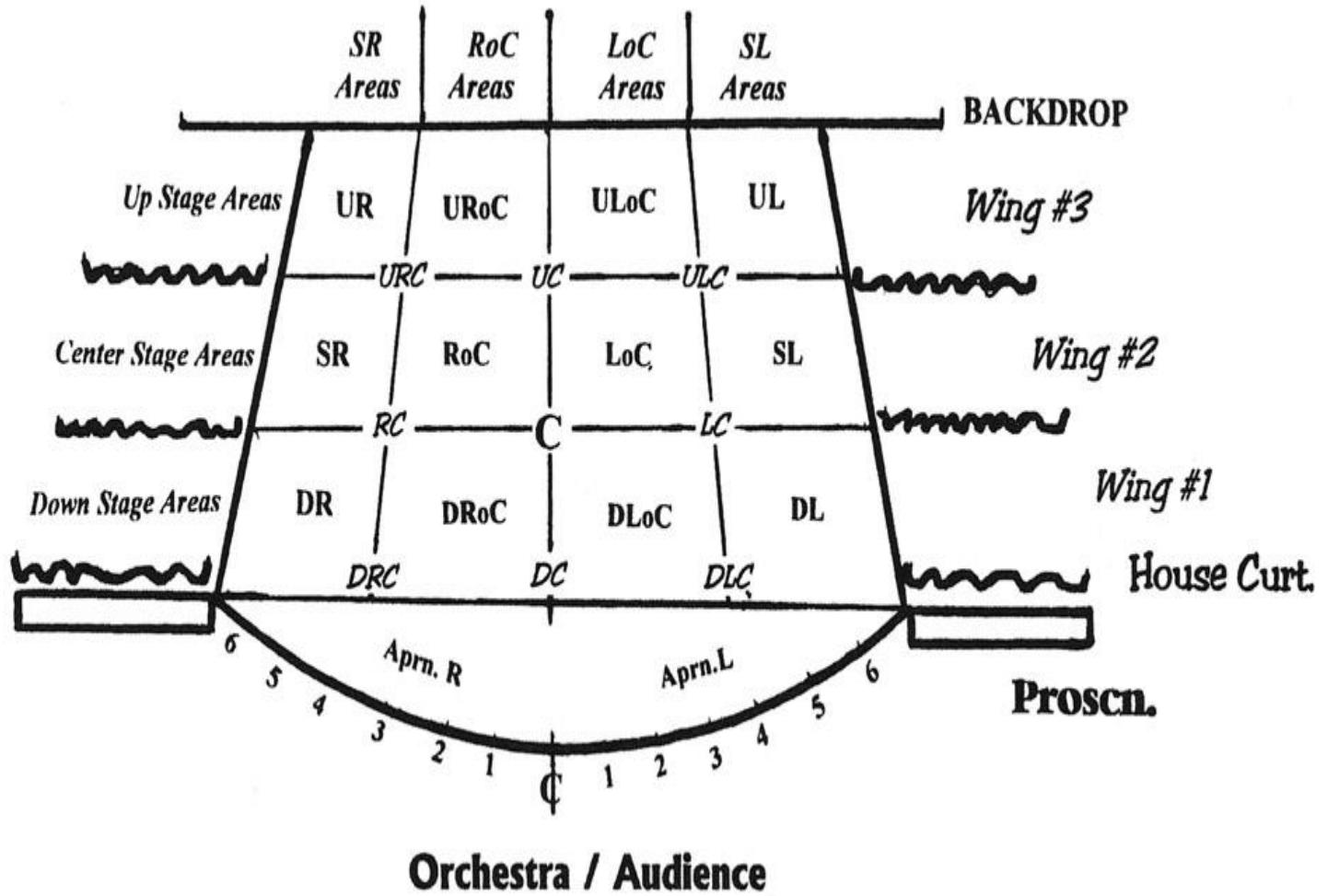


Figure 11-10 The complete stage breakdown, with all its reference points and performing areas.

Arena Staging—Theatre in the Round

Just when an SM masters the art of *proscenium* blocking there comes a show that is performed in *arena staging* (be it a round or square stage), where the audience either surrounds the stage or is seated on three sides of the stage. The abbreviations and symbols for noting the blocking won't change, but the reference points can at first appear less distinguishable until the SM gets some very specific and identifiable points and areas in mind.

First the SM must decide on a *front viewing* position of the stage, as if the audience was seated in a conventional theatre with a proscenium. This front viewing position can be based on a combination of things:

- The place in the house where the director sits most often to block the show
- The main entrance to the theatre
- A main aisle leading up to the stage
- The placement of the technical booth from which the lights and sound are run, and from where the SM calls the cues for the show
- For a musical, the placement of the orchestra pit

Having established a front viewing position of the stage, the SM has automatically established SR and SL and has created US and DS, and can now divide the stage into areas as with the proscenium stage (see Fig. 11-11).

Once the SM determines all the reference points to the particular theatre in which the show is performing, the SM can then draw out a stage floor plan using the same software program that was used for creating the floor plans in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy." Then a copy of this stage floor plan can be slipped into one of those plastic sheet protectors

with a three-hole side tab that enables it to be slipped into the blocking script when not being used and laid out on the worktable while noting blocking.

Arena Staging—Theatre in the Square

Should the SM be confronted with a square arena stage, there should be no difference. Once the front viewing position is established and all the parts surrounding the stage, such as the aisles, technical booth, orchestra pit, and so on, are named or numbered, then the performing areas on the stage are easily established.

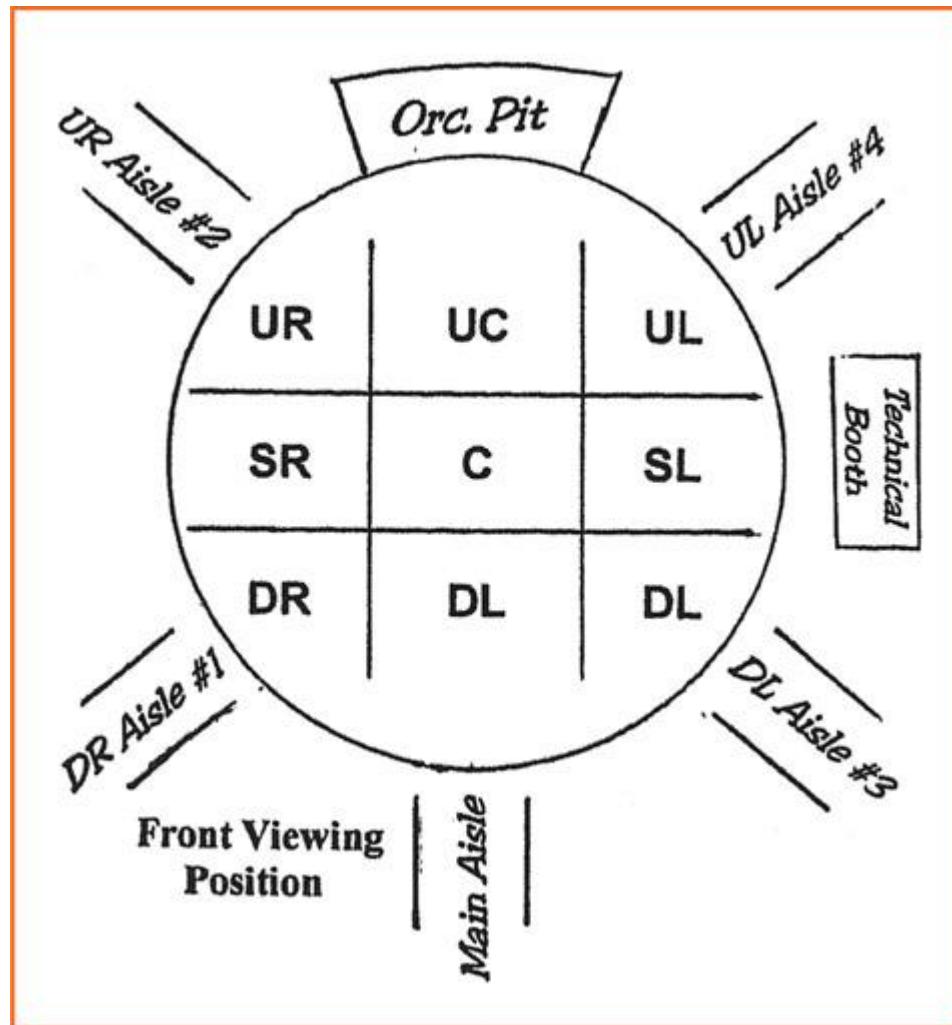


Figure 11-11 Breaking down the circular arena stage into performing areas and using other points of reference to note blocking. Note that the aisles can be identified either by their stage position (DR, UR, etc.), by number (1, 2, etc.), or as demonstrated in the example (a combination of both the position and number). It is the SM's choice, as long as everyone is working with the same information.

Also, whether in round or in the square, the SM might lay out the numbers of a clock, as in Figure 11-12. This breakdown alone is enough for the SM to make clear and detailed blocking notes. Using this around-the-clock method with an arena in the round is also possible, especially when the performer is directed to stand at the edge of the stage.

It can be very helpful to the actors, director, crew, and perhaps to the technical designers if the SM makes copies and hands out the breakdowns for either the round stage or the square stage. It puts the same picture in everyone's mind and gets them using the same terms of reference.

Additional Areas and Abbreviations for Noting Blocking

In addition to the area breakdown of the stage floor, other parts of the stage can be used as reference points in noting the blocking:

- proscenium line = **prosc.ln**
- curtain line = **curt.ln.**
- show portals = **ShwPort** (R or L)
- wings #1, 2, 3, right or left stage = **#1Wng R**, etc.
- footlights, right, left, or center = **Foots R**, etc.
- dance numbers (at the edge of the stage) 1 through ? = **dnc#1R, dnc#6L**, etc.
- If in arena and using the clock numbers = **@12:, @3:, etc.**

With the addition of the scenery, set units, or big props like furniture, the SM has even greater reference points to use in taking down blocking.

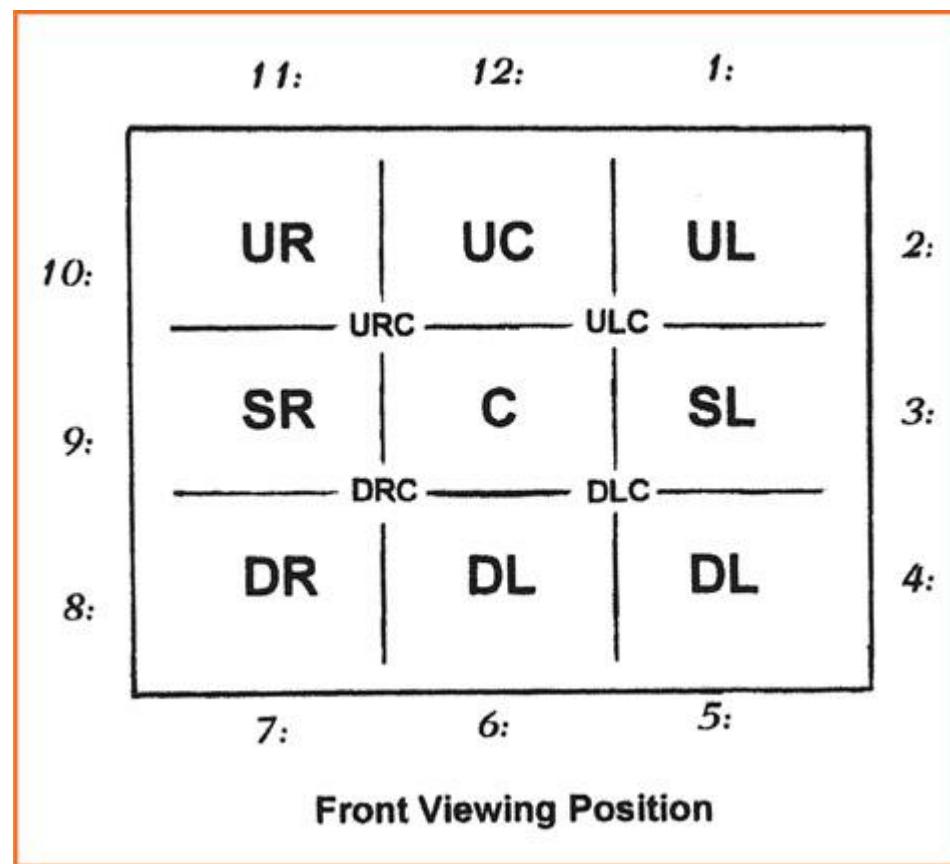


Figure 11-12 The square arena stage with the numbers of a clock surrounding the stage to further aid the SM in noting blocking.

Abbreviations for Character Names

When having to note in the blocking script a character's name, a good method of abbreviation is to shorten the name, even down to the initial if they are not easily confused with some other character's name, and then circle it. Circling the abbreviation makes it immediately recognizable as a character. Figure 11-13 shows abbreviations for the names of the characters for our imaginary play, *John and Mary*.

John = **J**, Mary = **M**, Alice = **Al**

Florence = **Flo**, George = **Geo**

Frieda = **Fre**, Postman = **Pst.Mn**

Superintendent = **Super**, etc.

Figure 11-13 Abbreviating the characters' names and circling them for quick and easy identification.

Noting the Actor's Moves/Crosses

Whenever an actor moves from one part of the stage to the other, it is simply noted as:

X = cross

Xing = crossing

Xes = crosses

Example of SM's Blocking Notation in Shorthand

In our imaginary play *John and Mary*, the character Mary has been told to "Cross in front of John, go to stage right, sit on the left side of the sofa, take a cigarette from the coffee table and light it." See Figure 11-14 to see how the SM noted Mary's moves and stage business into the blocking script. Note the combination of abbreviations and symbols.

(M) Xing frnt. o **(J)**, XR to sofa, sit L side, lite cig.

Figure 11-14 An example of how an SM might note blocking in shorthand.

Directional Arrows Speak Volumes

Here is a collection of arrows that say a lot with one symbol and stroke of the pencil. Arrows can be used to indicate direction as well as movement (see Fig. 11-15).

Another Blocking Notation Example

This is how the blocking note would be in long hand:

Intoxicated from drink, George stumbles up the stairs, tripping on the third step. When he gets to the top, he burps, smiles, and in his confusion, heads back down the stairs.

There is a lot happening here. Certainly it is too much for the SM to note while the direction was first being given, but also a bit too wordy even for the finished copy of the blocking script. So Figure 11-16 show how it would be noted.

It is not necessary to note the timing of the action. The actor will take care of that. However, should the director want a specific amount of time in any part of this action, then that too can be noted.

Greater Use of the Arrow

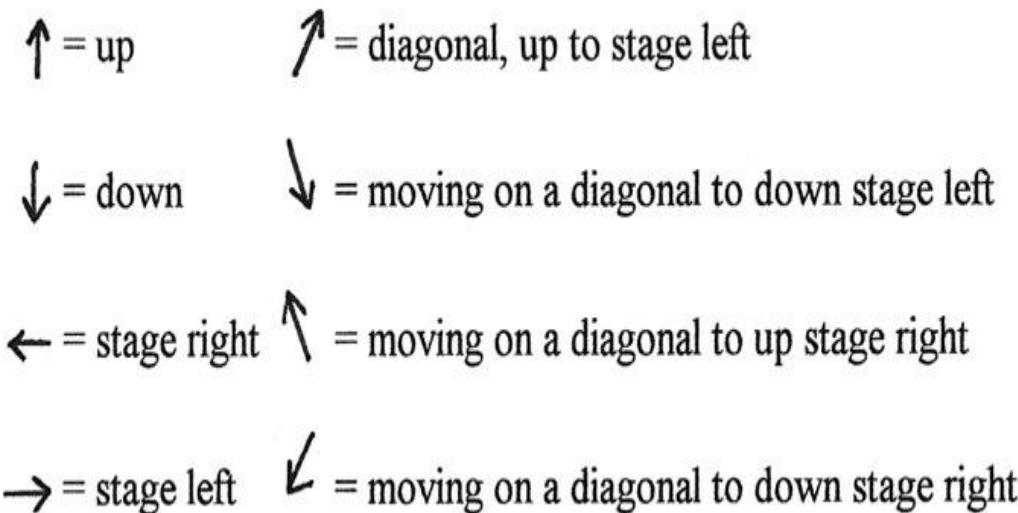


Figure 11-15 Arrows of direction an SM can use when noting blocking.

In the example above with George doing all that movement and business going up and down the stairs, the *squiggly* arrows shown in Figure 11-17 might have been more expressive and would have conveyed the inebriated state of George (note also the arched arrows).

(Geo) drnk., stmb. ↗ strs. Trips 3rd step. At top, burp, smile, confused, back ↘ stairs.

Figure 11-16 The SM's abbreviated words, arrows, and symbols to note blocking

Some General SM Abbreviations

In writing blocking notes, the SM abbreviates words as much as possible. In doing so the SM follows no standard abbreviated form for the words written; the goal is to write as much detail as is needed in the smallest amount of space. The notes must be clear and understandable. Abbreviations must stand alone—they should not be mistaken or confused with another word. As an example, the abbreviation for *bedroom* and *boardroom* could be the same, *Bd.rm.* However, if the SM abbreviates boardroom as *Brd.rm.*, there is no chance of it being mistaken for bedroom. Figure 11-18 demonstrates some typical abbreviations for noting blocking.

The SM's Picture Drawing in Noting Blocking

The adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” holds very true for the SM when making blocking notes. However, the SM’s pictures or diagrams are very basic and primitive (see Fig. 11-19). They don’t need to be anything more, as long as they convey the blocking information. In this example, the character Flo, from behind the bar, crosses left over to the left corner of the desk, gets some flowers, crosses down to stage left, sits in the chair, and as we see from the two-headed arrow between the chair and the coffee table, arranges the flowers. While it took several lines of text to explain Flo’s action, movement, and stage business, the drawing in Figure 11-19 says it all.

Noting Blocking for Busy Scenes

Annie Get Your Gun Train Scene

There is a scene on a train in the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* that is confined to the space of a sleeper car with a double berth for sleeping. The scene involves the character Annie, three children, and four of the principal performers. There are times during this scene when all of the characters are on stage at the same time, and the blocking can be fast paced and played for as much comedy as the director and actors choose. It is the SM’s job to capture in the blocking notes the movement, the action, the stage business, and as much as possible the comic values of the scene. For the SM, this train scene is broken up into three parts:

A squiggly arrow going upwards (), could have been used to note George’s stumbling up the stairs.

The same for his coming back down (). The head of the arrow indicates the direction in which George is traveling on stage.

A slightly arched arrow () can indicate a character stepping over something.

A sharply arched arrow () can indicate a character jumping over something.

Figure 11-17 Examples of squiggly and arched arrows and what they mean to further aid an SM in noting blocking.

adjust = adj. (or)	desk = dsk.	mirror = mirr.
adjst.	dinning room =	music = mus.
answer = ans.	din.rm.	
at = @	door = dr.	near = nr.
bathroom = bth.rm	down = dwn.	newspaper = nws.ppr.
bed = bd.	drink = drnk.	
bedroom = bd.rm.	enter = entr.	of = of
begin = bgn.	*Exit = EXIT	open door = opn.dr.
bench = bnch.		overture = ovrt.
blackout = BO	fade = Fd. or FD.	picture = pict.
bottle = btl.	follow = folw.	platform = platf.
bottom = btm.	front = frnt.	point of view = POV
	furniture = furnit.	room = rm.
chair = chr.		
check = chk. or ✓	immediately =	sound effect = SFX
circle =	immed.	
close door = cls.dr.	kitchen = kit	table = tbl.
coffee = coff.		with = w/
continue = cont.	light = lite	without = w/o
corner = cr.		

* EXIT - Noting this word in upper case letters helps single out in the rehearsal script all EXITS. For any number of reasons, the SM will be asked for this information and will need to extract it from his blocking script as quickly as possible.

Figure 11-18 A list of words and their abbreviations an SM might use in noting blocking.

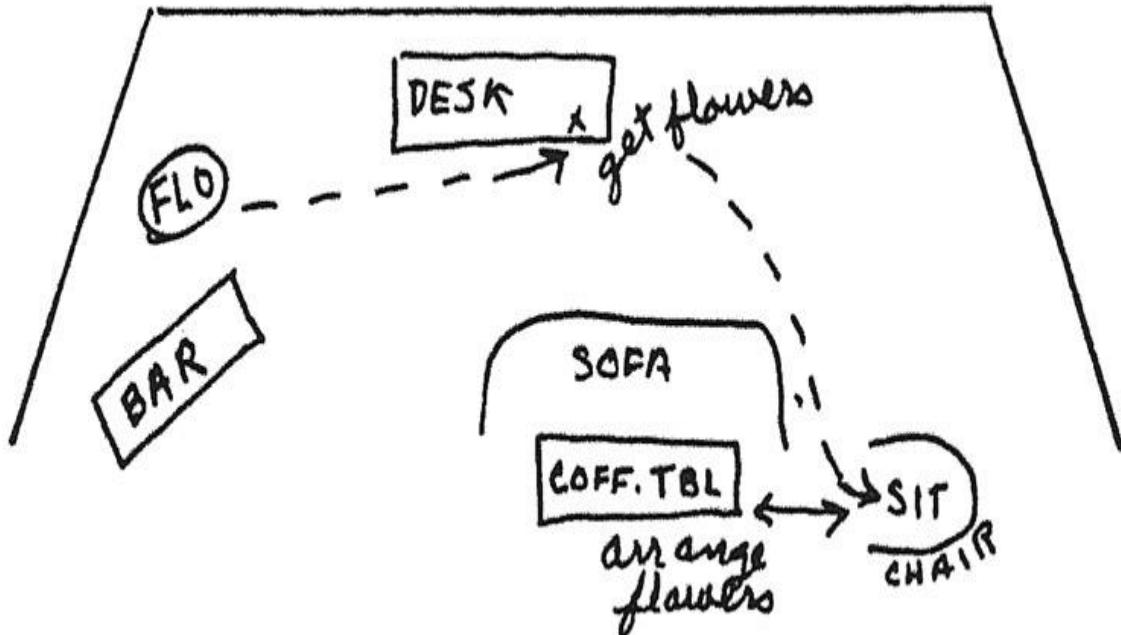


Figure 11-19 A small, primitive diagram the SM might draw when noting the blocking of the character Florence from the imaginary play *John and Mary*.

2. Buffalo Bill's entrance with Charlie, which is shortly followed by Frank's entrance
3. Dolly's entrance and encounter with Frank

1. Annie's Entrance with Jake

The long version of the blocking notes for this scene might be written as follows:

As the lights come up, Annie's two sisters are already on stage, playing in the upper berth, which is placed left of center. Annie and her brother Jake enter stage right. They cross to the berth. Annie tucks Jake in the lower bed of the berth with his head going toward stage left. Annie then sits on the stage right corner of the bed, takes Jake's primer-reader, and reads. The sisters hang over the edge of the upper berth to listen.

This is translated into SM's shorthand, as shown in Figure 11-20.

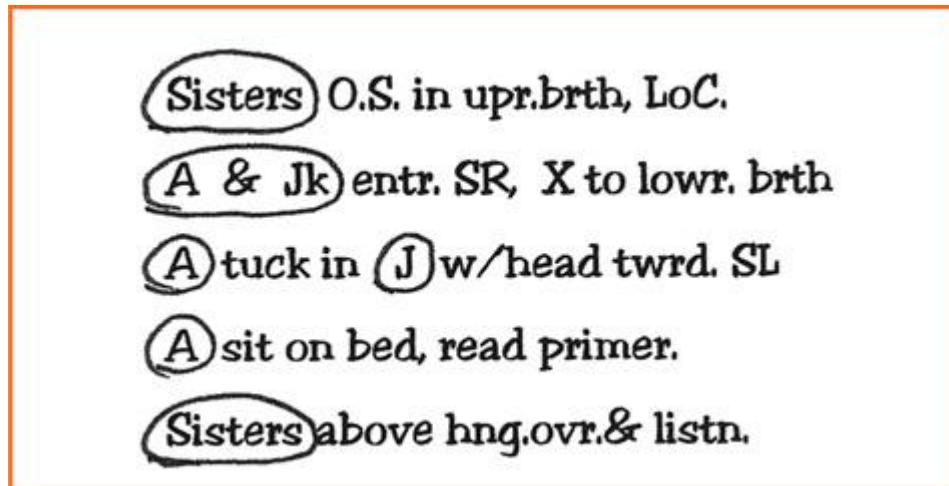


Figure 11-20 The SM's way of noting busy or complicated blocking for a train scene in the musical *Annie Get Your Gun*.

2. Buffalo Bill's Entrance with Charlie, Shortly Followed by Frank's Entrance

The longhand version:

As Annie reads, Buffalo Bill and the show manager, Charlie, enter from stage right. They stop stage right center to talk. They do not see Annie and she does not see them. Annie continues to read. Just as Buffalo Bill and Charlie get into place, Frank enters from stage left. He sees Buffalo Bill and Charlie. Not wanting them to see him, Frank does a comic circle around himself and starts to exit the same way he came in.

BB & Charl entr.R - xing to RC.

Stop, mime-talk, do not see **(A)**

(A) not see them, cont. read

As **BB & Charl** get in place, **(Fr)** entr.L, sees

BB & Charl, **(Fr)** does

comic **○** around-self & starts exit L

Figure 11-21 Continuing the same train scene from *Annie Get Your Gun*, with the SM's blocking notes for the entrance of Buffalo Bill (BB), Charlie (Charl), and Frank (Fr).

The SM's shorthand, abbreviations, and symbols in Figure 11-21 tell it all in a small block of text.

3. Dolly's Entrance and Encounter with Frank

Just as Frank is leaving, Dolly enters left at the same time. They bump into each other, each spinning off the other, and end up going in the opposite direction in which they were heading. Thus Dolly exits back out the door and Frank heads straight for Buffalo Bill and Charlie.

While the longhand description for this section of blocking and comic stage business reads like a novel, the SM's notes are concise, highly abbreviated, and to the point.

As **(Fr)** Exiting - **(Dol)** entr L.

They bump into each other & spin.

(Dol) EXITing L

(Fr) Xing R to **(BB & Chrl)**

Figure 11-22 The same train scene from *Annie Get Your Gun*. The SM notes the blocking for the comic business between Frank (Fr) and Dolly (Dol).

The Absence of Some Blocking Details

Although the SM is required to be detailed in the blocking notes, they should not include things that actors bring to the part, such as feelings, emotions, attitude, gestures, or reactions, unless they have direct importance to the storyline or play in some way. If the SM does make these notes, it is for the SM's information only, and when a director or an actor asks for blocking from the SM's script, the SM does not deliver this additional information. The actors and director want only the basic blocking information—the moves, placement, stage business. They will fill in their parts. No SM, director, or anyone else for that matter should expect one actor to do what some other actor has done in the

part previously. In the same light, the SM does not always note timing, such as the number of beats or seconds the actor takes in a dramatic pause, or the number of steps an actor takes to complete a movement or action, unless of course the information is important for comic value or dramatic effect to the scene or the play.

Neat Blocking Notes

It is very important for the SM to be neat in penmanship when noting the blocking. It must be clear, orderly, and highly comprehensible so the SM or anyone else can read it at a later time. There is no time for a quick scribble with the intention of going back to the script at a later time to rewrite the information, unless the SM wants to spend hours doing a task that could have been time for doing something else. Learn to be neat and clear on the spot while making the notations. Furthermore, *the SM uses only pencil when making blocking notes*. Change is certain—it is the rule and not the exception.

SM's Blocking Notes as Written on the Script Page

The example in Figure 11-23 is an edited scene from the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* with the SM's handwritten blocking notes. This is the scene where the scrubby and gawky Annie Oakley meets for the first time the handsome and egotistical Frank Butler. Take note of the detail in the blocking notes. Both the director and actors wanted the action done at specific times and on certain words.

The Numerical Way to Note Blocking

Sometimes when the blocking of a scene is intricate or complicated, or the interplay between characters is involved, or when there are a large number of people in the scene, the SM might want to use the numerical way of noting the blocking. With this method, the SM merely jots numbers on the page of dialogue where the blocking notes are to take place, and then on the blank page to the left (that is the backside of the previous page) writes out the notes.

Figure 11-24 shows Scene 1 from Act I of our imaginary play *John and Mary*—the scene in which Mary's mother, Frieda, calls. The director chooses to have Frieda seen by the audience as she makes the call, rather than having her backstage talking over a mic. The director's objective is to show how mother and daughter are so alike even if they seem to be at odds with each other when they speak. In noting the blocking for this scene, the SM is required to note in detail the actions of all the characters.

Note in Figure 11-24 the amount of numbers listed in the small paragraph of stage directions at the beginning of the scene. The numerical way of noting blocking has allowed the SM to make copious notes on seven different directions and their details. Note also that the numbers are not all in numerical order as you read down the page of dialogue. Notes 9 and 11 come before notes 6 and 7. This is because the director added these directions/details later in the rehearsal. When this happens, the SM just notes the numbers on the page of dialogue and then makes detailed notes on the page to the left. Later, perhaps in understudy rehearsals, the SM sees numbers 9 and 11 on the dialogue page and refers to the same numbers on the left-hand page.

The numerical approach, however, has its drawbacks. It is not recommended when working on a new play because there will likely be script changes. New pages will replace old ones, and when the old pages are removed, so are the blocking notes on the backsides of those pages. In a new show, if the SM chooses to note blocking using the numerical method, it is safer and wiser to insert blank pages to make the blocking notes.

A Tip and Invention: In the past when I have needed to use the numerical way of noting blocking, I have inserted a half or three-quarters page. This way the blocking notes on those extra pages did not become part of the overall pages of the script when I had to quickly flip through to find a particular page or scene.

(Annie is seated stage right cleaning her gun.
Frank Butler enters left)

*(Fr. entr. L
See (A), X to R.C)*

FRANK
(Sees Annie. Her gun pointing in his direction)
What's that you got there, girl?

(A) not lookin' cont. clean gun.

ANNIE
(Not looking up)
What's it look like? Ain't you got eyes?
(She looks at Frank and winks in awe)
Yeah! You got eyes!

*(A) takes gun
looks + barrel*

FRANK
Honey, you know you shouldn't be fooling around with an old piece of junk like this. — *ret. gun to (A)*

Rise

ANNIE
(Gazing into his eyes) *X-ing DSR*
I want to keep it long enough to win a shootin' contest off'n a big swollen-headed stiff out of the Wild West Show.

*takes fur
steps to (A)*

FRANK
You mean Frank Butler? Why he's the best!

*cockay to D.L.C
strutting R*

ANNIE
He was! Say, would ye wanna wait around and bring me luck?

Starts to exit R

FRANK
That 'Big Swollen-Headed Stiff's gonna need the luck.

faints to (A)

ANNIE
Say whar ye goin'? Don't ye like me?

Put arm around R

FRANK
Sure honey, I like you fine. But I like the kind of a girls who faints when she sees a mouse.

(A) Pulls away

ANNIE
Meanin' I suppose, when I see a mouse, the mouse faints! — *(A) X back to bench + sit*

Figure 11-23 The SM's handwritten blocking notes for the first meeting scene between Annie Oakley and Frank Butler from the musical *Annie Get Your Gun*. ((c) 1949, 1952, 1967 by Herbert Fields, Dorothy Fields, and Irving Berlin. Copyright renewed. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

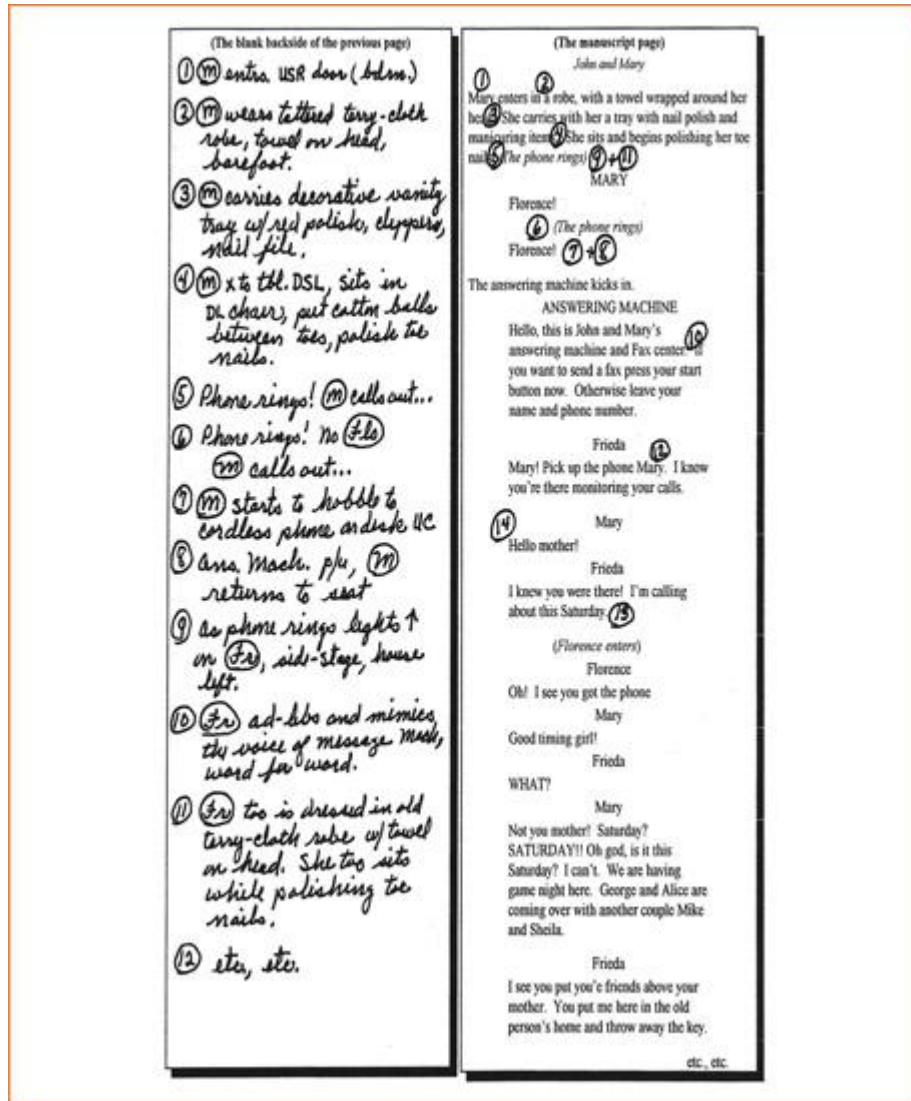


Figure 11-24 The SM's numerical way of noting blocking. Numbers are placed on the dialogue page, while details of the blocking are noted on the blank page to the left (the backside of the previous page of dialogue).

Theoretically and Academically: In some schools of thought it is said that the SM should maintain and retain the old blocking notes that have been changed or are no longer in use, just in case the performer or director at some later time wants to go back to the old way. In theory this is ideal, but as a practice how is it done? First of all, the old blocking must be quickly erased to make room for the new blocking. So then how is the old blocking preserved? Remember, when noting blocking, the SM does not have time to transfer the old information to another place and at the same time keep up while the new blocking is being created. I have no answer for this and I guess, being delinquent in this area and perhaps as a lesser SM, I never attempted to keep the old blocking notes. Perhaps an instructor or some other SMs might have a way—if so, latch on to it and make it your own.

The Publisher's Stage Directions and Technical Effects

Any manuscript, whether published or unpublished, has written into it stage directions that the author or some director has created. The script will also have noted into it technical effects inherent to the script. For the most part, directors read the stage directions once and then ignore them, doing as they choose. In the second or third reading of the play, the SM should write in pencil in the right margin all the effects that are cues in the show. Using our imaginary play *John and Mary*, Figure 11-25 shows how the SM's script would look after the second or third reading.

Some SMs prefer highlighting the technical effects that are printed on the page. This is a workable idea, but it becomes a wasted step. For two reasons, the SM should note these doorbell cues as they will eventually be noted in

the *cueing script*—the script created and used for calling all the cues in the show during the performance, which we will discuss in detail in Chapter 13. The second reason being that the director will surely have some business happening before each ring, and that stage business will have to be written in so that during rehearsals, as the performers rehearse the scene, the SM will verbally call out the “rings” in the correct spot and moment. The rehearsal script will look something like Figure 11-26.

Organizing the Rehearsal/Blocking Script

Tabbing the Scenes

During rehearsals it is extremely helpful for the SM to tab the pages of the rehearsal/blocking script. The SM places the tabs at the beginning of each scene. When working on a show in which there will be script changes, it is wise for the SM to insert between each scene a card-stock page and attach the tab to that page. Then, when the changes are made, the SM can quickly remove the old pages and have the tabs remain in their proper place.

Inserting the SM’s Personal Floor Plans

In addition to tabbing each scene in the rehearsal/blocking script, the SM should insert a copy of the personal floor plan for that particular scene. On it the SM can note prop and furniture placement and the initial placement of the actors as they begin the scene.

Script Changes

Before computers and copying machines were readily available, the task of doing rewrites could be time consuming, requiring late hours after rehearsals. Script changing can be done in various ways, with varying numbers of people involved. Sometimes it is privately done between the director and writer. Other times the producer and assistant director are included. On occasion, the SM may be there, but mostly in a secretarial capacity.

First comes the creative session to make the changes. Then the task to get the rewrites entered into the computer, printed out, copied, and made ready for distribution for the next day’s rehearsal. The SM may be left to do this work alone or may be aided by the ASM or the PA. If the SM is really fortunate, the assistant director will take full responsibility for the entire matter and have the changes ready and distributed each time they are made.

The Electronic Script

There is some good news and some not so good news for the SM on this matter. The good news is that if the show is brand new and is being produced for the first time, the script will be available to the SM in an electronic file. Even better news, if the show is brand new, more than likely all script changes will be done by the writers and out of the SM’s realm of work. The changes will come the next day as hard copy. The SM can ask that an electronic copy of

MARY

There is this fabulous sale at the
department store which we must attend
this weekend.

JOHN

We are not spending a penny more until
we hear from George about our finances.

DOORBELL RING!

(The doorbell rings)

*Neither John nor Mary move to
answer it. They turn and look
towards the kitchen door, waiting
for Florence to enter.* DOORBELL RING!

(The doorbell rings again, still no
Florence.)

JOHN (cont.)

This is ridiculous! I'll get it.

Mary

(Stopping him)

No! Florence must learn that she was hired to also
answer doors.

DOORBELL RING!

(Impatiently, the doorbell rings again)

*As John crosses to
answer the door, there is
a CRASH from the
kitchen.* FROM KIT. CRASH!

WHAT WAS THAT?

B.O.

(The lights black out)

Figure 11-25 An example from the imaginary play *John and Mary* of what the SM's rehearsal script might look like going into rehearsals. The SM notes the technical cues inherent to the script. Later the SM will be more specific about their placement and when to call these cues.

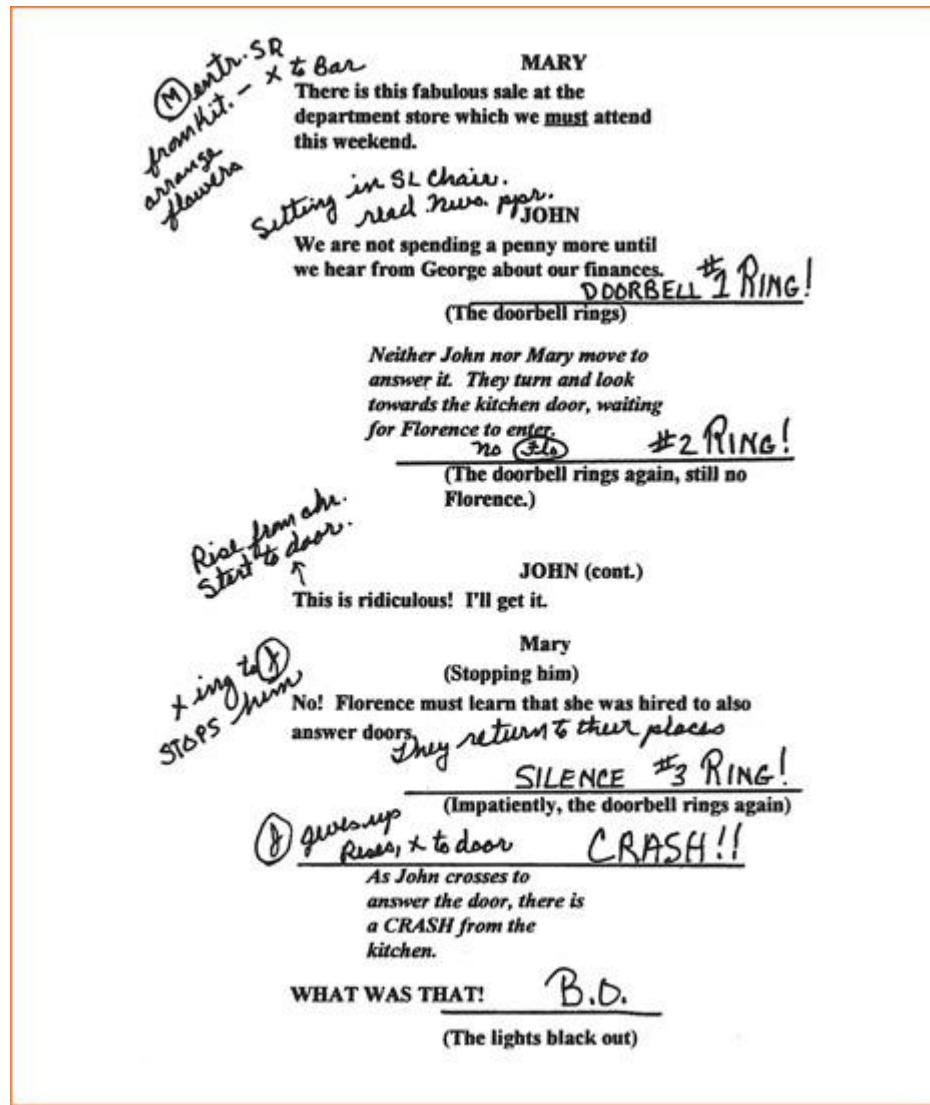


Figure 11-26 The same scene as in Figure 11-25 after the director has blocked the scene. In addition to being specific about the placement of cues, the SM has now added the blocking notes to the script.

those script changes be sent as an attachment via email or put into Dropbox. The most popularly used program for writers of stage and movie scripts is Final Draft, so this becomes a program the SM must have installed on the laptop.

The not-so-good news is that should the SM be working with a script that has not been made into an electronic file and if the SM feels that it would be a great help to have this script on the laptop, then it seems the only way is to have someone company or some person type the entire script into Final Draft. Most assuredly that will be an expense most producers would prefer not to have, unless the SM can convince otherwise.

There are some programs that promise that each page can be scanned into their software... but SM *beware!* At the time of publication of this second edition, the process of getting the entire script into electronic form feels as if a college degree is needed. Then, to complicate things more, there is the difference between working on a PC and on a Mac, although at present Adobe Acrobat Reader is available to Mac users. It is, however, limited as to the SM's needs, and the process is involved and requires quite a leaning curve.

For those working on a Mac, the news is a little better in that there is the Macintosh Highland App. While Acrobat Reader and the Highland App are good for getting the script into the computer, it appears that the script then still needs to be put into Final Draft.

This is about as detailed I can get on this matter without devoting a chapter to what the SM needs on the computer and the steps to be followed to get the script into a workable, editable, and usable form. Go on the Internet, or better still, network and talk with people who might already be fully immersed in working this way. It is hoped, by the time you are ready to be involved with this entire matter of getting an electronic copy of the script on to the laptop, some advancement will have been made and by the simple fact of scanning each page into the computer you can have a clean and workable script that requires no adjustments or transfer into another program.

Revised Pages

Some directors or production companies like to print out the new pages of the script in different colors for easy identification. This method is especially popular in films and television. It is not always necessary in theatre, depending on the extent of the rewrites. If the SM is responsible for making up the new pages, he or she should check to see what the director or production company prefers.

Marking Revised Pages

As each script change takes place, there should appear on each revised page, at the top right corner, a note identifying the page as a revision, just as the SM does with all charts, plots, plans, and lists when they are revised. The note should contain the word *revised* and the date. It is also a good idea for the SM to put a person's initials following the date. This could be either the person who originated the change, such as the author or director, or it could be the SM's initials: **REVISED:(6-28-99)sj**. This identifying mark becomes very important to ensure that everyone is working from the same script. It is the SM's job to see that everyone who needs to have these changes receives them. Also, putting the revision information in a bright red or bright blue brings further notice that this is a revision page.

Script Changes That Create Extra Pages

Should a script change create extra pages to the overall script, in no way should an effort be made to change all the following page numbers! Simply "letter" those extra pages (a, b, c, etc.). If by chance the script change has fewer pages than what was originally noted, on the page that starts the original numbering make a note at the top of that page reminding yourself that the missing page numbers were a result of a script change.

Keeping Script Changes in Electronic File and Hard Copy

It goes without saying that whenever possible the SM keeps the script changes electronically, but also that extra hard copies are kept for on-the-spot distribution.

If the show has a lot of script changes, more than likely the individuals making the script changes have done them on their computers and have the changes on file. It is the wise SM who also keeps a good filing system on the changes. It is a good idea to make separate folders, one marked *Current Script Changes*, another marked *Last Script Changes*, and a third, *Past Script Changes*. Then as the changes take place, the changes that are already in file are shifted over to their next folder, and the newest changes are put into the Current Script Changes file. With this system in place, the SM is now armed and ready when, in the rehearsal room, the director asks to see the script change made two weeks ago and can provide that information without hesitation. This system can also be part of the SM's folder files on script changes.

Following Script

Prompting, being on book, cueing the actors, following script—these are all terms that describe another important job the SM must do to keep the rehearsals running smoothly and efficiently. Both the director and actors expect one of the SMs to be on book at all times when they are rehearsing. When scenes are being blocked for the first time, everyone has scripts in hand, reading their dialogue and jotting down their blocking as it is created. However, once the blocking has been set and the actors are somewhat confident about knowing their lines and blocking, they will go *off book* and expect the SM to be *on book*, following script, and feeding them a line or piece of blocking should they forget.

Following Script for the Director

In following script, the SM must first serve and please the director. The director expects the SM to be ever present and ready, following the script line by line, moment for moment. The director does not want rehearsal time lost while the SM looks in the script for the line an actor has forgotten, nor does the director want to wait while the SM tries to decipher blocking notes. In some extreme cases, the director requires the actors to say every word as written in the script and do the blocking exactly as set, and expects the SM to correct the actors if they are the least bit off. This is a tedious task and not the most pleasant way to work, but if the director is important and very successful, then he or she can do as he or she pleases, and the SM works in whatever way chosen. For the most part, most directors allow greater latitude in this area, but nonetheless expect the SM to correct the actors if they go too far astray.

Following Script for the Actors

Following script for the actors can sometimes be a challenge. It is the SM's job to be on script, ready to feed an actor a line or recite a piece of the blocking. Most actors, when they forget, are very good in asking the SM, "Line, please?" There are some, however, who stumble and grope, trying to jog their memory, or become silent as they search internally. Sometimes these actors want help from the SM but for whatever reason do not ask. This can leave the SM uncertain, because actors in rehearsal will also grope, stumble, or become silent when they are in a moment of discovery, or taking a dramatic pause. If the SM decides the actor has forgotten the line and delivers it, and if indeed the actor was in a dramatic moment, the actor can become very upset, first because the moment was broken and possibly lost, and, second, because with the delivery of the line from the SM, it appeared that the actor did not know the dialogue.

To avoid this uncertainty and to prevent the wrath of an actor who might be misunderstood, the SM tells the cast and director that he or she will feed lines and give blocking only when asked, "Line, please?" or "What is my blocking here?" It helps if the SM briefly explains why it is best to work in this way so the actors and director understand and are willing to make this part of their way of working.

Calling Out Lines

In calling out a line, the SM gives only the first part of the line. Sometimes only the first two or three words are necessary—just enough information to jog the actor's memory. The actors know their lines, and usually hearing the first few words is all they need. For the SM to give more usually is an intrusion and becomes an annoyance. In addition, the SM simply reads the words from the page and does not deliver them with any sort of acting or interpretation.

Calling Technical Cues in Rehearsals

When following a script that has written into it technical effects with a direct effect on the scene or the actor's timing, it is the SM's job in rehearsals to call out such cues each time the scene is rehearsed. Calling out technical effects such as lightning, a doorbell, a telephone, a loud noise, a gun being fired, or scenery being moved during the scene aids the actors during rehearsals, giving them a greater sense of being in a performance. To call out technical cues that don't have a direct effect on the moment being rehearsed is a distraction, an intrusion, and annoying!

The SM's Delivery Technique

In the delivery of technical cues or special effects, the SM vocally interjects them at the correct time, saying, "The telephone rings," or "Lightning," or says in a clear and audible voice, "The gun is fired." The SM may choose to imitate some sound-effect cues. This is acceptable as long as it is not laughable or distracting. If, according to the script, the gun is fired unexpectedly, the SM might call out in an explosive manner, "Bang!" maybe even slamming a hand on the worktable to enhance the effect and perhaps jar the actor. There are, however, some things better said than imitated. It is enough to say, "The car starts" or "Footsteps are heard approaching."

When having to give an action with some detail, the SM needs to keep it simple and to the point, choosing adjectives that best fit the action and mood:

- “The car starts with a ‘choke’ and ‘gasp,’ followed by a puff of black smoke.”
- “The rain starts falling gently on the roof.”
- “The sound of footsteps of a woman wearing high heels is heard coming down the hall—stopping from time to time as the steps draw near.”

Sometimes, before the scene begins, it helps to set the mood and get the scene started if the SM is a little more poetic in this presentation:

- “As the curtain rises, brilliant sunlight beams through the downstage window, and the song of morning birds fills the air.”
- “As the lights in the room fade to black, we hear footsteps approaching. Suddenly they stop! In a burst, the door swings open. There silhouetted against the hall light is the slight figure of a little man. The curtain slowly comes in.”

Each SM develops his or her own approach in following script, giving lines, and calling out technical cues. The SM who is selective and keeps it simple will be highly successful and become even more valued as an SM.

Timing Scenes, Acts, and the Whole Show

Throughout the rehearsal period, the SM will need to time some or all parts of the show. Some directors are greatly concerned with the length of scenes and ultimately the whole show. Some directors will from the very first reading ask the SM to take a timing. Certainly, once a scene is blocked, the SM should periodically take timings. This is particularly important with a new show. With each timing, the SM notes the results on the rehearsal script at the beginning of the scene, in the left-hand margin, along with the date of the particular timing. This information is then readily available for the director, and comparisons can be made with other timings.

Props

Props, too, hold an important place in the SM’s job during rehearsals. Props, which include hand props and furniture, require the same intensity of attention as the other parts of the SM’s work. Of all the technical departments, the SM is most involved and most knowledgeable of the props used in the show. The SM is there in the rehearsal hall when they are introduced into the play and starts the prop list from the first readings of the play. The SM knows their placement, and each day in rehearsals (if there is no prop person working the rehearsals) sees that the props are set for each scene being rehearsed.

With a brand-new show or a heavy prop show, the head prop person is often hired to start working at the rehearsal hall on the first day of rehearsals. With some shows, producers are able to hold off until the last week at the rehearsal hall. Fortunately, in many regional theatres, the property master is hired and on staff so he or she is available from the start and after an initial meeting can be in communication daily via the daily report, text, or email.

Detailing the Props

With the SM being the key person in creating the prop list, it is important that the SM be organized, specific, and detailed. During rehearsals as each prop is introduced into the show, the SM needs to observe and seek out from the director and actors what they want, what they need, how the prop is used, whether it needs to be real or can be fake, and then convey that information verbally and on a list to the person gathering the props.

Red-Flag Props

As each prop is introduced into the show, it is important for the SM to visualize the prop and *think around it*. That is, the SM not only sees the prop mentally, but also sees other props that might be generated because of this one prop. Neither the director nor actors will think of these additional or secondary props until they get on the stage with the real prop. It is the SM's job to think ahead and add the secondary props to the prop list. For example, if the actor in the rehearsal is told by the director that the character lights up a cigarette, a **red flag** must go up in the SM's mind. Smoking a cigarette on stage means more than noting cigarettes on the prop list; even with an electronic cigarette the illusion must be kept by having matches and an ashtray. Should the cigarette be real, a slight amount of water should lie in the ashtray to ensure the cigarette is fully put out. As a consideration, the SM might also ask the actor if a particular brand of cigarettes is preferred. Also, know that more and more real cigarettes are being banned. So as soon as a cigarette is mentioned, the red flag should be raised. Certainly the prop person should know, but it is the thorough SM who seeks out the information for sure.

Red-flag props are props that generate other props. As soon as food or any perishables are mentioned in rehearsals, a giant red flag should go up in the SM's mind. Food items require the SM to think around the item in great detail:

- Is the food real, fake, or a substitute for the real thing?
- Do the actors eat the food?
- Do any of the performers eating or coming in contact with the food have allergies?
- Can the food be easily eaten during the performance so the actor can continue to speak or sing?
- Are dishes and/or utensils, napkins, or towels needed?
- Is the food perishable? If so, is a refrigerator needed?
- Does the food need to be cooked or prepared in some way?
- How much food is needed for each performance?
- What cleanup items are necessary?

The Metamorphosis of the Prop List

► **Stage 1:** The list begins with the SM's first readings of the play as the SM enters into the laptop the props inherent to the scene. Some of these will be specifically mentioned; others will be noted through the dialogue or action. Included on this list are also *set dressing* props—items that need to be on the stage, but are not handled or used by the actors, props that have been specified in the author's notes or have come out of the dialogue. From this list, and in talking with the director, the SM creates a rehearsal prop list for the person who will be procuring the rehearsal props.

► **Stage 2:** This next stage starts once the rehearsals begin. During this stage, the SM's list grows daily in size and detail. As the director and performers rehearse, the SM might handwrite the prop notes and later enter them into the computer in the prop file.

► **Stage 3:** This begins with the different meetings the SM will have with the person procuring the props, be it the prop person working the show or the person just purchasing the props. During these meetings the SM provides a clean, organized, and detailed list, noting the specific needs and descriptions of the props. The list grows as the director and actors work on the show, and the information is given to the prop person at the next meeting or more conveniently sent electronically. Providing this information as it grows in bits and pieces is the only way the SM and the prop person can work and still be ready for the first day of technical rehearsals at the theatre.

► **Stage 4:** This is the final stage of the prop list—the **Performance-Preset Prop List**. Toward the end of the rehearsal period, no later than the last week, the SM puts together this show prop list from which the prop person and the SM will work. Look back to Figure 6-20. Notice that on this list the information describing the props and how they are used has been eliminated. Also, the props are no longer listed within their scenes but rather in how they are set at the top of the show. From this point, the prop list remains the same in form. The only changes made will be whatever props the director, actors, or designers add or take away.

The Performance-Preset Prop List

The props listed on the performance-preset prop list are listed according to their placement backstage and on stage, before the performance begins. This enables the SM to check the preset placement of all props. The SM can start in one area, let's say the backstage on stage right, and then work toward the stage right wings, on to the stage, across the stage, into the stage left wings, and into the backstage areas on stage left, checking all along the way the placement of the props. The creation of the performance-preset prop list usually is assigned to the ASM, whose job it is to check the props for each performance after the prop person has finished setting them.

In Closing

During rehearsals, as well as throughout the production, the SM must be careful not to get into the position of doing work that is not part of the job, especially work that takes the SM away from the rehearsal hall. The rehearsal period is the center of action, change, development, and growth. As much as possible the SM needs to be at that center.

Each SM's experience of rehearsals will be unique, depending on the show and the people working on it. Throughout the rehearsal period the SM must be focused and concentrated on all parts of the production. It is the SM's job to oversee, observe, and keep the rehearsals running smoothly. In addition, the SM must note the blocking for the show in the rehearsal script, keeping it updated along with all charts, plots, plans, and lists. The SM must keep the lines of communication open to all departments, seeing that all changes are properly noted and distributed. While doing all of this, the SM is also thinking ahead or reflecting back, anticipating problems or heading them off. If the SM falls short in any one area and things go wrong, people will be quick to place blame. *Whenever possible, the buck and the blame stop at the SM's desk!*

There is still more to the rehearsal period at the rehearsal hall—the last part of rehearsal, the closing part. Primarily, this part takes place in the last week of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall. In a rehearsal period of seven or ten days, this last part will be in the last two or three days. The things that happen in the last week or last few days include information enough for another chapter. So without further delay, turn to the next chapter and let's see what things need to be done to close out the rehearsal period.

The Last Days of Rehearsals

Whether in four weeks of rehearsal or ten days, it is misleading to say that these are the *last days* of rehearsals, for there are still the technical rehearsals. This chapter would more appropriately be titled, “The Last Days of Rehearsals at the Rehearsal Hall.” As it has been throughout the rehearsal period, this ending period remains devoted to the actors and director because, once the show gets into the theatre, the time and work become divided, with greater focus on technically putting the show together.

The Shift in Work

There comes a shift in direction of work for everyone. There is a new energy, as the production gets closer to the opening of the show. For the actors and director, it is time to finish experimentation and development on their parts and start bringing their work to performance level.

For the producer, he or she has had many meetings, consulted with the director, watched rehearsals from the sidelines, and intervened whenever his or her vision was not being realized. Now the producer’s attention is most likely directed toward the opening of the show, perhaps planning a gala event and surely stepping up the publicity and advertisements.

The heads of the various technical departments, too, are changing in pace and energy. From time to time throughout this ending period, some of the technical heads may stop in at the rehearsal hall to see a run-through of the show. On a large production and most assuredly on a new musical, the prop person is now working full-time and has taken over the props during the rehearsals. It is now time to be finishing construction on anything that has to be built, putting the final touches on things, gathering, buying, renting, and just generally preparing to be ready for the technical rehearsals.

For the SMs this ending period becomes a time of duality—somewhat like rubbing their bellies and patting their heads. On the one hand, the SMs’ thoughts and work must be directed toward moving the company to the theatre, and at the same time rehearsals must keep going full speed ahead, scheduling and working the actors and director up to the last hour of the last day. On the other hand, though the SM has little control over the technical departments, the SM watches closely their progress and readiness. If they are delinquent in any way, the SM cannot be responsible but can express concern and remind the department head of the schedule. If things do not improve within the next day or so, most assuredly, the SM needs to take the concerns to the producer and director.

The SM does, however, have more control and effect over the cast and director in seeing that they are prepared and ready to move into the theatre without problems. Even then, the SM can be limited and handicapped by a director who has used rehearsal time poorly and ignored the SM’s efforts to keep the work on schedule.

Meetings

Meetings become an important part of the work in this last period of time at the rehearsal hall. With a new show or a show that is being made over, a final production meeting with all departments in attendance is mandatory, having each department reporting their readiness, or lack of readiness.

Smaller Individual Meetings with the SM

Lighting and Projections

Aside from the all-inclusive production meeting, the SM has smaller meetings with the different departments to go over matters that pertain only to that department. One of the more important meetings is with the lighting designer, the assistant, and the creator and operator of projections. The importance of this meeting is reflected in the fact that it was scheduled on the block calendar back in the early days of the SM's pre-production time at the production office. First these three need to see one or more runthroughs of the show. During that time they tentatively mark the placement of cues in their scripts. If any of them do not have a clean and updated script by this time, the SM sees to it that one is presented before the meeting is to take place.

The SM's Second Meeting with the Lighting Designer to Get Light Cues

After the lighting designer has viewed the show and has noted cues, the SM needs to have a sit-down meeting with the lighting designer to get the numbers and placement of the light cues. Most times the noting of these preliminary cues are written directly into the SM's rehearsal script, and then later, before the technical rehearsals begin, the SM will transfer these notes into a clean and updated copy of the script that has been kept on file just for this very thing—the cueing script or prompt book. Call it what you will, this will become the SM's bible for calling cues during performance. We'll learn more about the cueing script in the next chapter.

Note of Interest: At present many of the projections are combined or written into the lighting cues. Consequently, there are many projection cues the SM will not need to call separately. However, more and more complex systems and dedicated media servers with their own controls are coming into play. With such systems in operation, sometimes a projection cue can be set up so that when one light cue is executed another light cue will also be executed. Other times each cue will be numbered separately and named separately when being called during performance. This will all be determined by the lighting designer and the projection designer. It's then the SM's job to note the cues in the cueing script and call them as directed.

Having the Cueing Script/Prompt Book Noted *before* Techs Begin

There are at least four good reasons why the SM should have the cueing script neatly noted, penciled in, and if color coded, written in erasable colored pencils *before* technical rehearsals begin:

1. Yes, some or many of the cues will change, whether in position, timing, or even number, but that is no reason to wait. The SM needs to have a working foundation on to which the changes can be made, and not have everyone waiting as the house is first being built.
2. In addition, the director and lighting designer want to work at their own timing, be it at lightning speed or snail's pace. They do not have the patience to wait for the SM to first write in the cue. In fact, oftentimes, as soon as the cue has been set or reset, they want to run the cue, with the SM calling it as if in performance.
3. It is important that as the director and lighting designer are working or reworking cues the SM takes full advantage of the time to make the notations in the prompt book as neatly as possible and not scribbled in, crossed out, and quickly rewritten because the SM will not have time to go off somewhere and make a clean script. If color coding the cues, the SM needs to have at his or her side the colored pencils that have been chosen for each cue. More about this in the next chapter.
4. As the cueing script is being built, it needs to be as close to "performance ready" as possible so that during techs the SM can call parts of the show, or the full show, whenever directed.

Spotlight Cues

For shows where spotlights are used, the meeting the SM has with the lighting designer does not include noting spotlight cues. Spotlight cues will be set during technical rehearsals, usually after the lighting designer has set the stage light cues.

In most shows the lead spotlight person is responsible for executing the cues on his or her own. On occasion, the SM may be made responsible for calling spotlight cues and will need to note them in the cueing script. For the SM, having to call spotlight cues, especially in a musical, makes the job that much more difficult, because there are many of them and sometimes they have to be intricately executed, depending on what is going on onstage or what the director and lighting director want. It is the *relieved* SM who does not have to call spotlight cues, and it is the “*take a breath/bite the bullet*” SM who is told to call spotlight cues.

Set Moves/Scene Changes Meeting (Paper Tech)

In shows where there are major set/scenery changes, it is important that the SM sets up during this last week of rehearsals a meeting with the technical director (TD), the head carpenter, the head fly person, the head of props, and the head of automation. The purpose is to get written into the SM’s rehearsal script the cues for the scenery moves. This is where the SM’s personal floor plans are highly useful. Often, this meeting is called a *paper tech*—that is, the set/scenery moves are envisioned and written down without benefit of having the actual pieces of scenery present to aid everyone in the decisions. Later in technical rehearsals, whatever changes need to be made will happen as each set change is being worked. After this meeting, the SM releases all responsibility as to how scenery is moved or what changes are being made. This is now in the hands of the TD, automation, and the head carpenter. The SM does, however, maintain a working knowledge and vision of what is happening during the set/scenery moves to ensure that in performance all is being done well and correctly.

If for some reason this paper tech cannot take place, then once in the theatre and once the scenery and props can be worked, the SM schedules a *dry tech*. This is where the crew sets up and actually moves the scenery on and off stage, scene by scene, without the actors or any other technical element being worked or executed.

Actually, having one or two dry techs is important even if the paper tech takes place. It gives the crew the chance to work out the logistics of moving the set pieces backstage. Besides, like everything else in techs, no one, especially the director and producer, wants to wait while the stage crew is first learning their jobs.

Sound Cues Meeting

From the start of rehearsals the SM has been in continual communication with the sound designer and probably more accurately with the sound technician that will be assembling, gathering, and recording the cues. It is in the first meetings that the SM delivers the list of sound effects that are inherent to the script and at the same time asks that they be recorded as soon as possible so they can be played in the rehearsal room as the actors rehearse the show. Of course the sound designer and technician more than likely have started their own list, but with the combined lists, all are assured of working on the *same page*.

Then, as the rehearsals progress, the SM is in continued communication and informs the sound technician of any changes or additions made by the director. This is speedily done via the daily report, email, or texting. So the meeting somewhere within the last days of rehearsals is for the SM and the sound department to get within their scripts the numbers and placement of the cues.

As stated in Chapter 7, “Profiles and Working Relationships,” the SM is interested only in the sound effect and recorded music cues. During the performance, the SM is not responsible for calling cues that bring up microphones and the level at which they are set. Only in very special cases will a mic cue be written into the SM’s cueing script to be called during performance. If body mics are being used in the production and if the SM has not already given the sound person a copy of the Scene/Character Tracking Chart, this would be a good time. This chart will aid the sound person in creating the mic tracking chart, though they more than likely have already started their own chart. The Scene/Character Tracking Chart can serve as a double check.

Costumes/Wardrobe and Hair Meetings

The meeting or contact with the heads of costume and hair is mostly a formality and could be done by cell phone, text message, or email. With each, it is mostly to review the tech schedule, but also

- to check with wardrobe to see that the costumes will be at the theatre in enough time to be set up to the dressing rooms, have the actors try them on, and do alterations if needed
- to check with hair to confirm that wigs are in order and that the styles and period are set and in accordance with the costume designer.

The dressing room assignments will naturally fall into place, being governed by the stars, clauses in contracts, and probably the number or difficulty of costume changes for an actor. As for pairing off or grouping ensemble performers into dressing rooms, the SM will confer with the head of wardrobe, but for the most part will make those assignments on one of the first days at the theatre, before the arrival of the cast.

As for quick changes, the performers and wardrobe work that out between themselves, although the SM has already made a note of quick changes and more than likely has passed that information on to wardrobe. The quick-change areas backstage are set and established at the last part of technical rehearsals, just before the show is run as if in performance, after the crew has established where the different set pieces will “live” as the saying goes.

Meeting with the Music Department

This meeting too is merely a matter of formality and probably happens briefly in the rehearsal room, with the SM asking if there are any problems with moving over to the theatre and if the orchestra is together and has the schedule. The SM and musical director have been in daily communication and have exchanged information and worked out problems as they arose.

Perhaps the most important part of this meeting is for the SM to remind the music director and assistant to have drawn and submitted to the head of props a schematic drawing of the layout and placement of instruments in the orchestra pit. During technical rehearsals, a day or two before the orchestra begins working with the cast, the prop department is responsible for setting up the chairs, music stands, lights for the stands, risers for the conductor’s podium, and the podium itself.

If the show is a new musical or the revival of an old one with new music arrangements and orchestrations, the SM should also ask if the new music has been sent to the arrangers and if the various parts for the different instruments will be copied and ready for the first orchestra rehearsal. Once again, this is merely a formality and point of assurance for the SM, because 99.9 percent of the time the music director has dealt with all of this well in advance and is confident about being ready.

Set Designer/Construction Shop Meetings

This is another part of the production over which the SM has very little control or say in matters. The set designer, TD, and head carpenter are in full charge of what is happening with the set, so the assurances the SM seeks should come in the meetings with the two technical heads. Maybe a visit, along with the director, to the scene shop where the set is being built might be set up and such questions asked as:

- Are things on schedule?
- Will the set be brought into the theatre so it can be set up and ready for the first day of tech rehearsals with the cast?

If the set is a rental that was made for a previous production,

- Are all the pieces there and can someone do a double check?

Advice to the SM

For one reason or another, departments sometimes start running behind in their work. While doing all the other work the SM must do, it is also the SM's job to observe the various departments from the sidelines as they progress. It is true that the SM has very little power over the various technical departments—it is the SM's job to let the professionals hired succeed or fail on their own. However, when the SM sees a situation that will negatively affect the show, the company, or the smooth running of the operation, these concerns must be expressed immediately, first to the head of the department, and then to the producer and director if there is no change.

This may make the SM appear to be a nervous individual, a person who worries unnecessarily, or, in today's lexicon, a micromanager. Some department heads, especially those who are falling behind or have a tendency to put off their work to the last minute, may express their annoyance about the SM. It is better for the SM to appear to be a *nervous-worrier-micromanager* than to let matters reach problem status.

The SM observes and oversees, lends support, gives advice, and presents alternatives. The SM's attention in all areas is on behalf of the producer, director, and show, looking out for their best interest. If a potential problem arises, the SM is obligated to step in and generate conversation on the matter. The SM's position of authority is well established, and although the SM's power is sometimes limited, a good SM learns to use whatever power is available to effect change. In academic and community theatre, the SM has more direct control in all areas and is taught and expected to jump in and help wherever possible.

The SM must also learn self-protection. All of the people in the company, from their own positions, have certain expectations of the SM. The SM learns these different expectations and meets them by providing service, doing the job, and leaving each person responsible for his or her own work.

The ASM

We have talked very little of the ASM's work during this rehearsal period. As stated early in this book, the ASM is ever present, just as is the PSM. The ASM takes up the slack, supporting the PSM by doing what the PSM cannot do, what the PSM may or may not want to do, or what the PSM may be incapable of doing. The ASM does this work quietly and without fanfare. The ASM's presence needs to be as strong as the PSM's, but from a secondary position. The ASM gets to shine and take center stage by working as well as any PSM. A good ASM is an under-rated PSM. In this last week, the ASM gets the opportunity to step into a more prominent position, for while the PSM is off meeting with the different departments and preparing for the technical week ahead, the ASM is working closely with the director and actors, keeping the rehearsals running smoothly and productively, and doing all the things the PSM would be doing.

Birth of the Cueing/Prompt or Calling Script

Once the SM has gathered all the information needed from the various departments, the SM pulls out a clean and updated script, goes off to some quiet place, and neatly transposes all the notes/cues that were given during the meetings with the different department heads. If the SM is prone to color coding cues, the SM uses colored pencils that are erasable, for there will be a lot of that as the cues are being refined and set further.

This is the birth of the *cueing script*. This script will grow and develop during the technical rehearsals, and the SM will use it in each performance to call the cues for the show. Often the quiet place to which the SM should steal to create this cueing script is after hours at the office or at home, or early in the morning before the calls and text messages start pouring in or actors start arriving for the day's rehearsal.

This cueing script needs to be ready on the first day of technical rehearsals. To begin transposing the notes from the meetings during technical rehearsals is too late! The process of creating the cueing script requires time to think, time to envision the change of lights and the movement of the scenery. There will be no time for this kind of *musing* during technical rehearsals. While doing this preliminary work on the cueing script, the SM is also *learning* the show. To not have this cueing script ready is gross negligence and could be professional suicide on the part of any SM.

Run-Thrus of the Show at the Rehearsal Hall

In theatre jargon, the process of rehearsing the show non-stop, as if it were a performance, is called a *run-through*, abbreviated as *run-thru*. In fact, the SM will abbreviate the word *through* in most of the writing for schedules, blocking notes, and notices posted on the callboard.

The Director's Obligation to Have Run-Thrus

By this last week in rehearsals, the director should be well past the blocking stages, unless the show is new and scenes are being changed, added, or rewritten. Even then, the director must do double-duty work by blocking the new scenes and at the same time allowing time for runthrus of the entire show.

The SM as Watchdog

From the start and throughout the rehearsals, the SM has been vigilant in seeing that the director worked productively and stayed on schedule. The SM does not let a director get to this last week in rehearsals without being prepared to have run-thrus. However, being a watchdog over a delinquent director can be hazardous. It can cause ill feelings between the director and SM, may affect their working relationship, and could mean that the SM will never again be hired by this director. From the start, the SM must handle this “watchdog” behavior delicately, subtly, and with great diplomacy. It is really a matter that should be handled by the producer, but the producer is not there to see the little things being done, or not being done, that will add up to falling behind schedule. If the SM’s efforts to change the delinquent director fail, the SM should speak to the producer and let the producer work things out. The SM’s taking on this problem alone will become a losing situation.

The SM's Contributions to the Run-Thrus

During run-thrus in the last days of rehearsals in the rehearsal hall, it is now the SM’s job to do more than just follow script:

1. If for some reason the SM does not have the recorded music or effects, then without being distracting, annoying, or laughable, the SM calls out those cues as well as other cues that have a direct effect on the actor’s timing and performance—such cues as, “The handle breaks off,” or “EXPLOSION! The stage goes to black.” The SM verbally fills in the elements of the production that are not present at the rehearsal hall.
2. By this time in the rehearsals, both the PSM and the ASM are highly knowledgeable of the placement of props and furniture. They are coordinated and organized in shifting things from one scene to the other smoothly and quickly, further enhancing the feeling of being in a performance.
3. During these run-thrus, the SM continues to follow dialogue, being ready to give a line upon request from the actor. There should be no delays in the delivery or lines, which would slow down the pace and flow even further.
4. This is also a good time for the SM to *time* the scenes and acts. The results of each timing should continue to be noted for future reference, either in the left-hand margin of the rehearsal script or directly into the computer on the template already created for this purpose.

Invited Guests for Run-Thrus

Often within the last day or two of rehearsals, the director invites people to come and see a run-thru. These guests may be staff members, colleagues, or a limited number of friends and relatives of the cast. Having guests present helps shift the actors into working at performance level. It gets their energy up and provides greater motivation to perform. It is also good closure to the rehearsal hall period. Not all directors do this, however. When the suggestion of having

invited guests is made, the SM needs to orchestrate and restrict the number of guests attending. There must not be more guests than the room is capable of holding.

Setting the Rehearsal Room for Invited Guests

When there is an invited audience, it becomes the SM's job to set up the room for the viewing audience. The SM must now rearrange the rehearsal room to accommodate the number of guests:

- Scale down both the director's and SM's worktables. Keep the director's table at the center of the viewing area as it has been throughout the rehearsal period and perhaps place some VIP chairs next to the director, putting reserved signs or the names of the individuals on them.
- The SM then sets the SM's table further back and off to the side where both the SM and the ASM can see the show and move freely to and from the stage area without disturbing the audience, to set props and change scenes.
- If the show is a musical, the SM also sets the music director and pianist farther back and off to the side, but where the music director can see and conduct the cast and pianist, and the performers can see the music director.
- This being done, the SM can now set up the number of chairs needed for the guests.
- Before the guests arrive, the SM sets the stage/performing area, putting all the props and rehearsal furniture in order as they will be used in the show and as they might be set if they were in a theatre doing a real performance. The SMs need to be coordinated, work like a well-oiled machine, and do things as quickly as possible without fumbling or chaotic movement, for they too are being viewed by the invited guests and they too are contributing to the timing and performance.

Arrival of the Guests

The room and the stage should be set and ready before the guests arrive. As the guests arrive, the SMs now need to act as hosts, welcoming the guests and giving whatever instructions and direction are necessary to maintain order and see that the event runs smoothly and begins on time. If the SMs are so inclined, there might be music playing as the guests arrive, but not so loud that it will be distracting. The producer and director may choose to make the occasion even more elaborate with food and drink. The SMs will coordinate this part of the setup, too, but should have help.

During the time that the guests are arriving but before the performance begins, the rehearsal room will echo with joyous sounds of friends seeing friends and people meeting people. The SMs, of course, will become part of this social affair, but not so much as to forget the time and the schedule. With the director's approval, the SM allows a ten- or fifteen-minute grace period for guests arriving late.

While waiting for latecomers, the SM announces generally to the cast and guests a fifteen-minute call. At the five-minute mark the SM asks the audience to take their seats, and asks the cast to either leave the room or go off to some corner where they can focus in on the rehearsal and prepare themselves for the performance.

Just before the performance begins, the producer, director, or PSM might formally greet the guests and set up the performance by giving a brief description of the technical elements—namely, the set and costumes—if they are an important element to the play.

At the intermission portion of this rehearsal, the SM announces there will be a fifteen-minute intermission. Once again the SM gives a call, first at the ten-minute mark, and then at five. On completion of the performance, the SM allows a short period for congratulations and well-wishing, but then gently and kindly begins asking the guests to leave so that the director can continue the rehearsal.

Preparing the Cast for the Move into the Theatre

In those last days of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall, the cast, and to some extent the director, should feel very little of the work and preparations the SM is doing. They should feel that this last week is just another phase in their rehearsal

process—that of cleaning up scenes and having run-thrus. The transition from the rehearsal hall to the theatre and into technical rehearsals needs to feel smooth, effortless, and if the director and SM have done their jobs throughout the rehearsal period, the actors and director should feel prepared and ready.

Halfway through this transition time, the SM starts making general announcements to the cast, making sure the director also hears. The SM starts by telling everyone that they must make a greater effort in focusing in on their work, because once the cast gets into technical rehearsals there will be limited time for cleaning and working scenes. The SM keeps these words focused on the work they must do now and not on the monumental task of technically mounting the show. A feeling of excitement should be built around this move. Then, on the last day of rehearsals, the SM schedules one or two hours for the company manager, the director, and the SM collectively or individually to lay out the things that must be done to make the move from the rehearsal hall to the theatre organized, smooth, and on schedule.

From the SM's point of view, the following points are important to discuss with the cast, making sure the director, choreographer, and music director are also part of this meeting:

1. Actors who might be going into technical rehearsals for the first time need to be advised of the extended hours, work, energy, effort, concentration, and professional discipline needed to meet the schedule and get the show opened.

Old-timers need to be reminded of their past experiences with technical rehearsals and asked to draw on the good things that helped them make it through, and avoid those things that made the process difficult. They also need to be reminded to take care of themselves—to eat properly, continue their daily regimen of exercise, get plenty of rest, and allow just enough social time for relief from the show, but not so much as to interfere with what is professionally required of them. For convenience and safety, the SM might suggest the actors carpool whenever possible and travel in groups on the way to their cars or taking public transportation at night after late rehearsals.

2. If the rehearsals have been pleasant and all have worked in the expected professional manner, an expression of thanks and appreciation from the SM is endearing and affirms the good work that has been done. If the rehearsals have been somewhat troubled or stormy, this is a good time for the SM to try and create a new beginning, asking everyone to put aside the things of the past and move forward to completing the next part of the rehearsal without incident.

3. The cast needs to be reminded that they are now sharing their rehearsal time with the crew and eventually with the members of the orchestra. Being on time becomes even more important because now more people are involved and greater amounts of time and money can be lost. Also, the schedule is not easily altered or changed to accommodate individuals (unless, of course, it is the star of the show). The SM needs to ask the cast to have patience and be helpful to the crew when possible. For the crew, working technical rehearsals will be the first time they are seeing the show, and they have little to no knowledge of the things done during the rehearsals.

4. From experience, the SM knows that for the actors, the change from working in the rehearsal room to working on the stage can be disorienting. Even the most experienced actors need a day or two to become acclimated. First, they are now performing out to the big black hole of the audience seats. Second, there are now the walls and doors of the set where once there were only taped lines on the floor. The space around them, which was open and free, now seems small and confined. On occasion, some of the actors will proclaim the construction people made the set smaller, or that the SM put the wrong measurements on the floor in the rehearsal room. Also, using the real props and furniture adds to the disorientation, not to mention the glaring stage lights and strange figures of crew people moving in the wings or staring out at them as they perform. Some actors are not aware of the true nature of their discomfort, but will just become frustrated and irritable. Others may lash out in ways that will be unbecoming and unprofessional.

As a personal note to the actors, the SM might express an understanding of what they may experience, and offer in help that as each scene is being tech'd and during the times when the rehearsals stop to deal with the setting of cues or technical matters, in order to make themselves more at home, they take advantage of this time to move about the set, handle the props, and just generally get a feel of the space around them. Most of the "seasoned" performers will do this for themselves without having to be told, but there are those younger, less experienced ones who might need to be reminded.

A Paragraph of Ifs: If by chance the set is nearly completed; if the technical director feels it is safe for nontechnical people to be roaming about the set; if the rehearsal hall is within the same structure as the theatre or very close by; if the SM can convince the director to take time out of the rehearsals schedule... the SM can

then schedule an hour for the cast to visit the set. Otherwise, a similar thing can happen on the first day of the techs when the cast usually arrives at the theatre while the tech crew is out to lunch.

5. This meeting with the cast is also a good time to bring up the fact that once the actors get into technical rehearsals and especially during performance, there will be no one on book to throw them a line should they forget. For those who might be insecure in their lines, this can be an awful revelation. The SM is, of course, on book during the show and, if there is a dialogue problem during performance, will do everything possible to save and rectify the moment. The SM does not, however, tell the cast this. At this moment the SM is like the mother bird that pushes the youngling out of the nest to make it fly. The SM explains to the cast that they cannot depend on the SM for line prompting because during performance the SM is calling cues and may be busy setting up cues or dealing with a technical matter when an actor needs help.

6. No matter how experienced the actors might be in the company, it is wise for the SM to go over some of the backstage rules and practices:

- Remain quiet backstage while others are working onstage.
- At the end of working on a scene in technical rehearsals, do not leave the immediate backstage area until the director has moved on to the next scene. Then, once beyond the limits of the immediate backstage area, remain within earshot of the PA and video monitors to know what is happening onstage. If the director has agreed that the cast can sit in the audience while scenes are being technically rehearsed, it is the actors' responsibility to get backstage in plenty of time for their next scene. However, once the show is technically set and the director begins having run-thrus and dress rehearsals, the SM must insist that all cast members remain backstage as they would during performance.
- While standing backstage waiting for their next scene, the actors must be aware of the crew working and the scenery being moved. Whenever possible, they should stand off to the side and out of harm's way.
- The cast should be reminded not to wander off, not to leave the theatre without letting the SM know and getting approval, and not to leave the theatre at the end of the workday without knowing the schedule for the next day.

7. Technical rehearsals mean extended work hours for everyone. As agreed on by Equity, the actors' workday will be twelve hours long. Ten hours will be devoted to rehearsal time, and two hours for a meal break, given no later than the fifth hour of the workday. After the twelve hours, the cast goes into overtime. This time, schedule is commonly called "ten out of twelve." In addition, at whatever time the cast is released at the end of the day, the *turnaround time* must be twelve hours—that is, the cast cannot be called back to rehearsals before having a twelve-hour break.

Also, the number of days the performers can be in technical rehearsals and working *ten out of twelve* is specified and stated specifically by the type of contract under which the show/theatre/production company is working, with the *production contract* having the most number of days (ten).

8. At one time it was important that the SM gave the cast members telephone numbers for the backstage area, the company manager's office, and the SM's office. Now all that is needed is to remind the actors that if at any time there is a problem or if they are going to be late, be they out on the freeway, stuck in a stalled subway car, or just entering the theatre, give the SM a call!

9. Remind the cast to check the callboard in the theatre. The callboard will also have the sign-in sheet posted. Signing in becomes even more important once the cast is in the theatre. The area of the theatre is bigger than in the rehearsal hall and there are more places where an actor might be found. The SM cannot spend time looking through the theatre to see who is present, but will look at the sign-in sheet, and if the block for that particular time is not initialed, the SM will assume the actor is not at the theatre and follow through on the little-red-box procedure.

Many of the items listed above are common sense—things most of the actors in the company know and have experienced time and time again. For whatever reasons, the actors need to have them reviewed. Having this conversation with the cast eliminates most excuses that begin with "I didn't know!" It also reestablishes the SM as a center point of structure and order. It shows that the SM's care and concern is not only for the show but also for the individuals. It carries everyone gently and lovingly into the technical rehearsals and reiterates once again the SM's professional expectations of discipline, behavior, and work practices.

Supplementary Rehearsal Space

In most working situations, once the cast gets into the theatre, the director likes having a rehearsal space where the director, the choreographer, or the music director can go to rehearse while technical work is being done onstage. If the show is new and is being produced for the first time, having supplementary rehearsal space is a necessity, for the rehearsal process will continue well into previews and past the opening performance, if necessary. Some theatres will conveniently have rehearsal space within the building. For those who don't, the SM needs to see that the production office makes arrangements for supplementary rehearsal space nearby.

The SM deals with this matter at least halfway through the rehearsal period, and certainly before the last days of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall. The SM first talks with the director to see if the director needs to have this space. Most directors will say yes, but the SM must then check with the producer to see if the producer is willing to spend the money. Finding rehearsal space is one of those jobs everyone expects the SM to do. If the SM knows of a place, the SM might go through the process of booking the space. If finding this space is going to be time consuming, the SM needs to know the limitations of time and set priorities. For the most part, the SM should leave this work to the production office.

The most preferred rehearsal space is within the theatre building. If this is not possible, something nearby from which the cast and staff can travel quickly and freely is best. In situations where no rehearsal space is available, directors have accepted working in the lobby or foyer of the theatre.

In this new rehearsal space (except for a lobby or foyer), the SM may be expected to tape out on the floor some of the dimensions of the stage and even part of the set. The details will not be as extensive, because the cast now has the real set in the theatre by which to judge. The SM may also be expected to have some rehearsal furniture and props that are intricately used or are important to the action and scene.

Closing Out the Rehearsal Hall

Closing out the rehearsal hall is the easiest part of all. The SM has made arrangements for the rehearsal props to be moved after the rehearsals on this last day. Some of these props may go to the new rehearsal hall. Those that are not needed and have been borrowed or rented will be returned. Others that are usable for another time and show may be put in storage.

Once the cast is finished and is ready to leave on the last day, the SM sees that the actors take with them all personal items—all comfort things they have brought to the rehearsal hall to make themselves feel at home. The SM removes all signs and things from the walls, including the callboard, and most important, removes the tape of the set from the floor. By this time the tape may be shredded to bits and pieces from wear and tear. This is where the use of cloth tape becomes most important. Anything other than cloth tape will require laborious scraping and could take an hour or two to remove. With cloth tape, no matter how shredded it may be, the tape is easily pulled up by hand. A solicitous SM might get some of the cast members to help. On occasion, the volunteers might make the event into a playful, childlike game, completing the task quickly and with fun.

Sometime toward the end of this last day, the SM returns all keys to the managers of the rehearsal hall and accepts all bills they might present, making sure these bills get to the producer's office or accountant. If the space has worked out well and the service has been good, the SM might express thanks and appreciation, offering to recommend the space to other producers and SMs. It is good PR for the SM to express genuine feelings because the SM never knows when he or she might be required to find rehearsal space, need space on short notice, or work with this management again.

The SM is often the last person to leave the rehearsal hall on this last day. As a final professional gesture, the SM checks to see that the rooms are left in respectable order with the trash picked up and the tables and chairs stacked or stored away. With this last bit of business, the SM closes out a major part of what it takes to put on a show. Like all other parts of putting together a production, the phase just finished is quickly set aside and the next becomes the most important. So it is as we leave the rehearsal hall and move to the theatre for technical rehearsals.

The Cueing/Calling/Prompt Script

Before moving our discussion into technical rehearsals, we must take time in this chapter to create the cueing script. Remember, the cueing script must be put together and ready to use on the first day of technical rehearsals; trying to put it together during technical rehearsals is a grave disservice to the SM. In doing the initial work on the cueing script, the SM needs quiet time, in which they can think and envision the cues as they are transposed from the rehearsal script to the new cueing script.

Yes, the cueing script can be put together during technical rehearsals. In some working situations, it may be the only time the SM can get this job done. However, with the short amount of time allowed for technical rehearsals and with the amount of work that needs to be done, the SM is better off beginning work earlier, and then as each cue is worked on during the technical rehearsal, the SM can devote energy to refining the cues rather than having to first write them down. In addition, neither the director nor the producer is willing to wait for the SM to do this work.

When the cues are called and executed at the correct timing, they support and enhance the play. Cues are what keep the play moving moment by moment, scene to scene, providing visual and audio effects and taking the audience to times and places imagined by the author and created by the designers. Like the score to a musical, the cues in a show help create a mood, a feeling, an environment, or an atmosphere. They help bring a sense of reality and believability to what otherwise would be just painted scenery, costumes worn by actors, and make-believe on a stage. When combined with the actor's work, the cues noted in the cueing script help create the magic of theatre and heighten the quality of the entertainment.

With such importance placed on the cueing script, great care and detail should be given in creating it, noting it, and keeping it up to date. The cueing script must be neat, clean, orderly, legible, thorough in the information it provides, and concise. It should always be kept in a safe place, with an extra copy also put away for safekeeping.

Cueing Script: The SM's Master Plan or Conducting Score

By any other name (the *calling script*, *prompt book*, or *production book*), the cueing script is the SM's master plan and guide to the timing and execution of all the technical elements in the show. Noted on the pages of the cueing script are the cues with the exact timing for the movement of lights, scenery, props, sound, or effects, as created by the designers and set by the director. For each performance the SM is responsible for calling all the cues from the cueing script. The cueing script is to the SM as the score of a musical show is to the conductor.

Preparing the Cueing Script

Noting cues begins with the SM's second and third reading of the play. As noted in Chapter 11, "The Rehearsal/Blocking Script," all cues, such as a doorbell, a car horn, lights being turned on and off in a room, or streaks of lightning that momentarily light up the stage, are noted in the right-hand margin of the rehearsal script.

I Wouldn't Note My Cues Any Other Way! It makes absolute sense to me to note cues in the right-hand margin, as opposed to the left margin or on the backside of the previous page, as I have seen. In our culture we read from left to right. Cues are called and executed in the same way. First, there is the dialogue or action, and from that the cue is called and executed.

Cueing Script—Manuscript Size

In most working situations, the scripts given to the SM at the start of the pre-production time are manuscript size: eight and a half by eleven inches. If by chance the SM is handed a playbook (five by seven), the SM should make enlarged copies, with one copy to become the rehearsal script and another set aside to become the cueing script. In addition, the SM makes copies for the director, lead actors, lighting designer and assistant, projections designer and technical operator, and sound designer and technical operator for that department, too.

Cutting and Pasting Ends of Scenes

Before entering any cues into a script, the SM checks to see that *each scene ends on one page and the next scene begins at the top of the next page*. In many playbooks and in some manuscripts, the publisher leaves only a few lines of space before starting the text for the next scene. This is not a workable setup for the SM. Almost always, the end of a scene is where the SM has the greatest number of cues to note. This space is especially important when doing musical shows, where there is more of everything—cues to change the lights at the end of the scene, cues to change the scenery, maybe a sound cue, and then another cue to bring up the lights for the next scene.

So whenever an SM is given such a script, be it play-book or manuscript, he or she will need to do some cutting and pasting, leaving the end of the scene on its original page while cutting out and pasting the text that begins the next scene on to a blank page that will become inserted into the script. This new page then should be numbered as an “a” page. For example, if page 47 is the original page that has the end of the scene on it, the additional page with the beginning of the next scene would be marked as page 47a. If such a page has been added, copies might also prove useful to the lighting designer, the assistant, projections, and sound.

Merging the Score and Libretto into One Cueing Script

Before going into the details of creating and noting a cueing script, it should be noted that there are SMs working in musicals and especially in opera who first create a cueing script by cutting and pasting the libretto and score together into one script. I myself have never done this, but then again it would be futile since I cannot read music. However, I have done quite well, having called over thirty musical, a good portion of them *major* musicals. What I lack in being unable to read music, I have made up for by having a good ear, an ability to count measures of music, good timing, and a watchful eye in taking visual cues as the singers and dancers perform.

So I say to the student and beginning SM that if you can read music, cutting and pasting the libretto and score into one script is an excellent way of creating your cueing script. It can only aid in calling an excellent and well-timed show. However, student and beginning SMs, your career is not handicapped or limited. You might run into a producer or director who will require the SM to call cues from the score. Once again, if you have the talent, the job is yours; if not, there are plenty of producers and directors who do not require their SM to call the show from the score. If you can hear well, have a good sense of timing and rhythm, and keep a watchful eye on the stage, you can still have a long and prosperous life in musical theatre as well as with straight plays.

Tabbing the Cueing Script

Some SMs choose to tab their cueing script, either by the numbers of the scenes or the names of the scene. Other SMs by this time have learned the sequence of scenes in the show and prefer not to have their cueing script tabbed. Tabbing the cueing script can be useful depending on the SM and the show.

Cue Gathering

From the first readings and throughout the rehearsal period, the SM has gathered cues. Some came from the design of the set and floor plans, some were invented and created by the director, and some the SM will note from experience, knowing that a cue has to be executed in a certain place.

In Chapter 12, “The Last Days of Rehearsals,” it was noted that the SM gathers the greatest amount of information on cues in the meetings in the few remaining days of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall with the different technical departments. During these meetings, the SM has noted those cues as they were dictated.

Reminder: Once again, in professional theatre, the SM does not set or dictate cues in any of the technical departments. It is, however, the wise SM who keeps a watchful eye as these people give out their information. The SM interjects, asks questions, or makes suggestions when something does not feel right or if things are left to be resolved at a later time.

The SM’s Artistic Mind’s Eye

In the meetings the SM had with the different technical departments, each gave their cues without consideration of whatever other cues had to be executed at the same time. In putting together the cueing script, it is the SM’s job to combine and group the cues into an order in which they are to be called to give the desired timing and effect on stage. Through experience, the SM knows and has learned that one cue should happen before or after another, or sometimes together. As the SM is assembling the cues into the cueing script, through the mind’s eye, he or she imagines how things are going to look onstage. The SM envisions the flow of things, the physical effect, and the theatrical experience the audience will have. This is something of which most SMs are not aware when putting together a cueing script for the first time. It just becomes part of them with experience and working show after show. For the student SM, beginning SM, and even a seasoned SM, being conscious of this way of working is something worth knowing. It better serves when the cueing script is being written up.

A Shorthand for Noting Cues

Just as a shorthand is needed in noting blocking (Chapter 11, “The Rehearsal/Blocking Script”), so it is with noting cues into the cueing script.

The space in the right-hand margin is limited, and, because of this, the cues written need to be abbreviated and concisely written so they can be quickly scanned for the SM to call the cues with the correct delivery and timing.

We already have a collection of abbreviations and symbols for blocking, some of which we can use in noting cues. Now we need to learn a few more that pertain directly to noting and calling cues. All SMs have their own abbreviations and variations, but the differences are not so great that one SM cannot pick up another SM’s cueing script and understand the cues written.

There are four important factors to know in noting cues and calling cues:

1. Notations must be neat, legible, and concise so that the information can be read and understood in a single glance. When the SM gets into the heat of calling a show, no matter how experienced, there is no time to think about or decipher the written cue.
2. With that in mind, whatever symbols, abbreviations, or way of noting an SM adopts, it must be used consistently.
3. Each term, symbol, or abbreviation should be to the SM as words are to us when we read aloud. When reading aloud, we don’t stop to think about the words, we simply say them.
4. I will add that color coding aids greatly in identifying cues without having to think about them.

The Notation for Electric Cues

In every show, the light cues are the most prominent. In beginning to lay cues into the new cueing script, it is best to begin with the light cues and build the other cues around them. In noting electric or lighting cues, some SMs use the acronym EQ or LQ, followed by the number of the cue, for example, EQ10 or LQ10. In Europe, it is a common practice for SMs to use the letters LX. It is all a matter of preference and how the SM was initially taught.

Abbreviations for Noting Cues

The following list of abbreviations for noting cues will allow any SM to note clearly and distinctively all cues that must be written into the cueing script:

► **LQ** = **Light** cues or electric cues (LQ1, LQ2, etc.)

► **Proj** or **Prjn** = **Projections**. As a rule projection cues are part of the light cue. On rare occasions the SM may be required to call projection cues, and if so, this could be one of the abbreviations used in the cueing script.

Fallen to Extinction: Before projecting images on to the scenery and stage, the following collection of abbreviations were a necessary part of the SM's language in calling cues:

- S1d# = Slide cues are cues that involve a slide projector. This was probably the precursor to the projection department.
- Proj or PjQ = Motion-picture projection cues, delivered to the stage by a projector from at the back of the theatre or rear-screen onstage.
- Vd, Vid, or Vdo = These are the different ways to note video projection cues or video cues to be played on a TV monitor.

They are now extinct and if used in some way become part of the cues for the projection department.

► **SQ** = **Sound cues** (SQ1, SQ2, etc.)

► **Auto** or **Autm** (SM's choice) = **Automation** (Auto6, Autm7, etc.). This is a fairly new abbreviation in the SM's language of calling cues, and it is here to stay. There will be a lot more said about automation in the next chapter. Before automation, these next terms were important in the SM's language:

► **TT** = **Turtable**. In some shows the turtable is an important part of the set design. For the most part, the turtable is now part of automation and its movement can be part of a greater cue with other pieces of scenery being moved. Sometimes the turtable needs to be called as a separate cue. It is in those times it will be noted as TT. Along with the turtable comes, two other abbreviations cw and cc.

► **cw** = **clockwise**, the direction in which the turtable will revolve.

► **cc** = **counterclockwise**, the direction in which the turtable will revolve.

► **Wnch** = **Winch**, a device and system of moving scenery on and off stage.

► **Wgn** = **Wagon**, which has become Palt = Pallet, a riser or platform no more than four to six inches high that moves scenery, props, and performers on and off stage from the wings on either side of the stage.

► **Wnch** = **Winch**. Winches are the mechanical pieces of equipment that glide props, set units, and pallets on and off stage from the wings on both sides of the stage. Some are hand cranked while others are computerized and motor driven. Both are still used. When calling cues, for the motor-driven winches the SM calls it as part of its automation cue number. With the hand-cranked winches, they first have to be numbered. The SM decides with the TD how they

are to be named or numbered and then notes them accordingly in the cueing script (for example, SRWnch, SL-Wnch, or Wnch#1, Wnch#2, etc).

► **Wgn = Wagons** or **Palt = Pallet**. Because of their streamline look and close profile to the stage deck, wagons have become **pallets**. They are, however, one and the same. They still have placed on them props, scenery, and sometimes the performers, moving things on and off stage from the wings. They will be cues that the SM will call. While discussing automation, let us include these abbreviations:

► **Sldrs** or **Slid** (SM's choice) = **Sliders**. Sliders are **flat pieces of scenery** that are motor driven. They glide across the stage as a traveling curtain might glide when opening or closing. A lot more about sliders in the next chapter. Slider cues can be part of a bigger automation cue, or if they are a cue to be called by itself, the SM then uses the abbreviation.

► **RAIL** = Cues pertaining to drops, curtains, set pieces, and items that fly in and out on the stage during the performance are noted as **rail** cues. Sometimes rail cues are numbered (RAIL-Q1, RAIL-Q2, etc.). Other times rail cues are simply noted as RAIL, followed by written information describing what is to be done in the particular cue. When the cues are written in this way, during performance, while setting up the cue from the console, the SM might say, "Stand by on the rail for the sky drop to go out and the office drop to come in."

► **Q-Lites** = **Cue lights** are free-hanging light bulbs, usually red, amber, or blue. Sometimes all three are used with each color designated for a particular purpose. They are strategically placed backstage for easy viewing in the stage technicians' work areas. When turned on, they stand as a warning. When turned off, that is the stage technician's GO! cue. These cue lights are turned on and off from a panel of toggles switched at the SM console.

► **SPOT, SPT, SP**, or **Sp** (SM's choice) = **Spotlight** cues. As a rule, the SM does not call spotlight cues for the show; however, from time to time, a director may insist. If and when that happens, the cues would be noted as SPOT#1, SPOT#2, and so on, which is then followed with an abbreviated note of what is to take place with that particular spot. When it is time for the cue to be executed, the SM clearly identifies the spotlight by its number, but does not restate what is to happen with the spotlight.

► **WARN:** = **Warning**. When calling cues for a show, the SM must first **warn** the technicians of the next cue(s) coming up. This warning gives the stage technicians time to set up and prepare. In a large show with major scene shifts and transitions, such as a musical, there are often a large number of cues to be called and executed within one sequence or group of cues. On one or two pages before the transition is to take place and the cues are to be called, the SM writes **WARN:**, and then lists all the cues to take place in the upcoming sequence.

Color Coding Cues

I would not call a show without it!

To further aid the SM in noting and calling cues and to further distinguish one cue from the other, many SMs color code their cues. Early in their training or careers they choose a color for each department and for the most part continue with those colors throughout. When color coding, the SM should stay away from light colors, pastel colors, or colors that are similar to ones already being used, such as magenta when red is already being used or blue-green when blue and green are already being used.

The PSM with whom I first worked always used:

! BLUE = Warnings (**WARN:**)

! RED = Electric cues (**LQ**)

! GREEN = Sound cues (**SQ**)

! ORANGE = Automation (**Auto**)

! LITE-GREEN = Sliders (**Sldr**)

! PURPLE = Winches (**Wnch**)

! BROWN = Pallets (**Palt**)

! BLACK = Rail cues (**RAIL**)

! LITE-BLUE = Cue lights (**Q-Lite**)

! LEAD PENCIL = spotlight cues (**SPOT**)

These became my colors and my abbreviations. You will choose your own.

Note: If you should be wondering why I use RED for my electric cues when BLUE seems to be a more natural color, in my mind there are two good reasons: (1) When working my first big-time, career-starting show, the PSM used red and insisted I use red in my calling script. (2) At the time, I too thought electric cues should be blue. When I questioned my PSM, he said, “The electric cues are the most abundant in the show. Red is an important color in our society. It is highly noticeable and when we see it, we become alerted.” Between that response and the fact that red was the color I was conditioned to use, I will not use any other color for my electric cues. Once again, you make your choice and stick with it.

Besides the abbreviation, color coding cues provides a second identity to the cues. After a while, when the colors for each department become implanted in the SM’s mind, the SM will often recognize the cue first by its color, and then by the written abbreviation. When calling a large group of cues, colors also allow the SM to quickly scan the block of cues, verbally calling out each cue to be executed.

There are two choices to be made when going into technical rehearsals: some SMs choose to go with the cues written in pencil and as soon as possible get them into a cleaner script in color; others will already have their cues color coded when going into techs.

Personal Experience: After some time, I finally settled on having my cueing script already color coded when going into techs because, inevitably, as we worked, the director and the lighting designer, after finalizing a group of cues, would want to see them executed, as they would be in performance. My choice, however, does not preclude going into techs in pencil, and then color coding later and getting the cues into a clean script.

Practical Application of Cues into the Cueing Script

Let us start with a fairly straightforward, somewhat easy page of cues as in Figure 13-1. This was how it looked when the SM went into techs. However, SM *beware!* While all looks simple and straightforward in this figure, after having gone through techs, this page could, and probably will, look different.

The script used in Figure 13-1 is the climactic scene from the musical *Man of La Mancha*, “The Knight of the Mirrors,” in which Don Quixote is forced to face the image of his true self. The scene takes place in the last few pages of the play. In this particular production the cue numbers at this point were in the sixties. This is how the SM’s cueing script looked when going into technical rehearsals. Notice the cues are written in pencil.

Marking the Spot Where the Cue Is to Be Called: The Caret

In calling cues for a show there is one symbol that the SM must adopt and put into practice and that is the **caret**. This is a very important marking symbol, for it notes the place

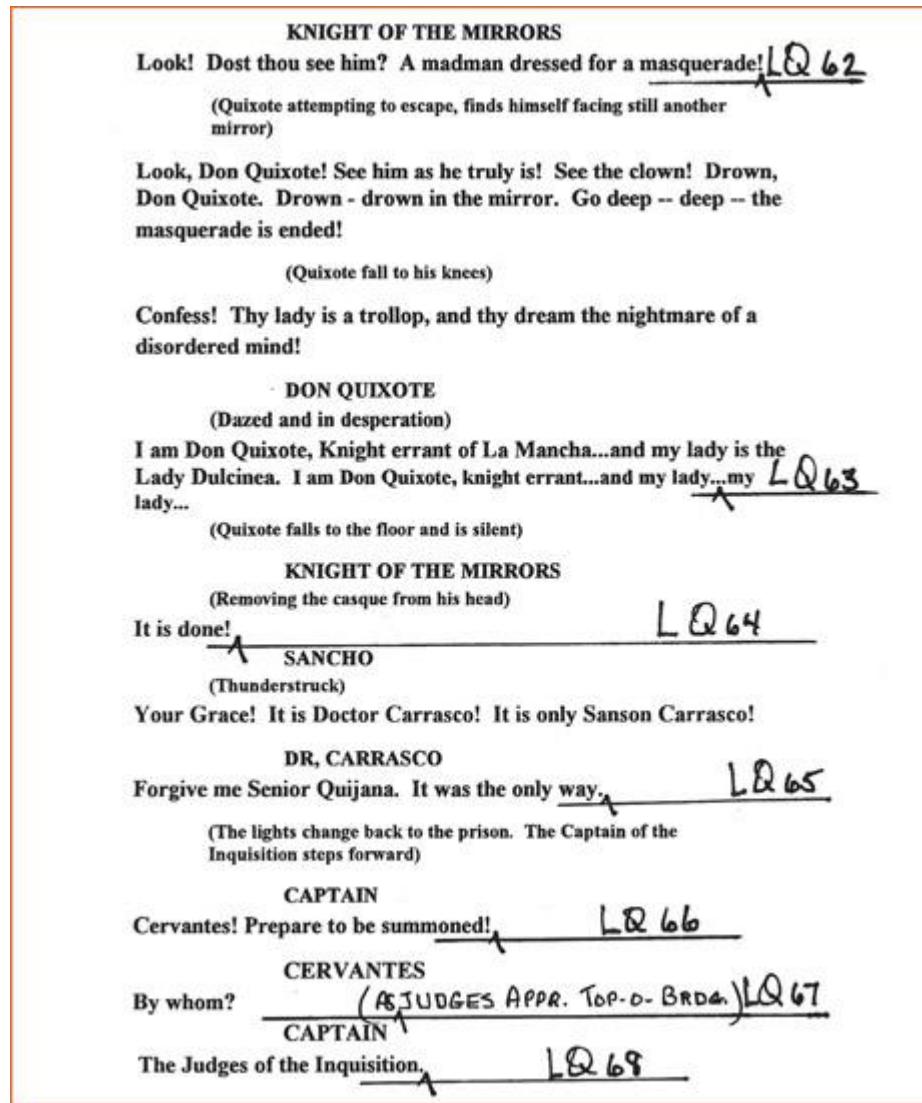


Figure 13-1 A scene taken from the musical *Man of La Mancha*, the “Knight of the Mirrors.” The light cues are noted as they were given to the SM during the meeting with the lighting designer. (From *Man of La Mancha*, by author’s permission. © 1966 by Dale Wasserman.)

at which the cue is to be called. Its placement has all to do with *timing*. The caret marks the spot. If the timing of the cue needs to be changed, the SM moves the caret. Remember this symbol. It is the SM’s guide to calling a well-timed show.

If you look at the first cue in Figure 13-1, LQ62, the arrow just after the last word of dialogue is the caret. Notice that the carets in Figure 13-1 are all in association with dialogue, be it on a word, before a word, after a word, or in the middle of a word. But notice now in LQ67 (at the bottom of the page), the caret is placed within the SM’s handwritten note. It seems the lighting designer or the director wants the lights in LQ67 to come up *as the judges appear at the top of the bridge*.

The Caret vs. The Box: Though I prefer the caret, there are some SMs who box in the word on which the cue is to be called. If, for the *timing* of the cue, the SM needs to call the cue in the middle of the word or action, the SM will box in either the front part of the word or the last part. I much prefer the caret because the arrow leads my eye to the exact spot where I am to call the cue. Also, if and when there is a change, it is simpler to erase the caret than to erase the box... but then maybe I prefer the caret because this is what I first learned from that same PSM who made me color code my electric cues in red.

Comparing Figure 13-1 with Figure 13-2

Figure 13-2 is the same script as in Figure 13-1, but with one difference (or should I say many differences), because Figure 13-2 is representative of what this page of cues looks like, first, after my color coding, and also after the director and lighting designer made their changes or additions.

Color Coding

The most distinguishable difference between Figure 13-1 and Figure 13-2 is of course the color coding—**RED** for the light cues, **BLACK** for the rail, and **ORANGE** for automation to bring in the bridge.

Point Cues

Notice now that after LQ62, another cue has been added—a **point cue**, LQ62.5. Most times, point cues are cues that are added. Instead of numbering this added cue in its next consecutive order and then having to change all the cue numbers following, the designer made this added cue a point cue.

Sometimes in situations where there is a light cue that closely follows another (a *follow cue*), the designer might number the follow cue as a point cue. Point cues became a standard with the advent of computer lightboards. Prior to this use, added cues were numbered with an *a*, *b*, *c*, etc.; thus, LQ62.5 in Figure 13-2 would have been noted as LQ62a.

Computerized lightboards allow for a nine-point range to add in cues. If you are wondering why the lighting designer did not simply number LQ62.5 as LQ62.1, there is a perfectly good reason. Point-five was purposely chosen so that more cues can be added on either side.

Caret versus Box

Before leaving LQ62.5, notice the two-boxed pieces of text/information: for this cue, the SM has chosen to use a box to tell him where to call the cue. There is no right or wrong here; however, consistency in noting abbreviations and symbols is much preferred. Whatever works of the SM is what the SM uses.

Boxed Information

Notice the boxed-in text (Mirr Ball) after LQ62.5. This is a common practice with SMs. Boxed information is to *separate* and make information stand out. The information within these boxes has nothing to do with the timing or calling of the cue, but becomes information within a single glance and tells the SM what will be seen on stage. In this case it is the light to come up on the mirror ball.

Standard Abbreviations within a Box

Here are some standard abbreviations that might be found at the ends of a written cue to give the SM more information about the cue:

► **B.O.** = This cue instantly **blacks out** the lights on the stage.

► **BMP** = Directors and lighting designers commonly call this a **bump cue**. A bump cue either “pops” the lights on from darkness or, if the lights are already on, pops the lights “up” or “down” to a brighter or lower intensity. A B.O. cue is a form of a bump cue that pops the light off. Bump cues are commonly used in musicals at the end of musical numbers. Either on or after the last note of music,

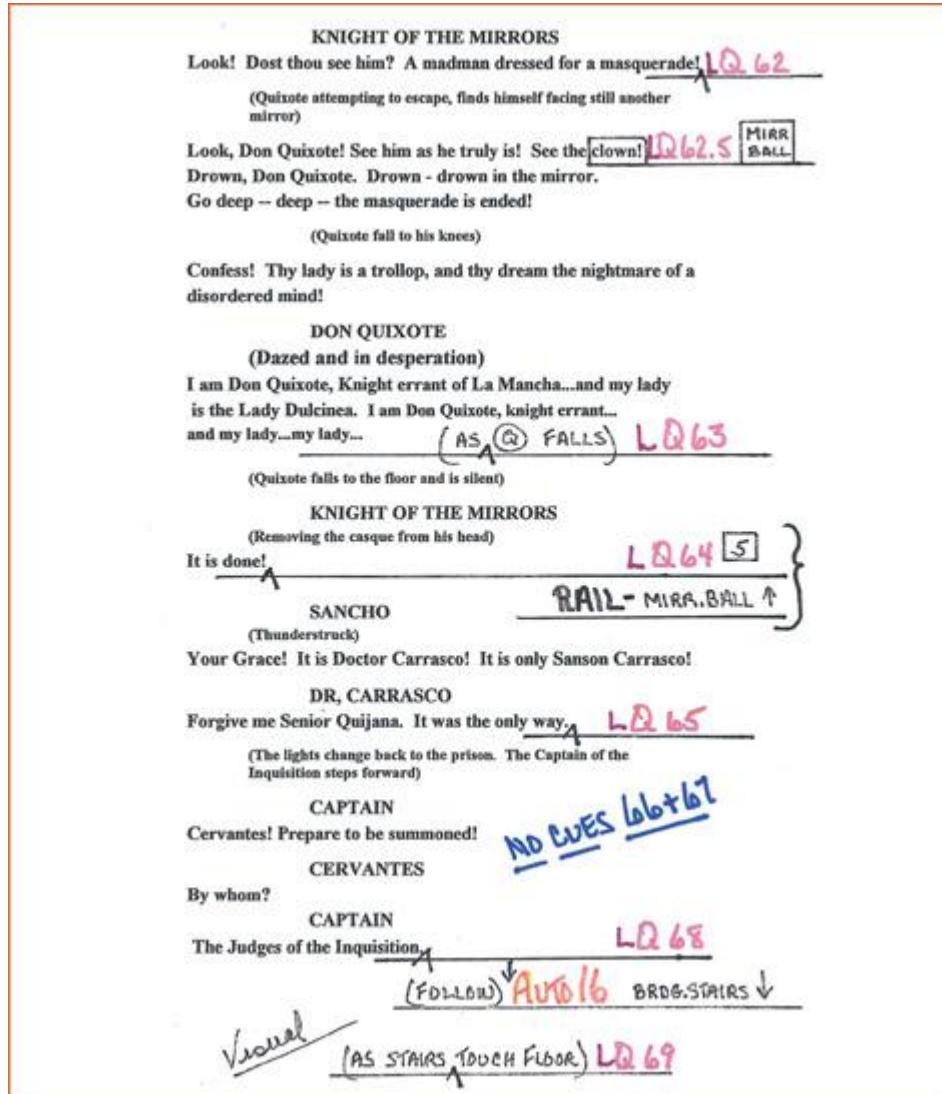


Figure 13-2 The same scene as in Figure 13-1 (*Man of La Mancha*, “Knight of the Mirrors”). In this figure the cues have been refined or changed by the lighting designer and director, and the SM has noted the changes accordingly. In addition, the SM has color coded the cues, using red for the electric cues, black for the rail cue, and brown for the winch cue. (From *Man of La Mancha*, by author’s permission. (c) 1966 by Dale Wasserman.)

the director or designer will have the lights bump up to an even greater intensity to emphasize the end of the number. Other times, when an actor on stage pretends to turn on a lamp or light switch, the stage lights will bump on as if the lamp or lights had been turned on.

► **LTNG** = The information in this box tells the SM that this is a **lightning cue**.

► **FD to BLK** = With the execution of this cue, the lights on stage **fade out** or **fade to black**.

► **RSTOR** = A **restore cue**. The SM’s abbreviation tells him or her that with the execution of the cue, the lights on stage will return to an original setting. An example of this is in *Man of La Mancha* in the scene where Don Quixote sees a windmill in the distance. The stage is brightly lit with LQ18, as if in sunshine. Quixote mistakes this windmill

for a dragon, and when he goes offstage to fight the dragon, the lighting designer changes the lighting to a more colorful and fantasy-like setting, LQ19. As Quixote returns to the stage, the next cue, LQ20, restores the stage to the original bright, sunshine setting that was in LQ18. Thus, LQ20 is a restore cue.

Notice in Figure 13-1 that going into techs, the caret in LQ63 was placed between the words *lady* and *my*. But now in Figure 13-2 (after techs and into performance), the caret is moved and is now within the SM's handwritten note. Once again this is refinement and detail in noting the SM's calling script.

A Reminder: In LQ63, if you are wondering (and maybe have forgotten) what that letter *Q* with the circle around it is, you may recall in Chapter 11, when discussing blocking notations, we said that character names are noted with their initial and then circled. So the SM's circled *Q* in LQ63 stands for the character Quixote (Don Quixote).

Parentheses with the SM's Handwritten Note

Before leaving LQ63 in Figure 13-2, the SM has hand-printed in parentheses key information given by the director, information that instructs the SM to call the cue as Don Quixote falls. Notice the SM has placed the caret between the word "as" and the symbol for Don Quixote's name. Being this specific in the placement of the caret aids in calling the cue accurately. If the director changes this cue and wants it to happen earlier or later by a few seconds, or even by a fraction of a second, the SM will place the caret accordingly.

When going into techs, this cue stood by itself, but now it has added notations. Right alongside LQ64, there is a box with the number 5 in it. In a single glance, this notation tells the SM that this light cue will slowly appear on stage in five counts (in a *five-count*, as is expressed in theatre talk). After calling the cue and watching the stage through the TV monitor on the console, the SM knows that the light will not appear on the stage as quickly as it would have done had it been a two- or three-count.

The Count of the Light Cue

Every light cue has a *count* or duration for how long it takes for the cue to appear—that is, how long it takes from the moment the cue is executed to the moment the cue is completed onstage. Some cues fade up or fade out slowly, as in a ten-count. Each count is about one second long. A sunrise or sunset effect may be set to happen in a thirty-count. Other cues happen more quickly, as in a two-count, or in a blackout (BO), which is a no-count.

Before computer lightboards were used, having the light counts noted in the SM's cueing script was very important, because the lights were manually operated by stagehands and their sense of a count in seconds could vary. Back then, it was the SM's job to look out on the stage after calling a light cue to see if the execution happened at the correct speed and timing. Today, that is all in the computer and once the count is set with a light cue it will forever remain that way.

Notice now the added **RAIL** cue. Just under LQ64 and alongside of it is the SM's handwritten note *mirror ball*, and alongside that is the upward pointing arrow. This is pretty much self-explanatory (the rail is to take the mirror ball out). In a single glance the SM knows what is to happen in this cue. After calling the light and RAIL cue, the SM watches in the TV monitor for the light cue (LQ64) to materialize and at the same time sees the mirror ball disappear from the stage.

Bracketing a Group of Cues

We come now to a symbol that will be used time and time again, and that is the *bracket*. This is standard notation telling the SM that all the cues within its confines are to be called at the same time. "Electric cue sixty-four and Rail to take our the mirror ball... GO!"

Notice after LQ65, the numbering goes directly to LQ68. For whatever reasons cues 66 and 67 were cut. As a reminder and to keep the SM in a linear frame of mind, the SM makes the note **No Cues 66 & 67**.

A Group of Cues

At the end of Figure 13-2, there is a group of cues:

- LQ68,
- An automation cue (Auto16) to bring in the bridge,
- and LQ69, which was added by the fact that it was not there in Figure 13-1, going into tech rehearsals.

Any SM who calls cues for a show will run into such groupings. Some will be as simple as the one presented here, but others will be busy, complicated, and intimidating. Let's work with this easy one first. Notice there is no bracket, so immediately we know that the three cues in this grouping are to be called separately according to the SM's notes and placement of the caret. There is, however, an arrow just under LQ68 pointing downward toward the word in parentheses, *follow*. I call this arrow the "Arrow of Immediacy."

The Arrow of Immediacy

Whenever this **arrow of immediacy** appears in the cueing notation, the SM first calls the cue above the arrow (LQ68), and then immediately the SM brings his or her attention to the next cue (Auto16) to call that one. Also, seeing the word **follow** within the parentheses tells the SM to call this automation cue immediately. Had there been a different note in the parentheses, it would have told the SM when to call the automation cue.

You would think, "Why not just call LQ68 and Auto16 together?" Well that is the way it was at first. Both LQ68 and Auto16 were bracketed and called together. But somewhere in techs the director instructed that he wanted the lights to come up first with LQ68, so that the judges could be seen entering, and then have the bridge stairs start their decent down on to the stage floor. To give the director the desired effect, Auto16 was made into a follow cue.

Follow Cues

This is a good time to talk about **follow cues**. They are used in times when the director or lighting designer wants split-second timing. The making of follow cues and the appearance of the arrow of immediacy are *very* important notations for the SM when calling cues for the show. They aid the SM in calling well-timed cues, give the director or lighting designer their desired effect, and bring to the audience a piece of well-crafted entertainment.

At one time *follow cues* were very important to the lighting designer and the director and just as important to the SM in giving the lighting designer and the director what they want. With the capabilities of today's electronic lightboards, in many situations the follow cue is written into the main cue and is automatically executed without the SM having to call it. This is all well and good, making the SM's job a tad easier. But keep in mind that after calling any light cue, it is the SM's job to look out on to the stage or into the monitor to see that the light cue appears, and so it should be with a follow cue that the SM does not call. With all such follow cues, then, the SM should make a reminder that the follow cue will automatically be executed so that the SM can then look out on to the stage to see if that too appears at the proper timing and place as chosen by the lighting designer or director.

Visual Cues

As you see, LQ69 has the word **visual** handwritten and slating upward, which is to catch the SM's attention in a single glance. To call any visual cue, the SM must either look very closely into the TV monitor or out through the wings on to the stage. In doing so, the SM is looking for a specific thing, perhaps an action or placement of a piece of scenery. In the case of LQ69, it is an action: when the bridge stairs touch down on to the stage floor, as noted in the parentheses with the caret placed between the words *stairs* and *touch*.

Before leaving our discussion and breakdown of Figures 13-1 and 13-2, there is one other important thing to be said. Notice the neatness of the cues as they are written. It is important that every SM cultivate a clear and neat way of noting cues because the SM will be using this script time after time, eight performances a week, for however long the show runs. Each cue is critical to the show, regardless of how small or inconsequential it may seem. Many things can

happen during a performance that will require the SM's attention. With a neat and orderly script, the SM can return to the script, find the correct place, and not miss a cue or lose the timing.

Noting Spotlight Cues

As stated earlier, in some productions, especially in musicals in which there can be two or even three spotlights, most times the SM is not responsible for calling the spotlight cues. In all such cases, the head spotlight operator is brought in on the first day of technical rehearsals and notes those cues and calls them to the other spotlight operators during the performance. However, in the shows for which the SM is responsible, the SM notes all spotlight cues in the cueing script along with the other technical cues. Spotlight cues are seldom numbered. There are usually too many. It becomes easier for the SM to identify the spotlight by number (Spotlight#1, Spotlight#2, etc.) and hand-print information after the numbered spot, telling the operator what should happen in the cue (see Fig. 13-3).

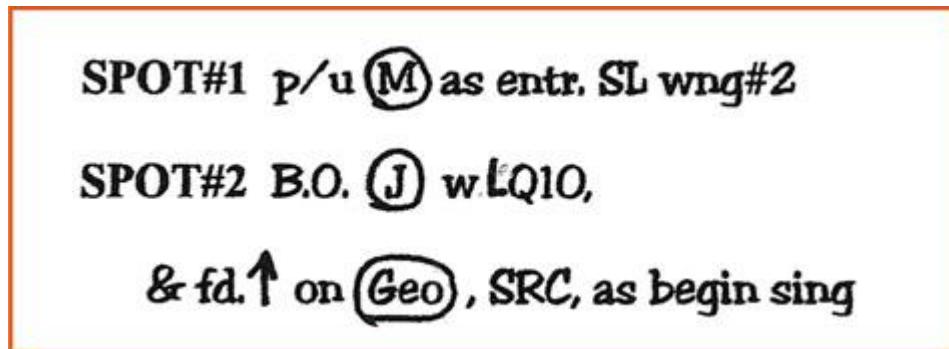


Figure 13-3 An example of how the SM might note cues for the spotlights.

Upon seeing these notations for the spotlights in the script, the SM would say through the headset to the spotlight operators,

Spot number one, pickup Mary as she enters from the stage left wing #2, and spot number two blackout on John as I call cue ten, then fade up on George standing stage right center as he begins to sing.

Building Sequences of Cues for a Transition—Easy to Complicated

An Easy Transition

A complicated or involved sequence of cues usually comes at the end of a scene and leads into the next scene. We will start with an easy example. Let's return to our imaginary play *John and Mary*. We will note the cues that end Scene 1 and lead into Scene 2.

In the last week of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall, after the lighting designer came to see a run-thru of *John and Mary*, the SM met with the lighting designer to put lighting cues into the rehearsal script. The director was also present at this meeting. Together the designer and director decided that at the end of Scene 1, LQ13 would black out the stage at the end of Mary's last line ("John, I hate you!"). Then, after John and Mary clear stage and George takes his place at the light switch, LQ14 would be executed, bringing up the lights for the beginning of Scene 2. Figure 13-4 shows how this was noted in the SM's rehearsal script, and this is how it looked when the SM went into technical rehearsals on the first day.

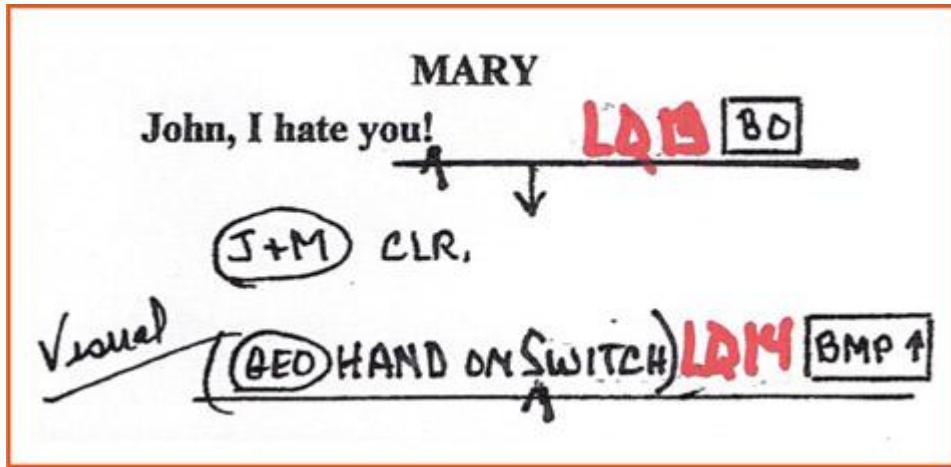


Figure 13-4 Simple cues noted for the imaginary play *John and Mary*.

The SM's notations in this example are simple and straightforward:

- The placement of the caret for LQ13 tells the SM when to call this cue.
- The notation BO tells the SM that LQ13 is a blackout.
- The downward *arrow of immediacy* under LQ13 leads the SM's eye to the next bit of information, which is *J&M Clr* (John and Mary clear stage). However, there is also the notation "Visual." With the arrow of immediacy and the *visual* notation, the SM needs to look closely into the infrared monitor, watching for John and Mary leaving stage and at the same time seeing George coming on stage and taking his place at the light switch. Only then does the SM call LQ14.

For a student SM and beginning SM, the cues for this transition appear easy, and they are, but take heart, because when the show got into the theatre and in techs, things changed, as shown in Figure 13-5.

A Middle-Sized Transition

As you can see, in comparison to Figure 13-4, Figure 13-5 has been made more complicated:

- There is the added light cue (*LQ13.3 Lightning*) and a sound cue (*SQ2 Thunder*). Both are bracketed together, which means the SM will call these two cues at the same time.
- Immediately following is another light cue (*LQ13.7*), which brings up the hallway light as George enters the apartment.
- And with the term *Visual* noted, the SM is reminded to be on the lookout for George, ready to call LQ14 as he touches the light switch.

Though this transition is bit more involved, it will become easier to call as it is worked during techs, performed in run-thrus, and certainly in dress rehearsals.

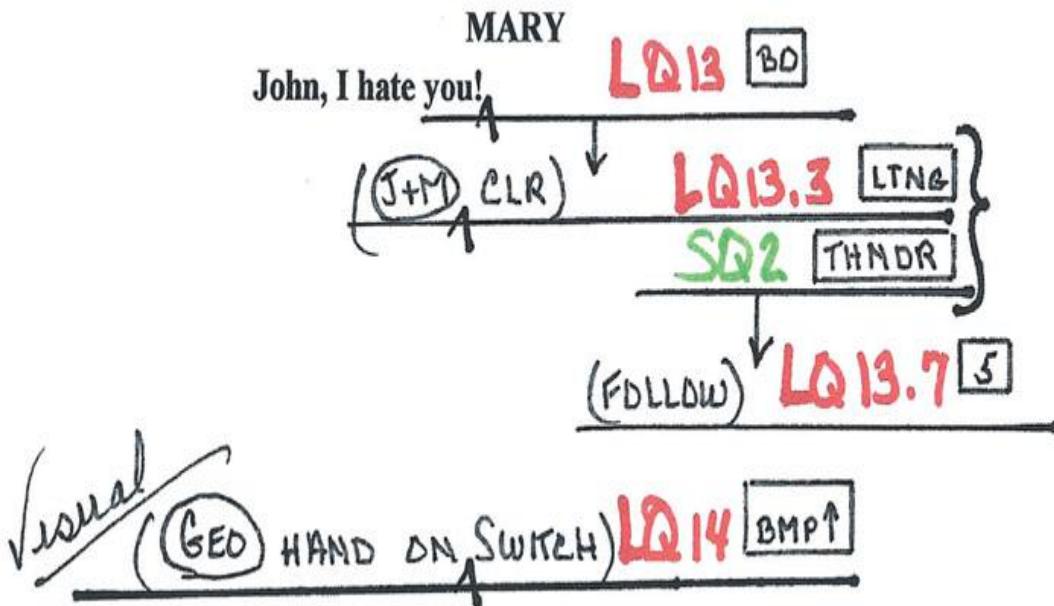


Figure 13-5 In comparison to the scene transition in Figure 13-4, this transition has been made more complicated by added cues and effects.

A Large and Involved Transition

For the sake of academic study, let us now adventure into what could be a very involved and complicated scene change/transition. While the example in Figure 13-6 is from the imaginary play *John and Mary*, it is nonetheless typical, especially if the show is a musical. So let us make our imaginary play into a musical.

We'll start with what we had in Figures 13-4 and 13-5 and build from there.

Intimidating? Probably. But having worked mostly on musicals in my career, I have had worse, like the burning of Atlanta in the stage musical version of *Gone With the Wind*.

Practice, Practice, Practice: Figure 13-6 would be a scene transition I would have to study. I would have to go into the theatre an hour or so before anyone was scheduled, sit at my SM's console, put on my head set, and practice—putting in the warnings, setting up the cue lights, and verbally calling the cues as if I was in performance. Had I thought of it I might have recorded it.

While the whole of Figure 13-6 appears overwhelming, the parts are easy:

- If the first two bracketed cues in this transition (LQ13 and the Spotlight #1 cue) were the only cues on the page, you could easily call that grouping.
- Similarly, if the next bracketed grouping of cues along with the arrow of immediacy (**RAIL-Q6**, Auto3, and Auto4) were all that was on the page, you could easily call that, too.

Now we come to the first *Visual*. This grouping has three sections:

1. The **RAIL** brings in the office drop.
2. The bracketed cues (LQ13.3 and SQ2) are to be called together. This is a grouping of cues you will execute many times over in a show.
3. And the last part of this section (LQ13.7) is a follow cue, which means you would wait a beat before calling it.

So if each of these groupings were separately written on a page, they would also be easy to call—and this is how you have to look at this entire page of cues, seeing each section or grouping as if that was all that was written on the page.

Finally, in the last part of Figure 13-6, another *Visual* is noted. Within this section you have (LQ14 and Spotlight #2). This grouping of cues is certainly easy.

So in the final analysis, any transition can become easy if you first study its parts, and then put the parts together, section by section, and before you know it, you are calling a massive, cue transition.



Figure 13-6 A complicated and involved group of cues, from the musical version of the imaginary play *John and Mary*, transitioning from Scene 1 into Scene 2.

Noting Warn: Cues

As we said earlier, **WARN:** cues will be in blue. You of course may choose your own coloring or stick with what is suggested here. Having gone through the writing of cues into the calling script with Figures 13-4 through 13-6, this is a good time to talk about putting in the **WARN:** cues.

In a simple show where cues are mostly individual, paired together, or in small groups, writing in **WARN:** cues is not really necessary. In larger, more technically complicated shows there should be no doubt:

- The **WARN:** should be a page or two from where the cues are to be called and executed.
- The **WARN:** is designed to alert the stage technicians in the various technical departments of what is coming up. It is at this time the technicians do whatever needs to be done to prepare.
- The **WARN:** cues are written as a list, and the entire list is written in blue. See Figure 13-7.
- Notice in this collection of **WARN:** cues that the different technical departments are grouped together.

Putting the WARNs into the Cueing Script

While reading off the WARN: cues to the technicians, the SM not only gives the cue name and number but includes keynote words or phrases to remind the departments what is happening in their cues. As, for example, with the cues in Figure 13-6, the SM would say:

Warning electric cues thirteen, thirteen point three, thirteen point four, and fourteen. Warning in on spotlight number one to black out on Mary. Warning in on spotlight number two to come up on George at the light switch.

MARY

There is this fabulous sale at the department store which we must attend this week.

WARN: LQs 13, 13.3, 13.7, 14

JOHN SQZ THUNDR

We are not spending a penny more until we hear from George about our finances.

CUE LITES 2+3 AUTO3 SP PALT-OFF
SL PALT-ON

(The doorbell rings) CUE LITE 1 AUTO 4 TT CC

*Neither John nor Mary move to answer it.
They turn and look towards the kitchen door
waiting for Florence to enter.*

CUE LITE 5 RAIL-Q6 APT 1RP↑

(The doorbell rings again, still no Florence)

RAIL-Q7 OFFL DRP↓

JOHN (cont.)

This is ridiculous! I'll get it.

SPOT #1 BD
SPOT #2 ↑ GED

MARY

(Stopping him)

No! Florence must learn that she was hired to also answer doors.

etc., etc.

Figure 13-7 A list of WARN: cues. The cues are noted into the SM's calling script one or two pages before the actual cues are to be called. The cues in this WARNING grouping are not written or read off in the order in which they are to be called. For the purpose of clarity and organization, the SM groups the cues into their technical departments. It is clearer and easier for each department to hear its cues being read off in a group rather than hearing them separately, between cues for other departments.

Then, while verbally putting in the warn for the RAIL, the SM is also flipping on cue-lite #5:

Warning rail cue six to take out the apartment drop, and rail cue seven to bring in the office drop.

Similarly, while putting in the WARN: for automation, the SM is flipping on cue-lites #2 and #3.

Warning automation cue three—taking off the stage right pallet and bringing on the stage left pallet. And warning in on automation cue four—turntable turning counter clockwise....

Of course the technicians already know where they are in the show and what cues are coming next, but in doing the job with perfection, the SM delivery is a reminder and assurance that each department is on the same page. However,

when actually calling the cues to be executed, the SM does not repeat all the descriptive verbiage. The SM will give the STAND BY, and then at the prescribed time will simply say, “Light-cue thirteen and spot number one, GO!”

The SM waits to write the WARN: cues into the calling script until almost the end of the technical rehearsals, just before going into dress rehearsals. This saves time and work, because prior to dress rehearsals the director and designers are still making changes. During techs the SM can still call a transition of cues without having written into the calling script the WARN: cues.

Half-Hour Before the Show

Before leaving our discussion on the art of noting and calling cues, let us jump to the front of the cueing script and insert two blank pages. On the front side of the first blank page, the SM notes all that must be done during the half-hour before the show is to start. This half-hour call by Equity rule, is when the performers are required to be at the theatre and signed in.

Actually, even before the half-hour mark, the SM checks first with the technical staff to see that they are close to finishing up their work—that is, the work that would either be seen by the audience or would disturb the audience once they are allowed to enter the theatre and take their seats.

The Preset and Curtain Warmers

Having gotten clearance from the different technical departments, the SM checks to see that the stage is properly set for when the audience comes in. This is commonly called the **preset**. There are three different types of presets to the stage that can be had as the audience enters:

1. A curtain (grand drape) covering the entire stage opening
2. A scrim, which most times is lit from the front so the audience cannot see what is behind
3. An open stage with whatever setting the director and designers have chosen

Accompanying any one of these settings will be some lighting—lighting that is called the **curtain warmers**. The curtain warmers are the dim lights that pleasingly and attractively light the curtain, scrim, or open stage.

Being assured that the show is set and ready, the SM alerts the front-of-the-house staff, informing the house manager or head usher that the backstage is ready and the house can be opened. After all of this has been done, the SM announces over the backstage public address system that it is **half-hour**:

- At fifteen minutes before curtain time, the SM announces over the backstage PA that there are fifteen minutes left to curtain time.
- At twenty-five minutes into the half-hour, the SM announces that there are five minutes to curtain.
- After making this announcement, the SM sits at the calling console, puts on the cueing headset, and checks to see that all the technicians are at their stations.
- With all departments ready, the SM gets in touch with the house manager to see if the show can be started on time. If the house manager feels that more time is needed to seat the audience, he or she will ask the SM to hold off from starting the show for however long is necessary. The SM of course agrees.
- If the show is a musical, at three minutes before the new starting time, the SM calls the conductor to the pit.
- At two minutes before the performance is to begin, the SM asks the cast to take their places.

This list of calls and points are standard procedure with all productions. After having done several shows, this process becomes ingrained in every SM's head. However, it is good form for the SM to note this information in the cueing script on the front side of that first blank page in the front of the cueing script (see Fig. 13-8).

BEFORE Half Hour

Chk: TECH. DEPTS. - Ready open house

Chk: CURT. & PRESET

Call: FOH - Open house

@ HALF HOUR

@ 30 min. = ½ hr. call

@ 15 min. = 15min. call

@ 5 min. = 5min. call

Call orchestra to the pit

Chk: TECH. DEPTS. - Ready?

Call: HS.MGR. Ready to begin show?

@ 3 min. = Call conductor to the pit

@ 2 min. = call PLACES

Figure 13-8 An example of how the SM might note at the beginning of the cueing script the things to do within the half-hour before the show begins.

It's Show Time! Noting Cues to Start the Show

While the cues in Figure 13-8 are on the front side of the first blank page in the front part of the cueing script, the cues to open the show are noted on the backside of that first blank page. Generally, the cues noted on this page bring the audience into the play by:

- Bringing the house lights down to half
- Giving the GO! for the recorded or live announcement, which welcomes the audience, points out the exits, reminds them of no pictures or recordings, and asks that they turn off all electronic devices
- Bringing the house lights to black along with the curtain warmers
- Having the performers take their places onstage
- And last, bringing the lights up for the first scene

This is standard, but depending on the show, the director, and the designers, things can vary. Whatever the working situation, the SM has noted and color coded all of this information on that backside of that blank page where the notes from Figure 13-8 are noted. However, as in life, the SM's work is not always that simple and orderly. Figure 13-9 is an actual example of the opening cues from a production of *Man of La Mancha*.

At first glance, Figure 13-9 is overwhelming and appears as a jungle of cues, and, yes, it is a jungle, but an organized one. First of all, for the sake of space in this book, each column of cues you see in this example is representative of one page in the SM's cueing script. Once again I want to remind you that this was a real situation. To read and understand the notations in this example, first take note of the following:

1. The electric cues are noted with a simple Q. At the time of doing this show, I noted all my electric cues with just a Q. Today I choose to note them as LQ.
2. See now the headings written on an angle and underlined in the first grouping of cues, *Prdcr's Intro*. This was all I needed to have noted because I knew the producer was going to do an introduction onstage.
3. Note the WARNs: are color coded in blue.
4. The individual cues are color coded

5. There are black lines to make groupings of cues.

Having read and maybe even experienced all of what we have talked about in this chapter on noting cue, perhaps you might better understand what is written in Figure 13-9. If so, then the figure should be a little easier to read, and if you take one section at a time and zero in on the notations one at a time, you might better understand what is happening. For example:

- In the first section, from the underlined notation *Prdcr's Intro* we can surmise that the producer is going to talk to the audience.
- The WARN: cues should be fairly clear since we discussed how they work using Figure 13-7.
- Now we come to another angled heading that is underlined, *When Ready*. This note tells the SM that when the producer is onstage, standing behind the curtain, the SM can start the first set of cues, which are the house lights down to half and at the same time making the producer's mic hot.
- Then, as the house lights are going down to half and the producer's mic is being made hot, the SM hand-cues the producer to pass through the opening in the middle of the curtain to begin his or her greeting and speech. As the producer is passing through the curtain, the downward arrow of immediacy tells the SM to call the cues for light Q1 and Spotlight #1 to come upon the producer.
- Then, seeing the black line, the SM can take a breath before he puts in the WARN: cues for the next section.

The Craft of Calling Cues

The cues have been noted. The cueing script can stand as a masterpiece if it is organized, neat, clean, orderly, concise, and color coded, and has in it all the information that the SM needs to call a *good, clean, and perfect* show. I underline these words because this is what will be expected of the SM for *every* show.

However, the job is only half done. The SM must now sit at the console and, like the conductor of a musical score, lead the technicians through the technical movements of the show. Like the musicians, the technicians have noted on paper their parts, but it is the SM who, from the console, coordinates all the parts, keeping things together and in the order they have been set, seeing that all things work in harmony, with the proper timing, and are done safely.

In addition, the SM keeps a watchful eye for any mistakes, correcting them as they happen, or better still anticipating them before they happen. When an SM does the job well, calling the show with impeccable timing, no one is aware of this work. Often people will forget the SM's presence and the part the SM plays in creating the magic of theatre for each performance.

As we have gone through the process of noting cues, we have had no choice but to also discuss some of the aspects of calling cues. Noting cues and calling cues go hand in hand. The form, layout, abbreviations, and symbols used in noting cues not only inform the SM, but also become the *dialogue* the SM speaks in calling the cues.

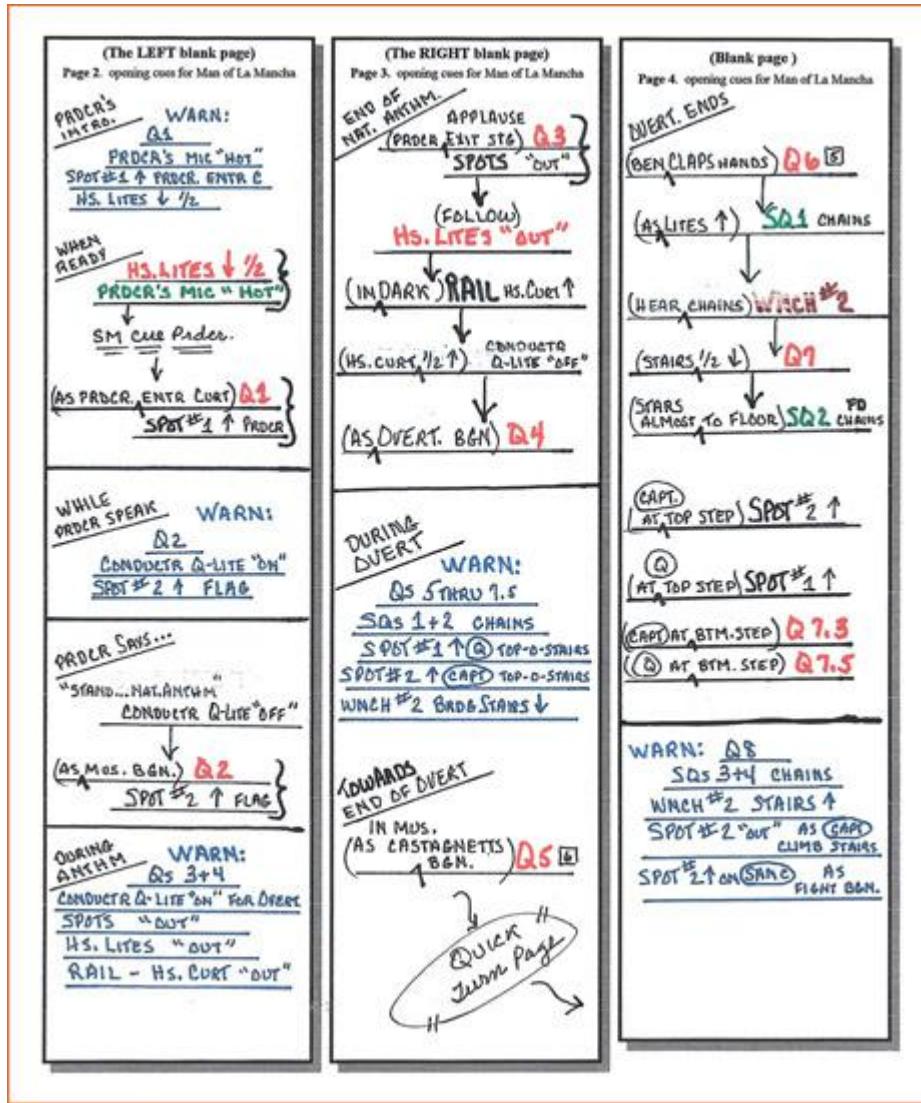


Figure 13-9 The opening cues from a production of *Man of La Mancha*, showing a way to note cues when there is no dialogue to use for reference points. The figure includes three pages of cues the SM had to insert at the beginning of the cueing script to get the show started. Again, color coding of cues is important.

Reaction Time

The most important part of calling any cue is to call it so the cue happens on the stage at the correct time and at the timing the designers and director have chosen. In calling a cue, the SM never calls it at the moment it is to happen on the stage, but calls it perhaps a second or a fraction of a second earlier. This difference in time is called *reaction time*—that is, the time it takes the technician to react and execute the cue. Today, the reaction time is minimal what with automation, computerized lighting, and sound all being executed at keyboards, by a technician, poised and ready to tap the GO! key.

Placing the Caret for Timing and Perfection

During technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals the SM learns the reaction time for the different cues and places the caret accordingly. We have said that the placement of the caret is crucial. It is the key to the perfection that is required of the SM in calling the show. If, for example, the director says the cue is happening late or too early, the SM moves the caret one way or the other to give the desired effect/timing.

Feeling at Home at the SM's Console

You wouldn't think it, but feeling at home and comfortable at the SM's console is a very important factor in calling well-timed cues. With each new show, production company, or theatre in which the SM works, the SM will work at a different console. Some will be very basic with only the necessary pieces of electronic equipment, and some may be elaborately built. It is important for the SM to be familiar with the way that the console is set up.

Calling cues requires the SM's complete attention and focus. In moments of complicated transitions, during mistakes, or in cases of emergency, the SM needs to react and act. Throughout the performance, as the SM sets up the cues and then calls them, the SM is reaching for switches, looking at monitors, taking visual cues that cannot be seen on the TV monitor, or being distracted by a technician or actor with an urgent or pressing question. While doing all these things, the SM does not have time to think about or look for where things are on the console.

The SM's Console—Basic Setup

At one time it was important that the SM's console be placed backstage, just off the stage right (SR) or stage left (SL) wing #1 so that he or she could take visual cues. More than likely it was only a partial view of the stage, with either curtains or scenery obstructing the rest of the view. Today, with any number of cameras placed out in the house and on stage, the SM's console can be, and often-times is, placed in some corner out of the way of scenery that will be moving on and off stage.

As part of the basic setup of the SM's console, even the most stripped-down model will have:

- Some kind of a shelf or desktop on which the calling script can be placed. This desktop is usually built with a tilt to it, at a speaker's podium height. At this height, the SM can stand comfortably at the console and still read from the script.
- After a while it can be tiring to stand, so a mediumsize or tall stool is needed.
- Also needed is a light at the console, preferably a shaded lamp that directs the light down on the script and confines the light to the general area of the desktop of the podium.
- Of course a headset is needed to communicate with all technical departments during the performance—preferably wireless, but some theatres still have the kind with the wire jacked into an amplifier, which tethers to the SM to the console and gives limited range of movement away from the console.
- A panel of cue-light switches is standard equipment. This panel needs to be placed within arm's reach so that the SM can remain at the console with fingers on the switches and still read the cues from the cueing script.
- Many consoles are now equipped with TV monitors. Standard now are at least two monitors: one for the primary camera mounted on the balcony rail, which provides a wide view of the stage, along with an infrared camera providing the same type of view. If the show is a musical, more than likely a third monitor will be part of the SM's console, which will be of the conductor. In shows heavy with automation cues, one or two more monitors might be added to the SM's console, showing closer views of the stage where scenery, props, or stage pieces will be coming and going. As a side note, there can also be monitors on each side of the backstage for the ensemble performers to follow the conductor's lead as they sing along, performing the job *pit singers* used to have in times gone by.

The SM's Needs: Creature Comforts and Necessities

With the experience of calling different shows and working at different consoles, all SMs learn the things they like to have at the console to make them feel comfortable and at home. They do not always have control over the equipment available and how the console is set up, but they can be assertive in trying to get what they want and at the same time work with what they are given.

Headset

I cannot think of a situation in which an SM can work without a headset. Today, wireless headsets are almost standard equipment with one earpiece or muff, volume control, and several channels. If ever handed a two-ear muff headset, the SM must seek out one with only one. The SM needs to have one ear free to hear the dialogue through the sound monitors that will be placed on or near the console, the SM needs to hear the backstage activity, and if necessary the SM may have need to talk quietly with an actor or stage technician without having to remove part of the headset to hear.

Sound Show Monitor

SMs discover quickly they need to have at the console a small **show sound monitor**—a speaker through which they can hear the dialogue or, if the show is a musical, the singing onstage and the music from the orchestra pit. This is what is called the *show monitor*. Large show monitors or speakers are usually hung up above in the #1 wings, stage right and stage left, and are directed out on to the stage for the actors to hear the music or even the dialogue of other actors.

With the common use of microphones onstage and in the orchestra pit, and with the plentiful use of speakers throughout the stage and theatre, setting up a show monitor for the SM at the console is not a difficult task for the sound department. Most times they merely have to dig out of their equipment box an extra sound cable, run it to the SM's console, and attach a small monitor. However, some lesser technicians, ones who might not be willing to put out the extra effort, may suggest that the overhead sound monitor aimed on to the stage for the performers be tilted to include the SM's area, or maybe just pump up the volume so the SM can hear, or set up the SM's headset to include the sound on stage and from the orchestra pit.

None of the above is acceptable! Those choices are only a last alternative in the poorest situation, when nothing else can be done. First and foremost, never should the sound from the stage and the orchestral pit be included into the SM's headset. The SM needs to have clear communication without interference dialogue on the stage or music from the pit. Also, the SM needs to have control of the volume of the show monitor at the console because, on occasion, the SM has to bring up the volume to take a dialogue cue in a quiet moment, or might need to have the music louder to count measures of music or listen for the sound of a certain instrument. Whatever the SM's needs, the best working situation is a show monitor at the console over which the SM has control.

Reading Light

This is an item that SMs seldom consider and never give thought to in terms of calling the show. The spill of the light should be confined to the desktop portion of the console where the SM reads the cueing script and spill just enough onto the panel of cue-light switches. SMs should learn to read their scripts under a low-wattage bulb or have some kind of dimmer control to make the light brighter or dimmer so that when there is a blackout and the SM must, for some reason, look out into the darkness, he or she is not blinded. Working under a dim or low-wattage light requires less time for the SM's eyes to adjust to the darkness of the backstage or the stage itself. Also, if the intensity of the light on the cueing script is close to the intensity of the light coming from the TV monitors, the SM can move freely from the script to the monitor with minor adjustment. (See listed in Chapter 5 the kind of goose-neck, LED, intensity-controlled light discussed.)

The SM should never use a colored bulb or a gel to lower the intensity of the light. This will be the first choice that most lighting technicians will offer when an SM asks for a low-wattage bulb or dimming device to be attached to the light on the console. Remember, the SM's cueing script is color coded. Whatever colored bulb or gel is used will wash out that color in the cueing script and change the other colors used in noting the cues.

SM's Stool

Some SMs are comfortable standing throughout the show, while others like to sit. Most SMs do a combination. Certainly, one of the greater creature comforts invented by man is a device for sitting. Enter the SM's stool. Most theatres have stools scattered about. One of them may even be designated as the SM's stool. However, SM's stools have a way of disappearing, either being buried behind crates and boxes or being confiscated by a stage technician to

use at a workstation. One of the first things an SM must do on the first day at the theatre is to round up a stool to suit the SM's size and comfort and clearly and boldly mark it "Stage Manager."

Other Comforts and Necessities

The items listed above are ideal, should be standard, and should be what the SM has at the console on all jobs. Any other devices, inventions, or pieces of equipment that are available should also be used to aid the SM in calling cues for the show.

- A microphone, permanently placed at the SM console for the SM to make an announcement to the audience is a good idea, but not a necessity. However, more important, there needs to be a mic so the SM can make the **time calls** during the half-hour prior to curtain and to communicate messages or information to all within the dressing rooms, greenroom, or even the halls.
- A TV monitor with the view of the entire stage in the greenroom is almost standard now.
- In making the console functional and workable, there are items that no one thinks about until the middle of the show: pencils, notepaper, a stopwatch, a clock, the show reports, and drinking water.

Finally, in both subtle and assertive ways, the SM needs to establish the console and a small space around it as the SM's area, almost a home, which is not to be used by others without permission.

Having a Backup Plan

There is a danger, however, of the SM becoming dependent on all this helpful equipment. Electronics can and most assuredly will break down at one time or another throughout an SM's career. What is an SM to do? The show must go on. Only when the show becomes disabled beyond anyone's control and possibly a danger in some way will the SM stop the show. So the SM needs to have a plan worked out. Having an extra light bulb at the console for the lamp is the simplest thing to do. Having backup in case one of the many parts of the communication system goes out, such as the headset, show sound monitor, or TV monitors—especially the TV monitors through which the SM takes many visual cues—is a good idea. Probably one of the better plans is for the SM to insist that the console be placed backstage in a spot where he or she can also see on to the stage.

Backstage versus Back of the House

In some theatres the SM's console will be in a booth at the back of the house. For a small comedy or drama with a good ASM backstage, this can be a welcome occasion for the PSM. It affords the SM a better view of the performance, visual cues will be easier to call, and the SM is better able to judge the performance, keeping the show as it was set by the director. However, if given a choice, the SM should always choose to be backstage where the cast and crew are more aware of the SM's presence and the SM has more direct contact with them. From this vantage point, the SM has greater control over the show, can be more effective in correcting mistakes, and just generally can keep a hand on the pulse of the company. Sometimes the events and drama backstage can be as involved and complicated as the performance on stage.

Calling Cues for the Performance

Now that the console is set and ready, let us turn our thoughts to "calling" the cues. There are three parts to every cue:

1. The **WARN**:
2. The **STAND BY**
3. The **GO!**

The **WARN:**

We have already discussed the listlike form in noting the **WARN:** cues in Figure 13-7. The **WARN:** alerts the different technical departments that the cues are coming up. As a general rule of thumb, warnings are given to the technicians a minute or two before the cues are to actually happen. The **WARN:** is geared to allow the technicians time to prepare and be ready to execute the cue.

Eliminating the **WARN:** When calling cues for a simple show, a show where most of the cues are in a single form or in small and uncomplicated groups, the SM can eliminate the **WARN:** part, both verbally and in writing in the cueing script. The SM merely asks the technical department to STAND BY and when it is time gives the GO! command.

The **STAND BY**

The **STAND BY** tells the technicians to finish their preparation and be focused and ready to execute the cue on the SM's GO! command. The **STAND BY** part of calling cues is not written in the script. The **STAND BY** is given about ten seconds before the cues are to be called. In the delivery of the **STAND BYs**, the SM groups together the cues as they are in Figure 13-7. The SM simply says:

“Stand by electric cues 13, 13.3, 13.7, and 14.”
“Stand by sound cue 2.”
“Stand by auto cues 3 and 4.”
“Stand by on the rail for cues 6 and 7.”
“And stand by spotlights 1 and 2.”

Notice in calling the **STAND BYs** the SM does not give the description.

The **GO!**

This is the part of calling cues that separates the good SMs from the not so good. This is the part in which the SM demonstrates a talent for timing and makes the greatest artistic contribution to the show. This is the part in which the SM reigns supreme. Nothing happens until the SM says, “**GO!**”; this fact is written in stone and honored, as the Ten Commandments or Golden Rule might be honored. Everyone backstage who is taking a cue from the SM must wait and not execute the cue until the SM says, “**GO!**”

There are three parts in calling the **GO!**

1. First **the setup:** “Electric cue thirteen and number one spotlight...”
2. Then there is **the pause** while the SM waits for the precise time to call the cue as it is noted and caretied in the calling script,
3. And then the **“GO!”** which is delivered precisely, with clarity, and with assurance. There should be no doubt that the SM has called **GO!**

Calling Spotlight Cues

In shows where the SM is required to call spotlight cues, after about a week of working the show, the spotlight operators learn the cues and need less description of what they must do in each cue. When the SM is certain the spotlight operators know the cues and have good timing, the SM can become more abbreviated in delivering the information for each spot cue. After setting up the cue, the SM can also tell the operators to take the cue on their own. Working in this way expresses from the SM a vote of confidence. In addition, it gives the operators a sense of being in

control of their jobs and contributing to the show. It also frees the SM to concentrate on the timing of the other cues that must be called at the same time.

QUICK, Turn Page, More Cues

On occasion, after a group of cues on one page, there may be a cue coming up quickly on the next page. To remind the SM not to delay, the SM might make a note just after the group of cues, "QUICK—turn page," and might circle this note and draw an arrow pointing to the edge of the page. The SM does whatever will help in calling a mistake-free, well-timed show.

Calling Cues with Clarity

It is not only important for the SM to be clear in speech and diction in calling the cues over the headset, but also to be clear, concise, and orderly in conveying the information for each cue. In setting up cues, the SM first states the technical department by name, and then gives them the cue number, and then the brief description of what is to take place in the cue.

Pattern and Rhythm

More than likely, SMs are totally unaware of the **pattern** and **rhythm** they use while calling cues for a show. This is not something that is taught or purposely created. It happens naturally and each SM is different. It happens by calling show after show. In an effort to call a good show, beginning SMs refine their delivery and, in doing so, create their own pattern and rhythm.

The *pattern* is created by:

- The way the SM lists the cues in the WARN:
- The tone of voice in setting up the STAND BYs. While the WARNS: may have been casual in tone, the STAND BYS are given with some urgency or demand for attention.
- The inflection or feeling when giving the GO! that completes the pattern

The *rhythm* is created by:

- The amount of time the SM leaves between putting in the WARN: and the STAND BYs, by giving the WARN: one or two pages before the cues are to be executed (which is approximately one or two minutes in time)
- And then by giving the STAND BY and the amount of time before giving the GO! Some SMs will give the STAND BY, and then within two or three seconds give the GO! Others will take a full ten or more seconds.

After working a few shows with an SM calling the cues, the stage technicians unknowingly pick up on the pattern and rhythm. They become comfortable with it and fall into the swing of it, as one does when listening to music. For the beginning SM and for the PSM who at times must coach an assistant in the art of calling cues, understanding *pattern* and *rhythm* can be a helpful tool.

Vocal Inflection

In times past, before the use of computers, the timing at which the lights changed and the speed at which set pieces moved and things flew in and out were dependent entirely on the stage technicians who were manually executing the cue. Today, with automation and light cues programmed and executed electronically, the timing, speed, and movement of the set and lights are more uniform. The cues are executed with the same speed, timing, movement, and intensity

every time. There is no variation. For the most part, the SM no longer has to watch the stage or the monitor. There is no human element involved that might bring variation to the cue.

In times gone by, before computers, SMs learned not only to call cues with clarity and order but in places where it was important learned to call a cue with feeling and vocal inflection. This inflection acted as a reminder to the stagehands and was the SM's way of orchestrating the movement of cues, ensuring they would be executed as set by the designer and director. For example, Q13, the cue at the end of Scene 1 in our imaginary play, is noted as a blackout. In calling this cue, the SM might give the GO! sharply, crisply, and perhaps clipped. Even if the lightboard operator is working a computer, calling the cue in this way induces the operator to react and execute this light cue with the same sharpness and crispness. If this same cue were a slow, ten-count fadeout, the SM might call the GO! with a soft and drawn-out lilt, perhaps with the voice ending in an upward swing. The SM does not do this type of thing with all cues—it would be laughable and distracting—but is selective and uses this approach only on those cues that are manually executed by a person and those cues that bring a certain feeling and dramatic impact to a particular moment in the show.

I have said now several times over that though times have changed and things are different, it is still a good idea for the student SM and the beginning SM to know how things were done "back then." For surely at one time or another there may be failure and things may have to be done as they were in the past, if for nothing else but to save the moment during a performance.

Night Vision

At one time, the art of night vision was very important to the SM, especially when the SM had need to look upon a darkened stage to execute a cue. Today, in most working situations, a monitor for an infrared camera is part of the SM's setup on the console. However, I am almost certain that an SM will at one time or another (maybe even more times) work in a theatre where there will be not an infrared camera/monitor. It will be then that knowing how to use night vision will be as good as any new technology.

Night vision works when we peer out into the darkness, looking generally in the direction of the object we want to see, but not staring directly at it. This allows the night vision cones in the eyes to pick up the image and send it to the brain. However, with the pressure of calling cues perfectly for a show, some SMs might stare hard at the thing they need to see, thus preventing their night vision from working naturally. Whenever you find yourself in a darkened place, at home or on a dark street with no lights, practice using your night vision. Remember, do not stare directly at the thing you are trying to see, but just toward the direction in which the thing or item is placed.

Calling a "Tight" Show and Keeping the Cues "Flowing"

When calling a group of cues, such as the ones demonstrated in Figure 13-6, the SM must in every way keep the execution of the cues as tight as possible to keep the entire scene change short and flowing.

As the SM learns the cues, he or she finds places where the next cue can be called before the previous cue has been completed. For example, in Figure 13-6, there is the Auto4 cue, which is turning the turntable for the next scene, which is the office. The next cue (a visual cue) is **RAIL-Q7**, which brings in the office drop. The rail cue cannot be called until the turntable is in place so that the office drop can slip into place without hitting or damaging whatever set pieces happen to be on the turntable.

So, in tightening up the calling of these two cues and to keep things flowing, the SM does not wait until the turntable is stopped and in place before calling **RAIL-Q7** (the office drop to come in), but instead:

- In techs, in the first run-thrus of the show, and certainly in dress rehearsals, the SM sees how long it takes for the office drop to come in from the time it is called to the time it reaches the deck.
- Next the SM judges how long it takes for the turntable to get into place.
- With the knowledge of these two things, the SM calculates in mind when to call the rail cue so that as the turntable is moving into place, the office drop is at least two-thirds of the way in and can slip in the rest of the way, just as the set pieces on the turntable have cleared. (Also, whenever possible, know that the rail person operating the drop is watching the stage, too.)

We are talking seconds here, but with a few seconds here and a few seconds there, the SM creates a **tight** and **flowing** scene change. No one knows or talks about the few seconds saved, but if the scene change takes place in view of the audience, the audience is entertained, the SM is credited with calling a good show, and the director swells with pride for having set such a magical scene change.

Visualizing Scene Changes and Transitions

For each performance, when calling a group of cues for a scene change or transition, such as the one in Figure 13-6, the SM should know what is happening with each cue that is called and have a strong visual picture in mind. The SM needs to visualize the lights changing, the things that fly in and out, and the turntable as it revolves.

As an exercise, it is a good idea for the SM to sit at the console at a time when there are no disturbances, have the script open, have the headset on, and go over the transition, verbally calling the cues, turning the cue-light switches on and off, and imagining each cue as it is called and the effect that that cue is having onstage.

With this kind of practice, the SM knows the change as well as his or her name or social security number. Then, if at any time during a performance something should go wrong, the SM will be able to correct the problem and remain in control. The SM cannot keep mistakes from happening but, with such familiarity, can quickly correct them.

Hand Cues

Hand cues are given when no other means of communication is available. With the use of headsets and cue lights, this means of giving a GO! cue is used less and less. However, like everything else that is fading out of use, now and then it becomes necessary to use the good old hand cue.

For the SM to give a stage technician or a performer a **hand cue**, the SM first gets the person's attention in the form of a WARN: or a STAND BY and at the same time raises his or her arm high in the air so the person can clearly see the SM's position. When it is time for the person to GO! and execute the cue, the SM sharply lowers the arm in a clear and definitive manner. There should be no doubt, uncertainty, or tentativeness in making this gesture.

The SM's Sacred Space while Calling Cues

Around three minutes to starting the show or maybe just after calling for places, the SM does a check-in of the technical crew over the headset. No matter how bad a day it may have been, the SM must set that all aside and greet the crew in a pleasant manner, maybe even offering personal commentary as each technical department checks in.

Calling cues for the show requires the SM's complete attention. Any distraction can lead to missing a cue or calling it with the wrong timing. From the start the SM establishes that the channel of communication used by the SM is sacred space and asks that any commentary, conversation, or joking between departments be done on one of the other channels. While it is a known fact that the SM should not be disturbed, the SM reestablishes that and asks those standing around the console during the performance to be quiet.

A Note of Thanks and Appreciation: At the end of every performance the SM should in some way acknowledge the crew for their work. As soon as the final curtain is in, the SM should announce over the headset to the crew, "Ladies and gentlemen, once again a good show, my mother thanks you, my father thanks you, I thank you, and most of all our producer thanks you." If the show did not go particularly well due to some technical problems or an error the SM might have made, the SM acknowledges this too: "Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your good work despite the botched-up scene change I called going into Scene 3, and the late light cue at the top of Act II."

In Closing

Creating a cueing script and calling cues for a show can be for the SM very satisfying and fulfilling. This is one of the times the SM makes an artistic contribution to the show. It is, however, a contribution sometimes overlooked or underestimated by the SM's peers and superiors. The audience should never be aware of the SM's work. They have come to be entertained and swept into the magic and illusion of theatre. It is right that the SM's work is lost to them. The SM who looks for glory and praise for the work done in calling a good show looks to a barren field, an empty room, a house with no occupants. The experienced SM knows the importance of this work and its contribution to the show. Whatever praise or glory the SM needs must come from inside. However, occasionally someone will recognize the SM's efforts and value the continual good work done in calling a good show.

Learning how to note cues in a cueing script and learning how to call cues for a show is not something that can be done in one chapter or in one semester of study. This is an art and craft that is perfected by experience and by observing others, and then by doing it over and over again and again. It is learned by calling a bad show, making mistakes, learning from those mistakes, and then moving on, perfecting and improving with each performance and each production.

The Professional Experience

At this moment I can think of two nightmares upon which an SM should not dwell, but which are horrifying if they happen. One is to call the cues wrong in a major scene change during a performance and have the scenery crashing together and possibly causing injury to someone. The other is losing the calling script and not having a backup copy. Fortunately, in my worst calling of a scene change, I was able to salvage the moment by not destroying the scenery or injuring anyone. However, I did once lose the SM's calling script when it was the only copy.

Lost and Never Found: An SM's Nightmare

I was working for a production company where we produced four star-vehicle musicals a year. For each production, we had only two weeks of rehearsals and seven days for techs. Needless to say, getting the shows on was always an intense period. As the PSM, I had to learn to do only the charts, plots, plans, or lists absolutely necessary. The staff and crew heads usually were the same people on each of the productions, and they worked efficiently and economically. For each show, I was assigned an apprentice assistant, which handicapped the situation somewhat, but the apprentice was always anxious to learn and put in the time. The sets and props were rented and most times were from the original productions. Usually the star had already done the show, either on Broadway or in some other production. If not, the star worked before the rehearsals began, learning the songs and dialogue. We worked like a well-oiled machine. The experience was often likened to working summer stock.

One of the important things I delayed in doing my work was making a copy of the cueing script. Many times, up to the opening moments of the show the director was changing cues, and I knew that the next day at rehearsals he would have more. We would preview on Thursday night, have a rehearsal the next day, and then officially open the show that night and have a matinee and evening performance on Saturday and Sunday. By Sunday night we were exhausted. I had learned to put off making a copy of the script until Monday, our day off. On Monday, I would clean up the script and then at the production office make two copies, leaving one at the office and one at the theatre.

Actually, the one copy of the script I had was not lost; it was inadvertently stolen. It was in my SM's bag. The bag was leather and that is what attracted the thief. I was not aware of the bag being missing until Monday afternoon when I was ready to go to the office to make the copies of the cueing script. I cannot begin to tell you the feelings I experienced at the moment of discovery. My whole world dropped out from under me.

The only good part was that it was Monday and we did not have a performance until Tuesday night. I reported the bag missing to the police and scoured the neighborhood, hoping the thief emptied the contents of the bag in some garbage dumpster, but my time was running out. I needed to have the script for the Tuesday night performance. It was already late afternoon and if I acted now I could recreate the cueing script within the next twenty-four hours. The two major areas of cues were the light cues and the set moves. I called the lighting director, but he had gone to his home in the mountains. His daughter called him. He was just leaving to go upstream to do some fishing. He had his master script with him and he said he would leave it in the cabin for me. He gave me directions. It was a ninety-minute trip each way—three hours of valuable time. Before leaving, I called the TD, set up an early meeting for Tuesday morning with him, and asked if the head carpenter and the flyman could also be there. He was most accommodating and

sympathetic. He expressed his thanks to God that it was not him who had to re-create the script. That was no comfort for me.

Having read through the chapter on creating and noting the cueing script, you know what was involved in recreating the cueing script. Once the lost information was gathered, it then had to be color coded and put into readable form. By 5:30 on Tuesday afternoon, I completed the script. Word of my having lost the script had spread throughout the company. Everyone was a little worried that night. After 123 light cues, thirty-six sound cues, thirteen major scene shifts and a dozen assorted other cues, I missed only one cue in the re-creation. It was one of those point cues that had been written in during technical rehearsals and that the lighting designer had not written into his script. The experience was a lesson well learned—one I wish I had not gone through.

Having read Chapter 5, “The Electronic SM: Tools, Supplies, and Equipment,” you know the SM’s bag does more than just carry a script, a few pieces of paper, some snack food, and possibly a change of underwear. It is an office. It took several weeks before I remembered everything I had in the bag and was able to replace it.

Technological Advancements

Moving Lights, Light Emitting Diodes, Lasers, Haze Makers, Scenic Projections, and Automated Scenery

Up to this point, we have talked about the technology the SM now uses in the function and operation of the job. Well, now we move to the theatre and on to the stage into another world of technology—moving lights, light emitting diodes, lasers, haze makers, scenic projections, and automated scenery.

In the first edition of this book, after having talked about putting together a cueing script, it was a natural progression to move on into technical rehearsals. It would, however, be a capitol offense if we did not spend some time with the technological advancements that have become part of the theatre—some slowly, piece by piece, innovation by innovation, others so rapidly that in the blink of an eye the SM has been confronted with new ways of working.

Moving Lights

Lighting units have become so advanced in what they perform and deliver, and in the effect they bring to the stage, that I cannot help but playfully give them a *classification* of their own, perhaps the genus and species *Intelligencia iluminata*, or what theatre folk and technical people refer to as **intelligent lighting**. While these units presently hang alongside some of the standard, traditional, conventional lighting units, they are now dominating and soon will bring to extinction any lighting instrument that cannot perform some kind of acrobatic action, like changing color, switching to different gobos, changing beam size, focusing, having the shutters programmed, or giving off some kind of prismatic effect as designed by a lighting director and controlled by a keyboard operator.

Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs)

LED lights are an efficient, energy-saving means of light production, bringing more intensified and brighter light to the stage. The diode is the replacement of the incandescent bulb or halogen lamp, and like the moving or intelligent light, these are already making lamps and light bulbs a thing of the past. A greatly admired and desired feature of LEDs is their color-changing ability, making gels even more extinct.

For an understanding of what a light emitting diode is, perhaps a is needed. Grant you, what I offer here is a very elementary explanation. At this time, for both the student and beginning SM, it is not important to know the absolute technical details, but rather to have a general knowledge when speaking of a **diode** or LED lights, for surely the terms will be part of lighting conversations that an SM has with stage technicians:

A diode is a very small, square-shaped or dome-shaped solid piece of plastic-like material made up of a mixture of chemical elements. Incased within this treated plastic is a positive and negative conductor that, when submitted to an electric current, reacts with the chemical of the diode and emits light of a particular color.

For a more comprehensive understanding of LED lighting, talk to any stage electrician or technical director, or go on the Internet.

Lasers

In the scheme of things, lasers are old hat in comparison to moving lights and LEDs. While lasers were brought to use in the sixties and seventies, they really became prominent in the eighties and nineties, mostly in rock concerts. Then by the turn of the century they made their way into theatre and the stage. Again, in simple layman's terms, *lasers lights are a tight, concentrated, focused beam of light.* At this time, suppose we leave it at that because further explanation will require greater definition to understand the technical workings—for example:

Laser lights are devices that emit light through a process of optical amplification based on the stimulated emission of electromagnetic radiation. Stimulated emission is the process by which an incoming photon of a specific frequency can interact with an excited atomic electron, causing it to drop to a lower energy level. The liberated energy transfers to the electromagnetic field, creating a new photon with identical phase, frequency, polarization, and direction of travel as the photons of the incident wave. This is in contrast to spontaneous emission that occurs at random intervals without regard to the ambient electromagnetic field.

See what I mean. Presently, isn't it better just to know that *lasers are tight, concentrated, focused beams of light?*

Haze Makers and Smoke Machines (CO₂ Machines)

These units are mounted up high onstage where the lighting units are hung or at stage deck level. They go hand in hand with the design of lighting, emitting a thin layer of smoke or haze and filling the air, bringing definition to the rays and shafts of lights and the beams of lasers. They are mounted up high so the smoke can slowly drift downward to fill the air.

Scenic Projections

These are here to stay. Projecting images on to the stage started simply as maybe a picture with the use of a slide projector or a motion-picture projector from at the back of the house in a projection or spotlight booth. But then with the advancement and technology applied to moving and intelligent lights and the use of **gobos**, scenic projections became a natural occurrence and rapidly grew in size. The technology's potential was quickly recognized, and before anyone realized, it became a separate department and permanent part of theatre design. Now, especially in musicals, projected images and designs are splattered upon scenery, backdrops, the stage floor, the proscenium, and even the walls of the theatre to bring the audience more into the mood/environment of the play, making them a greater part of the illusion and experience of going to the theatre.

There is no limit as to what can be projected—anything an artist can imagine, anything a photo-shopped picture can enhance, combine, manipulate, or distort: perhaps a darkened or enchanted forest, or a simple pattern of colorful leaves falling in the breeze, or maybe filling the stage with snow, or bringing the audience into an enclosure that would have required major set building. How about the Paris street scene of the Broadway production of *An American in Paris*?

Used in straight plays and elaborately in musicals, projections have also made a tremendous contribution to dance shows where once there was a simple curtained stage and lots of front and cross lighting. Now there are moving lights and projected patterns. In one show, the script called for the lead performer to go into a recording studio. Well, instead of bringing in new walls, projections were able to splatter across flats already present on stage that spiky soundproof look you see in recording studios. Then, with an overlay projection of a sign blinking on and off reading "recording," the scene was set and the audience was taken into a recording studio. In another situation in an opera, a grand staircase was required that traveled on almost into infinity. Well, a partial stair unit was built and then with the right projection, the rest of the staircase was projected. It was spectacular and saved the production company a lot of money.

Computer-Driven Automation

This is **electronically moving scenery** on and off stage that was once done by stage technicians hidden by the piece they were moving, or scenery that was once brought on and off stage by a hand-cranked winch or, even more primitive, pushed and pulled by a stick. Automation has been around since the eighties when it was used extensively in *Phantom of the Opera*, but it did not become a large part of the stagecraft/technical theatre until the turn of the twenty-first century. At present, there are several automation systems and maybe one will eventually become the standard.

Let us not forget curtains, drapes, and flat pieces of scenery (sliders) that automation now moves and were once done manually by rope and pulley. With the ease and gliding of scenery that automation provides, it seems that scene changes once done in the dark are a thing of the past and are now all part of the visual entertainment and pleasure of the audience. In effect this makes the SM's job a little more difficult when calling cues for a show because now the SM must be like a musical conductor, moving lights and scenery with flow and perfect timing.

Sound

Slowly sound has made its way into the theatre starting back with the introduction of high fidelity and stereo-phonic sound in the late fifties. At first it was just foot mics at the edge of the stage, and then hanging mics from above. It wasn't until the seventies with the advancement of wireless radial mics that sound began taking its place in theatre. Then by the eighties and nineties, with the perfection of amplification and giant powerful speakers that were designed mostly for rock concerts, we began seeing sound speakers mounted alongside or high above the proscenium.

While theatergoing purists once disliked the idea of the performers being mic'ed, today it is an accepted fact, and what is more impressive is that practically every speaking role, no matter how small, can be mic'ed so the audience will hear no difference in sound from a major speaking role to, let's say, a walk-on part. Also in musicals, the chorus/ensemble performers are all mic'ed to enhance songs and bring a fuller sound. At one time they had to rush to the orchestra pit to sing over mics set up and be led by the conductor. Today, they can be anywhere in the backstage area, and when it is time for them to add their vocal prowess, the sound person merely brings up the gain to their mics, while the ensemble performers watch the conductor on TV monitors set up backstage just for that purpose.

In Awe and Wonderment: While these devices and technological advances in theatre are commonplace to the student and beginning SM of today, they were not part of my work and life when I was first starting out, so I marvel at them and look in awe at what they bring to the stage, to the play, to the performance, and ultimately to the audience.

So What Should Today's SM Know about the Latest Technology?

In actuality not much more than a good thumbnail sketch of how things are done, how they work, and how they are used in the show. For example:

Automation

- While the SM does not need to know how to program and operate the computer or set up the actual apparatus, the SM does need to know that in any show in which the scenery will be moved on and off stage by computerized automation the stage will be outfitted with a raised deck at least a couple of inches higher, if not three to four inches higher, than the actual stage floor, and within the space between the stage floor and the deck, there is housed the *wire rope* and pulleys that are rigged to a power motor (winch) that will crank that wire rope around. This wire rope is designed to travel pieces of scenery or platforms, more commonly called pallets.

- For the scenery or pallets to travel securely on and off stage, cut into the deck are tracks or spaces that guide the pieces, but first the scenery or pallets must be **dogged** and **knifed** in.

Strongly attached to the wire rope under deck is a metal unit, which is called the “dog” The **dog** is the all-important part. The automation operator presets the dog (which is under the deck) off into the wings. A deck technician puts the piece of scenery or scene pallet into place, lining up the lead end of the unit with the dog under the deck.

At the lead corner of the scenery or pallet there is a slot into which a six-to-eight-inch piece of metal is slipped in. While this piece of metal is called a knife, in actuality it is a flat, rectangular piece of metal. This **knife** travels into the slot, down through the track of the deck, and into the *dog*, marrying the front end of the pallet or scenery to the wire rope. At the tail end of the unit is still another slot into which another knife is slipped that also passes into the track of the deck, but this one does not attach to anything. So while the *dog* at the front end pulls the unit on to the stage, (as an Alaskan dog would pull a sled) the knife at the other end simply keeps the unit on track and prevents it from fishtailing.

- **Pallets versus Wagons:** Actually there is no “pallets verses wagons.” They are one and the same. Pallets are today’s version of the wagon. While wagons were four-to-six-inch platforms, pallets are low-rise, standing two to three inches high. The wagon was highly noticeable to the audience—the pallet is barely visible.
- Hidden under the pallet or piece of scenery are hard rubber or polymer cylinders called **low-profile casters**, which also add to the low-profile appearance of the pallet. The casters become a *cylindrical wheel* on which the pallet can roll along. If what is on the pallet is lightweight, then a tight-knit nap carpet, such as outdoor carpeting, can line the bottom of the pallet.

It is interesting to note that with all the advancement in technology that automation has to offer, *hand-cranked winches* (especially in musicals) are also used in conjunction with the automated system.

Sliders

This is a term that has snuck into our theatrical lexicon. **Sliders** are primarily large sections of traveling scenic flats that can serve any number of purposes within the design of the stage. They can be stored offstage and when wanted brought on by automation and placed wherever the designer chooses. They can also be preset on each side of the stage only partially in view of the audience, looking as if they are the *legs* that create the entrances and exits to the *wings*. Still further they can operate together by gliding on to the stage and meeting in the middle, or they can be placed on separate tracks, working independent of each other, overlapping and even passing.

For the most part they are simple flats either sprayed with a textured paint or covered in a fabric. Sometimes they are just squared-off flats and other times can be partially cut out, such as the ones used in the Broadway production of *An American in Paris*, where they were cut out at the top to give the appearance of the roof and chimneys of a building in Paris. In another show, where it was important for the audience to see a ship docking, a slider, cut out into the shape of the bow of a streamliner, entered from stage left, stopped almost at center, and with the correct lighting against the night sky, the illusion was enough to keep the audience within the realm of reality and believability.

Sliders split their importance between *projections* and *scenic design*:

- For projections, and for that matter for lighting too, sliders become the canvas on to which images can be projected and color splattered. Once again, in the Broadway production of *An American in Paris*, once the sliders got into place, a street scene was created first by the cutout chimneys and rooftop at the top of the sliders, and then with the lighting of the stage to create a night scene, and probably most important of all and most visually appealing, stimulating, and thrilling to the audience was to see the facade of the Paris building slowly materialize on to the surface of the sliders as if in the style of a famous artist.
- As part of set design, sliders can be placed and arranged to make the stage smaller, creating a more intimate performing area, or opened up to a full stage. At other times sliders can be the backing for a scene on one part of the stage, with another slider being the backing for another scene.
- With technology advanced as it is, these sliders can also be made into a panel of LED lights to make up a **video wall** that can be seen sliding and gliding on and off stage.

Between the sliders, moving lights, projections, pallets moving on and off stage, and a bare minimum props, an entire play, even a musical, can be produced.

The Pizza-Cutter Device: The *Idler Wheel*

There is one other part to a slider that an SM should add to his or her well of knowledge. At the bottom corners of each slider there is a metal device that is best described as a **pizza cutter**—well, in fact, that is what it is called. By a more technical name it is an **idler wheel**, but I am willing to bet that only the technician who sets up the automated system and perhaps a very savvy technical director know it as an *idler wheel*.

The handle of this pizza cutter is attached to the bottom of the frame at each corner of the slider, while the round part sits within a slot, grooved out across the deck. While the slider is led on and off stage by a motorized traveler track from above, this pizza cutter below aids in keeping the bottom of the flat traveling in a straight line, and at the other end, the pizza cutter aids in keeping the flat from fishtailing. When the slider is traveling off stage, the roles of the cutters are reversed.

The Lavalier Microphone: Body MIC, Wireless, Body Pack, or Radio Pack

The **lavalier wireless body mic** may not be the newest entry into technical theatre, but it remains the standard. What makes it important to today's SM is that surely everyone in the cast will be mic'ed, and at the half-hour call before each performance, the SM will announce to the cast to report to the sound person to get fitted for their radio packs.

The wireless part may not be impressive to today's student and beginning SM, but for SMs who remember the long strands of wire dressing the apron of the stage and the limitation of movement while being used, the wireless is quite an advancement.

The lavalier is not entirely wireless. Whatever wires are required remain with the performer, as a wire leads from the head of the mic to the radio transmitter or *radio pack* hidden away, most times tucked in the small of the performer's back under the costuming.

At first the head of the mic was placed as close to the throat as possible. Today, it is almost a pinhead, flesh colored, and is often placed on the forehead, just at the hairline. Some singers in concert choose to have the old-style headset type with the arm of the microphone conspicuously coming around the side of the face with the ball-shaped, sponge-head mic placed right at the mouth. While this may work for concertgoers, this would be a great distraction for a character being played, and surely for the theatregoer seated in the audience.

The body pack is no bigger than a pocket calculator or bulky smart phone. It is placed in a cotton pouch and strapped on the actor. The cotton pouch is used to absorb perspiration. If a performer becomes wet during the performance or has a tendency to perspire heavily, the sound person will first place the body pack in a plastic baggie or condom to prevent the unit from shorting out. The body pack is battery operated, and it is common practice to change out the batteries after or before each performance—even if the sound person believes there is still some use to the battery. The power pack transmits the sound signals to a radio receiver, which is usually somewhere backstage. The receiver sends the signal to the amplifier, which in turn broadcasts the signal through speakers to the audience.

Assisted Listening

What is new in the world of sound, however, is the **assisted listening systems** that theatres now have built into their establishments. The SM has no direct involvement with this part of the theatregoing experience, but it is important that with this system every actor with a speaking or singing part be mic'ed so that the sound can be transmitted to the assisted listening system. It is then imperative that the sound department keep all mics maintained and that the SM quietly and unobtrusively sees that this work is being done with care.

Some Basic Knowledge about Moving and Intelligent Lighting

This is a large section of information that today's SM should have as part of his or her vocabulary and working knowledge. We have already touched on moving lights, intelligent light units, and LED lighting, but let's go into a little more detail.

Before we jump into all of this, I am compelled to state once again that it is not important for the SM to know the absolute technical details of the different technical departments.

Intelligent Lighting

This refers to stage lighting that has automated and mechanical abilities beyond those of traditional, stationary, conventional lighting units. Moving light can be used as a follow spot where the actor follows the light rather than the light following the actor. The unit is preprogrammed and the actor learns to follow.

The Vari-Lite: The Moving Spotlight

The theatrical lighting company **Vari-Lite** was one of the first to come out with moving light fixtures. While Vari-Lite is the company name, for a while it was the common name for any moving light fixture; within a short time other companies came out with their more advanced and improved designs, which became the new lighting units of choice. However, from time to time, the SM may hear the term *Vari-Lite* used, especially from old-time stage-hands who have hung on to the terminology they first learned.

Moving and intelligent lights are a lot more difficult to maintain and repair because there is so much going on inside of them. With so much that can possibly go wrong, many shows, especially big-time musicals on Broadway, will have an electrician maintain and calibrate the units daily.

Because of their moving ability, moving lights can give the range of about sixteen Lekos. What is more, no gels are needed because built into LED lighting units are Red, Green, Blue, and White diodes, and with the units that use halogen and xenon lamps, a CYM (Cyan, Yellow, Magenta) system of getting color is used (more about LED color and **CYM** color further on in this chapter).

The Source Four Lighting Instrument

The Source Four revolutionized conventional ellipsoidal reflector spotlight lamps such as the Lekolite, including the use of a lower-wattage lamp. At present, the Source Four is most favored. It is dressed and outfitted with technology that brings it closer to being a smart/intelligent light by building into it or attaching things that the larger moving/intelligent lights can do. However, you can be sure that by the time you are reading this, it has become much improved with many more capabilities, and perhaps is even called by another name.

A Thumbnail Sketch of the History of Lightboards

- There was at first the **resistance dimmer board**. They were those large black boards that took up a wall backstage, weighing two and three thousand pounds, which had built into them large resistant dimmers that were operated and controlled by levers you could move up and down to reduce or maximise the electricity being sent to the lighting instrument installed onstage. If there should still be one in a theatre in which you work, know that it stands dormant as a relic or dinosaur.
- By the seventies, the **George Izinour lightboard** came into use and was touted as a great advancement. It still had a lot of the old resistance-style dimmers, but now they were smaller and could be put on to a tabletop, but even at that it was large, and instead of having levers the lights could now be controlled with sliders.

- The big change came in the late eighties with the dimmers themselves, when the resistors became even smaller and more compact, and could now be controlled by an electrical signal. Then, with the new and improved software programs, the stage lights could be controlled by a computer operator at a keyboard.
- With this major change, the units containing the dimmers became cabinets called a **dimmer rack**. A good-size dimmer rack can be installed backstage, taking up little room, or be somewhere else, perhaps in another room, a closet, or even down in the basement of the theatre.
- Within the dimmer racks are slots or drawers called **bays**, each bay containing two dimmers, each dimmer controlling the amount of electrical power going to a lighting unit onstage.
- A good-size dimmer rack can control 150 to 200 lighting instruments.
- And what was once called a *dimmer board* is now a desktop **lighting console**, along with the monitor displaying the different light units along with the information programmed into them, and a keyboard for easy access and operation.

DMX Cable (Data Matrix)

We cannot leave the dimmer rack with its bays without talking about the all-important **DMX cable** that delivers electrical data from the desktop lightboard to intelligent lighting instruments onstage. The DMX cable's specific use is to run data, which gives the lighting designer and computer operator the ability to control the lighting instrument in whatever way the unit is capable of being controlled.

Getting Color from the Intelligent Lighting Instruments

There are intelligent lighting instruments that provide light by way of LEDs, and we have intelligent lighting instruments that provide light via halogen or xenon lamps.

Getting Color from LED Light Units

Earlier, we defined the diode as

a very small, square-shaped solid piece of plastic-like material made up of a mixture of chemical elements. Incased within this treated plastic is a positive and negative conductor that, when submitted to an electric current, reacts with the chemical of the diode to emit light of a particular **color**.

Within LED lighting instruments there are clusters of diodes. Each cluster contains diodes capable of emitting **Red**, **Green**, **Blue**, and White light. The lighting designer or computer board operator tells the computer the specific color, and through the program, the DMX cable, and the motherboard within the dimmer rack, the desired color is attained.

From time to time, the SM may hear the term **RGBW** (**Red**, **Green**, **Blue**, and White). This acronym should also be part of the SM's working vocabulary, for surely it will be used in communicating and having conversations with electricians, technical directors, lighting designers, and even knowledgeable directors.

Getting Color from Lighting Units Using Halogen and Xenon Lamps

Within each of these units are **three colored prismatic lenses**:

- ▶ **C = Cyan** (greenish blue, complementary to Red)
- ▶ **Y = Yellow** (complementary to Blue)
- ▶ **M = Magenta** (a purplish red, complementary to Green)

These three lenses are stacked in front of each other. As light passes through each lens, it is bent. When the prisms are combined and lined up, and as the light bends through each prism, the desired color is attained.

At one time or another, today's working SM will hear a lighting technician talking about the *CYM color*. This is the system of getting color from the intelligent lighting instrument of which they speak. You can be sure that as this technology becomes improved, it is possible that more prisms will be added and the simple acronym of *CYM* will be changed to include the new color added.

Led Tape

LED tape is one more little thing that today's SM might want to know about. It really has little effect on the SM's job, but this LED tape will surely come up in conversation, perhaps during tech rehearsals when the lighting designer asks the SM to find out when the LED tape will be put on to line the edges of the scenery, flats, platforms, or sliders.

LED tape is a thin strip or run of LED lights all placed in a row that can be ordered to different lengths. There are many sections of diodes to a strip of LED tape. Each section, about eight inches long, is soldered to the next section. If the tape needs to be made longer or shorter, it has to be added to, or cut at the soldered point; otherwise the section that was cut in the middle will no longer emit light.

What makes LED tape desirable is that it has a low profile. Unlike the standard lighting instruments, LED tape is easily concealed and yet can flood an area with a large amount of light. The diodes are mounted on woven cloth, which makes it flexible, and it has a sticky backing that allows it to be applied to most surfaces. When bought, you can have the tape all in one color or have it laid out with RGBW diodes so that different colors can be attained.

The LED Panel, Screen, or Video Wall

At present the use of LED screens in theatre is minimal. With the rapidity of technological advancement that has come to theatre, it seems almost certain that within the working lifetime of a student or beginning SM of today, he or she will be working with an LED screen of some kind, if not have one running the entire length of the upstage, where once the cyclorama was placed. The greatest and most spectacular use of an LED screen or **video wall** is at Radio City Music Hall, where one spans the entire length of the stage and is used most effectively in their Christmas show featuring the Radio City Rockets.

Once again another thumbnail sketch. This time for an LED flat screen:

An LED flat screen or video wall is made up of sections or panels. Each panel has within it hundreds of tiny squares grouped together side by side containing clusters of RGB (Red, Green, Blue) diodes. They are all placed evenly and closely together, creating one pixel. As you may know, a pixel is one of many thousands of squares and, when standing side by side with other pixels, will make a picture.

Gobo

A gobo is a physical stencil or template that is slipped in front of a lighting source. It is used to control the shape of light being projected on to the stage, such as moonlight filtering through the leaves of a tree, or sunlight streaking past the iron bars of a prison or dungeon. The term **gobo** is used generally to refer to any device, which produces patterns of light and shadow on the stage. Gobos are readily used along with projections, adding another layer of color, image, and design. In theatre, the term *gobo* is an acronym that stands for "go before optics." More and more glass gobos are being used and in time will probably become part of the smart, intelligent lighting units, offering places for several gobos of different images to be used within the production.

Lumen, Luminaire, Luminous Flux

These terms are creeping into the theatre lexicon, depending upon the part of the country being worked. All having to do with lighting—the brightness of light, and the intensity.

Lumen

The measurement of light or the intensity of light coming from a lighting instrument. It is the measurement of light itself, as in large lighting units such as a 1K or a 10K. Originally, the *K* stood for a thousand watts of light—a *kilowatt*. However, today it's lumens. I guess the *K* was never advanced to the *L* for lumens. But then it might be confused with the Roman numeral L, which stands for fifty.

Luminaire

Any instrument used in the lighting of the stage. This is a term commonly used in Europe, and with the advent of moving lights and intelligent lighting in general, we in America have switched over from *stage lighting instrument* to *luminaire*.

Luminous Flux

This is *the amount of visible light coming from out of the light fixture*, the brightness and intensity of light coming from a lamp within a stage lighting instrument, and the measure of the strength of a light source. *Flux* is the flowing out of light from a lighting fixture.

The term *lumen* came into great use when moving/intelligent lights came into theatre. One definition says that it is a word used for all lighting fixtures on stage. Another says it is a light that is projected on to the stage to look as if it is light coming from a practical prop lamp on the set, or sunlight through a window, or the light that would come from a lit fire. The term “lumen” is used differently in different parts of the country and even across the world. As a working SM, you will find these terms used interchangeably. Eventually, they will fall into their placement of definition.

More on Smoke, Hasers, and Fog Machines

Essentially, units made and designed to make smoke, haze, or fog all work the same. Each unit has a heating device that heats a saline solution and, depending on the makeup of the solution, gives you the smoke, haze, or fog. Built into the unit is a fan that blows out the desired consistency.

A **haze unit** emits a light airy film of smoke or fog that hangs, filling the air, which allows the shafts of light from the lighting instrument and laser units to be seen, which becomes part of the lighting designer's effect onstage.

To create a **fog**, CO₂ is heated, but then the vapors from the heating need to be cooled, so units that create fog also have a chill box. While heat rises, cool lays low, and for the fog effect it is desirable that it travel and cling to the floor of the stage. While CO₂ machines are most popularly used, **dry ice** machines make a much thicker, more dense layer of fog that will cling and travel the stage deck, as seen in the boat scene in productions of *Phantom of the Opera*.

The fog created from dry ice is really CO₂, and as it travels the stage it pushes the oxygen out of the way. If a person becomes incased in it, such as the musicians in the orchestra pit, it can be deadly. There is a whole section of Equity rules on what is and is not approved with the use of these units and what an SM must do (post these and have on hand material safety data sheets—see below).

Equity Rules Governing Atmospherics (Smoke, Haze, Fog, and Firearms)

In today's show with lighting designers using shafts of light coming from different light units as part of their design, there is sure to be two or more smoke machines to fill the air with a thin layer of smoke. It is therefore important for all SMs to know the entire section of information on what Equity calls "atmospherics."

Much too involved, specific, and detailed for discussion here, this information is attained by going on to the Equity site, www.ActorsEquity.org. It is, however, buried within the "Documents Library," under "Safe and Sanitary," and further under "Smoke and Hazers."

The Material Safety Data Sheet

In addition to what Equity offers and requires, there is the material safety data sheet (MSDS) that must be posted in any workplace where potentially hazardous materials are being used. This sheet is prepared by the manufacturer of the chemical and describes the *physical and chemical properties, physical and health hazards, routes of exposure, precautions for safe handling and use, emergency and first-aid procedures, and control*. Aside from having copies posted in the immediate backstage area, it might do well to have a copy posted on the Equity callboard. More than likely, the technician installing and working any of the smoke/hazer units in the show will know of the MSDS requirements and have at least one copy to be posted. The SM can then make additional copies if needed. It is the responsible SM who double-checks with the technician to see that all is in accordance on this matter. If the technician is delinquent in any way, the SM should then talk with the technical director to see that all is made right in compliance with the particular chemical being used.

Aluminum Trusses

Trusses are sturdy, lightweight support structures made from tubular aluminum and shaped into various sizes. What we usually see as set design and hanging overhead in front of the proscenium are box trusses—long and rectangular.

At one time, aluminum trusses were strictly used for hanging lights either up in the flies or out in the house just in front of the proscenium. Mostly they were painted black to be hidden away as much as possible from the view of the audience, or at least from out of their sight lines. However, when lighting and set designers started using the lighting instruments as part of the scenic design, very soon trusses too became an acceptable part of the stage.

Scenic Projections

Projections certainly need a little more discussion. Let's get a deeper view and understanding of the contribution that projections make to the stage and to theatre.

Projections are now a solid part of theatre spectacle, whether used in straight plays or elaborately in musicals. Projection is not going to replace scenic design; it is just going to enhance what is there, making it more visually stimulating and exciting. While there are effects that can be gotten with other technologies, projections are done cheaper and are just as effective.

Projection has made a tremendous contribution to dance shows, where once there was a simple curtained stage and lots of front and cross lighting. Now added to that are moving lights with gobos. Projections can be splattered across the cyclorama, either in *still* form or in *moving* pictures.

Projection can also change the texture and look of the stage without having to bring in drops or other pieces—for example, in a show where a scene calls for the lead performer to go into a recording studio. Well, instead of bringing in new walls, projections are able to splatter on to the surface of the flats (sliders) already on stage an image of that spiky, soundproof foam that is often used in recording studios. Then, with an overlay projection of a sign blinking on and off reading "recording," the scene is set and the audience taken into the studio within a magical second or two. For regional and community production companies that cannot afford a lot of scenery, plays that were once out of their consideration can now be done with just the expense of renting one or two projection units. In one local opera company, a scene called for a grand staircase that went on forever. Well, a partial stair unit was built; then, with the

right projection, the rest of the staircase was projected on to the canvas backdrop. It was spectacular, served the purpose, and saved the company a lot of money.

DLP Digital Projector

Though a lighting unit, the DLP (Digital Lighting Processing) is today's top-of-the-line digital projector, programmed and operated by a keyboard operator. It pans, tilts, zooms, and focuses, as well as projects video. It can show a motion picture or just a moving light pattern projected on to the stage or scenery. Each cue can be programmed into the unit and then call by the SM as either a light cue or a projection cue.

Some Basic Working Terms for Today's SM

Moving Lights

Intelligent lighting
Conventional lighting units
Light emitting diodes (LEDs)
LED lights
Vari-Lite—the moving spotlight
Source Four Leko
Lasers lights
Halogen and xenon lamps DMX (Data Matrix)
Dimmer bays or dimmer racks RGBW
CYM/Prismatic lenses
LED tape
LED panel, screen, video wall
Lumen
Luminaire
Luminous flux
Aluminum trusses

Projections/Scenic Projections

DLP projection unit
Gobos

Smoke Machines

Haze makers
Fog machines

Automation/Automated Scenery

Pallets/Wagons
Low-profile casters/Cylindrical wheels
Tight-knit nap carpet

Winch/Hand-cranked winches
Wire rope
Dog
Knife
Sliders
Pizza cutter/Idler wheel

Sound

Wireless radial mics
Mic packs/Radio pack
Lavalier mic
Body mic

Note: If you know these terms and have a general idea of how they work and how they are used in the production then you are on your way to being an SM in the twenty-first century. Also, remember, as an SM you will be entering as an assistant, and most assuredly as you work you will become flooded with the more technical details whether you want it or not. So at that point in your learning and working career, remain alert, and hear what the professional folk are saying. Take it in and ask questions. I found that practically every technician with whom I worked was thrilled and happy when I was interested in their part of the production.

Technical Rehearsals

When Stephen Sondheim wrote the lyric “Dot by dot... putting it together,” from his musical play *Sunday in the Park with George*, he was writing about the way the renowned artist George Seurat worked in creating his impressionistic masterpieces with dots of paint rather than strokes from the brush. However, Mr. Sondheim could have also been writing of the way that technical rehearsals work: “cue by cue... putting it together.” Cue by cue, the technical elements of the show are joined together with the work and artistry created by the actors and director in the rehearsal hall. The stage is the canvas on which the technical elements give the play mood, color, feeling, texture, environment, and movement.

The PSM and ASM

It was stated in the first chapter of this book that the ASM must be capable of doing all that the PSM does, and the information in each chapter, though seemingly directed to the head SM, includes the ASM as well. Only when there has been a clear separation of work duties have the terms *PSM* and *ASM* been used. This rule remains even more steadfast when discussing the work to be done by the SMs in techs. Whatever work duties are prescribed for the SM in this chapter, either both SMs will share the job, or while one is busy doing something, the other will take up and do another. Again, when there is a separation of work, that will be clearly defined.

No Rest for the SM

On the last day at the rehearsal hall, the SM closes out everything having and, in most working situations, heads to the theatre on the next day. Depending on the show and the technical setup, the crew may have already been working at the theatre for one or more days. They may have some or all of the scenery set up, and they may be finishing with focusing lights and putting in the last pieces of sound equipment. In other working situations, the crew may be just starting their work—the *drag-in* or *load-in*.

The Cast’s Work Schedule

Most times the cast is given one or two days off before starting technical rehearsals. In an Equity production contract, this can be their last day off for two weeks. According to an Equity agreement, the producer can work the cast for fourteen days straight without giving them a day off and without having to pay overtime. In addition, the producer can work the cast each day for ten hours—two five-hour periods—providing they have a two-hour meal break in between. This makes the workday twelve hours long and gives rise to the expression “**ten out of twelve.**” As a third part to this work agreement, there is a twelve-hour *turnaround clause*—that is, whatever time the cast is dismissed at the end of one day, twelve hours of time off must pass before the cast can be called in for rehearsals on the next day. The SM must know each part of this rule by heart and schedule rehearsals accordingly, or the SM will cause the producer a great expense in overtime payments.

Longer Day's Work for the SM

With the *ten out of twelve* rule, it has become a natural order of things to have the cast come in at noon. This gives the crew the morning hours to technically work on the show. With the cast coming in at that time, that means they can be worked until midnight, but remember they cannot be called back to rehearsals until noon on the next day. While this kind of a schedule works well for the performers and technicians, the SMs often have to come in at least an hour or two before the performers—sometimes to work with the different technical department, other times to get things ready for when the cast arrives because as soon as they come in technical rehearsals must begin. Every moment in techs is valuable, not only in time but in money for the producer. This makes the SM's day even longer, and at times it can become a fourteen- or fifteen-hour day.

The Nature of Technical Rehearsals

Going into technical rehearsals can be like going into an Olympic event; the participants must be ready and prepared, and there is no room for mistakes or hesitation. Working at performance peak is the only acceptable level. Every department and person in the production must stand strong, deliver, contribute their expertise, and remain responsible for themselves and their work.

For someone who does not know all that goes into technical rehearsals, ten to fourteen days sounds more than adequate to put a show together. For a small comedy or drama, half the time usually is enough. Even when doing a musical, if all goes smoothly, ten can be sufficient. However, technical rehearsals seldom take place without problems, setbacks, or delays. It is the nature of the beast—there are just too many layers, too many departments, and too many new parts being put together for the first time. Technical rehearsals bring together the creators, designers, and artists with the theatre, stage, craftspeople, technicians, sets, props, costumes, lights, sound, and so on. In technical rehearsals, the show becomes the main event. Even the actors, who up to this time have felt themselves to be the center of the production, must now step aside while the different parts of the production are put together.

Technical rehearsals are a time when things can go wrong, and often do. No matter how talented or experienced everyone may be, problems arise. There will be differences of opinion. Creative and artistic minds may clash. The patience factor can crash, and confidence can plummet. People can become emotionally spent. In addition, there is the ever-present enemy—time. Relentlessly, time moves forward without regard for people, problems, or situations. To some degree, all technical rehearsals have these things.

The SM Entering Techs

Of all the participants in techs, the SM must be in top form, both in body and spirit. Technical rehearsals will test any SM's endurance, skill, and performance ability. The SM will need to be confident and assured; stand strong, silent, and centered; keep a clear head; and not get caught in the drama when others may be ranting, raving, or going over the edge. An SM is best prepared for technical rehearsals by experiences from past technical rehearsals and by putting into application all the things we have discussed in this book thus far. Being ready for techs starts on the first day of the job, during the SM's pre-production time. If the SM has faltered or lagged behind in any part of the job up to this point, it can come back to haunt the SM, especially in technical rehearsals.

The SM's work in techs is wide, diverse, and aggressive. The SM appears to be focused only on the cueing script and learning to call the cues, but in truth continues working with the cast, serving the director, looking out for the producer's interest, and being available to the technicians to answer questions and feed them information. The SM creates a realistic daily schedule, seeing that everyone continues to work in a productive capacity and speaks up if time is being abused or is slipping away. SMs must think on their feet and facilitate whatever changes the producer, director, or designers present. SMs keep a watchful and critical eye for potential problems, circumventing those that can be circumvented and resolving others with dispatch. While working in the present, the SM is continually looking ahead, anticipating what must be done next. In short, the SM is the clockwork master backstage during technical rehearsals, the mainspring that keeps other wheels, sometimes wheels bigger than the SM, moving.

During techs, the SM works quietly and carries a big stick, keeping a low profile but being assertive and aggressive when needed and appropriate. The SM is not, however, confrontational or combative. Technical rehearsals are a time when the SM must apply “people” skills to an even greater intensity. The SM is quick to evaluate and accept the responsibility of the problems that go with the job, but is just as quick to give to others the responsibilities of their own jobs and problems. Above all things, for technical rehearsals an SM must be ready! The SM should not be doing in techs anything that could have been done prior to going into techs. All of the above applies to the ASM as well.

The SM's Work in Techs

The PSM and ASM arrive early on their first day of technical rehearsals. More than likely the crew is already there doing their work. The SMs’ entrance should go unnoticed. As much as possible, they should remain understated. From the start, the crew members will be observing them, sizing them up. Though the SMs will not be their bosses, the crew is anxious to know about the SMs—to see what kind of people they are. The SMs should go around, seeing the technicians with whom they have worked and introducing themselves to department heads whom they have not yet met. Conversations should be kept light, saving impending business for a little later in the morning.

First Business of the Day

Probably the first order of business for the PSM is to see that the SM’s tech table is set up:

- TV monitors.
- Cue-light panel.
- Microphone (**God mic**). In theatre parlance, this microphone is playfully named a *God mic* because when the director speaks through the mic, the disembodied voice comes booming out from the darkened theatre as if coming from God.
- Hooded lamp by which the SM can read the script. This was a lamp I would bring myself. It had the right-size bulb, a dimmer dial attached to the wire, and the shade was solid so no light would reflect in my eyes or on to the other nearby tech tables.
- Small table-top podium just large enough for the cueing script. Few theatres will have such an item. More than likely, this too will be something the SM will make and bring in for each technical rehearsal.
- Power strip to plug in a laptop, smart phone, and charger.
- Some kind of a padded board to be placed across the arms of theatre chairs upon which the SM can sit. Once again, I brought in my own. It was padded and comfortable for the hours I would spend sitting waiting for the director or lighting to complete their work.

This tech table will be the SM’s home for the duration of techs, until such time that it will all be transferred backstage into the console, ready to start working the show from there.

While on the subject of the SM’s console, on that first day, the SM can maybe have an initial conversation with the technical director on where the SM’s console will be set up. Sometimes this is too early for such a decision, but it is good to get people thinking about the setup and also for the SM to express his or her preference. Sometimes the console is already a permanent part of the setup backstage, so there is no discussion to be had.

Before moving on to the next point of business, the SM should check the other technical tables set up in the audience, especially the one for the director, which will be right in the middle of the theatre. Again, the SM should check to see that the director can be comfortably seated and has a reading lamp, a power source, and most importantly, a god mic he or she can use to give directions to all onstage or throughout the theatre.

If the show is a musical, there is still another important setup to check: the music director’s. Sometimes this will be in the orchestra pit; other times it is an electronic keyboard placed out in the audience, at the foot of the stage, in the first row of seats. If it’s in the pit, the SM should check to see if a piano or keyboard is in place, that the conductor’s podium is set up for the music director, and that something has been set up to amplify the sound of the piano from the pit to the stage—similarly, if the setup is out in the audience. This department too will need a table setup, perhaps not as large as the ones used by the other departments.

Tour of the Theatre

Assuming that both SMs have not previously worked the theatre or performance site, this is the best time to go on a tour. Sometimes the tour is guided by the house person. Most times the SMs do it on their own. The house person is different from the house manager; the house manager takes care of the front of the theatre (the box office, the ushers, the seating, etc.), while the house person oversees the technical elements of the backstage and the theatre in general.

To be effective in their jobs and in cases of emergency, it is important that SMs know the layout of the facility and where things are placed. The SMs should come to know the theatre as well as they know their homes:

- They should follow the halls, corridors, and passageways, open doors, find the different staircases that lead to other levels, and ride the freight or passenger elevator if there is one.
- They should know where the different technical departments are set up and have their offices or gathering places. See the layout of the dressing rooms and begin formulating dressing room assignments for the cast. If the rooms are locked, the ASM should find the house person and ask that they be opened as soon as possible. The SMs will need to see the sizes of the rooms and determine the number of people who can be placed in each room. They need to see if there is a place where the cast can gather and rest, such as a greenroom. Check bathrooms and showers. See that the dressing rooms, the bathrooms, and the showers are clean. If they are not, the SMs need to inform the house person as soon as possible and ask that they be cleaned before the cast arrives.
- If there isn't already office space set aside for the SMs, the SMs need to decide on a space convenient to the stage and near the cast, which in many cases will be one of the dressing rooms.
- It is also good that the SMs take a trip down to the basement and under the stage, which many times is the way to the orchestra pit and sometimes in old theatres, the only crossover for the actors to get from one side of the stage to the other.
- In the last week at the rehearsal hall, the SMs more than likely inquired about a rehearsal room in the theatre and made arrangements for the company to use it. If up to this point the SMs have not seen the room, they need to look it over now. If rehearsal props were to have been delivered, check to see if they are there. If a piano had been requested, see if the piano is there and reasonably tuned.
- Next the SMs should journey to the artists' entrance or the place backstage where the actors will enter each time they come to the theatre. If there is a security guard or door person, the SMs introduce themselves and see if there is a dressing room key policy. They need to decide at this time if signs are needed, directing the company members to the dressing rooms and backstage areas. While on this part of the tour, the SMs also need to decide the best location for the company callboard.

Touring the Front of the House

Having covered all parts of the backstage, even places that have not been mentioned above, the SMs now need to explore the **front of the house** (FOH). First, they need to locate the door or passageway that leads from the backstage area out to the audience and FOH. This door is not necessarily for public use but is often put in for convenience or easy access for the people who work in the theatre. The SMs will find this door extremely useful when they need to go out to the box office, perhaps to the administrative offices, maybe to rehearse in the lobby during the day, go out to watch a performance, or after a performance bring special guests to the backstage area.

Walking through the Audience

Walking through the audience and viewing the stage from different parts of the house should be standard procedure for the SMs. They should first walk across the front part near the orchestra pit, checking sight lines. To get a good feeling of the house, the SMs should sit at the center of the house, at the back, and up in the balconies. In each position they should imagine the relationship between the show and the audience.

Visiting the Box Office and Administrative Office—Meeting the House Manager and Staff

It is important for the SMs to make contact with the FOH staff and begin a working relationship, regardless of how limited this relationship usually is. During the initial meeting with the house manager, the PSM discusses the process of communication to be used with the FOH in getting the show started for each performance. At this time the SM also arranges for the placement of the ***Equity cast board***. This is a board that is provided by the producer's office and lists in alphabetical order the names of all the Equity performers in the show. By Equity rule, this board is to be placed in the lobby, in clear view for the patrons to see as they enter the theatre. Often the theatre will provide an easel on which the board can be placed.

Also at this time, the SM informs the FOH of any pyrotechnics, fog, haze, or gunshots that might be in the show, and the degrees to which these things are used. In addition to the Equity cast list, FOH management will often put up a notice, warning the audience members as they arrive.

The SM's Office

Before the SMs can do anything else on this first morning, they must set up their office. If a space has not already been set aside, the SMs will need to find space for themselves. While touring the facility and seeing the dressing rooms, the SMs were able to assess which space or area they might use for their office. If at all possible, the place should be on the same level as, and in easy access to, the stage. It should be located at the edge or at the far end of where the cast is generally situated. If at all possible, it should not be in the middle of the actors' living space; neither the SM nor the performers want to be in such close proximity to each other.

Cast Dressing Room Assignments

Once the SMs' office is set up and in operation, the next important order of business is the dressing room assignments. At first glance this appears to be an easy task. However, once the SMs get in the middle of this job, they find that a great amount of consideration, input, and craft must go into the assignments. No later than the last week of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall, the SM begins conversation with the production office, head of wardrobe, and director on this matter. In assigning dressing rooms there are the stars, the principal players, the supporting actors, and the ensemble performers to be considered. There is a professional protocol and order to follow. There are contractual agreements that must be honored, requests from the actors, handicaps, disabilities, age, and even ego to think about. When two or more people have to share a room, the craft is in putting people in compatible groupings. No matter how much consideration the SMs give this matter, there will be one or two cast members who are unhappy about their assignment. It is because of these individuals that producers and directors like having the SM responsible for assigning the dressing rooms.

Consulting Wardrobe and Quick Changes

Before the SMs assign any dressing rooms on this first day of techs, they must consult once again with the head of wardrobe. Certain elaborate or difficult costumes, or some quick changes, may dictate which room is assigned to whom. While talking with the head of wardrobe about the dressing room assignments, this would also be a good time for the SM to discuss quick costume changes, which need to be done backstage, as close to the set as possible. Together they can go backstage to find the best locations. If the scenery is in place and the crew's physical work areas backstage are defined, the SM and head of wardrobe can consult with the TD on where the quick-change booths can be placed. This is a matter that is easily put off to the last minute, sometimes not being remembered until the first dress rehearsal. It is part of the wardrobe department's job to establish the quick-change areas they need. However, it is the SM's job to see that they are in place by the time the costumes are first used. The producer and director will hold the SM responsible for this.

While the carpentry department is responsible for putting up the flats or hanging the drapes, it is the prop department that furnishes a mirror, some hooks, possibly a small table and chair, and some carpeting, if available. The electric department is also informed and reminded to put in some lighting, usually two small, clamp-on lights. Each light needs a hood that directs the light to desired areas in the booth and prevents the light from spilling into parts of the darkened backstage during the performance.

Even after initiating this part of the setup and informing the different departments, the SM in the next day or two will need to check to see that the booths get set up and are supplied. In times when the different departments are running behind in their work, setting up and furnishing quick-change booths is a low priority. They will put off this task and may even forget about it.

Dressing Room Nameplates

While assigning each dressing room, it is helpful to everyone to have the actors' names placed outside of each dressing room. Traditionally, the names are placed on the doors, but it is more practical to place them on the wall next to the door so the names remain visible when the doors are left open. Some production offices may provide professionally made nameplates. Other times, the SM will have to make them up. This is easily done on the laptop and printed out once the SM's office is set up. This is also a good time to make up nameplates for the SM's office, the wardrobe department, the company manager (if there is one with the show), and other designated areas for the cast and company's use.

Having the names at each door is helpful to the wardrobe department, crew, staff, and visitors who come backstage, and at the same time makes the performers feel good. If doing a musical, while making up the name plate for the ensemble performers, it is fine to head the list with MEN'S CHORUS or FEMALE ENSEMBLE, but then to also list in alphabetical order the names of the performers assigned to that particular room.

To the Contrary: While suggesting that nameplates be posted at each dressing room, it is often better not to post the name of a celebrity performer, especially a well-known one, at his or her dressing room door. To be on the safe side, consult with the performer. I learned that lesson early on my first show. At the time, this particular female star was being stalked. The intruder found his way into the theatre and easily found the star's dressing room. Fortunately, her dresser found the culprit before Miss Star Performer was to come to the theatre for the evening performance.

A Schematic Drawing of Dressing Room Assignments

The SM can, either in freehand or on the computer, make up a simple, one-page schematic drawing of the layout of the dressing rooms on each floor and write in the names of the actors assigned to the different dressing rooms. A drawing is a greater visual aid than simply making a list with the room numbers. For the first few days of techs, this drawing should be prominently placed on the call-board. Then once everyone is familiar with the layout of the rooms and the assignments, it can be moved to a far corner of the callboard and remain there for the run. Don't forget to leave out the star performer's name if that person so chooses.

The Company Callboard

Next in importance is setting up the callboard. Not only is this item necessary, but it is also mandated by Equity rule. Most theatres already have one permanently in place, but this may not be the best placement for the SM's and cast's use. Sometimes it is best for the SM to set up a different callboard area. Choosing a location is very important. It must be in a central place, convenient for the cast and SM, a place where the cast first enters the backstage area to go to their dressing rooms, a place they have no choice but to pass.

The SM can create a callboard area on any free wall in a hallway or corridor. Framed corked, felt, or softwood particleboard can be purchased very inexpensively. A board of thirty-six by twenty-eight inches works well if the SM uses the space on the board economically. If the show is going to remain in one theatre for its run, a larger size is more desirable. If the show is touring, a smaller one will be easier to pack away and travel. The board should be lightweight, and with some strong electrician's tape it can be neatly mounted on any wall. Once in place, the board is ready to be divided into sections with the followings headings printed from the laptop and whatever other headings the SM chooses or finds important to the production:

(Name of show) CALLBOARD
SIGN IN PLEASE
DAILY SCHEDULE
CURRENT NOTICE
LAST NOTICE
PAST NOTICES
PERFORMANCE NOTES

From the start, the SM establishes that the company call-board is for official use only. The SM must approve anything posted on the board by anyone else. In addition, the SM must make it clear to the entire company that the documents appearing on the board should not be written on, altered, or mutilated in any way. Whenever possible, the SM should set aside a place adjacent to the callboard, clearly marked, where the cast, crew, and staff members can put up their own notices. The SM should keep the company callboard neat, consistent in the placement of things, up to date, and clear of outdated information. In addition to the headings listed previously, the SM needs space on the company callboard for:

- The Equity special and mandatory notices
- The dressing room assignments
- The block calendar schedule
- Important telephone numbers
- Performance notes from the director, producer, or SM
- Instructions of any kind, maps, and the like
- Information about parking, show tickets/house seats, places to eat
- Forms to make medical insurance claims
- Forms important to the company for organizing and administrating

With so much to be posted, the SM can hang information from the bottom part of the frame if that becomes necessary, while less important information can be taped on the wall on either side of the board.

Directional Signs

If getting from the artists' entrance to the backstage and dressing rooms is difficult, the SM needs to put up a network of signs to direct the company. Directional signs leading to the backstage are sometimes necessary, especially if the dressing rooms are in the basement of the theatre complex and a series of halls or stairways have to be negotiated to get there. Once again, professional-looking signs can be printed from the SM's laptop. They can be simple, with the company or show's name, and possibly have a graphic of a large blackened arrow or hand pointing the way.

No Let Up for the SM

From the SM's first day of work on a production (the SM's pre-production time), the SM must not let up on what must be done each day. As worn out and overused as the saying goes, it still holds strong and it is extremely wise not to *put off until tomorrow what can be done today*. The SM follows this work ethic through the rehearsal period and now, more than ever, through technical rehearsals. On this first day of technical rehearsals, the SM should not let up until most, if not all, of the work we have discussed is done:

- Meeting the crew
- Checking the setup of the SM's and director's tech tables
- Touring the theatre
- Talking to the FOH (discuss placement of Equity list of performers and communication procedure to begin each show)
- Setting up SM's office
- Assigning dressing rooms (keys, nameplates, quick-change booths, schematic drawing of room assignments)
- Setting up callboard

- Posting directional signs

There is no time to waste. Socializing and schmoozing must be kept to a minimum. Extended lunches are for other people. Tomorrow will have its own list of things to do.

The SM's Second Day of Techs

Once again the SMs arrive early. More than likely, the crew is already at work. If the SMs were able to complete their list of things to do on the first day, today will be easier. The PSM will work more in an advisory capacity to the crew, answering questions that will aid them in completing their work before the director, staff, and cast arrive to begin the heart of techs. If the SMs have work left over from the day before, they will need to complete that work in addition to what must be done on this day.

Tech Departments Ready

In many work situations, on this second day, the director, producer, staff, and cast will be coming in by noon. At that time, the crew will go to lunch for an hour while the cast becomes acclimated to the theatre. By 1:00 pm, the heart of the technical rehearsals will begin.

With the staff and cast arriving on this second day, the SMs' morning is even fuller. If on the SMs' first day there was something that needed to be done with the tech tables, the PSM needs to do a final check to see if the work has been done. There is nothing more disturbing and upsetting, especially to the director, to find something not right with the setup once the technical rehearsal has begun.

Around 10:00 am on the morning that the cast and the director are to arrive, the SMs need to check with each technical department, asking for assurance that the department will have its work completed and be ready without delay, by 1:00 pm. It is the nature of technical rehearsals that there is never enough time. Many times, when the SM approaches the different department heads looking for assurance and reminding them of the schedule, they complain and say they will not be ready. The SM listens to their circumstances and complaints and can sometimes help by recommending priorities, pointing out what can be set aside and what should be completed before the rest of the company arrives. Other times there is nothing the SM can do but remind the person of the schedule and say that when the producer and director arrive, the SM will inform them of the delay. In most situations, the department that complained is miraculously ready to function at the scheduled time.

At around 11:00 am, one of the SMs checks to see that the backstage areas are reasonably clean and things are cleared away. If they are not, the SM must remind the TD of this work and the need to have it done before they go to lunch and the cast arrives.

White Tape and Glow Tape

Next, if the carpentry department is reasonably ready, the SM might ask the TD or the head of carpentry to put white tape and glow tape on things and in places backstage that can be hazardous when the cast and crew are walking and working in the dimly lit areas backstage. Stairs are especially hazardous, as are the edges of platforms. Pathways or walkways might need to be taped off, to direct people and keep everyone out of harm's way. Glow tape is especially effective on the edge of scenery and in places where even the white tape cannot be seen in the dark. Another important duty is to lay in taped sight lines in each wing to aid not only the performers from keeping out of sight but also the technicians as they stand and wait or set props or scenery to go on for the next scene. If the carpentry department is behind in its work and cannot do this job before the arrival of the staff and cast, the SMs might ask if they can do this job in preparation of the cast arriving. Most technicians are glad to oblige, especially if they are first asked for permission.

The Dance/Blocking Numbers

Another job, usually one that is delegated to the ASM, is to lay in the dance/blocking numbers across the foot of the stage. If this was not done on the first day, surely it needs to be done before the cast arrives and begins working onstage. These are all-important numbers for blocking and for the choreography. They need to be white, possibly glow-in-the-dark, have peel-off sticky backs, be no smaller than two inches, but not be so large as to be readily seen by the audience.

Some stages are shallow and the edge of the stage comes right at the proscenium line. Others may have a large apron before dropping off into the orchestra. On those stages where the edge is at the proscenium line, the SM places the numbers at the edge of the stage. For those stages where the apron is larger, the director and lighting designer establish how much of the apron is going to be used as the performance area. The lighting designer will focus the lights to shine at the lowest point downstage. It is there, just within the beginning glow of that light, that the SMs lay in the numbers.

Whatever the situation, before placing the numbers, the SMs first lay in a strip of white tape at the foot of the performance area running across the width of the stage. Then, as the SMs stand at center stage looking out at the audience and facing the tape, they start laying in the numbers just below the line (in theatre terms, that would be upstage of the line). The SMs start by placing a zero at center. Two feet away on each side of zero, the number 1 is placed. From there on, and traveling off to their respective sides, the numbers build numerically. Laying in these numbers is done mostly for musical shows. However, directors and actors are asking for them more often even when doing a drama or comedy.

The SM's Psychology of Good Timing

Early on in a career, the SM learns when to approach the technicians to remind them of things or to have something done. In the examples of setting up the quick-change booths, putting the production table in place, or clearing the backstage before the cast arrives, it would have been futile for the SMs to have mentioned these things any sooner than an hour or two before they were needed. Previous to this time, the technicians were more than likely consumed with getting other things done—things that, in their minds, had greater priority. When the SM asks for something earlier than its hour of need, some technicians may assure the SM they will do it but then promptly forget. Some might even become annoyed, feeling that the SM is micromanaging, is a worrywart, or is just plain not allowing them to freely do their jobs.

In working harmoniously with crew members, the SM learns the best psychological time to approach technicians on matters when there is urgency and need for immediacy. At the same time, the SM must allow the technicians enough time to get the job done. Otherwise, they will accuse the SM of asking too late. If the producer and director have to wait while a particular thing gets done, many times they will turn to the SM, holding the SM responsible for the delay. All of a sudden, what was clearly someone else's job and responsibility has now become the SM's.

Gray Responsibilities

Throughout this book it is a continual theme that in the professional world the SM gives to associates, peers, and coworkers the responsibility of their own jobs. This is indeed a standard by which every SM must work. However, in the world of reality, the SM learns what parts of other people's responsibilities the SM must take on. *Gray responsibilities* are work that is the responsibility of others but that the SM takes on to check and double-check to see that it will be done. If this work is not done, the blame can easily be placed on the SM. Such things as the quick-change booths and the production table are prime examples.

In the Line of Fire, Magnified

It has also been a reoccurring theme in this book that the nature of the SM's position often places the SM in the middle of skirmishes or battles within the company. This fact is exemplified and magnified during technical

rehearsals. In techs, when the cast, crew, and staff are working to put the show together, the SM becomes the central figure. The SM is the agent between the staff working out front in the darkened theatre and the cast and crew working backstage. When things are going well, the SM's work goes unnoticed and is taken for granted. However, when patience is running short, tempers are beginning to flare, frustration is running high, and time is running out, people look for a place to hang their feelings and put the blame. Sometimes it becomes easier or safer to use the SM. Such terms as *whipping boy* and *scapegoat* can be applied. Producers and directors can be most guilty of such behavior toward the SM.

For the SM's well-being, it is important that the SM knows the parts of the job and the things for which the SM is responsible. Then, during the times when it looks as if the SM is going to fall victim, the SM can clearly set the record straight and state what is the SM's responsibility and what belongs to others. These things can only be learned through working shows and having experience. For a student, beginning SM, or ASM, much of what I speak will fall upon the PSM, so take heart while still in that part of your career, observe the danger zones, and keep in mind what you see, for surely one day as a PSM you will walk those minefields.

The Crew's Expectations of the SM

At every turn in our discussion about the working relationship between the SM and the crew, the SM's limited involvement with the crew becomes more evident. In technical rehearsals, it is the SM's job to be ever watchful of all that is going on, yet not be intrusive in these observations of the crew. During techs, if the SM sees something wrong or something that needs to be changed, the SM goes to the TD or the head of that department to express these opinions or concerns. In doing so, the SM uses a careful approach and presentation to avoid putting the technician on the defensive. It is an established fact that the SM stays out of union technicians' work. What the crew expects and needs from the SMs is that the SMs remain available to answer questions, maybe ask a limited amount of questions, know when to step in to voice their opinions, and create schedules that keep the technical rehearsals coordinated and running smoothly.

Cast and Crew Coming Together

There is an interaction and exchange between the cast and crew that every alert, observant, and aware SM experiences over and over when the cast and crew come together for the first time. This interaction is seldom, if ever, discussed or acknowledged. By the time the cast walks into the theatre, the crew has already put in a good amount of time and work in setting up the scenery and getting the technical elements into place. They have quickly made the theatre and backstage their home, and the physical part of the show their own. The cast, on the other hand, from the work they have done in the rehearsal hall, has also made the show their own. Upon coming together, each group, in its own way, can feel invaded by the other. These feelings can become even greater with a musical show, where there can be thirty or more cast members. The cast, often in an enthusiastic and demonstrative way, comes swarming into the theatre on their first day to investigate and make this new space their own. Some crew members become protective of their territory. Depending on the nature of the individuals and the chemistry of the two groups, this initial feeling quickly passes and the two groups bond, create a working relationship, and easily become friends. Other times, matters can go from bad to worse with tension mounting and many complaints given to the SM from each group, and on occasion little rifts emerge, which the SM must tend to and resolve immediately.

Preventative Measures

It is important for the SM to be aware of such dynamics between the two groups. With this knowledge, the SM can better deal with the situation should it arise or, better still, take some subtle preventive steps. This work can be done mostly with the cast. In the last week of rehearsals at the rehearsal hall, as part of the transition speech to the cast, the SM can ask the cast to be aware of and sensitive to the crew and the work they do and can remind them that the crew's work is as important to the show as theirs. The SM can ask the cast to extend the same patience and courtesies to the

crew as they did to each other when they were first learning the show. To help the cast better understand, and if so inclined, the SM might point out the casts' feelings and attachment to the show and how the crew has developed its own feelings and attachments.

The SM Sets the Example

From the moment SMs walk in on their first day at the theatre, the crew is looking them over. They see how the SMs dress; being too trendy, funky, or conservative can leave a negative impression. They watch the SMs' manner, demeanor, behavior, and way of working. The crew will listen to the SMs' tone of voice, see their attitude, and the way they exert their position and power. The crew formulates opinions quickly, and it will take a lot to change them.

The SMs cannot have the same conversation with the crew members as they did with the cast, but from the start SMs show respect, interest, understanding, and appreciation for the crew's work and their contribution to the show. The greatest impression an SM can make on the first day of techs is to be low-keyed. When beginning the work for the day, the SMs need only to show that they are organized, efficient, and know the show. The SMs' strength and power come from knowing their job and doing it well. An SM will impress by being a good listener, being understanding and appreciative of the crew's work, making reasonable and fair decisions, and doing the work without drama, fanfare, or ego. Being assertive and asking questions is okay, but stepping over into aggression is destructive. A softer, gentler way gains respect and maintains control.

The Daily Tech Schedule

For a better overview of what a technical rehearsal day is like, it might be good to go over a typical schedule. Technical rehearsals can last from one day to fourteen. Musical productions can take up to fourteen days, while a simple one-set comedy or drama can take seven or fewer. By all standards, the technical rehearsal day is long. The actors work ten hours out of twelve, with the usual breaks. The crew too has union rules governing the number of hours they can work and the breaks they must have. However, because of the workload and the limited time the crew has to do their work during techs, their workday is often long, with their hours being extended and the producer paying overtime.

By Equity rule, the SM comes under the same agreement as the actors. However, the SM's hours are not monitored and the SM puts in whatever hours it takes to get the job done. The SM seldom gets paid overtime unless the cast members go into an overtime situation. Perhaps Equity justifies the SM's long hours by the fact that during the rehearsal period, while the actors are on a rehearsal salary, the SM is being paid a full salary.

A typical schedule for technical rehearsals follows:

- **8:00 am:** Each technical department begins work. (Depending on the work the SM must do before the director and cast come in, the SM comes in around 10:00 am.)
- **Noon:** The crew goes to lunch. The cast arrives to begin their day. The cast has an hour to work before the crew returns from lunch. Generally, some IATSE (stage technicians' union) rules require that there be at least a union stage technician present if not a skeleton crew if the director wants to use this hour to rehearse the cast. However, if the director is only giving notes or only wants to work onstage/set, without any of the technical elements, the union shop steward will often grant permission, relieving the producer from having to pay.
- **1:00 pm:** Everyone works on teching the show—putting the technical elements together—cue by cue, working their way to run-thrus, dress rehearsals, and preview performances.
- **5:00 pm:** Everyone has a dinner break. (The SM may or may not go to dinner, depending on what needs to be done before the cast and crew return. Many times the SM will have food brought in and will continue to work.)
- **7:00 pm:** Everyone is back from dinner and continues teching the show.
- **Midnight:** Everyone is dismissed.

With this as a basis, the SM can create a good working schedule for techs. The only other factor to keep in mind is the *turnaround time*, the time when the actors or the crew members can be called back for the next day's rehearsal: twelve hours for the cast and eight hours for the crew. In addition, there are some Equity contracts that limit the number of *ten-out-of-twelve-hour* periods that can be worked during the tech period. It is up to the SM to know the limits and particulars of the contract under which he or she is working.

Division of Labor

Most labor unions, such as the stage technicians' union (IATSE), have some well-defined lines for the division of labor and distinctions between the work of one technical department and another. It is important for the SM to learn which department does what things. With this knowledge, the SM knows what to expect from each department and where to bring any questions, comments, suggestions, changes, or corrections. This division of labor is learned as a beginning SM works on shows as an assistant. Sometimes the new SM learns quickly because the technicians themselves will be the first to direct and set straight any SM who steps into their area of work or goes to the wrong department.

Along these same lines, it is also important that the SM knows not to do any of the work that is deemed technicians' work. If some small job must be done—something as simple as moving a hand prop, taping a spike mark, opening a curtain, or sweeping up some litter—the SM must call for a technician from the correct department. An SM who decides to go ahead and do the work can be reprimanded, with the matter being taken to the union and to the producer. The only exception might be in an emergency, in a moment of danger, or to prevent an accident or injury. During such times, the SM should have no hesitation to jump in and lend a helping hand.

The Working Relationships of Techs

When all is going well with technical rehearsals, it is theatre working at its best. The show magically comes together, joining the creative, craft, artistic, and technical parts, everything fitting together as everyone had designed and envisioned. For the SM, technical rehearsals can be a time of excitement and accomplishment. This is the time when the SM makes an artistic contribution to the show by calling impeccably well-timed cues. It is also a time when the SM is given more of the responsibility for the smooth running of things. While in rehearsals this is an easier task because most of what happens the SM can control, now in techs there are so many more elements, so many more departments and people added into the mix over which the SM has *no* control.

Technical rehearsals are a complicated network of technical things and people. With the technical elements being designed and assembled separately, then coming together at the theatre for the first time, there are bound to be problems. For the SM, the technical problems are the least troublesome. Professional men and women have been hired to do the job. They know their craft and usually can handle whatever problems come up or make whatever changes are presented. It is the pressure of the limited time and the conflicts that can sometimes develop between people that are wearing and destructive to the overall process. No matter how much time is allowed for technical rehearsals, there is never enough. People seem to work under the same pressure and intensity whether given one day to do the work or ten days. In technical rehearsals, Murphy's Law prevails—that is, if something can go wrong, it will! In the worst scenario, as problems mount people become insecure, protective, or defensive, tempers flare, or their egos become hurt or inflated. People will look outside themselves to find fault or to place blame. This is one of the places for the SM in that minefield of which I speak.

It is through all that can go wrong in technical rehearsals that working relationships can fall apart. This is another one of those subjects seldom discussed in preparing an SM for the job. Ignorance can be bliss, but not for an SM working a technical rehearsal. If and when technical rehearsals become less than picture perfect, it is important for the SM to know and understand the dynamics of why people are behaving and reacting as they are. With that kind of knowledge, the SM can get to the core of the matter rather than floundering about with everyone else. The SM can appease the person who might be feeling wronged or defensive by expressing understanding and suggesting rather than living in the problem, maybe moving over into the solution. This may sound good in book study, but it works too in actuality.

The Principal Performers in Technical Rehearsals

If the SM can know and understand a little more about the *cast of characters* performing in technical rehearsals, then the SM can know better how to work and deal with situations as they arise.

The SM

Let us start with the SM. At all times in technical rehearsals, the SM needs to be focused and concentrated on the work at hand and not put attention on things that should have been done previously. The SM must keep a clear and open mind and remain calm and levelheaded. Of all the people working techs, the SM is expected to remain sane and secure. While all others are going over the edge, the SM must be the rock on which people can find some stability. The SM needs to be ready to handle the tasks and problems at hand, and there will be plenty without the SM creating more. It is the SM's job to keep the technical rehearsals moving forward, even if at times they move at a snail's pace. The SM needs to have his or her area working and running like a well-oiled, well-tuned machine to avoid becoming enmeshed in a labyrinth of problems and blame from which it may be difficult to escape.

The SM cannot be responsible or control the other players in techs or in the company as a whole, but as has been said time and again, if the SM has done the job *perfectly*, yes, *perfectly*, from the start by having done *all* that has been discussed in the preceding chapters of this book, then this coupled with his or her understanding of the psychology of people can resolve some of the problems that might arise in techs before people's feelings and egos flare up.

The greatest buffer that an SM can be during techs is between the director and designers seated out in the house at the tech tables and those onstage, the cast and the crew. Even before these two groupings come together, the SM sees in his or her mind's eye where there might be a problem and heads it off. Then, once in techs, the SM does the same. The SM does not deliver harsh messages to one group from the other. Always, the SM softens the words and yet conveys the necessity for expediency in whatever it is that needs to be done.

The Director

Techs are a time when the director must relinquish some control to the SM. The director is placed in the darkened theatre, separated from the cast and crew. It is not practical to be running backstage to direct every bit of work that needs to be done, and the director must trust the SM to do it. Most directors are able to let go and allow the SM to be in control and lead. Some directors are technically smart. They know how to communicate with the different departments. They understand the technicians' work, appreciate their contribution to the show, and know the time it takes to do things and make changes. With those directors, the SM's life during techs is made pleasant. Some directors use the period of technical rehearsals wisely. They know how to push and prod, when to apply pressure, exert their power, wield their authority, and when to back off. Then there are those directors who are inexperienced or have very little interest in or knowledge of technical rehearsals. During these times the SM takes up the slack and contributes what the director lacks. This is when the SM needs to be an even greater buffer between those out in the audience at the tech tables and those onstage and behind the scenes.

Most frightening of all for a director during technical rehearsals is when the world gets turned upside down—when everything that can go wrong, goes wrong; when nothing seems to fit, it seems the artistry is gone and the director's vision is lost. At these times some directors abandon the technical part of the show and start redirecting. Before this kind of thing escalates, the SM might have a conversation with the director and even the producer, pointing out the importance of first getting all this technical stuff together, and then making changes if things still are not working.

The SM, Producer, and Director

During some of the more difficult technical rehearsals, the producer's or director's working relationship with the SM can be affected. Some producers or directors will use the SM's position as a place where they can vent. Some will verbally berate the SM, using the SM as a sounding board to get their point across to others. Other times, producers or directors in their frustration and anger over something else may unfairly place the blame on the SM.

The Cast

This is a time of great adjustment for the actors. They now have to deal with walls, stairs, and platforms, which were only taped lines on the rehearsal room floor. The props will feel different. The furniture may be smaller or larger than anticipated. Parts of costumes may be missing or not fit properly. The blocking will feel wrong and the sense of performance they once had in the rehearsal room is now gone. What was once safe and secure now appears to be lost. In addition, they are no longer the center of the day's work. Everyone is concentrated on the technical matters, and that is how it should be, but on occasion even the most experienced actors may feel abandoned.

From Personal Experience: While in techs with a very well-known director of Broadway with whom I had a wonderful working relationship, I was verbally attacked by him over the god mic for all to hear. "You are the stage manager! I would expect you would have foreseen this problem and taken care of it before this time!"

It was the tone of voice and the intensity at which he spoke that hurt. I felt attacked, betrayed, embarrassed, and made to look as if I was inept at my job. Ego stepped in. From the stage I defensively lashed back. This was the worse thing I could have done. Our relationship was never the same and I knew I would never be hired by him again.

What I did was against all the advice I have offered here in earlier chapters. However, at that time, I had not yet written this book, so I was not of the mind to follow my own advice."

During this time some actors will change. Some of the changes will be small and subtle with only the SM taking notice. Others will be broad and overt, for everyone working in the theatre to see. A star or a lead performer who was the very model of a professional in rehearsals may become intense, insistent, or demanding, wanting to change everything until the star once again feels safe and secure. The ensemble players too, who once worked as a team, may begin quibbling among themselves, complaining to the SM about the least little thing, or while on stage stumbling over each other, forgetting their blocking, and becoming unsure of their entrances and exits.

Not for a moment can the SM neglect or forget the work with the cast during technical rehearsals, no matter how demanding the rest of the workday becomes. The SM must continue to attend to their needs. However, in moving from the rehearsal hall to the theatre and into techs, the SM, in the talk with the cast on the last day at the rehearsal hall, changed the working relationship with them. During rehearsals, the SM was more parental and more of a caretaker. Now in technical rehearsals, the cast members need to take the responsibility for tending to their smaller needs. The SM assures the cast that he or she will still be present and available to communicate, support, and serve them, but more in their important and immediate needs. The SM leads the cast into a more mature working relationship. Like a parent whose child has grown up, the SM gives the actors the freedom and responsibility for their own professional life and work, while the SM continues to love and care for them.

The SM's greatest opportunity to communicate and assure the cast of this continued interest comes during talks with them over the PA system. The SM thanks them for their good work during the rehearsal day and in a caring and loving way leads them, instructs them, and keeps them informed. The SM asks if there is anything the backstage staff and crew can do to support them in small ways: do they need someone to shine a flashlight as they come off the stage, or want a prop placed differently? The SM might even assure an actor who is left in the dark on stage at the end of a scene that the scenery will not start moving until the SM sees that the actor is clear and safe.

The Crew

Technical rehearsals are the time for the crew to learn their parts for the show. However, the crew is not afforded the same luxury in time and patience as the actors were allowed in rehearsals. This factor can be especially significant when a nervous, impatient, or inexperienced director sits out in the house, calling over the god mic for speed and perfection. The SM must be aware of and sensitive to this factor, and at the least indication of impatience or lack of tolerance in allowing the crew time to do their work or learn the show, the SM needs to become an intermediary, speaking on the crew's behalf. In a nonconfrontational way, the SM must express to the director the crews' efforts and need for time to learn or complete the task. At the same time, the SM assures the director that the ASMs are keeping a watchful eye and running a tight ship backstage.

Let the Techs Begin

From some of what has been said about techs thus far, the picture painted appears bleak and grim. Sadly, it sometimes is that way. However, no one goes into techs expecting things to be bad. They just know that technical rehearsals are a fragile and intense time. Some of the darker colors presented here are to better prepare the student or beginning SM should the trenches become muddy with artillery fire bursting overhead.

Most times, on the first day the cast, crew, and staff get together to begin techs, the crew has already been working at the theatre since early morning. By the time the cast and staff are called in, it is time for the crew to go on a lunch break. Meanwhile, the cast and staff come to the theatre to settle in. The SM is there to greet and lead everyone around and get them ready to begin the technical work when the crew returns. Upon arrival of the crew, it is the SM's intent to get the rehearsal started at the scheduled time. Seldom does it work out that way. There is always some delay. A thirty-minute delay is expected and manageable. Anything longer and the people, who are left waiting, especially those out in the audience at their tech tables, become irritable. For the SM this is no way to begin technical rehearsals. At the start of any delay, the SM must investigate, know the cause, find out how long it will take before the rehearsals can begin, and then report it to the producer and director. To use the time of the delay effectively, the director or SM might have the cast work on the stage, perhaps running some blocking, or have the choreographer work with the cast on one of the dance numbers.

The Heart of Techs

The SM is seated at the tech table out in the audience. The ASMs are left free to roam the backstage areas, to observe and troubleshoot wherever needed. The technicians are at their workstations. The actors are in place. The director, lighting designer, their assistants, and possibly the producer are seated in the audience at the production table. The stage is set for Act I, Scene 1. The curtain is down and the curtain warmers/preset is on.

If all has been working in textbook fashion, the SM already has the cues for the opening of the show written in the cueing script. If not, at this point the SM receives over the headset the cues and their timing from the director or lighting designer. The SM notes them quickly in the script and then over the headset puts in the warnings to the crew. The SM gives the STAND BYs and, when ready, calls the GO! cues that take out the house lights, raise the curtain, and bring up the lights for the first scene, which is the actor's cue to begin doing their part. If the timing and execution of these cues are not as the director and lighting designer wish, they will stop the rehearsal to make changes or corrections. The changes or corrections may have to do with one or more departments. Each department makes its own notes, as does the SM with the notes that pertain to the SM. Thus, the technical rehearsals begin and continue—putting it together cue by cue, stopping and starting.

Laying in Spike Marks

Some shows require many things to be *spiked*—putting small pieces of tape on the stage floor to mark the corner of set units, furniture, or even where an actor must stand to be in a special light. The placement of these things on stage becomes established as each scene is worked and teched. For the most part, either the prop or carpentry department handles this job. As the techs continue, some of the marks may be changed as the director moves things around and adjusts the stage picture. When this happens, most directors will suggest that the spiking be done later—but, through experience, the SM has learned to do this job immediately or it will be forgotten or not spiked in the right place after things have been moved. This is where the ASMs working the backstage need to be alert and, as soon as they see or hear about anything needing to be spiked, have a stage technician ready to do the job. Meanwhile, the SM over the headset is saying to the director, “This will only take a second,” and when the director sees the job being done, accepts the moment of time it takes to do it.

Changes and Cleaning up the Cueing Script

In technical rehearsals change is a fact of life for an SM. It is the only constant on which the SM can depend. From the moment the performers step on the stage with the scenery and props, there will be change. From the moment the director and lighting designer see the cues they have set, there will be change. Change is an ongoing process from which the SM is never freed. There is no particular place or moment in the production of a show when the changes stop. Once the show opens and gets into its run, changes in the show take a new direction. The actors begin to improve on their performances and make changes. Even the SM makes changes, improving the timing in calling the cues for the performance.

To make changes in the cueing script, the SM must have at all times the colored pencil at hand along with a large smudge-proof eraser. When in the middle of techs, whatever changes the SM makes must be made quickly, with little delay, so the SM can then lead the stage technicians in executing the changes with the timing and perfection expected. While making these changes in the script, the SM must make them neatly and legibly because the SM may be called upon to call and execute these cues an hour later, a day later, or when going into the first run thru.

While much of the changing and rewrites of cues will take place on the spot during techs, it is also extremely helpful for the SM to have an extra copy of the script from which to take clean pages. In addition, it is extremely helpful for the SM to have multiple copies of the pages on which a large number of cues appear, as in musicals and scene changes/transitions.

Experience Is the Best Teacher: Experience taught me that no matter how neat, clean, and orderly I had noted things during techs, pages with large numbers of cues always needed to be rewritten. Often I would do this at home the next morning before getting to the theatre by 10:00 am.

Moving into the Next Phase of Techs

Once the cues for the show have been set and all the technical kinks have been worked out, the techs move into the next phase. This move is not extreme and is hardly noticeable except maybe to the SM, but it is a natural progression of working and running the show. It is a time to refine and make more changes, blending the work of the performers and crew, bringing all elements to performance level. There is still, however, one more technical element to be added —**the costumes**. They will come at the tail end of this phase.

It is also during this part of techs that the SM learns the cues and refines the timing in calling them. Not only must the SM have the cueing script performance-ready, but the SM must also be performance-ready. Waiting until dress rehearsals or preview performances is too late. By that time the producer, director, and everyone else is expecting the SM to call the show as if the SM had been doing it for a year.

Actors' Entrances

One of the greater sins an actor can commit is to miss an entrance. It would be erroneous to say that during performance the SM is responsible for getting the actors in place to make their entrances. The only times the SM calls the actors to their places is at the top of the show and after intermission, just before Act II begins. From those points on, the actors are responsible for their own entrances. In rehearsals at the rehearsal hall the SM was more of a caretaker and would seek out actors if they were not standing by to make an entrance. This, of course, is not possible in techs and certainly not in performance. The SM starts early in techs to make the actors responsible for their entrances.

Having said this and having established this way of working with the cast, the SM still owes a responsibility to the show. It is the SM's job to do whatever it takes to see that each performance runs smoothly and without problems. The SM does not abandon entirely the responsibility for actors making entrances, but instead becomes an observer—a

monitor. Whenever possible throughout the performance, the SM checks to see if an actor is in place, ready to make an entrance. The SM cannot monitor all entrances, especially those out of sight and certainly those made on the opposite side of the stage from the console. The SM takes on this responsibility, but in no way communicates this to the actors. As soon as they know, some actors will relieve themselves of their responsibility and depend on the SM to do it for them.

To aid the SM in monitoring entrances, the SM marks in the left-hand margin of the cueing script (not in the right-hand margin, where the cues are noted) the character's name and surrounds this information with a circle or box to make it stand out. Then, as part of looking ahead in the script for the next cues, the SM sees this information and checks to see if the actor is in place. In a musical, the SM tracks only the entrances of the principal and supporting performers, and not the entrances of the ensemble. The ASM also helps in this matter and will over the headset assure the PSM that a particular performer is in place.

Nipping It in the Bud

During this second phase in techs, the PSM and ASM are especially watchful in checking to see if the performers are in place, ready to make their entrances. Their purpose? To learn early which actors have a propensity to be late or which actors have a tendency to get in place at the last minute. Before bad habits develop, either the PSM or ASM asks the offending actors to be in place earlier. Also during this period in techs, if the SMs see that an actor is about to miss an entrance, they allow it to happen. There is no greater embarrassment, lesson learned, or impression made than when the rehearsals must stop while the SMs seek out an actor who has missed an entrance.

Timing the Show, or the Running Time

As the technical rehearsals become less stop-and-go and more of a run-thru, the SM starts getting *timings* on the scenes and acts. The PSM usually does this job while calling the cues for the run-thru. However, if the show is busy with cues, the PSM might have the ASM do it. Only one or two timings are necessary at this point, just to give the director an idea of how long things are now running with the technical elements added. The SM either notes this information in the left-hand margin of the cueing script along with the date of the timing or starts using the performance timing sheets that were created way back in the SM's pre-production time as noted in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy." The SM already has noted in the rehearsal script the timings taken during rehearsals at the rehearsal hall, and the SM or the director can at any time compare those timings with the ones now in the cueing script.

The SM Moves from out Front to the Backstage

Once the cues have been set and the scene changes are beginning to run smoothly, it is time for the SM to move from the tech table out in the audience and into the backstage wherever it was decided that the console would be set for the run of the show. This is now the SM's new home. Surprisingly, it sometimes takes a day or two to feel comfortable because the SM had grown used to calling the cues and observing the show from out front. Now it is whatever can be seen through the wings and mostly in the monitors set up at the console.

Show Rundown Sheets

This is also the perfect time for the ASM to print out and post the show rundown sheets throughout the backstage as presented in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy." The backstage is more organized and arranged now to suit the run of the performance. All unnecessary things are packed away, the prop tables are set up, the workstations for the different technical departments become more defined, and the crew members settle into their space.

Remember, this list of scenes needs to be simple, easy to read at a glance, done in large print, and be placed where people are working or passing. This includes hallways, corridors, staircases, crew workstations, the back walls of the set, quick-change rooms, the SM's console, the places where entrances and exits are made, and each dressing room. Show rundown sheets are mandatory for musical shows, but the SM also should make it a habit to post them even for a one-set comedy or drama.

Dry Techs

In any technically difficult show where there might be a lot of scenery and scene changes, it is in the best interest for the crew and SM to have one or several *dry techs*—that is, a rehearsal with the crew but without the cast. During a dry tech, the SM sits at the console while the crew members take their places at their workstations. Together, as if in a performance, they run the more technically difficult cues, stopping to correct any mistakes. This kind of rehearsal is often done in the morning hours before the cast and other staff members come in to do their work.

Scenery Plot and Fly Plot

In some academic, community, or regional theatres, the SM may be required to make up a scenery moves plot and a fly moves list. As for the scenery moves, this is where the SM's personal-size floor plans can be put to an even greater use. As for the flys, a list is more usable and quicker to read during the performance.

In larger productions, as with Equity production contracts and shows destined for Broadway, the SM is not required to do such work. The heads of each department will create their own working plots or lists. At the end of the run of the show, however, the SM may want to create a scenery plot and fly plot for the production book that will be turned in to the production office.

Checking Sight Lines

Just before the start of dress rehearsals and preview performances, it is a good idea for the SM to check the sight lines from both the backstage as well as the audience. From the perspective of backstage, the SM needs to stand in each wing or opening of the set and mark on the floor with white tape the closest point at which a person can stand or a piece of scenery can be placed without being seen by any member of the audience. From the perspective of the audience, the SM sits in the seats at the far ends of the rows closest to the stage to see that all openings on the stage that can reveal the backstage are sufficiently covered with curtains or flats. The stage technicians, however, are very good at covering sight lines before the SM has to make any mention of it, and while this may seem unimportant in relationship to all the other things to be done in techs, it is nonetheless important. For audience members, seeing actors or scenery waiting in the wings is distracting, spoils whatever illusion might have been created, and hurts the magic of theatre.

The Blue Work Lights

Once the backstage area is organized, the crew's workstations are established, and everyone is familiar with what they must do during the performance, the SM should ask that the overhead work lights backstage be turned off. As soon as possible, the SM needs to get everyone backstage working under the same conditions they will be working during performances. Of course, people cannot work in the dark. They must have some light at their workstations, light reflecting on the prop tables, and some general lighting so they can move about safely. Some theatres will have lighting instruments with blue gels already set up. If not, the electric department needs to set them up. On the list of

things the electric department must do during techs, the blue work lights are a low priority. If the SM does not ask for them and show they are a priority on the SM's list, the blue work lights can be put off to as late as an hour before dress rehearsal. Having the blue lights up and functioning becomes, for the SM, another one of those things that must be approached with good timing. In the poorest of situations, the SM may have to push and be assertive in getting this to happen sooner.

Through experience, SMs and technicians have found that the color blue is the best choice for these lights, possibly because blue is more like the light of night and people are comfortable with it psychologically. Green and red feel unnatural, while amber can be too bright, even when at a low intensity.

Crucial Cues to the Show

Also toward the end of this second phase in techs, the SM might go through the cueing script looking for cues that are so integral to the show that if they do not take place, the plot, storyline, or action will be hurt—their absence might even stop the show. With each crucial cue, the SM must decide what the SM, the cast, and the crew can do to quickly rectify a mistake or how to continue the performance without it. They must discuss an alternative plan for each crucial cue. Simple examples of such things might be a telephone that does not ring, a gun that misfires or jams, a door that won't open, or a special effect that goes wrong or does not happen. An alternative plan is excellent insurance for the show. Even with a high probability that the problem will not occur, the SM should take such measures. It is worth the time and effort.

Costumes, Hair, and Makeup

Just about the time in techs when the show is being run almost nonstop, the costumes are added to the show—the frosting and decoration on the already delicious cake. Each director, producer, or production company does this part of techs differently. The differences also depend on the type of show. A six-character, one-set comedy or drama will be quite different from a full-scale musical.

Some directors or producers want a formal *dress parade* in which the actors individually come out onstage, under the stage lighting, to display or model each of their costumes while the director, producer, designer, and their assistants sit at the production table, making notes. Other producers and directors may introduce the costumes slowly to the show by having the actors wear only bits and pieces or having the actors wear the costumes for only one particular scene. Often, due to the lack of tech time, all the costumes are introduced in an afternoon rehearsal, and then for the rest of the day the rehearsals are devoted to whatever problems might surround the costumes. Usually, by the next day or no later than the day after, the costume problems have been resolved and the actors have adjusted quickly, welcoming the final touch to their characters. Makeup and hair may also be introduced at the same time as the costumes, or the director may have the actors add makeup and hair after the costumes have been reviewed and the problems resolved.

On the positive side, adding costumes, makeup, and hair is fun and exciting, and is a final touch to the actors' characters and the show in general. However, adding these things can also be upsetting, especially if they are of a different period or are fantastic in design. First, there is the problem of getting used to the feel and the fit. Then there is the part of doing the blocking and stage business with whatever problems the costumes might present. Also, up to this point when the actors came offstage in the rehearsal, they had leisure time before the next entrance. With the addition of the costumes, makeup, and hair, they must now be concerned with these things to be ready for the next entrance, especially if the change is quick. There are also those actors who just do not like what has been designed for them.

During the introduction of costumes, makeup, and hair, the SM needs to be alert to the problems and feelings that some of the actors might have. The SM needs to troubleshoot wherever possible, calming a person who might be upset, assuring another that the problems will be heard and resolved. The SM reports to the wardrobe or hair departments all the problems they can handle and keeps the director and designer informed of the problems that might not yet have reached them.

The Actor's Use of Personal Costuming: As a side note to this costuming matter, on occasion, for any number of reasons, a performer may be asked to use a piece of personal clothing as part of the costuming for the show—mostly footwear, sometimes a garment of special design or one of a kind. In all such cases, by Equity rule and agreement with producers, the performer must be paid. In conference with the Equity deputy or even the local Equity office itself, the SM should find out the rate of pay and see to it that this information is sent to accounting or to the department responsible for issuing the weekly paychecks. Similarly, this holds true with a personal prop or item the performer may be asked to use in the show.

Musicals: The Orchestra

As has been stated over and over in this book, with musicals there is more of everything: more people, more scenery, more cues, more scheduling, more costumes, more problems, and for the producer, more money spent. At this point in our discussion of techs, the only element left for a musical is the music part of the show—the orchestra.

Scheduling the Orchestra

Time needs to be scheduled during techs for the orchestra to rehearse with the music director and conductor, and then with the cast. Once the musicians are brought in, they become a permanent part of the show and the payroll. This is a large expense in the producer's budget, so producers hold off as long as possible before bringing in the musicians. This means they are brought in either the day before the first dress rehearsal or sometimes on the same day.

The music director works out the schedule for the rehearsals and all the particulars having to do with the orchestra, working closely with the musicians' union. The SM needs only to get the information, put it on the schedule, and see that the cast is informed and attends their part of the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Space for the Orchestra

In most working situations it is not practical for the orchestra to set up and work in the pit. Because the show is a musical, chances are the techs are running behind schedule and everyone needs all the time on the stage they can get to complete their work. The crew needs stage time in the morning before the cast and director come in. The director, along with the cast and crew, needs the afternoon and evening times. Having the orchestra rehearsing in the pit while others are working on the stage is annoying and disturbs everyone's work. No one is willing to give up stage time. The only resolution is to put the orchestra somewhere else. It is common practice, while the orchestra is rehearsing for the first time and while the cast is having their first rehearsal with the orchestra, that the orchestra rehearses somewhere else. If the theatre has a large enough rehearsal room, the orchestra will be set up there. If not, a rehearsal room somewhere else will need to be rented and set up. To save that expense, and if the lobby or vestibule of the theatre is large enough, producers will have the orchestra set up there. Actually, working in the lobby is a good second choice. It is convenient for everyone.

Setting Up the Orchestra Rehearsal Space

To set up the orchestra someplace other than the orchestra pit, the music director and SM coordinate with the TD. The prop department sets up the music stands and chairs. Electrics bring in whatever power is needed and sets the clip-on lights on to the music stands. The carpentry department sets up the conductor's podium and whatever platforms might be needed, and the sound department sets up the mics and whatever amplification of sound is needed. The SM has little to do with this project other than to check with the music director to see if all is scheduled and going according to plan, and to remind the crew about the setup on the day before the rehearsal.

Setup of the Orchestra Pit

At some point in the last week of rehearsals the SM has asked the music director to make up a floor plan for the order, placement, and arrangement of instruments in the orchestra pit. This plan is given to the prop department, which for the most part leads in the setup of the pit, but, as you will see, it will take a village to do all that needs to be done to have a working orchestra pit:

- The prop department is responsible for setting up the chairs and music stands.
- The carpentry department sets up whatever platforms and podiums need to be set up.
- The electric department puts into place and connects the music stand lights and whatever electrical outlets are needed for electronic instrumentation.
- The sound department sets up the microphones, speaker, and whatever else is needed to get the sound out to the performers onstage and the people in the audience.
- Finally, the video people set up the camera to be trained on the conductor.

While the setup and working of the orchestra pit requires only these three paragraphs of text, it is nonetheless an important item to be discussed and should be on the SM's list of things, making sure that it is coordinated and gets done.

The Sitz Probe (*Sitzprobe*)

This is the first meeting between the orchestra and the cast. It is in this rehearsal that the cast and the orchestra sing and play through the show without any staging or other production elements. The term *sitzprobe* comes from the German for a “seated rehearsal” and is believed to have originated in opera. Working with the orchestra for the first time is another milestone in the life of the production and can be very exciting as the cast finally hears the full orchestration of the music instead of a keyboard rendition.

The Different Parts of Rehearsals for the Orchestra—Schedule Breakdown

Sometimes, depending on the ensemble configuration and complexity of the show, the director or music director will ask to have the entire cast come to rehearsals and be there as the different musical parts are worked over. With this type of scheduling, it truly becomes a *sitzprobe*. However, it is usually more practical to schedule times for the different parts of the cast to come in and rehearse:

1. First, before any of the cast members are scheduled, within the first few hours of the day the music director and conductor have their rehearsal time and go over all of the music.
2. The next block of time is for the principal singers, scheduled individually, in pairs, or in groups depending on how they work together in the show.
3. Next come the ensemble performers to work over their parts.
4. Academically, the fourth part is for the cast and orchestra to do a complete run-thru of the entire show. Almost always the SM is told to write this into the schedule, and, from experience, there is almost never enough time in the day for it to happen. Invariably, sessions run longer than expected and, by day's end, due to time restriction and overtime penalties should the members of the orchestra be required to work any longer, this last part of the schedule is lost to *good intentions*.

The SM's Responsibility to the Orchestra Rehearsal

Most times an SM is not needed during the entire time of the orchestra rehearsal. On the day of the rehearsal, the SM is there at the beginning to see that the rehearsal gets started without delay and to handle any problems. Once the rehearsal is underway, the SM is free to go about other business but returns from time to time to see if all is still going

well. Later in the rehearsal, after the orchestra has learned their parts, the SM checks again to see that the cast members are arriving according to their scheduled times.

Before the Arrival of the Fire Marshal

Sometime at the end of this second phase of techs or at the beginning of the next phase, it is wise for the SM to approach the TD and ask if everything that needs to be fire proofed or sprayed with fire-retardant chemicals has been done, or is going to be done. Also, the SM needs to check all fire exits and fire lanes to see that they are cleared, or going to be cleared before the fire marshal comes. The SM should also remind the TD of the fire extinguishers, asking if they are up to date and accessibly placed. If the techs have been particularly difficult and are running behind schedule, or if the TD has forgotten, the TD may respond defensively or be thankful for the SM's reminder. An SM can only do the job and be prepared for either response.

The Fire Marshal's Arrival

The fire marshal always arrives unannounced. The fire marshal may come one or two days before the first public performance, be it a dress rehearsal or preview performance, or may come as late as the afternoon of the opening performance. The fire marshal appears backstage, saying very little to anyone. The fire marshal knows what to look for and freely moves about the stage and backstage areas. The TD or SM will be asked if there are any open flames or pyro effects in the show, and the fire marshal will want to see all licenses and permits. If things are not according to the law or do not meet with the fire marshal's approval, this person has the power to prevent the show from performing for an audience until violations are corrected.

Another Gray Responsibility

With the fire marshal coming at such a late date, if there is a major problem there usually is a mad scramble to get corrected whatever needs to be done. The things having to do with the fire marshal are not the job and responsibility of the SM, but the experienced SM takes on another gray responsibility, knowing the problems that can be created in a worst-case scenario. Once again the SM is there to protect the producer and look out for the best interest of the show.

The Final Phase of Techs

In this final phase of techs at least one dress rehearsal is scheduled. Before the opening performance the producer may also schedule one or more preview performances. If there are no preview performances, on the day of the opening there may be a dress rehearsal in the afternoon with the opening performance at night. In other cases, if all has gone well, the director may call a short rehearsal in the afternoon, giving the cast and crew the time off to rest and prepare for the opening performance that night.

Collecting and Returning Valuables

Equity mandates that once the show gets into dress rehearsals or when the actors are required to wear costumes and can no longer keep their personal valuables on their person for safe keeping, the SM must collect valuables and management must provide a safe place until the SM returns them. As soon as the company gets into the theatre for techs, the SM will accept valuables from performers who choose to have certain items locked up. However, the SM will put the practice of collecting valuables into full swing on the first day when everyone is required to wear

costumes. This is a task most often assigned to the ASM or the SM who is not calling the cues for that particular performance.

For the sake of order, for keeping individuals' items separate, and for quick return, many SMs provide each actor with a large, plastic Ziploc bag with the actor's name clearly printed on it. The SM makes it a standard practice that, immediately after giving the half-hour call before a dress rehearsal or performance, one of the SMs goes around collecting the items. Most SMs prefer going around to each dressing room to collect the items instead of having the actors bring their items to the SM. This gives the SM the opportunity to see and talk with the actors and gives another opportunity to keep a finger on the pulse of the company.

The SM walks through the halls and corridors calling out, "Valuables!" When approaching a dressing room door, the SM knocks and calls out again, "Valuables!" and then waits for a reply. Some people will come to the door with a bulging bag of valuables, while others will have in their plastic bag only a ring, maybe a clip of money, or perhaps a watch. When the SM reaches an ensemble dressing room of the opposite gender, every effort should be made to respect the modesty of the occupants. After knocking, calling out, and having the door opened, the SM can give the valuables container to the person answering and have that person collect the valuables in that room while the SM waits outside.

Some SMs prefer having the cast members come to them while they wait at a designated place backstage or at the SM's console. The problem with this approach is that the actors will come at their own timing. This means an SM must be at the receiving point until the SM is sure everyone who chooses has turned in their valuables. With the limited time of the half-hour before a performance and all the things an SM must do during that time, it is more efficient for the SM to go around, complete the business, and be off to do other things.

In returning the packets and bags of personal valuables after the performance, the SM must be as responsible and conscientious as was the case in collecting them. The SM must personally see that all bags are returned to the correct individuals. Also the SM returning the valuables must make it a point to go around returning the valuables as soon as the curtain is down and the performers are in their dressing rooms.

Techs Continue

Although the technical elements have been set and worked out by this time in techs, there is always some refining and tweaking to be done in all parts of the show. Technical rehearsals are never officially over until after the opening performance. Even then, within the week following the opening, the director may continue to rehearse the cast and make technical changes in the afternoons and perform the show in the evenings.

Performance Level

In dress rehearsals and certainly in the preview performances all the technical elements, including costume, hair, makeup, and orchestra, are used. If the director agrees, the SM should remind the cast and crew before a dress rehearsal that the rehearsal is to be performed as it will be for an audience. The SM reminds them that there will be no stopping unless it is a matter of safety or at the word of the director or SM. This is certain to be the case for preview performances, even if the producer or director announces to the audience beforehand that the show could be stopped for a technical problem.

The Director Giving Notes

Sometimes immediately after a dress rehearsal or preview performance the director will give notes. Other times this will be done just before the next run-thru or performance. The notes are mostly for the cast members, but one of the SMs always attends the note sessions, and sometimes the heads of the different technical departments will attend.

Important Information for the SM

Notes from the director are very important to the SM. Aside from getting notes about calling the cues for the show, the SM must know what the actors are being told and how they are being directed. With this information the SM can maintain the director's intent and integrity, and can later transfer this information to the understudies and replacement actors. Also, if neither the TD nor the technical heads are present at the note session, it is the SM's job to take their notes and later relay the information to them.

Performance Show Reports

Once the show gets into dress rehearsals and preview performances, the SM starts filling out for each performance a show report sheet, as presented in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy." An important part of this report is noting the timing of each act. By dress rehearsals and previews the timing of the acts and the overall show is closer to what it will be throughout the run of the show. This is usable information for anyone who seeks it from the SM. It is especially useful to the house manager, who needs to prepare the staff for intermission and the end of the show. Also, the box office likes having this information to tell patrons who might ask.

Detailed Timing Forms

After the show is in its run and the timings for each act on the show reports become consistent, the PSM will create from time to time detailed timings of the show, timing the individual scenes as well as the overall acts. The information from these timings is noted on the performance running-time chart, as presented in Chapter 6, and then it is placed in the front part of the cueing script for reference.

Production Photos or Videos

Often in this final phase of techs the producer and publicity department want a photo session to get production stills and video. Having a photo call at this time should be no surprise to anyone. It more than likely was placed on the block calendar that was handed out during the first week of rehearsals. Once again, if all has gone well in techs, the cast, crew, and staff are ready for this part of techs. If not, all are a little resentful at having to use precious tech time to do this work.

Some picture calls, for both still photos and video, can be simple and uninvolved. The photographers may do their work standing on the apron of the stage or moving about in the orchestra of the empty theatre. I have even seen a special platform quickly built overnight by the stage crew out in the audience upon which the photographer stood to get his shots while the cast did a run-thru of the show. Some sessions may involve only the principal performers, while others, as with a musical show, may require the entire cast. With other photo calls, the publicity department may want to set up and stage the pictures, using additional lights specifically for the camera. These events can take up as much as the two rehearsals periods allowed with the twelve hour working day, sometimes flowing over into the next day.

Picture calls are governed by Equity rule. It is important that the SM refers to the Equity Rulebook and knows the details, especially when it comes to videotaping. If things are not done according to Equity agreement, the session can end up costing the producer a good amount of money—money the producer is neither prepared nor willing to spend.

It is the SM's job to find out the type of photo session, the needs of the producer, what the publicity department might want, and then coordinate the event accordingly. Some producers, directors, and even textbooks say the SM is in full charge of the photo shoot. The truth is, on the day of the shoot, the SM takes more of a secondary position, assisting and doing whatever the director, producer, publicity people, and even the photographer wants. The SM is there to facilitate, organize, keep order, work out logistics, keep the event moving, make suggestions that can make things easier and save time, put together the list of pictures as dictated to the SM, tell the crew when to change the scenery or lights, and see that the actors who are not being used onstage are getting into their costumes and are ready for the next picture to be taken. On some occasions, when the SM might have the producer's and director's confidence, the SM might be called on to run the entire affair. At those times the SM draws on any artistic experience as well as the experience gained from doing other photo shoots.

News Coverage and Interviews

News coverage takes less time and is not as involved as a photo session might be. Usually one or several TV stations are invited to bring in their cameras during a dress rehearsal. Sometimes the camera is handheld while the cameraperson moves about the apron of the stage. Other times the camera is placed on a tripod and set either on the stage at the far side of the apron, or in the audience. Between the existing stage lights and a light that may be attached to the camera, little time is needed to set up this equipment. For news coverage, the cameras are there to shoot only parts of the show—at the most a scene, not an entire act and certainly not the whole play. Once again, there are Equity rules on this matter and the SM needs to know the details beforehand and not after the fact. This is where the Equity Rulebook comes in handy.

Interviews with performers can be done on camera or for the printed press, sometimes both at the same time. On many occasions, a still photographer is included. The SM usually has even less to do with these sessions. The SM is informed by the publicity department and they usually handle everything else. The SM needs only to find out where the interview is going to be held and check the schedule to see that the interview does not conflict with anything having to do with the show, the theatre, or the company. If the interview is to be done onstage with the set and stage lighting, the SM arranges to have some crew members there to set up the scenery and turn on the lights. Stage technicians get paid for doing this work, so the SM needs to check to see that the producer is agreeable to this expense.

Piano Tuning

If in fact some kind of a piano is used, whether it be a baby grand, spinet, or upright, one of the last things to be done before preview performances or opening night is to have the piano in the orchestra tuned. Today, electronic keyboards are mostly used and require no tuning. However, in large musical shows with detailed instrumentation, a piano is often part of the musical arrangement. The music director is responsible for having the tuning done and usually makes the arrangements through the production office. Sometimes the music director asks the SM to set it up. It is natural that the piano tuner prefers doing this work in a quiet theatre. Whenever possible, the tuner is scheduled early in the morning before everyone arrives, or during lunchtime when everyone is gone. If the piano tuner can come only during the day when the crew needs to be working on the stage, the SM will have to arrange with the TD to keep the pounding and running of electrical tools down to a minimum. It is best to have the piano tuner come to do this work in the morning. Then if there is a problem and the piano cannot be used, there is still time to bring in another.

More on the SM's Working Relationships

Once again we come across a *gray responsibility* for the SM. Even though piano tuning is not the SM's responsibility, the SM checks to see that this work has been done or will be done. Remember, it is the SM's job to do whatever must be done to have the company and rehearsal running smoothly and without delays.

Sometimes, however, when the SM inquires about something that is someone else's responsibility, three things may happen: the person being asked may thank the SM for inquiring or reminding them; the person may become defensive because they are in some way delinquent in this part of their job; or the person mistakenly thinks the SM is stepping in to do the job. Some less responsible people may try to pass their work on to the SM. It is important for the SM to know human behavior and the people with whom the SM is working. When inquiring about a thing or a job that belongs to someone else, the SM needs to approach in a nonthreatening and nonconfrontational way, assuring them that the SM is there to help and not to criticize, complain, or point an accusing finger, and most of all not to take over the responsibility of the job.

A New Beginning

In many working situations, the final dress rehearsal or last preview performance marks the end of techs. For a new show or the makeover of a show that has been previously produced, rehearsals after the opening—rehearsals resembling techs—may continue until the artistic staff is satisfied. When techs finally end and the show is about to go into its run, a heavy sigh of relief and pleasure can be taken by all. Technical rehearsals are a monumental task and a lot has been done in a very short time. For the producer, techs are an expensive period of time. The producer is now anxious to get the show in performance with the hopes of recouping the initial investment, and then making a small fortune. The director and the actors too are pleased and relieved, but there is no time to savor the moment. With the opening performance comes the reviews, critically acclaiming or disclaiming the performances, the show, or the director's work.

The SM too can take a moment to enjoy the accomplishment of techs, and possibly reflect on a job well done. The SM cannot rest on any laurels, though, but must move swiftly into the next part of the job. If the show is new and possibly headed to Broadway, changes, rehearsing, and teching will continue, sometimes in bits and pieces and other times with whole scenes or acts. This will continue until the show opens on Broadway and goes into its run. Once the show goes into its run, the SM's work will become less intense; hours will become more normal and the SM will be able to have more of a personal life. However, the demands on the job will remain the same—the SM will need to focus attention and energy to caring for the company and maintaining the show as set by the director.

The Making and/or Rewriting of the Cueing Script

It is at this point that if needed the SM cleans up or creates an entirely new and color-coded curing script.

For Peace of Mind: While some SMs do not find it necessary to do this next phase, for my comfort and frame of mind, if the cueing scrip is color coded and in the neatest order and notation possible, then no matter what frame of mind I might be in when going into a performance, I am drawn in and assured that the show I will call will be “perfect” because my cueing script is “perfect” and is not a reflection of what life can sometimes be.

The Professional Experience: An SM Overwhelmed

Just at a time in my career when my resume had some good credits and I thought I had done it all, I got a production of the musical *My One and Only*. It was a West Coast production and I was thrilled to get the show because a good friend was directing and starring in it. The rehearsal period was one of the best I had experienced. I worked well with my friend and he allowed me more artistic contribution than any director had previously. I had no concerns about the technical rehearsals. I had worked in the theatre in which we were performing and knew most of the crew. I was aware that the show had some technically difficult places by the number of cues I had accumulated in the cueing script. I knew I was going to be one busy SM during the performance, especially for the opening sequence, which ran nonstop for twenty-two minutes. No problem! I had behind me the experience of burning Atlanta every night for twenty weeks in the musical production of *Gone With the Wind*. How bad could anything else be? I had no idea what I was about to embark upon.

The opening to the show had many parts with musical numbers and quick dialogue scenes. First, there was a rainstorm with small flats of painted clouds flying in and out and across the stage. A combination of a real rain curtain and a lightning effect created the illusion of stormy weather. Of course, there were flashes of lightning cues and sound-effect cues of thunder. There was a bevy of tap-dancing girls with umbrellas and slickers, dancing everywhere. At one point the rain stopped, the clouds parted, the sun came out (all requiring cues), and the handsome lead aviator character Billy “Buck” Chandler entered from above, hanging from a parachute. He was lowered to the stage, released from his harness, and as all lead aviator characters do, he sang and danced with the girls.

To give the female lead of the show, the lovely Edythe Herbert, channel swimmer and aquacade star, an equally impressive entrance, the scenery changed before the audience’s eyes. We were now at a train station as a train unit was cued to roll out on the stage, with many blasts of CO₂. The door to the train was cued to slide open and out came more tapping beauties—the same dancers as seen in the slickers, but now in colorful bathing suits of the period. They of

course tapped their hearts out before Edythe slipped in place at the train door. The lights changed to focus on Edythe while many flashes of lights filled the stage, as if from hundreds of news pictures being taken. The flashes were outrageously out of proportion to what the three or four photographers on stage could possibly shoot in that moment.

With Edythe's entrance there was more singing and dancing. Other principal characters appeared with special light cues to point out their entrances. Then, in a moment in time, the lights changed and the stage picture froze. Billy and Edythe's paths crossed. They saw each other. They were drawn to each other but never left their frozen positions. It was magical. The moment was brief. The lights were restored to their original setting and the soon-to-be lovers continued on their way. The opening sequence finally came to an end, but all is not over for the SM, because in the dark he must now cue a life-size propeller plane to be brought onstage before bringing up the lights. This, of course, must be done quickly so that the momentum of the opening and the pace of the show is not lost. When the lights come up, the sight of the plane is impressive and the audience reacts, first verbally and then with applause.

It took us all afternoon and evening to set the cues for this sequence and then we tried running it. The director, who was also playing Billy, remained in the audience while his understudy ran the part of Billy onstage. Running the sequence was highly problematic for me. There were just too many cues, too many elements. The timing was outrageously fast. There wasn't enough time for me to read the cues in the script and then look up on the stage to take the visual cues. My timing was off. Also, with scenery and performers moving on the stage at the same time, there was an element of danger. With the least little thing being cued at the wrong time, someone could be injured.

I was overwhelmed. At first I would not admit defeat. I had worked with hard groups of cues before, but now I could not reach the accuracy and perfection the director and lighting designer were expecting in such a short time. In my desire to please, I put even greater demands and pressure upon myself. Each time we had to stop the rehearsals, I could feel the annoyance from everyone around. I could hear expletives of disapproval over the headset coming from the lighting designer, and at one point I heard the director make a comment that showed his lack of understanding and support for me. It was not meant for my ears and it was said out of his frustration, but nonetheless, I heard it. I was hurt and at the same time baffled. This was supposed to be my friend. He knew my capabilities. He knew how difficult the sequence was. I became defensive and felt a great need to confront the director. One of my weaknesses as an SM was my inability to let pass abuse directed at me. SMs need to have a great tolerance for abuse, but I never reached such a level. I said over the headset, "I heard what you said and I think it very unfair of you not to allow me the time to learn my job as you have allowed others when they were first learning their parts." The director was contrite and apologized. Fortunately, I still had enough sense about myself to ask if we could leave this segment and move on. The director agreed and I felt a sense of relief, as did everyone around.

I went home that night broken in spirit. I had never been so defeated. I could only sleep a few hours. When I awoke, I was compelled to study my script. I was becoming more familiar with the placement of the cues, but I could only perfect my timing by actually calling the cues and seeing the action onstage. I tried playing the original cast album, but in many places the arrangement was different.

On the afternoon of rehearsals that day, we did not go back to the opening sequence. I was thrilled to have the reprieve and another day to study. While everyone went on dinner break, I stayed behind. I sat at my console and practiced calling the cues. It was a great help to be at the console, talking through the headset, turning on and off cue-light switches, and looking at my script and then at the stage, seeing in my mind's eye the action. I felt comfortable and at home.

When everyone returned from dinner, I was certain we would continue rehearsing from where we left off. Instead, the director asked that the stage be set up for the opening. My heart sank and I broke out in a mild cold sweat, while visibly maintaining composure and giving an air of confidence. Despite all my study, I had improved only a little. It was progress, but still not enough for everyone else. At one point the director said over the headset, "What is the problem? What should we do? Should we have the ASM take some of the cues? Maybe we can have the stagehands take some of the cues on their own."

"No!" I insisted. "The stage manager is supposed to call all the cues for the show. He is responsible for the timing. Give me a little more time. I know I can get it. The stage manager on Broadway called all the cues for this sequence, and from what I understand he had more cues than what I have." Perhaps it was my ego speaking, but I was insistent enough to convince the director. He said he would not get back to the opening until Friday.

The heat was on. I was now burdened with the fact that, by Friday night, *I had to deliver!* I knew I had to do something more to learn this sequence—change my way of studying. The answer was simple. I needed to make a cassette recording of the opening as we were performing it. The ideal thing would be to have the sound person record the opening as the cast performed it onstage. To do this, I would need a chunk of time out of the rehearsal (at least a half-hour) and the services of many. This was not practical in the tight schedule of working techs. It then occurred to me that except for some of the dialogue moments, the entire opening was filled with music. I simply needed to get with the rehearsal pianist and have her play the music while I recorded it. On the first five-minute break we had that

night, I cornered the rehearsal pianist in the orchestra pit, and with the offer of a bribe, I begged her to aid me in my hour of need. Without hesitation she agreed. She said she would come in an hour before the rehearsal on the next day and we could record it in the pit while the crew was at lunch and the theatre was quiet. Perfect! And so we did!

After the recording session and for the next two days, with every chance I got, which was usually in the morning before the cast arrived and during the midday meal break, I sat at the SM's console with my cassette player and rehearsed the sequence. I even did "head" rehearsals, like the athletes—seeing myself calling the cues perfectly and successfully, while visualizing the scenery, lights, props, and actors moving about the stage. By Friday I triumphed. I was 98 percent improved. The few mistakes I made were negligible. At the end of the opening sequence and when the lights came up for the next scene with the propeller airplane perfectly in place, the cast and crew cheered and applauded me. It was my Tony-winning performance, a moment I have remembered and treasured ever since.

Interview

► **Interviewer:** What qualities do you like in a good SM?

► **Brad Enlow – Technical Director:** *Communication* is a big one. I rely on the stage manager for clear communication, between the director and me. The stage manager is the buffer. In techs, while the director is out in the audience I am backstage; many times it is the stage manager who delivers to me what the director wants.

► **Interviewer:** Does this mean that the SM has to have a good working technical knowledge?

► **Brad Enlow:** It helps, but not completely necessary as long as the stage manager can convey in my terms. The stage manager has to be knowledgeable enough that if the director asks for what seems like a simple change but in reality can be costly or time consuming, the stage manager can initially tell the director the problem or problems involved. Also, I like when in techs if the stage manager sees something that might be a problem or is just not working, the SM tells me about it in anticipation, rather than waiting for the director to give a note on the matter.

Sometimes a director can be "flowery" or creative in saying and describing what he wants. For example, one director I worked with before I came to the Playhouse told the stage manager that he wanted the stage right side of the bridge unit painted a little "yummier."

Yummier? What does that mean?

Fortunately, the stage manager was experienced enough to find out what the director meant by "yummier" so that when she came to me, she said, "The director wants the tail end of the right side of the bridge painted so that it blends into a brighter color, maybe using orange and yellow because the bridge is the transition from the real world into the fantasy world." *That* I understood!

The Opening Performance

People working in theatre will go through many opening performances in their careers. In the most academic and traditional sense of theatre, there should be no difference between the level and intensity of work given during rehearsals and what will be done in performance.

In theory, by opening performance (more traditionally called “opening night”) the cast, crew, and SMs should have had the full experience of the show. There should be no differences, no surprises between what took place in dress rehearsals and what will happen in the opening performance. However, with all the hype and excitement generated backstage, on opening night things that went smoothly in the dress rehearsal on the day before can all fall apart.

The Event of an Opening Performance

Despite the assurance and success of dress rehearsals and preview performances, on opening night the atmosphere backstage is filled with excitement, high energy, nervousness, tension, worry, tradition, and sometimes fear. Producers will often make opening performances even more special by inviting guests, celebrities, and dignitaries from the community. People will come to the theatre more formally dressed, and cast members will have family and friends scattered about the theatre. Bouquets and vases of flowers will be decorating the greenroom and dressing rooms, electronic telegrams will be lighting up the smart phones, and decorative and fancy displays of food stuff and sweet things will be set out for all to pick at.

Most of all, there will be out in the audience the prying eyes of the critics, making their judgments, formulating their opinions, and jotting down notes for their commentaries, commentaries that can make or break a performance or the entire show. The night belongs to the artists, creators, writers, designers, actors, choreographer, musical director, producer, and director, and while they are going through their personal agony and ecstasy, it is they who will be judged, acclaimed, or criticized. No one will come backstage after the performance and tell the SM how brilliantly the cues were called, or how disastrous the scene change in the second act went. So on this night the SM’s greatest concern should be in calling the cues for the show. If all has gone well in the dress rehearsal or previews, then it should be, as the saying goes, *a piece of cake*.

Yes, the SM can be filled with the excitement and celebration and maybe even have some nervousness and expectations of his or her own, but by the fifteen-minute over the backstage PA system, the SM reminds not only him- or herself but everyone else to settle in. Then while giving the five-minute call, the SM might sincerely offer best wishes, thanks, and complement all on the work they have done starting at rehearsals and up to this moment. Corny as this may sound, it is a moment of endearment and is a catalyst in getting everyone focused and concentrated.

Hellish Openings

If everything in life worked in textbook fashion, this book would be half its size. A knowledgeable and well-rounded SM is one who sails through the good times with appreciation and thanks, and in the bad times buckles down and leads the people in his or her care to some kind of success and sanity. Unfortunately, in any SM’s career, there will be opening performances that can easily be labeled *hellish*. The techs may have been problematic, the schedule was all but abandoned—which included not having a dress rehearsal—and the opening performance was the first time everyone had the opportunity to run the show without stopping to fix things. During such an opening performance, nerves and fears dominate.

In these situations the SM can be as anxious as any performer might be. However, whatever it is that is going on with the SM, he or she cannot let feelings rule and, even more, cannot show them to those around. It is the SM's job to generate assurance and, if possible, a sense of security. This is not to say that the SM should be Pollyanna-ish and cheer people on with false rhetoric. The SM can acknowledge the situation but move on by first thanking everyone for their hard work, and then appeal to them to draw from their craft and professional experience. The SM can then ask them to become focused, concentrated, and do the best they can, and assure them that nothing more can be expected.

In such situations as described above, it is usually the technical aspects of the show that are problematic. To temporarily make their work easier, the SM might go to the prop department and suggest, "Don't worry about getting the potted palms on the stage for this performance. Placement of the table and chairs is more important. If anybody complains, tell them to talk with me."

The SM might also go to the carpenters and scenery departments: "Do the best you can without putting yourselves or anyone else in danger. I will be watching and will not take the next cues until I see things are in place. It's okay for the next few performances if we take a little longer in making this change."

To wardrobe and dressers: "Don't worry about the hat for now. It's more important the performer gets zipped and hooked and is feeling comfortable. If there isn't enough time, save the jacket for last and the actor can be putting it on as he enters the scene."

To the performers: "Don't worry about finding your way backstage. I'll have a dresser waiting and as soon as you get offstage, she will lead you to where you need to go. You just concentrate on your performance."

To the crew and performers: "With the short time we have had to put all this together, you cannot expect to do it perfectly. I am expecting in places the timing will not be right. I expect there will be mistakes. Just remain alert. Whatever might go wrong, don't let it throw you—just continue on. Together we have enough experience to handle any situation that might come up in the performance."

When wielding such authority and making what seems like small changes, the SM must be careful not to do anything that interferes with the play, the plot, the action, the business, or the characters. Most of all, the SM must be certain that the changes are simple and easy for the performers to assimilate and will not affect their performances. The performers must be informed of all changes, even the ones that do not directly concern them. For example, even though the potted palms are on the stage just as set dressing, the SM must warn the performers that the potted palms may or may not appear onstage for the performance.

The SM must also be ready to take full responsibility for disapproval of the changes from the producer, director, or designers. In addition, the SM must know that if anything goes wrong in or around these suggested changes, the blame will be placed on the SM, even if the mistake is not directly connected with the change.

Through experience and knowledge of human behavior, the SM knows that people's fears are often greater than what is likely to happen in reality. Armed with this knowledge and the ability to lead, the SM can rest easy and trust that with most opening performances that are not quite ready, everyone will pull through. By all rights, the opening should be a disaster. However, either through divine intervention or some professional miracle, the cast and crew pull together and the show is performed remarkably well, sometimes flawlessly. Of course, everyone else is thrilled and thankful, and yes, the palm tree did make it onstage for the opening performance.

With miracle openings, everyone is lulled into a sense of security and believes they are now home free. The SM, however, cannot be led down this path and allow everyone to rest on their laurels. Before each of the next few performances, the SM must pull the cast and crew back to reality, forewarning that if they do not put in the same focus, concentration, and effort as they did for the opening, the next performance could be the disaster they feared for the opening.

The Supreme Power and Rights of the SM

At curtain time on opening night, the producer and director have no choice but to relinquish control of the show to the SM. It is at this point in any production that the SM is in full charge. There is nothing more the producer or director can say or do. If something isn't right during the performance, they cannot stop the show to correct it. It is up to the SM to keep the ship sailing through calm as well as troubled waters. If there are any nerves to be felt on opening night for the SM, the thought of having full responsibility could be a triggering factor. The SM cannot give in to such thoughts and feelings. If up to this point the SM has done the work as suggested throughout this book, the SM has a great foundation of confidence to draw upon.

One Voice

For the sake of order, clarity, organization, safety, and timing backstage during a performance, there must be one voice controlling and calling the cues. It is a well-established fact that the SM is this solitary voice and that everyone backstage takes cues from the SM. Nothing can be done differently in a performance without first informing the SM and getting the SM's approval and clearance. Also, it is an established fact that the producer and director stay out of the backstage during the performance. If they choose to be backstage during the performance, they remain quiet and out of the way. They should not be giving directions, making changes, or giving notes. They must save that for intermission time or after the performance. The SM has the right to ask both the producer and director to adhere to this policy, and if they don't the SM can ask them to leave the backstage until the performance is over.

With such power and authority comes supreme responsibility. The SM is expected to have a perfectly run show for every performance. With anything that goes wrong, the producer and director turn first to the SM for answers. In most instances, they hold the SM responsible and expect assurances that the problem is fixed and will not happen again.

This supreme authority belongs to every SM during performance. All SMs should hold it dear and call anyone to task who stands in violation—producers and directors included! Once again, however, SMs take care in how they exert this authority. They must remember that this supreme reign is limited to the time of the performance, and once the show is over their peers and superiors resume their power and authority and will bring to bear what they did not like in the SM's conduct.

Curtain Bows

In many working situations, there will be a rehearsal on the afternoon of the opening performance. If there have been no preview performances, more than likely the director has put off setting the curtain bows until this last rehearsal before opening. Some directors make it a tradition to set the bows on the day of opening. Some superstitiously believe that if they do it any earlier, it will jinx the show. There are also those directors who have been so busy with the rest of the show that they have either forgotten the bows or have avoided them.

Last-Minute Cue Noting

Whatever the reasons directors have for setting curtain bows at the last moment, the SM ends up having to write curtain bow cues in the cueing script sometime in the late afternoon of opening performance. After having written an entire cueing script for the show, adding curtain bow cues is no major task. However, having to make these notes at this late date does add a little pressure to the day's work.

While the cues are being set, the SM writes them in pencil, allowing for changes. Afterward, the SM finds time to rewrite the cues and color codes them. The curtain bow cues for a small comedy or drama are usually simple and easy to note and call. With a musical, the bows can be choreographed, done while singing some of the songs from the show, or broken into many segments, and they can become technically complicated. In most cases, because there are no pages of dialogue on which the cues for the curtain bow can be written, the SM notes these cues in the same way the cues to open the show were noted (see Chapter 13).

Encore Bows

Sometimes encore bows are set and made to look as if they are spontaneous due to the great amount of applause. Other times the director will leave encore bows to the SM. There are different schools of thought on encore bows and how many should be taken. Some believe that encore bows should be taken only when the demand is so great that the SM can feel it backstage from the console—then give only one or two. Other schools, such as the one from which most performers come, say give as many bows as the audience demands.

When the director leaves the encore bows up to the SM, the SM should always find out from what school of encore bows the director comes. It is then the SM's job to do what the director prefers. Ultimately, once the show gets into its run, the SM learns the intensity of the audience response and the number of encore bows to give, if any. It is always

better to give a little less, because it is awkward and embarrassing for the cast to come out for another bow just as the applause is dying out and the audience is beginning to leave. It is also awkward for the audience, because they feel obligated to applaud, and some feel put out by having to give more.

Encore bows should be blocked and rehearsed the same as the regular bows. If the director has not done this, the SM should. The first thing the SM does is to establish with the cast and crew that after the final bow of the regular bows, everyone stands by for possible encore bows. The SM works out with the performers whatever blocking is needed, works out with the lighting department (the light-board operator) whatever light cues are needed, and has the technicians on the rail stand by to bring the curtain in and out on command. If the show is a musical, the SM also needs to work out a plan with the conductor.

The SM's Judgment and Timing in Giving Encore Curtain Bows

Within the time the last rehearsed bow is taken, to the time the curtain touches down on to the stage floor, the SM decides if there will be an encore bow. If indeed there will be an encore bow, the SM first gives a STAND BY, which is immediately followed by the GO! cue. This will continue until the SM announces, "This is the last bow." The cast will know when to break position and leave the stage when they see the stage work lights come on. The encore bows need to look just as professional as the regular bows.

Arrival of Congratulatory Items

On the day of the opening performance, the backstage area can become filled with many congratulatory items, such as flowers, stuffed animals, candy, gift baskets, and even champagne. If there isn't a doorman to accept these items, it becomes the SM's job to sign for them and see they are distributed to the right people and places. If the show is still in rehearsals, it is the SM's job to see that these items do not distract and draw the performers' attention away from the rehearsal. The SM should either put the items in the performer's dressing room or in a place where they are out of view and distribute them after the rehearsal. Traditionally, there is always an opening performance congratulatory letter from Equity. There was a time when this letter came in the form of a telegram. Today, it can be sent electronically and it becomes the job of the SM to print it out and post it on the callboard for all to see.

Working the Backstage Public Address System

If an SM is not used to communicating over a public address (PA) system, there are some things to learn to be more effective. The SM needs to be clear in speech, sometimes repetitive, have all thoughts well organized, deliver the information to create a picture, and be brief. When the SM first begins to talk over the PA, an effort should be made to get everyone's attention. This is best achieved by prefacing information with an attention-getter, such as, "Good evening company and welcome back!" or, "Cast, may I have your attention, please! This is your half-hour call. Half-hour, please. Half-hour."

The Dreaded Red Box!

Also at this point in the SM's half-hour call, the SM reminds the cast members, "If you haven't signed in, please do so now. I will be checking right after this announcement." More times than not, someone can be seen scurrying from their dressing room to sign in because they all know about the dreaded red box (see Chapter 10, "Rehearsals").

Communicating to Cast and Crew

Starting with the half-hour call for each performance, the quickest and most immediate way for the SM to communicate with the cast members is over the backstage public address system. The crew, on the other hand, is not always within earshot of the speakers to hear the PA, so after giving the half-hour call over the PA to the performers, one of the SMs goes around the backstage area, calling out, “Half-hour! This is your half-hour call, please! Half-hour.” If there is some specific information the SM has to communicate to the crew, the SM must go to the different department heads.

Collecting Valuables

Remember also, immediately after making the half-hour call, one of the SMs must go around to collect the performer’s personal valuables. The SM has provided each performer with a large plastic food-storage bag that zips closed and has each person’s name clearly printed on it. It is the SM’s responsibility to gather up the valuables before each performance, put them in a safe place, and personally see that they are returned to the correct individuals at the end of the performance.

Use of the Terms *Company* and *Cast*

As part of the SM’s clarity in communicating, when there is information to impart to everyone, the SM uses the term **company** in the attention-getter. When the information is only for the cast, clearly use the term **cast**.

Repetitive Information

By now you may have noticed that the SM is repetitive in the delivery of the calls over the PA. This is purposely done and a technique used to get everyone’s attention to get them focused in on the work to be done in the next half-hour. Sometimes the greenroom or ensemble dressing rooms can be more like a social hour with people seeing each other for the first time in the day or talking about what exciting thing they did or had happen to them. Knowing this, the SM creates an attention-grabber. This way, when a performer has fallen behind in being ready for the start of the show, they cannot use the excuse that they did not hear the SM’s half-hour call or fifteen-minute call.

Giving Notes, Instructions, or Directions to the Cast

Often, after making the half-hour call, the SM may have some information or instructions to deliver—giving a general acting note, or instituting a change. The SM cannot repeat everything three times, so before delivering this information the SM says: “Cast! Listen up! We have some changes that will affect you!” or, “Cast! Listen closely! I will not be repeating this information!” Once again, the SM should be selective and to the point. If the SM feels the information bears repeating, summarize it or repeat the information in outline form. Never give information or notes to individuals over the PA; seek them out and talk to them privately.

Being Clear and Specific in Delivering Information on the PA

In giving directions or instructions to the cast, the SM, once again, must be clear and specific, and must cover all possible questions that might be asked surrounding the particular subject at hand. The SM cannot assume or believe a thing is reasonably implied. Some listeners will come up with their own interpretation, unless the information is clearly stated.

An example of this might take place on opening night. Traditionally, just before the curtain goes up on Act I, some producers or directors like to meet with the cast. The producer or director asks the SM to have the cast on stage at the five-minute call. In doing so, the SM must consider how this affects not only the cast but everyone working the show. The SM informs the crew and staff so they can be finished with whatever work they would normally be doing at the

five-minute call, and then announces to the cast: “Cast! May I have your attention for a moment please! At the five-minute call this evening, the director wants to meet with the cast onstage.”

For the SM to leave the message at that will surely create concern and confusion, bring up questions, leave room for individual interpretation and assumption, and possibly create disorder. The SM must anticipate the cast’s needs and questions and continue the announcement by saying: “Cast! This meeting will cut into your preparation time. Please know that you must be in costume and makeup by the five-minute call. Directly from the meeting we will be taking our places for the start of the show. We will not have time to return to the dressing rooms to finish getting ready.” The SM was clear, specific, and to the point. The cast now knows the procedure and what is expected of them. Some of the cast members may not like having their preparatory time taken away. Out of consideration for the cast and crew, the SM might suggest at the end of the instructions that if there are any problems, the individual should come to the SM.

Half-Hour: The Time of Preparation before the Performance

As you can see, the half-hour call is an important time. It is filled with all kinds of intense and concentrated work. The cast members preparing for their performance, the crew setting up for the top of the show, the ASM going around collecting valuables and just generally touching base with the performers, and the SM going through his or her checklist of things:

- Setting up the cueing console
- Checking cue lights that are operated from the console
- Seeing that video monitors display what they are supposed to be broadcasting
- Checking to see that the headset is hot and that all departments are connected
- After the prop department has finished setting props, going around with a list and doing a double check
- Checking with the front of the house to see how things are going and reporting if there might be a delay

The SM must know that the cast uses the half-hour before the show to focus in and prepare for the show and should not be breaking into this time every few minutes with some announcement or delivery of information. As much as possible, the SM should deliver such information when making the half-hour call, or at the fifteen-minute call. By tradition and practice the cast knows that the SM will be talking to them throughout the half-hour. They are ready to receive information and assimilate it, but they don’t want it taxing in content or delivered in long orations.

The Fifteen-Minute Call

At the fifteen-minute call, the SM once again repeats this information three times. Also in this announcement, the SM is careful and specific in the choice of wording: “Company, this is your fifteen-minute call to curtain time. Fifteen minutes to curtain, please. Fifteen minutes.” The key word here is *curtain*. Beginning performers, and sometimes even the most seasoned performers, confuse their time, believing they have a full fifteen minutes before the next call, which is the five-minute call. In truth, when the fifteen-minute call is made, there is only ten minutes before the SM makes the next call, the five-minute call. Similarly, after the five-minute call, the actors actually have only three minutes to prepare, because the SM calls for places two minutes before the curtain is scheduled to go up.

The PA—for SMs’ Use Only

The SM needs to establish from the start that the PA is for the SMs’ use only. The PA should be used for official announcements, given only by the SMs, and not become a party line for anyone to use. Any social messages should be given by the SM or have the stage manager’s approval and clearance. Everyone should know that when a voice comes over the PA backstage important information is going to be delivered and that they must listen. In the delivery of announcements, the SM can be pleasant, informal, and have a sense of humor, but not so much so as to make the PA a forum for entertainment of the troops.

The Human Side

Having established such formal and rigid use of the PA, there are times when it is appropriate for the SM to allow the PA system to be used for fun and games. Such events help keep the spirit of the company running high and the bonds strong. If the SM allows this kind of use, it should be only when the event has merit, is controlled, is brief, and does not intrude on the cast or their time.

The SM can also use the medium of the PA to express thanks, give praise, offer congratulations, and show appreciation to individuals, groups, or the company as a whole. If at one time or another the SM has made a mistake that involves a large part of the cast or the company as a whole, it is endearing and appreciated when the SM publicly acknowledges the error over the PA. Not only is it humbling for the SM, but it also gains the respect of others.

The Five-Minute Call

When the SM gives the five-minute call, it must once again be carefully and specifically worded, including the word “curtain”: “Company, this is your five-minute call to curtain time. Five minutes to curtain, please. Five minutes.”

Even if the front of the house has asked the SM to hold the curtain for a few minutes, the SM goes ahead and gives the five-minute call. For this short amount of time, it is better if the SM has everybody ready and waiting in their places for the few minutes. If the delay is going to be longer, at the five-minute call the SM announces the delay, asking the cast to be ready anyway, because the next call will be for places.

Delays in the Starting Time of the Show

Whenever the show is delayed in starting, the SM records on the performance show report the reason. Some producers find starting the show late a grievous thing to do. They view it as someone not doing their job. No one wants to be noted as being the reason, so when house managers ask for a delay, they make an effort to get the people seated as quickly as possible. On many occasions the house manager will complete this work in a shorter time than requested. As soon as everyone is seated, the house manager calls the SM to begin the show and the ball is then in the SM’s court. This is why it is advisable for the SM to have the cast dressed and ready, rather than run the risk of becoming the reason the show was started even later than was necessary.

Consequences and Considerations When Starting the Show Late

Normally, when speaking of starting the show late, we are talking about five or ten minutes. There is no problem with that time frame. It starts getting grievous at the fifteen-minute mark and worrisome by twenty minutes or more. For it to get that far, something very great is happening, and the star of the show or the SM will either appear onstage or announce over the house sound system the problem and present their apologies. In addition, with the approval of management (the producer), an offer of a refund can be made to those audience members who cannot wait any longer.

Just as problematic when starting well past the fifteen-minute mark is the time consideration of the musicians. As a general rule, musicians work for three hours before overtime is to be paid.

Musician’s Time Restraints: Times vary in different cities and parts of the country, depending on the agreement and contract the musicians union has within that area. So it is important for the SM to know the rule for the area in which he or she is working.

Most musical shows are about two and a half hours long, so that gives thirty minutes before the musicians go into overtime. If the show starts fifteen minutes late, there is still time before the musicians go into overtime. Anything longer and the SM needs to have a serious conversation with the producer, reminding him or her of the overtime and asking what procedure should be followed.

Star Courtesy and Consideration

After the SM gives the five-minute call, and before the call for places, the SM should check with the stars or lead performers to see if they are ready. To do this at the fifteen-minute mark is too early—something can easily delay them in the next ten minutes before the five-minute call.

Late Performers

Some stars and principal performers always need more time. The SM graciously accepts the delay but asks and negotiates a time when the star will be ready. With performers who are late, the SM reinforces the need to start the show on time by displaying urgency in voice and manner. Before leaving the dressing room the SM asks to be informed if the person is ready any sooner. If the star or performer is not ready at the negotiated time, the SM is at the person's dressing room door, inquiring.

Prompt and Consistent

It is an important part of the SM's job to be prompt and consistent in making the time calls during the half-hour before each performance. Everyone backstage comes to depend on these calls. No matter what business the SM is doing within the half-hour, the SM must continually keep in mind the time frames and call them. Some SMs use a digital stopwatch with an alarm set for each call to be made. Others can use their smart phone. If the SM should happen to be late in making one of the calls, the SM informs everyone: "Company, my apologies to you! This is a late fifteen-minute call. We are now at twelve minutes to curtain. Twelve minutes, please. Twelve minutes."

Applause and Acknowledgment

It is the primary nature of all people to need, want, and desire praise, thanks, recognition, acknowledgment, and appreciation not only of themselves but for the work they do and their accomplishments. In theatre and with a successful product, the creative and artistic side—the actors, directors, producers, creators, and designers—continually get this attention from the audience, their peers, and the news media, through awards, and sometimes from the world at large. The downside to being in such a spotlight is that these same people are also open to criticism and have their failures equally recognized. At the end of a successful opening performance, the applause is immediate and gratifying. The backstage becomes filled with well-wishers and praise givers, flocking to the performers' dressing rooms or surrounding the producer, director, and whatever creators and designers might be present.

In addition to working their talent and craft, many people who have come to the entertainment world have come with an especially great and strong need for praise and appreciation. SMs and technicians too come with the same need and intensity. However, because the SMs' and technicians' work must remain subliminal, the audience remains aware of only the artists' and the creators' work. It is to the artists and creators that they flock to shower their praise and appreciation after a performance. This is the way it is. It is a fact of life not only in the entertainment field but also in other industries and professions. However, after a particularly difficult tech period, and after a successful opening performance that should have been a technical disaster, when people come backstage to give their praise, the SM and technician can feel somewhat left out.

Through years of experience, the SM grows to accept this fact and receives applause and acknowledgment in a different way. It comes quietly, in bits and pieces. The SM is not flooded with it and momentarily placed at a pinnacle. SMs know they have done a good job by calling a perfectly timed and smooth-running show and judge their success by the intensity of the activity and excitement backstage after the performance—by the pleasure the producer, director, and others display, even if they don't express it directly to the SMs. Later on, rewards, thanks, and appreciation come in the form of being hired again by the same producer or director, or when the SM is highly recommended to another producer and director.

The technicians also learn to accept their position. Some present a tough exterior, declaring they don't need all that stuff. Despite the display, it is important that the SM recognize how hard the crew works to do their jobs and to make the show successful. It is important that the SM give to the technicians what others might forget to give. After a successful opening performance, and for that matter throughout the run of the show, the SM should shower on the crew the praise, thanks, acknowledgment, and appreciation they so richly deserve, and it doesn't hurt if every now and then this expression of thanks is done over the PA system in one of the announcements to the cast.

Curtain UP!

With the call of places and the rise of the curtain for the opening performance, the run of the play begins. This is the moment to which this entire book, thus far, has been dedicated. It gives one pause and is somewhat overwhelming and startling to see all that must be done to get to this moment. The SM's job, however, is not yet ended. There is still the run of the show, a possible tour, and closing out the show—each demanding the SM's continuous focus, concentration, and dedication to the job.

The Professional Experience

This is one of those theatrical stories that people tell at parties to bring a laugh to the crowd, but at the time it was important SM's business. We have talked about the responsibility of the SM starting the show on time and how some performers have a tendency to be late.

The Scarlet Prumper-Nell

On this one particular show, I had a star performer who was not in the lead role but was an important name in a supporting role. She had initially made her fame in movies as a red-haired, raving beauty with a list of very impressive film credits. In the days I worked with her, she was in less demand for films but had brought her talents to the stage, commanding the same attention and ticket sales as she did when doing films. Our star performer was now in her sixties (some speculated older), but from the stage, with her flaming hair, with the correct lighting, and with her gorgeous figure, she was as stunning as ever.

She was a delight to work with. She was always at the theatre long before everyone else, preparing for the performance. She was charming, had an excellent sense of humor, was highly professional, and always on time—that is, until we got into performance. All of a sudden it was like a dentist pulling teeth to get her out of her dressing room.

I complained to the dresser, "What on earth is going on in there? She comes in early and still I have to hold the curtain until she is ready!"

"I can't get her away from the mirror," the dresser cried in frustration. "She's all ready, then she sits and prims and touches up her hair and makeup for hours. Then just when you think she's getting up to leave, she catches a look at herself from another angle in the mirror and starts primping again. If it's not her makeup or hair, it's her costume."

Between the dresser and me, we decided that after I called places, I would come to the dressing room to personally escort the star out to her place in the backstage area. This worked well because on my entrance into the dressing room, the star was distracted away from the mirror long enough for the dresser to lead the star out by the arm, as I held the door open. What we had not counted on was that just outside the star's dressing room was a six-foot-wide, full-length mirror that the dancers and other performers used as a final check before entering the backstage area. Upon seeing her image, our star would stop, taking poses she took on stage. We had to spend another five minutes getting her pulled away as she primped and posed from all angles.

After having this happen several times, I asked the costume people if they could store one of the performance costume racks in front of the mirror so we could get our star past. Having worked with other performers who had an obsession with mirrors, the costume people understood perfectly. The idea was a good one, but it did not work as we had expected. Our star merely rolled the rack to one side and started checking and primping again.

Tenacity being one of an SM's attributes, I was not going to be defeated in this matter. I had a show to get started on time. I also had a working relationship to maintain with the star. I tried impressing on her how important it was to me, to the producer, and to the audience to get the show started on time. She agreed wholeheartedly and promised she'd be ready. It was that damn mirror in the hall that caused her to abandon all her professional promises and values. If I could have had it removed, I would have. But it was a permanent part of the wall.

Then, during one performance in the second week of the run, after my assistant learned to call the show, I decided to stay backstage to see how things ran during the performance. I noticed one particular piece of scenery that was moved from place to place. It was a piece that was not used until the third scene in the second act. Due to the limited space backstage, there was no one place this piece could remain. Suddenly it hit me! You've guessed it! I begged the head carpenter to store the piece in front of the mirror. It was inconvenient for him to put it there. The space was just outside the backstage area and he and some of his crew guys carried it through double doors. I pointed out it couldn't be any more inconvenient than moving it around several times during the performance. He agreed, and this orphan piece of scenery found a home at last.

At the next performance, our star was quite annoyed. She tried moving the piece, but it was too large and too heavy for her. She ordered me to have it removed. I said I would talk to the carpenters. She was quite upset and felt very insecure as we led her to her place and she asked her dresser several times, "How do I look? Do I look alright?"

At the next performance the piece of scenery was still there. Our star turned to me abruptly: "Have you talked with the carpenters about this?"

"Yes," I replied with helplessness, "but they said this is the only place they can keep it."

"Where'd they have it before?" she inquired with an edge.

I had to think quickly, "Uh, I think it was outside in the alley, but they are afraid the weather will ruin it or vandals." Our star said nothing more and left on her own, unescorted, to take her place backstage.

We played out the rest of the week with the piece of scenery stored in front of the mirror. Nothing more was said and I decided we were finished with the matter. The show was dark on Monday, which was our day off. On Tuesday evening as the dresser and I were escorting our star to her place for the beginning of the show, we saw that the piece of scenery was not in place. Our star, without missing a beat, stopped in front of the mirror to do her posing and primping. I looked at the dresser and she looked at me. As soon as I could I went to the head carpenter. He told me the producer's secretary called him and told him to remove the scenery—to find some other place to store it.

I needed no further information. I had a clear picture of what had taken place. Several days later the producer's secretary confirmed what I believed. She would only say that our star and her manager had come to see the producer for a publicity shoot on that Monday. Need I say more?

Run of the Show

It is now the day after the opening performance. The show last night went exceptionally well for everyone. From the audience's reception, the show is a hit. However, the first reviews in the morning papers were mixed and not encouraging. The producers have faith in the show. The publicity campaign is strong and they know that word of mouth will sell the show. Already, ticket sales are up at the box office.

Reviews and Ticket Sales

Regardless of how good or bad the reviews, how great or poor the ticket sales, the SM's work remains the same. These things have no bearing on the work the SM does during the run of the show. In talking to the cast over the PA or in meetings, the SM does not deal in terms of ticket sales or reviews. In fact, the SM does not need to post reviews on the callboard. There is always someone in the cast who follows reviews and ticket sales and brings that news to the company. If the cast chooses, they may post a review on the section of the callboard set aside for them and their social business. The impact of negative reviews or poor ticket sales that are demoralizing and destructive to the cast and show can be greater than that of good reviews or sold-out performances that boost the morale of the company and make the show better.

A New Show

If the show is new and is perhaps heading to Broadway, a wave of intensive work still lies ahead. The workday will become a double-duty event with a rehearsal and changes made in the afternoon and a performance at night. There will be eight performances a week, performed on six consecutive days, with the seventh day being the day off. This means that two of the performance days will have matinee performances in addition to the evening performances. This sort of schedule for a workweek is carefully guided and ruled by Equity, with time frames for rehearsing, breaks, and performances. The SM must know the breakdowns and particulars of these rules, schedule things accordingly, and see that the producer and director follow the guidelines, or they will have to pay overtime or penalty fees.

Also, if the show is heading to Broadway, it more than likely will be playing out of town, perhaps playing in different cities. Touring a show adds still another layer of work for everyone. We'll talk more about touring shows in the next chapter. If the show is the revival of a play that has been previously produced for Broadway and plans to play only in one place, there may be rehearsals for a few more days, after which the show is left to play out its run.

A Shift in Work

Whether performing on Broadway or in just one city, once the show gets into its run, rehearsing stops, and there will be *no more changes*, the show is considered *frozen*—that is, the show is now to be performed each time as set and agreed on by the director, actors, and producer. The director leaves and the producer's attention goes to selling and promoting the show or to another project. It is at this point that one of the first things an SM does is to make a copy of the cueing script. With color copying machines now the standard, this is easily done. There are computer programs in

which a cueing script can be created, but when doing a musical, oftentimes the features and abilities of those programs are not sophisticated enough to note what the SM needs to call the show efficiently and with perfect timing. Until such time, the cueing script will remain handwritten and a copy must be made, safely tucked away, and probably in some place other than theatre.

Company Manager and SM Left in Charge

If there is a company manager with the show, the SM and company manager take over, running the show and the company. For the most part, the company manager runs the business of the company, being concerned with the daily finances, overall budget, and administration of the company. The SM takes full charge, maintaining the performance level and artistic integrity, and generally caring for the members of the company, seeing that their needs are met and their problems resolved. With the absence of a company manager, the production office handles most of the company manager's work with the SM aiding and assisting.

If the show is an easy one and the company is cohesive, performing well together, and maybe behaving like an extended family, on most days the SM's work can be easy. It can be as simple as going to the theatre, performing the show, having some social time with the cast and crew after the show, and going home. With a musical, a show that is technically involved, or a large cast or a cast that is problematic, the SM's days can be filled with the business of the show and continue to be long.

The SM's Work and Responsibilities

Whatever the working situation of the show or the company, there are some very specific things an SM must do as the person in charge while the show is in its run. These duties are clearly defined:

1. Calling cues for each performance: We have discussed at length how important it is for the SM to call an impeccably well-timed show for each performance.
2. Keeping the show at performance level: This subject too has been frequently brought up in various parts of our conversations. In short, the SM sees that the show continues to perform with the same integrity and intention as created by the combined efforts of the actors, director, producer, creators, and designers. This means keeping a watchful eye on the level of performance and changes the performers make to the show, and deciding if the changes are an enhancement or detraction.
3. Caring for the company: In many ways the SM has already been performing this job. Now the SM has full responsibility and is the person to whom the company members turn with their problems, concerns, suggestions, and so on. It is the SM's job to handle as many matters as possible, or point the company member in the right direction to resolve a problem the SM can't handle. The decisions the SM makes, the advice the SM gives, or the directions the SM expresses in leading and guiding the company are on behalf of the producer and the director. By this time, the SM should know the producer and director well enough to formulate and adjudicate as they would. If the SM is uncertain on a particular matter, a conference with the producer and director is appropriate to get their input. The SM also uses Equity and the Equity rules as an aid. This is another time when it is important the SM be a scholar and aficionado of the Equity Rulebook and work closely with the Equity deputies.

As part of the SM's caring for the company, the SM tries to anticipate problems and head them off, or see that adverse situations and conflicts do not escalate and become blown out of proportion. In addition, now that the SM has established a way of working and what is professionally expected from everyone, the SM can encourage and support small activities and little events that are fun, do not hurt the show, do not detract from the performances, and at the same time bring the company closer together in bond and relationship.

4. Keeping the producer and director apprised and informed: Depending on the working situation and what is set up between the producer and director, the SM may be in communication with the producer and director daily or on a need-to-know basis. All behavioral problems are to be handled by the SM. The only time the producer wants to be brought in is when the problems may have a direct effect on the show or hurt the

producer's pocketbook in some way. The director's primary interest is in the artistic integrity of the show, and although the director may lend a sympathetic ear to the SM who must work with a problematic cast or company, the director is glad to be removed from the problems and have the SM keep full responsibility.

5. Keeping a logbook or journal: If the SM has not started the SM's logbook from the start of rehearsals, this process definitely needs to start now. While some SMs choose to start a logbook account from the first day of rehearsals, it should start no later than the dress rehearsals and preview performance and continue on through the entire run. The SM notes the running time of each performance, pertinent or important business of the day having to do with the show and company, all events that are unscheduled or unexpected, the audience's reaction and reception to the performance, the behavior of the company members, and, when a problem is approaching or in full bloom, any observations about the problem as well as what is being done to head off the problem or has been done to resolve it. If desired, the SM can also make personal commentary. More on the subject of the logbook in a moment.
6. Understudy rehearsals and actor replacements: It is the SM's job to have the understudies prepared and ready to perform at a moment's notice. If the show has standby performers, the SM keeps them up on their roles. If the show requires replacement performers, it is the SM's job to do so whenever the producer or director dictates.

The SM's Logbook

We have briefly touched upon the importance of the SM's logbook in Chapter 5, "The Electronic SM":

Much of what was written in the logbook is now part of the *daily report* and, when the show is in performance, the *running time chart*; however, in my opinion, there are "personal" items that are not for general publication. The logbook is where this information is noted. These items are noted and reported in a journalistic fashion, without opinion or bias. Then, in a closing paragraph, the SM makes comment, gives opinion, expresses feelings, and writes down observation. The producer or director may be privy to the contents but no one else, unless the information is needed by Equity about one of its members, in a dispute between the employer and employee, or in a court of law as evidenced by the story at the end of Chapter 5, "Logbook, the Star Witness."

So it is my recommendation that the SM keep on the computer an "electronic logbook" in which such information can be noted and be given *only* to the right people upon request. The entries need to be noted with clarity—information should be detailed but concise, factual, and truthful. The SM must be careful to note the information in an unbiased and journalistic way, more as a historian. If at any time the SM chooses to express a professional opinion, experience, observations, suggestions, or judgments, or chooses to editorialize, this should be clearly noted in the log.

In being thorough and in documenting the production, the SM might start this private electronic logbook in the pre-production time before rehearsals begin. Other SMs will start it with the first dress rehearsals and into the run of the show. If the SM starts the logbook during the rehearsals, it is not necessary to note the schedule—that is documented in the daily schedule and a copy is kept in the SM's files for reference.

During performances the SM keeps a notepad on the console just under the cueing script, ready to slip it out to make notes. The SM will note the starting times and ending times of each act and calculate the running time of the whole performance; make notes on performances that are exceptionally good or not up to par; comment on audience reactions, encore curtain bows, and standing ovations, if any; and note lost lines or dialogue, cues missed, mistakes made, mistakes almost made, and incidents or near incidents. The SM notes joyous times, sad times, noise backstage if it becomes excessive, late entrances or near-late entrances, infractions of rules, shoddy work, conflicts and confrontations, unprofessional behavior, or anything that could be used as a reference for a later date. Seemingly small and unimportant notes written in today's entry can become tomorrow's valuable information.

After the performance, the SM transcribes these notes into the electronic logbook and then copies and duplicates some of that information that is suitable and appropriate for the daily report and the performance running-time sheet. When the run of the show ends and the show closes, the electronic logbook entries remain on file with the SM. It does not go to the producer along with the final production book.

Sample Entries in a Logbook

- *Reh. Rm. Flooded, (roof leaked from storm) reported to building mgr.*
- *Beth Williams, to costumes, 10:30-12:noon.*
- *Dave Thompsons, late, after meal break, 5 min.*
- *Propman still has not delivered rehearsal props!*
- *Pete Rawlins, doing poorly, director said may have to release from contract. Reported this info. to producer.*
- *Surprise birthday, during break for Rhonda James.*
- *3:20, set designer came with changes.*

Figure 17-1 A partial list of what the SM entered into the logbook on a particular day.

A More Complete Example from an SM's Logbook

The following example is an actual account of a show produced in Los Angeles. It was a musical production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The logbook was originally handwritten by the SM in a blank-page hard-bound book. However, the version presented here has been edited and re-created, singling out days that were particularly interesting, and displays some of the things an SM might write.

The original logbook contained names and personal information that was not meant for publication. The show starred several prominent performers of the Hollywood and Broadway communities. The seven dwarfs were played by real dwarfs who instructed everyone to call them “little people.” This show was targeted at adults as well as children and was planned to play throughout the spring season for the Easter holiday and spring vacation.

As you read the SM’s entries for this particular show, keep in mind that this was an exceptionally problematic situation, due mostly to the producer and his behavior. In most other shows, the SM’s log entries are pedestrian and not filled with so much conflict and drama.

Also, because of the problems with the producer, and with the SM realizing that this book can be considered a legal document and called for in arbitration or a court of law, the SM is careful to put in all the archival information necessary to document names, times, and places.

► Stg.Mgr's LOGBOOK, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (A Musical Stage Version)

Beverly-Wilshire Theatre—Spring Break/Easter Vacation, Los Angeles, CA,
March–April 2008

Producer:

Director:

PSM: Sarah Johnstone, ASM: Dan Porter

Star Performers:

Cast Members:

► **Saturday, Mar. 23, 2008** First day of rehearsals, onstage, at the Beverly-Wilshire Theatre.

10:00 am, Equity business: WHAT A MESS!!! Producer's office did not have contracts ready. Equity field rep refused to let rehearsals begin without contracts being signed. Finished Equity business 11:00 am (extra hour becomes part of producer's rehearsal time).

12:00–3:00 pm: Little people sent on a three-hour meal break.

End of Day: Producer wants to keep performers past 6:30 pm (past eight and a half consecutive hours) without paying overtime. He complains the Equity business robbed him of an hour rehearsal time. I pointed out the use of the extra hour for Equity business was due to his office not having contracts ready. He retorted that Equity could have bent the rules and let him rehearse today and he would have had the contracts ready on Monday. He also suggested that the little people could remain and rehearse because they had a three-hour meal break. Again I had to explain that was his choice and that he could not break up the performers' day. They were still on call after the first hour and a half of their break. Reluctantly, he let everyone go home at 6:30 pm.

► **SM's Commentary:** Producer seems to blame Equity for his bad day, and because I am aligned with Equity and make him stick to the rules, he seems to pass the blame on to me too. In the short time I have been dealing with this producer, I feel disaster coming. This producer is a "wheeler-dealer." Always looking to break the rules—get a special deal. Money comes above any other consideration. Experience has taught me to look out for bad checks from this guy.

► **Monday, Mar. 25, 2008** Good day today. Schedule followed, much accomplished. First time principal performers worked together. Good Ensemble feeling. FUN! Director, too, good mood. Pleasant. Not so nervous or angry.

► **Wednesday, Mar. 27, 2008 11:15 am:** Producer walks in w/CBS news crew—NO NOTICE!!!! Performers upset. Want time to fix hair, put on makeup. Checked Equity Rulebook—24 hrs. notice for press/publicity required. Equity deputy called Equity office. They said to go ahead, and they will settle matter with producer.

Today was little people's day off. Producer called each of them personally, last night, and asked them to come in to rehearse—to VOLUNTEER their time. Four showed up: Terri Rivers, Jack Hammer, Andrea Neville, Jane Roberts. Equity deputy reprimanded the four who came in and handled the matter with Equity. SM informed producer of Equity's disapproval in this matter and will be talking to him soon.

Marie Lee, late (5 min.) this morning. This is her second time, but I don't think she has a problem in this area.

After cast is dismissed we had a **Production Meeting**—7:30pm, Beverly Hotel: Chaotic and disorderly. Could not keep producer on one subject long enough to complete things. Designers and technical dept. heads not getting money from producer or checks are bouncing. Producer says money people back east shifted funds, left *Snow White* account dry. He assures matter will be resolved by Friday so checks will be here in LA next Monday.

► **Personal Note:** Today I overheard the producer on the phone backstage talking to his wife: "I can't fire her. I'll have to give her two weeks' pay and where do I get another stage manager? We open next week." After he got off the phone he approached me and accused me of going to Equity about his rule infractions (it was in fact the deputy and some of the performers, but I did not tell him that). I assured him I had not yet been to Equity on any matter, but used this opportunity to state my position and responsibility to Equity. He became angry. He told me that he was paying my salary and that all the stage managers he worked with back in New York showed their allegiance to the person who was writing the checks.

► **Thursday, April 4, 2008** Two shows today:

11:00 am–12:15 pm: Entire cast called in to put the horse in more scenes. Horse is getting great reaction from the audience. Producer wants the horse to appear more in show.

Entrances changed for the little people in 3rd scn. Choreographer took the remaining time to clean dance moves.

NO BREAK for performers between rehearsals and half-hour for Show #1: Producer was made aware of OVERTIME and PENALTY to be paid.

Producer happy today. Show got good notices and we are playing to 95 percent capacity audience.

► **SHOW #1**

Act I, 2:08–2:45 = 37 min.

Intermission: 18 min.

Act II, 3:03–3:38 = 35 min.

Terrible audience—kids threw things onto stage.

► **SHOW #2**

Act I, 4:19–4:56 = 37 min.

Intermission: 22 min.

Act II, 5:18–5:53 = 35 min.

A good performance. Audience reaction great. Horse stealing scenes.

► **MORE OVERTIME** to be paid for end of day (see report turned in to Equity and copy to producer). Sheila Fuerst paged me. Check for star's (witch's) nails BOUNCED!

► **Saturday, April 6, 2008**

THREE SHOWS TODAY!!

► **SHOW #1:**

Half-hour call, 1:15

Act I, 1:49–2:25 = 36 min.

Intermission: 16 min.

Act II, 2:41–3:16 = 35 min.

Our star forgot to bring on stage her witch's comb. Prop man was not there to remind her to pick it up from the prop table. Actress ad-libbed lines about returning to her castle to get it. Actress disappeared from view, got comb from prop man who was now standing in the wings, and reappeared within a second. Actress ad-libbed about what a tiring journey it was. Got great laugh. Audience applauded, actress continued to ad-lib few more lines.

Light board operator executed Q16 late. Was an obvious mistake to audience.

SM missed calling Q38. Audience was not aware but broke actor's concentration.

Final curtain nearly hit Snow White again! She was told several times to step back after her bow—fast curtain coming in! I placed white spike mark where she should stand. If she misses mark again, I asked Prince Charming to step forward and lead her back.

► **SHOW #2:**

So that the producer would not have to pay overtime, the producer took out the intermission. (Show works better w/o intermission. Producer still able to sell merchandise before and after.)

Acts I & II, 4:20–5:30 = 1 hr. 10 min.

Dinner Break 5:30–6:30

► **SHOW #3**

Half-hour call for 6:30 pm

Acts I & II, 7:15–8:25 = 1 hr. 10 min.

Show started late due to latecomers. Traffic and parking problems. Excellent performance. Actors had fun w/show and so did audience.

This example is to show the type of information an SM might enter in the logbook. There is no particular form to follow. The SM must, however, keep in mind that once the information is written, this book is used for reference. With this in mind, the SM groups and separates the information for easy extraction. Sometimes key words or phrases will be in uppercase letters or made bold to draw attention.

Our discussions in parts of this book have talked of no more than two performances in a day. With this production of *Snow White*, on some days there were three performances. The difference had been worked out and agreed on between Equity and the producer. More than likely, Equity took into consideration the short playing time of the show as well as the number of hours the actors would be putting in for the day, and then made adjustments that were equitable to both the producer and the actors.

Actors Making Changes and Improvements in the Show

One would think with all the work done in rehearsals and the changes made in techs, this subject of making changes would be exhausted, but there remains still one more installment: the changes the actors bring to the show once they get into the run. These changes are sometimes jokingly referred to as *improvements*, and the SM, in trying to maintain the director's work and intention, might say to the cast, "Take out the improvements."

First there are the changes actors make as they grow in their parts, fine-tuning, working moments, perfecting timing, filling in characters with color, finding more depth and meaning, enhancing and making things richer. In short, the actors are taking wing and soaring in their parts. This can be exciting for the SM to watch as the characters mature.

The next part of change does not always come out of growth and development but rather in a search for perfection—to improve on the improvements. This often comes from the performers trying to make the parts new and exciting for themselves as well as for the audience. These kinds of changes can be borderline and sometimes questionable. The SM must make a judgment and get the actors to return to what is more acceptable if the changes are determined to be unacceptable. If the SM is uncertain about a change an actor makes, the SM may want to talk first with the actor, expressing any feelings, opinions, or concerns. If the actor feels the change is valid and is unwilling to change back, and it remains questionable in the SM's mind, the SM then needs the advice and consent of the director.

The SM Knowing Acting and Directing

For the SM to do this part of the job well, it is helpful to have worked closely with the director and actors during the rehearsal period, watching the show come together and the characters develop. The SM also must be intimately familiar with the script—the plot, action, and storyline—and needs to know the director's intent, interpretation, and direction. In addition to all of this, it is extremely helpful if the SM has a working knowledge of directing and acting. The more the SM knows in this area, the better the SM can make judgments, maintain what the director wants, and communicate and work with the actors.

Giving Actors Performance Notes

With changes the performers make comes another part of the SM's job—giving acting notes. Even when a change is good, the SM should comment, expressing pleasure and approval. Now that the director is gone, it is an established fact that the SM will take over in monitoring the show, watching the acting and maintaining the director's work, but the cast needs to be reminded of this.

For the SM, giving actors notes can be like stepping from the frying pan into the fire, walking a minefield, or simply stepping out from the trenches in the thick of battle. Getting notes on their performance is a highly personal thing for actors. For actors to do a good job, they personalize and draw from within themselves. To have someone make comment on their work can set off any number of reactions, some of which can be protective, defensive, guarded, angry, and possibly filled with ego. Up to this point in the production, the director has been the only person licensed to enter this arena. For the SM to be accepted, the SM needs to display knowledge in this area. The SM must also be guarded in the approach to performance notes. If the actor feels the SM knows what he or she is talking about, the actor willingly and openly accepts the notes the SM has to give.

Before continuing further with some of the things an SM must do to be successful in giving acting notes, it might be a good time to return to Chapter 7 on working relationships and review the SM's relationship with actors and star performers. Having in mind some of the ways actors work and may react will allow greater success in giving acting notes. Following are some guidelines to use in giving performance notes:

1. First and foremost, the SM must approach totally egoless. If the SM has any personal agenda, like wanting to display and express his "directing" ability and talent, as sure as there is sunshine on a cloudless day that will be clear to the performer.
2. Before approaching an actor with a note, the SM needs to be prepared. If the acting note is questioned or challenged by the actor, the SM must be ready to talk intelligently about the script, the action, the plot, the blocking, the director's choices, and all the other parts of the director's work. There should be no uncertainty in the SM's mind about the things surrounding a particular note the SM has given. Upon being questioned or challenged, the SM cannot be defensive or protective, but must be clear and decisive in communicating any thoughts, observations, and what changes the SM wants the actor to make. The SM needs to have full conviction of what is being presented and have a strong foundation of support for the judgment and direction being given.
3. Next, the stage manager must be certain not to step into the directing arena. It is important to establish this with the actors and remember that the SM is there as the director's representative—there to maintain, not change. The SM must stay out of telling actors how to act and how to do things—that is their craft. The SM

cannot become involved with their characterization, interpretation, or manner of delivery, or ask the actors to do things that are the SM's choice and not the director's. If there is any question in the SM's mind about a particular note stepping over directing boundaries, the SM should not give the note until after having talked with the director.

4. In the approach to the actor the SM must come as an emissary, an ambassador, and not as a figure of authority who has come to judge, criticize, blame, and demand change.
5. After giving a note, the SM needs to step back to see the actor's reaction. Some will graciously take the note, even thank the SM, and act on the note for the next performance. Others will take the note silently and leave without a reaction. The SM will have to wait until the next performance to see if the note had any effect. Others, to varying degrees, will be more vocal and expressive, either in generating conversation or in challenging. The SM needs to listen carefully not only to what the actors are saying but to how they are saying it—the intensity or verve of the delivery. The SM must keep in mind that each actor is the ultimate source of his or her craft, performance, and the character being played.
6. With actors who are more extreme in their reaction and resistant in taking a note, the SM does not need to win but needs to do what is best for the show. If having further conversations with the actor will bring a resolution, then the SM can follow that course. If not, the SM momentarily sets the note aside and once again confers with the director.

Varying Performances

Most actors will improve, enhance, and embellish upon their performance, but will remain within the original structure, intent, and direction. Some actors are highly structured in their work. Once they find what works for them, they perform it the same for every performance. Others appear to be more spontaneous; however, upon a closer look, they too work within the structure that is part of the original design and plan—they just perform it differently each time. Then there are the performers who seem to be driven to wander and experiment, even after they have improved, enhanced, and embellished their work. They may be bored or need excitement and stimulation to get them through the performance. With this kind of performer, the SM's work becomes intensified and all of the suggestions on giving acting notes are put to their greatest use.

The SM's Transition in Giving Performance Notes

In giving performance notes to actors, the SM must start by taking it slowly and must build a performance-note-giving relationship. This relationship begins in rehearsals and escalates during techs when the SM gives notes concerning technical matters. From there, the SM can transition into giving acting notes, first by giving positive and complimentary notes. By the time it becomes the SM's responsibility to give actors notes during the run of the show, it is possible to transition into giving the less favorable notes without much resistance.

Giving Stars Performance Notes

For the most part, the SM should play a limited role in giving star notes. To have gotten where they are, most star performers have perfected their craft or at least know what they must do to maintain their star status. If there is a question in the SM's mind about what a star is doing in a performance, the SM should first confer with the director or, if the director is not available, with the producer. Star performers have created a certain style and persona. In most cases this is what the audience has come to see, and this is what the star will give to them. It is often this style and persona that makes the star perfect for the part and unique in playing the role.

There come, however, in every SM's life, times when a star must be given a performance note. The SM's experience will be wide and varied. Most stars have respect for the SM's work and appreciate the SM's care and concern for the show. On occasion, a star performer may even ask the SM to watch a particular thing in the show and give an opinion. Other times, a star's reception to an SM's acting note can be silent, cold, and possibly painful to the SM. The best an SM can do is follow the suggestions listed previously for giving acting notes and guard against giving notes that work against the star's style, persona, or way of working.

Greater Latitude for Star Performers

The American Declaration of Independence proclaims that all people are created equal. In theatre, this is an ideal all SMs would like to follow with the people in their care and charge. However, the truth is there is a chain of command—an order in which people are considered and treated according to their position and status. Among the cast members, this fact holds especially true for the star performers. The producer, director, and SM allow stars a greater latitude and degree of freedom for change and expression than they allow other performers in the show. In extreme cases, they will allow a star performer to do something in a performance that they would not allow another performer. By all ideal standards, this is unfair, sets up a double standard, and perhaps places the SM and the others in authority in a hypocritical light. The beginning SM who detests this notion and vows not to play such favoritism eventually succumbs. In efforts to treat star performers the same as everyone else, the SM may end up standing alone, unsupported, and may not work again for that star, producer, or director.

Delivering Other People's Performance Notes

For any number of reasons, the producer or director will have the SM deliver performance notes that should actually be delivered by the producer or director. Whenever the SM is put in this position, and the SM knows there could be a volatile or explosive reaction from the performer, the SM needs to take some steps before doing this job. If the note was not dictated in friendly or positive terms, the SM should edit and clean it up—taking out the things that might be inflammatory. In this editing, however, the SM cannot lose the note's content or its meaning and intent. Upon delivery, the SM needs to make it clear from the start who the message is from and that the SM is only the messenger. This point cannot be stressed enough. On hearing the contents of the note, the actor may become upset and filled with feelings that lead to forgetting who the originator of the message is and taking out these feelings on the SM—the deliverer.

A Final Step: Follow-Up

There remains still another step for the SM in giving performance notes. The SM must follow up on the note by watching to see if the actor has, in any way, responded to the acting note and made the desired change. If the actor has changed and all meets the SM's approval, either after that performance or before the next the SM should have a follow-up conversation with the actor to thank the actor, express the SM's appreciation for the actor's work, and ask if the actor was comfortable with the change.

If the SM sees that the actor has responded to the acting note but the actor's performance is still not what the SM thinks it should be, the SM first expresses thanks and appreciation, and then has further conversation to lead the actor into the desired change. The SM will, once again, need to be specific and clear in what is being asked.

If after giving an acting note the SM does not see any change in the next performance, the SM should wait one or two more performances. If by that time the actor still has not made any attempt to change, the SM needs to approach the actor, generating further conversation on the acting note.

It will be easy to follow up and thank the actors who have accepted the acting note and have made the change. It will be more difficult with the actors who do not. In not acting on the note, the actor may have forgotten, may be demonstrating resistance, or may be trying to turn the moment into a power play with the SM. The SM does not know which until approaching the actor again and initiating further conversation. The SM must follow through and do this final step on all the acting notes given.

The ASM Takes the Stage

It has been stated several times throughout this book that the ASM must be knowledgeable and capable of doing all of the work of the PSM. With such aptitude and to be a successful ASM, the ASM must work in the shadow of the PSM. It is the ASM's job to aid and support the PSM, do the work that the PSM dictates, fill in where the PSM is weak, or

do the work the PSM chooses not to do. When the show gets into its run, it is time for the ASM to stand alone and display some of his or her talents and abilities. It is time for the ASM to start calling the cues for the performance.

During technical rehearsals, the PSM was very careful not to have the ASM tied up with work duties that needed to be done for each performance. During technical rehearsals the ASM's job is to move from area to area, wherever someone was temporarily needed, and work as a troubleshooter or facilitator.

The ASM Prepares—Calling Cues for the Show

If the show is now *frozen*, usually by the end of the first week of the run and certainly into the second week, the cast and crew have worked out whatever problems they might have had in performing and the show is running smoothly. The ASM is not needed as much backstage, which leaves the ASM free to start calling the cues for the show. By the time that this moment comes, a good ASM has already begun preparing for this part of the job:

- The ASM has gotten approval from the PSM to sit out front to watch one or two performances. If the show is a musical, sitting out front is especially helpful because the ASM gets to see the show from another perspective. The ASM gets to see the lights and projections executed and the effects created. The ASM also gets to see the set moves—the scenery changes.
- After seeing the show, the ASM may want to spend a couple of performances backstage standing by the PSM and, while wearing a headset to hear the cues being called, watch the PSM throwing cue-light switches, scenes being changed, and sight-cues being called in protection of the performers.
- During the daytime, the ASM has made a copy of the calling script. From all he or she has seen from out front and standing by the PSM, the ASM studies the cues, visualizing the things that are to happen with each call. In addition, the ASM also goes to the theatre an hour or more early, sits at the PSM's console, maybe even puts on the headset, and, sotto voce, begins calling the cues, giving warnings and standbys, and operating the cue-light switches for the rail and floor stage technicians.

The ASM's Working Disadvantage

It is important that there is little difference between the PSM and ASM when calling the cues for the show. It is the ASM's job, as much as possible, to duplicate and recreate the timing and calling of the cues as the PSM calls them. Unfortunately for the ASM, the crew has learned the show with the PSM calling cues and their timing is dictated by the PSM's timing.

A second working disadvantage for the ASM is that while the PSM had the luxury of learning the show and making mistakes in techs, the ASM has no room for mistakes. The ASM is learning and calling the show during a performance, when the audience expects to see a perfect and professional show. It is important that as the ASM learns to call the show, the PSM stands at the ASM's side with a headset on and is ready to correct any mistake or avert any possible disaster. Even after the PSM feels that the ASM is able to go it alone, the PSM should remain close by for one or two more performances.

Musical Shows

When doing a musical, to make it easier for the ASM who is first learning, it is a good idea for the ASM to do the first act for one performance, the second act for the next performance, and on the third performance do the entire show. This gives the ASM time to assimilate the enormous number of cues for each act that usually accompany a musical. By the end of the third week of the show's run, the ASM should be navigating the ship as expertly as the PSM, creating the same theatrical magic.

Show Insurance: The Show Must Go On

Having the ASM call the show ensures that the show will go on should the PSM, for any reason, become unable to call the show. With the ASM calling the show, the PSM is free to go out front to watch performances or stay backstage to do company business and keep the show organized and running smoothly.

Updating the Blocking

One of the first things the PSM must do after the ASM has learned to call the cues is return to the rehearsal script and bring all the blocking up to date. If you recall, when the SMs go into technical rehearsals, the PSM sets aside the rehearsal/blocking script and the cueing script becomes the important book from which to work. Meanwhile, during techs and even after the show opens, more changes are made in the blocking. With techs being as they are, the PSM does not have time to note the changes made in the blocking and instead sets this part of the job aside with the promise that, once the show goes into its run, the PSM will return to bring the blocking up to date. This is now that time. The PSM might update the blocking either while sitting out front at the back of the theatre (as long as nearby audience members are not disturbed), or from one of the wings, as long as the cast and crew are not hampered. For further assistance, the PSM might go over the blocking notes with the understudy or even the performer. However, this is time consuming and can be taxing for the performer. The blocking has become so mechanical and ingrained in the actors that too much time may be spent jogging their memories.

The “Archival” Video

With today’s technology and the ease at which events can be recorded, there comes into the SM’s life another ray of light, making the job just a bit easier by being able to make an “archival” video of the show. This can be done with any of the video recording devices available. It would be a one-shot, one-angle view, with the camera framed on to a full view of the stage. There will be no editing, no closeups or changes of angle. Of course, all of this *must* first be approved by Equity and voted on by the cast members. Also the shop steward for the stage technicians’ union should be informed. This video is strictly to document the show. It cannot be shown or seen except for the SM to get most accurately the blocking into the blocking script and for restaging at a later time. It must remain with the production offices at all times.

Off the Record—a Confession and Denial: I must confess that for one reason or another, when all else failed and I was confronted with having to get the blocking for a major scene with lots of people, I have stolen off into a projection or spotlight booth and recorded that scene. Should it ever be brought up that I said this, I will take the fifth. Of course, after getting the information I needed, the recording was deleted. I say *no harm, no foul*. An SM must do what an SM needs to do to get the job done.

At this point in the show, the rehearsal/blocking script has been marked and erased many times and has gathered many other notes during rehearsals. It is strongly recommended that the PSM transfer the updated blocking notes into a clean script, which can then be used in understudy rehearsals and turned in to the producer at the end of the show as part of the production notebook.

Days Off and Matinee Days

According to Equity agreement with producers, the work-week starts on Monday and ends on Sunday. We have already noted this in Chapter 6, when creating the performance sign-in sheet, Figure 6-9.

The Equity rule states that after six consecutive days of work, the actors must have the entire seventh day off or be paid overtime. It further states that on the day after the day off, the actors cannot be called in to work any earlier than the half-hour call before the performance, unless the producer pays overtime and possibly a penalty fee. This gives the actors a sense of having had two days off. It is also agreed between Equity and producers that the actors will perform

eight shows within the six-day period of work. Any more than eight performances in a workweek and the producer is obligated to pay overtime. Any fewer than eight performances means that the producer still pays the full salary, unless a different agreement has been reached with Equity. Depending on the type of contract, time off and the start of overtime can vary. This is where each SM must know the particulars of the contract under which he or she is working.

Traditionally, theatres are dark on Mondays, which becomes the company's day off. For any variations or deviations from this workweek, the producer works out the differences with Equity. Rarely will a producer choose to have a performance on the seventh day. The cost can be too great.

Matinee Performances

Traditionally, matinee performances were on Wednesday and Saturday. With the expansion of regional theatre and civic groups producing shows, some producers found it was more convenient for their patrons, and they could draw a larger matinee audience, if they had matinee performances on other days. Some have chosen to have their matinee performances on Saturday and Sunday. The advantage to this schedule is that the company has its days free throughout the week, but starting with Friday night's performance, the company performs five shows within a two-and-a-half-day period. If the show is busy, difficult, or a musical, this can be a grueling schedule.

Rehearsals during the Run of the Show

What! More rehearsals? Yes. Brush-up rehearsals, line rehearsals, understudy rehearsals, rehearsals for new actors, standby performer rehearsals, and put-in rehearsals all happen during the run of the show. As part of the different Equity contracts with producers, producers can call in the cast for a limited number of hours for rehearsals each week without having to pay them for this time.

Also there is the mandatory rehearsal required by Equity that the SM must schedule before each performance where there is swordplay, choreographed fights, or manipulation of loaded guns that might be dangerous or cause injury.

Brush-Up Rehearsals

Having rehearsal time once the show opens allows the director to make changes or clean up things during any part of the run of a show. Also, once the show is left in the SM's hands, if the SM feels the show or a particular part of the show has fallen below performance level, the SM too can call a brush-up rehearsal. For the SM, brush-up rehearsals are not to redirect or make changes, but to get everyone back to the original direction.

Brush-up rehearsals can be as simple as having the cast sit in the greenroom to run lines, or as involved as having the performers up on their feet onstage and doing the blocking along with the lines. Brush-up rehearsals usually involve just the actors. If some of the technical elements of the show are needed during a brush-up rehearsal, the SM must get clearance from the producer to have a skeleton crew come in and pay for their time. For any rehearsal held onstage, whether using technical elements or not, the SM must know the policy of the particular theatre. Some theatres require a paid union technician to be present, even if it is only to turn on the work lights.

Line Rehearsals

If the cast has been away from the show for a period of time longer than the normal day off, the SM might choose, or even be asked by the director or producer, to have a brush-up rehearsal. If the show is not complicated and the SM is confident the actors remember their blocking, the SM might choose to have only a *line rehearsal*—a rehearsal where the actors sit around in the greenroom or out on the stage and run their lines. A good line rehearsal exercise that helps get the actors to remember their lines is to have them say their lines at double speed or as fast as they can and still be heard, remain intelligible, and maintain the meaning. This sort of exercise is jarring, taxing, gets the adrenaline flowing, and quickly brings the lines back to conscious memory.

Understudy Rehearsals

Enter another important part of the SM's job. Equity rules require that the producer assign and pay Equity actors to **understudy (U/S)** certain featured roles within the show. Consideration for U/Ss starts as early as the audition period when the producer, director, and casting director choose actors for smaller roles with the thought of having these actors also U/S the larger roles—the principal roles. However, once the choices are made, the contracts are signed, and rehearsals to put the show together begin, very little work is done with the U/Ss until after the show opens. Then, all of a sudden, the producer, director, and even the SM realize that if the U/Ss are not ready and one of the principal performers becomes unable to perform, the show will not go on. There now comes a rush to have the U/Ss ready.

Often, the job of preparing the U/Ss is left to the SM. Sometimes the director will play a major role in preparing them. Neither the director nor the SM should have to spend a lot of time teaching the roles to the U/Ss. Throughout the rehearsal period, the actors contracted to U/S must, in addition to doing their regular parts in the show, also be working on their own, learning their U/S parts. It is the U/S's responsibility to learn the lines, learn the songs (if the show is a musical), take down the blocking, and keep all changes up to date before they come to the first official U/S rehearsal with the director or SM.

If the director is conducting the U/S rehearsals, the ASM is required to be there to follow script, read in the parts without understudies, help set up whatever rehearsal furniture and props are being used, and use this time to further learn the show, as directed by the director.

The SM Must Be Prepared

Regardless of the U/S's responsibility for being ready for the first U/S rehearsal, the SM must also be ready to work by having the blocking for the show up to date and having a good working knowledge of the script, the action, the character development, and so on. In addition, the SM must know the director's work—the director's intent, meaning, and interpretation. The SM also must be ready to work with an actor who has come unprepared. In U/S rehearsals it is the SM's job to convey the director's work to the actors who have either missed getting it themselves or not yet incorporated it into their performance.

Restrictive Guidelines

To work the U/S rehearsals effectively, the SM steps into the directing arena, but in a limited way:

- The SM does not *direct* the U/Ss, only *prepares* them. The SM leads them to giving performances in keeping with the director's work and similar to the way the principal performer is performing the role. The directing has already been done by the director. The SM only mimics the director's work. Whatever directing techniques the SM might use are only to get good performances from the U/Ss.
- Neither the SM nor the U/S is allowed to change the blocking or bits of business, or interpret the role in such a way that it is removed from the director's work or so different that it will cause the other actors onstage to become distracted and possibly thrown in performing their parts.

The Soul of Understudy Work

With such restrictions, the art and craft of the U/Ss' work comes in duplicating the roles (staying within the bounds and framework of the director's and principal performers' work) and at the same time making the roles their own, performing them as if the roles had been tailored and directed just for them. It is important that the SM know this of U/S work to be able to better prepare the U/Ss and lead them into giving good performances, thus ensuring the show goes on and artistic integrity is maintained.

An Assortment of Understudies

SMs will work with an assortment of U/Ss during their careers. Some will know exactly what to do as an U/S, staying within the bounds and framework of the role and yet making the role their own. They will come fully prepared and will require little to no direction from the SM. Others will be young or inexperienced and, on occasion, were chosen by the producer or director just to fill the requirements of Equity. With these U/Ss, the SM must know all about preparing U/Ss and apply that knowledge.

The Understudy Who Will Never Go On

To add to the assortment, the SM will work with those actors who are U/Sing the star role in a star vehicle. Either the star has the reputation of never missing a performance, or without the star's performance the show will not go on anyway. Knowing this, some actors U/Sing a star role may slack off, putting little effort into learning the parts. With these U/Ss the SM must appeal to their professional senses, asking them to meet the responsibility for which they are receiving additional pay and, at the same time, aid the other U/S performers in rehearsing their parts during U/S rehearsals.

No Performance during Understudy Rehearsals

Every now and then an SM will work with actors who refuse to give a performance during U/S rehearsals. If the director were present, these actors would work at full capacity—for the SM they feel less motivated. Seeing this, the SM must ask the U/S to give some kind of performance if for nothing else than to be an aid to the other U/Ss rehearsing at the same time. A standard and stock reply is often, "Don't worry! When I get into performance, I'll do it." This is unacceptable. The SM must know that the actors can perform the roles before they go on in their part. If the SM accepts this excuse and it turns out the U/S cannot deliver, not only will the show suffer but the actor's poor work will reflect on the SM as not having done the job well. When an SM comes across an U/S who refuses to perform in rehearsals, the SM must be adamant in getting the actor to give some sort of performance.

In the same light, an SM may work with actors who have understudied the role before, or even performed it in another production. The first problem the SM may encounter is the U/S may want to perform the role as it was done in the other production. Another problem might be the actor may not want to put in the time each week at U/S rehearsals. Once again, the SM must be strong and insistent, working the U/S rehearsals to serve both the show and the other performers.

The Understudy's First Performance

No matter how prepared an U/S might be, when it comes time for the U/S to go on in the part, the event becomes highly charged for most everyone. It usually comes on short notice and sometimes as the result of backstage drama. Often the U/S's first performance is done with a lot of nervousness, excitement, anxiety, and adrenaline—somewhat similar to the feelings experienced for an opening performance. This is another one of those times when the company pulls together to help the U/S and keep the show at performance level.

For the first performance of an U/S the SM tries to redirect the charged energy to confidence and assurance. Over the PA, the SM officially announces to the company the U/S's performance and asks for everyone's attention and alertness during the performance, reminding them that if something is different they should go on with the show and that it will be corrected after the performance. Either the PSM or the ASM should be left free backstage for the U/S's first performance. The SM needs to watch to evaluate the U/S's performance and, at the same time, be ready to handle or avert any problems that might take place.

If the U/S should go on for a second performance, the SM must be aware of the possible letdown that sometimes takes place. After the first performance the U/S may become too confident, may be more relaxed, resting on the laurels and the success of the first performance. In anticipation of a possible letdown, the SM should talk privately with the U/S and to everyone over the PA. First, the SM thanks them for their good work, and then warns them of the possible letdown and asks that they once again become focused, alert, and concentrated.

Whether there is a second U/S performance or not, the SM should, on behalf of the producer and director, publicly thank the U/S. The SM should also privately express personal, sincere, and heartfelt thanks for the work the U/S has

done, not only in the performance but in preparation for the role and throughout the U/S rehearsals.

Being an U/S is often a thankless job. Lots of time, energy, and good work is put in with little to no payoff. Those fantastic and wonderful stories about an U/S going on and becoming a star overnight happens only on rare occasions, and only in movies and plays such as *All About Eve* does such magic appear to be an everyday occurrence. The reality in most cases is that the principal performer returns and the U/S's performance becomes a faded memory of a moment in time.

Scheduling Understudy Rehearsals

Equity has regulated the number of hours that can be devoted to U/S rehearsals each week during the run of the show. It also states that rehearsals for the U/S must be posted in advance. Once again, the SM must know the Equity Rulebook. The smallest error in timing or posting of the notice can cost the producer money.

In the first weeks of U/S rehearsals the SM should use all the time allotted by Equity for U/S rehearsals. Once all the U/Ss are up on their parts and the SM is confident they can perform their roles at a moment's notice, the SM can reduce the rehearsals to once a week or to every other week, but cannot stop U/S rehearsals entirely.

Often, with posting of the first notice for U/S rehearsals, there comes a series of moans and groans. Even within the first week of performances, the actors have quickly adjusted to having the daytime off before going to the theatre to perform at night. In consideration of the actors, many SMs will schedule U/S rehearsals in the latter part of the day. This gives the U/S performers the whole morning and part of the afternoon free before they have to be at the theatre to rehearse. Then once they get to the theatre to rehearse, they are also there for the evening performance. However, in scheduling in this way, the SM must also allow time for the actors to have a meal break after the U/S rehearsal, and to be at the theatre in time for the half-hour call.

Whenever possible, and without expense to the producer, the SM should have the U/S rehearsal on the stage, hopefully with some or all of the scenery and props. However, in most professional situations, to have some or all of the technical elements requires having at least one union technician present. The most an SM can hope for is a bare stage with work lights. In other situations, the SM will hold U/S rehearsals in a rehearsal room, providing a minimum of props, sometimes only tables and chairs. Not having the props and scenery is not a great handicap to the U/S actors. They can see these things being used at each performance, and if they need to, they can come in early before a performance and work with the particular item. Perhaps at least one time during the run of the show, the SM might get the producer to agree to having a skeleton crew come in so the U/Ss can have a chance to work with the set, props, and lights before they have to go on or before the run of the show ends. On occasion, especially when on the road with touring a show, U/S rehearsals will be conducted wherever there is space—if not at the theatre or in a rehearsal room, perhaps in a hotel ballroom, conference room, deserted foyer or lobby, or even abandoned restaurant or nightclub.

Understudies Watching from the Wings

Throughout the run of the show, the SM should encourage all U/Ss to watch the principal performers from the wings during the performances. In doing so, however, the SM opens the door to a number of potential problems. The SM should ask the U/Ss to be certain to stay out of the sight lines of the audience and, as much as possible, stay out of view of the actors onstage. In standing in the wings, the U/S must also remain aware of entrances, exits, and scene changes, stepping off to the side until all is clear. These things are common sense, things the SM expects every actor working in theatre to know. However, actors often forget as they stand there, concentrating and studying their parts. On occasion, some U/Ss may become even less aware. They might mouth their lines or say the words in a soft whisper. For a performer onstage to see their U/S standing in the wings and hearing their lines being echoed is distracting, disconcerting, upsetting, and unsettling.

Understudy Rehearsals for Musicals

With musical shows, the SM's work for U/S rehearsals usually is doubled. Not only is there more of everything, but the SM must also schedule and coordinate rehearsal time with the dance captain and musical director or conductor. In addition, the SM must have at the rehearsal space a piano. If the SM cannot use the stage to hold the U/S rehearsal and

cannot get a piano in the rehearsal space, it is possible to have the actors sing the songs a cappella, and then for another time schedule a music rehearsal with a piano. Another choice is to have the sound person with the show record the pianist while playing in the pit, and then either put the music on CDs or in a thumb/stick drive. The SM can then play the recordings through the laptop.

Standby Performers

Standby performers usually are performers who are not in the show but who are standing by, fully prepared to step into a role at any given moment. Standby performers many times are performers who are known to be excellent performers in the business—performers who are capable of carrying this particular show, or perhaps any other show. Standby performers are chosen for the main principal or starring role. Sometimes they have performed the role in another production and are celebrities in their own right. They have been chosen by the producer for their box office draw, should the original actor or star become unable to perform the show. Today, standby performers are not used as frequently and can be found mostly standing by for a major show on Broadway.

There is no one particular policy followed when working with a standby performer. It is whatever the producer and director decide and set up. Sometimes the standby is required to come to the theatre for each performance and stand by. Some are allowed to leave just before the last scene. In more liberal situations, the standby may be able to leave by intermission, or may not be required to come to the theatre at all, but have with them their cell phone and be in a place where can get to the theatre in a short time.

Most times the director works with the standby, while the SM is brought in to give the blocking notes and read the other parts. Sometimes it becomes wholly the SM's job. On those occasions, the SM might have some of the U/Ss join the rehearsal to do their parts, to aid and support the standby. Standby performers are usually extended more freedom in performing the role than is an U/S—especially if the standby has some star status. It is the SM's job to observe, evaluate, and if the differences are great, try to lead the standby performer closer to what the director wants, or to confer with the director.

If the standby performer's entry into the show is not on short notice, almost always the director or SM will hold a **put-in rehearsal**, calling in the cast and crew and using all the technical elements. If the standby performer has made any changes in the part, everyone will get to see them at this time.

Replacement Performers

Usually with a principal role or star performer's role, the director is instrumental in putting in the replacement actor. With lesser roles, it is often left up to the SM. When called on to do this job, the SM once again must apply all the SM knows about the show and the director's work. The SM must, however, be careful not to try to make the replacement actor a copy of the original actor. The SM must allow the replacement performer freedom but watch to see that the new actor's approach and choices are not extremely different or in opposition to what the director wants. If, after working with the replacement actor and trying to lead the performance in the direction the director wants, the replacement actor remains resistant to change, the SM must consult with the director and possibly have the director come in to work with the actor.

Prompting or Feeding Actors' Lines

We have discussed this subject on other occasions in this book, but it bears repeating. The SM should never feed actors' lines onstage during a performance, or lead them in any way to believe that this will happen. Some plays and movies depict the SM as standing in the wings throwing lines to actors. If the SM ever does this, it is in the most extreme cases or situations. Starting with the first dress rehearsal, the SM reminds the cast of their responsibility for their own dialogue and assures them that the SM can no longer be available to save them by throwing lines as was done in rehearsals.

To feed actors lines with promptness and accuracy, the SM must follow the script 100 percent of the time. During the performance, the SM needs to be free to set up cues, call cues, watch the show, and handle any immediate

problems that might come up at the moment. Even with a simple comedy or drama where the cues might be far and few between, the actors cannot be dependent on the SM. Just when they need the SM most, the SM will be doing some other part of the job during the performance and will not be watching their dialogue.

Creating Close Friendships

Now that the show is in its run, the SM has more time to relate in a social way and perhaps cultivate and develop some friendships within the company. This, however, is not always an easy thing to do, especially among the cast. By this point in time, the cast has bonded among themselves, creating pairs or little groups. In addition, the position of the SM is considered management, and there remains that gulf between the two working groups. Cast members sometimes feel restricted in what they can say or do when the SM is around. They welcome the SM in group social events, but when it comes time to go off and have a close and sharing friendship, the SM is not always an ideal choice.

It is sometimes easier for the SM to cultivate friendships among the crew members. As we have seen, the SM's rule and jurisdiction over the crew is minimal, so there is less fear or stigma for a crew member to be seen chumming around with the SM. In having to work so closely together, the PSM and ASM will often bond and become good friends.

The Professional Experience

The work the SM does during the run of the show is similar from show to show. These experiences will be wide and varied, depending on the cast, crew, producer, director, and often the star. Any person who makes working in theatre a career cannot escape having at least one or two backstage experiences or stories to tell. SMs collect more than their share. Here are a few.

Star Power: Box Office Power

I worked with a well-known Broadway star who had originally created the lead role in a very famous Broadway show. He was now doing a West Coast production of the show and I, fortunately, was hired as the SM. The star performer was notorious for stopping the show whenever the spirit moved him. He would break character, step to the apron, and talk directly to the audience. The audience loved it. As soon as it happened in a performance, word spread quickly throughout the backstage and the ensemble performers would gather in the wings to watch. The man was clever, witty, endearing, and very good at ad-libbing. As the SM, I showed disdain and disapproval each time he did this, but secretly I enjoyed it and looked forward to when it might happen. However, as the SM, I felt it was my job to maintain the artistic integrity of the show. I approached the star and expressed my position and opinion. He complimented me for doing such a fine job, but told me directly to leave his performance up to him. I talked with the producer about this matter and he agreed with me, adding, "A nightclub is one thing, but not a Broadway book show!" I thought for sure he would have a talk with the star, but in the next weeks, the star continued. Box office receipts were up, so I can only guess that was reason enough to leave things alone. Another possibility might be that the producer did talk to the star performer, and the star performer told the producer pretty much what he told me.

Walking in an Elephant's Shoes

In another show, a star performer who had not acted in fifteen years was cast in a supporting role. This actor made his mark as a star performer in the first part of his career, and then left the theatre to become a golf pro. After being absent from the theatre for well over a decade, it was quite a coup for the producer to have gotten this star.

It was obvious from the first day of rehearsals that the performer had become rusty in his craft and skills as an actor. He was stiff in his movements, he had great trouble remembering his lines, his delivery was flat and meaningless, and

he did not listen to the other actors in the scene—he would cut them off before they were finished saying their lines. We wondered if the producer had made a mistake. The director spent an inordinate amount of time with this actor, but with little result. One day, out of frustration and anger, the director sent me off to another rehearsal room to work with this star performer and the two other actors in the scene, saying, “Drill him over and over until he learns the lines and listens to what the other people are saying.”

We ran the scene several times. Each time I took a different approach, trying to get the actor back to the basics of acting. He could take direction and do a thing one time, but he was unable to repeat it. This would have been fine if we were doing a movie. We would have filmed the scene and sent him on his way. This, however, was theatre; the actor needed to repeat his work over and over, first in rehearsals and then in performance.

I could see the star was struggling and suffering from many feelings. I had great empathy for him and tried to make the rehearsal easier. I complimented him on the improvements, I put some of my attention and focus on the other actors, and I tried to keep the atmosphere light and not filled with a sense of its importance. At one point in the rehearsal, after the star performer continually cut off the other actors’ lines, I said in a lighthearted manner, “Let’s run the scene again, and this time allow your fellow actors to finish their lines.” I then added jokingly, “You know how actors are, they want to say every word they have coming to them.” The two actors working with us chuckled, but not our star performer. He took major offense. He came at me with such voracity, such intent, fury, and venom, that I remained stunned and pinned in my chair. I dare not repeat his words, but in essence, he told me I was no director, and how dare I tell him how to act. He reminded me of his London experience, having worked with Sir Laurence Olivier, and of his Tony nomination. He said that I was a mouse trying to walk in elephant’s shoes. From his point of view, he was right, for this man had worked with some of the top theatre directors. His fury was great and he had not yet spent his feelings. He attacked further, becoming more personal. In the ten years of my experience up to that time, I had never experienced such an attack and I was not prepared for it. I had been criticized, condemned for mistakes, even ostracized by the cast for a choice or decision, but my self-esteem always remained intact. I lost my composure. I rose from my chair and strongly suggested the actor leave the room before I told him what I thought of him. I too was ready to attack personally, and I had plenty of ammunition stored in my arsenal. This, of course, provoked the star performer further and he came nose to nose with me, challenging and daring me to speak. The two actors looking on separated us. The one with the star performer led him out of the room.

I was now mostly upset with myself for having taken this direction and course of action. It was obvious the star performer’s words, expression, and feelings were not actually about me, even though the words were. Once again, the position of the SM came in the line of fire and this time it was in some other war. I asked for the room to be cleared and spent some time regrouping my thoughts and feelings. Meanwhile, the star performer went to the director and told him he was leaving, without giving an explanation. The two actors were able to fill in the director. When I returned to the rehearsal room, the director continued to work and said nothing. I had now become paranoid, and felt even worse. I saw the director’s silence as an indication of his disapproval for my actions, and in my mind his silence confirmed that I was wrong. I lived with that feeling for the rest of the day and into the next.

Next day at rehearsals our star returned. At first we kept our distance, barely acknowledging each other. However, I knew I needed to mend the relationship if we were to continue working together. I had hoped he would have approached me first to make it easier, but he didn’t. Finally, as we passed in the hallway, I took the moment to speak. I apologized for my behavior. I assured him I would never step beyond the bounds of SMing with him again. He too apologized or said what appeared to be an apology. He was not direct in his words and spent most of his time telling me what I did wrong. At the end we shook hands. We continued to work civilly together, but I could see I was not one of his favorite people. Ashamedly, I must also admit that he was not one of mine.

The Reluctant Star Understudy

On occasion a producer or director will hire someone knowing the individual will be a problem, but to serve themselves or the show, they go ahead anyway, knowing the SM will have to deal mostly with the problem person. In this particular case, an actor of some star stature was hired to play a lesser principal role. The performer wanted the lead because he had done it on Broadway as one of the replacement actors before the show closed. The producer of our show, however, chose another actor to play the lead part, one who was younger and more known to the public through his television and film work. As a backup, however, the producer wanted the star actor to U/S the lead role, a cruel twist of fate that sometimes happens in the entertainment business. The star actor reluctantly agreed and signed the contract. Our troubles with this actor began early in rehearsals when he started telling the director how to direct the show and how it had been done on Broadway.

In U/S rehearsals he became worse. He refused to do the role as the director had directed it, and after the first rehearsal he refused to come to the U/S rehearsals. The producer had to have a talk with him. This actor tried my patience further by complaining that the director did not come to U/S rehearsals to work with him personally. He also wanted to rehearse on stage with the scenery and props. Most of all, he was annoyed with me for asking him to turn in some kind of performance in rehearsals. I did this not to see if he was capable of turning in a performance, but to help the other U/Ss in working their parts. He argued that everyone in the business knew what he was capable of and the performance he could turn in.

One day in U/S rehearsals, I said out of frustration, "If I can get the producer to agree to let us work on the stage with set and props for two rehearsals, will you give an allout performance?"

"Sure," my star U/S replied without hesitation or a blink of the eye. I was taken aback. What had I gotten myself into? No producer would go to such an expense for even one rehearsal, let alone two. I was desperate enough to approach the producer. I was surprised again when the producer agreed without hesitation.

What I did not know at the time was that the star U/S had already been to the producer on this very matter and been turned down. So when I presented my idea of working on stage with the set and props, the star U/S already knew it was not going to happen and agreed to strike the bargain with me. However, between the time the star U/S had spoken to the producer and the time I approached the producer, there had been a major change. The actor playing the lead was exercising the clause in his contract that allowed him to leave the show to do a movie. He would be gone for four weeks, but then would return for the last week in LA and the run in San Francisco. So now the producer was ready to pay the money to have the U/S rehearse onstage with props, lights, and scenery.

The producer did not, however, want word of this getting out. There were still two weeks before the lead actor left to do the movie. The producer did not want a rush at the box office in the next two weeks, and then have sales drop for the next four weeks. In addition, he was in the middle of his campaign for next year's season subscribers and did not want anything negative to affect a subscriber's decision in buying tickets, so he asked that I not say anything. Also, the producer wanted to keep this entire matter from the star U/S until the week before he was to go on. He did not want the U/S's publicity people getting out the word. Meanwhile, the producer wanted me to rehearse the U/S with as many hours as I had allotted to me by Equity. When I told the actor we would be having U/S rehearsals onstage for the next two weeks, he too was surprised and regretted having made the bargain with me. He performed with some reservation in the first week. In the second week, when he was told of his going on in the part, he was more than willing to give a performance during U/S rehearsals.

Through the years I have remained friends with this reluctant U/S. One time when reminiscing, I told him of my deception. He forgave me and then confessed that at the time, he was just being a jerk. It seems he was having personal and financial problems and had taken the job as the understudy because he needed the money. He was hoping to do as little work as possible, thinking he would never go on.

The Touring Show

Touring shows have various names but are always touring shows; they just come in different Equity packages with varying pay scales and working agreements. Traveling with a touring show can be like a double-edged sword. On the one side, it can be exciting and adventuresome; on the other, it is difficult and tiring. On the exciting and adventuresome side, people with a touring show may go to cities and countries they might not have otherwise visited on their own. They get to meet and live among the people in different places, see the local landmarks and attractions, and make new friends. On the other hand, traveling with a show can be wearisome, moving from city to city, living out of a suitcase, being away from home, family, and friends. In addition, while paying the inflated prices of living out on the road, each person often has the continued expense of maintaining a permanent residence. The added expense of being on the road has been taken into consideration when Equity negotiated the touring salary, but the scale is often not enough and lags behind the rate of inflation. While on the road, company members must live sensibly or they will find their paychecks being consumed by expenses.

Types of Touring Shows

Some people love the change of being on the road while others merely bear it, doing it only for the work and pay. With differences in pay scale and working agreements, some tours are more preferred than others. In order of preference they are:

National Tour

This is probably the most coveted of tours, for the pay and the long number of weeks playing in one place. A national tour is a show that travels throughout the United States, playing in most major cities. This usually is a new show or a revised show that has just completed a successful run on Broadway. Some national tours are scheduled and booked in each city for only a certain number of weeks.

Once the engagement is finished, regardless of ticket sales, the show closes and moves on to the next city.

In recent years producers have started putting together one or two more additional companies of the same production before the original production on Broadway has played itself out. These companies are placed in cities where they are not in competition with the Broadway production or with each other, such as in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, or Chicago. They are booked with an ***open-end run*** and remain until ticket sales drop. For the sake of the budget, the producers hire mostly local actors to play the smaller roles. By doing this, the producers do not have to pay for the housing of these actors and do not have to pay the touring pay scale. Sometimes in the second production the producers will feature the original star performer from Broadway, or the producers will hire another performer of equal stature and acclaim. On many occasions the PSM from the Broadway production will temporarily fill the position with the second company, with the intention of having the ASM take over for the run.

These additional companies are not a national tour in the truest sense. Depending on the agreement the producers have made with Equity, only the few who have been brought in from out of town fall under the terms of a touring contract. After the show has played itself out, either on Broadway or in one of the additional cities, the producers create a national touring company and travel the show to the other cities in the rest of the United States.

International Tour

This tour is similar to a national tour, but the show travels to different cities in different countries. The tour may be extensive, traveling to many countries and cities, or it may be limited, playing only one country and just a few cities.

Out-of-Town Tryout or Pre-Broadway Run

Traditionally, a new show destined for Broadway was produced in New York. Before its run on Broadway, the show had tryout performances in one or more nearby cities: Boston, New Haven, and Hartford were some of the popular choices. In recent times, some new shows have been put together in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, or even Canada, and have done a pre-Broadway run as a national tour, making their way to New York City. If the show proves to be successful on the road, the producers will follow through in bringing it to Broadway.

Regardless of the show's origin, being with a new show and going into tryouts or a pre-Broadway run is not an easy job. Once the show gets on the road, the workday becomes more full and more intense with rehearsals in the afternoons, making changes and revisions. Some of the changes may be simple and painless, but others can involve a complete makeover of a scene or an entire act. On some occasions, scrapping the entire show and sending everyone home is the only remaining option. The work is hard, but the reward is great if the show gets to Broadway and has a successful run.

Regional Tour

Regional tours are similar to national tours, but they play a specific area in one part of the country, such as New England, the Southeast, the Midwest, or the West Coast. Most of these shows are produced by a regional theatre or production company and start out to play in just one city, but due to the success of the production, the producers decide to tour it to nearby cities and towns. The play dates in each town are usually short, sometimes only one or two weeks in one place. The more frequently the show moves from one place to the next, the harder it is for the entire company. The pay scale for an Equity regional touring contract is not as high as a national tour. On occasion, if the show proves to be extremely successful on the regional tour, the producers might consider taking it to Broadway.

Summer Stock

Working in summer stock is not touring in the traditional sense of moving from place to place. The members of a summer stock company are removed from their homes, friends, and family, but once they travel to the town where the production is based, they remain there for the entire season—usually from June to September, Memorial Day to Labor Day. Some summer stock companies are located in tourist or resort-type places. For those that are, in some respects it can feel like a vacation, with the members of the company participating in some of the local color and festivities, meeting new and interesting people. On the other hand, the pay is middle of the road and summer stock companies usually do a series of plays, or a repertoire of plays. This means rehearsing and mounting new productions during the day and performing at night.

Traditionally, summertime is a slow time of the year for people who work in theatre. Producers both in New York and other cities usually finish producing their shows in April or early May at the latest. They do not start up again until late summer or early fall. Despite the pay and intensity of the work in summer stock, people who work in theatre and do not have a job for the summer welcome having a summer stock job.

Bus and Truck

Bus and truck is just as it says—the company travels by bus and the technical parts of the show travel by trucks. The show usually is booked in a place for one or two weeks before it moves on. The living accommodations, though monitored by Equity, are less plush and more utilitarian. The transition time between the final performance in one town and the opening performance in the next usually is short, most times two days. If the show is simple and can be set up quickly, the transition can be limited to one day. The next town usually is a day's trip away—sometimes only a few hours, other times twelve or fourteen hours. On many occasions, this travel day is also the cast's day off.

Split-Week Tour

This is a whirlwind tour of traveling, setting up the show, and performing. Everyone and everything travels by bus and truck. The distance between each town is short. The show may arrive in a town on Sunday and by Monday night it is set up and ready for performance. The final performance may be on Wednesday night. That night the show is taken down, traveled to the next town, and once again is made ready by the second day.

To move so swiftly and set up in such a short time, the show has to be simple. The set, props, and costumes are minimal, and the technical setup has to take no more than six to eight hours. This kind of a tour is extremely difficult and tiring for all. The members of the company literally live out of their suitcases.

One-Night Stand

A split week can seem like an eternity of time to play in one town when comparing it to a tour of one-night stands. The most practical show to do with this kind of a tour is a show that is done as a *reading*—a show in which the actors sit on stools, possibly reading their parts from scripts. The stage may be dressed with black curtains, the lighting limited to areas and specials, and for the different scenes the actors may arrange and rearrange their stools. The members of this kind of tour barely get the lids to their suitcases open before they are closing them and traveling to the next town.

Road Show

The term *road show* is generic for any show that travels. Many times a show that travels on a tour is cut down or streamlined from its original production. On occasion, scenes or dances may be cut from the show or cut down to be less strenuous. The scenery, lighting, and sound are almost always simplified.

Equity Taking Care of Its Members

Through the work of Equity, some very high standards for working conditions have been established for the actors and SMs of touring shows. There was a time when actors went out on the road and were at the mercy of the producer. Some producers were very honorable and caring, but others treated the actors as second-class citizens, having very little concern or consideration for their needs or working conditions. Today, Actors' Equity monitors carefully every touring show under its jurisdiction, seeing that pay scales are met, working conditions remain in accordance to contractual agreement, and the members are cared for in whatever events or circumstances come up while on the tour.

The Company Manager, Touring Manager, and SM

Only on a large show with a big budget will there be both a company manager and a touring manager. Whenever possible, producers will have only a company manager. In many ways, the parts of each job are similar. When both managers are traveling with a show, the company manager is generally in charge of the company, making travel arrangements, setting up housing in each city, and caring for the daily expenses and general budget. The tour manager, on the other hand, deals mostly with the crew and technical parts of the show, making the arrangements to transport the equipment, dealing with the local union and crew, and often traveling to the next city two or three days in advance to see if the next performance site is prepared to receive the show. The company manager works closely with Equity, knowing the rules and regulations, while the touring manager works closely with IATSE, knowing their rules and regulations. In the absence of a tour manager, the company manager also does the tour manager's work.

With the presence of both a company manager and tour manager, the SM's job is made easier. The SM's attention and efforts may be focused on maintaining the show and giving more personal attention to the cast. If there is only a

company manager, the SM may be called on to aid the company manager in whatever way the company manager asks. In the absence of touring and company managers, the work of these positions is divided among the production office, the TD, and the SMs.

The Wear and Tear of Touring

Touring shows, especially ones that play in towns for short periods of time, move frequently, and have one or two days' transition time from one city to the next, from one setup to the other—and are hard on everyone involved.

The Road Crew

The road crew consists of the heads of the various technical departments and their assistants. Moving the show from one place to the other is toughest on the road crew who travels with the show—the *roadies*, as they are affectionately called. From the moment the curtain goes down on the final performance in one city and rises on the opening performance in the next, their work is continuous, stopping only to eat and get some sleep. They must strike the show, get the technical elements and equipment securely and safely packed for travel, travel to the new location, set up the show, and have it ready for the opening performance.

The SMs

For the SMs too, each move is a major event. Not only must they pack out their part of the show, but they must oversee the travel day for the cast. Once they are in the new town, they must set up shop at the new facility and see that the show is ready for the first performance, which might mean having a dry tech, running cues and scene changes without the performers in order to give the local crew the chance to rehearse what they must do. No less than two weeks in a town is a welcome schedule for the SMs as well as everyone else in the company. With a two-week engagement, the cast and crew can have the following weekend for rest and personal time.

The Performers

Actors probably have it easiest in touring. After the final performance at a location, they are responsible for clearing out their dressing rooms, taking their personal belongings, and seeing that dressing rooms are left clean and in respectable order. Most touring shows will travel the actors' makeup kits for them. It is the actors' responsibility to clearly mark their cases with their names and put them in the travel container provided. The prop department becomes responsible for traveling the makeup kits. Once the actors' work is done after the final performance in a town, they can return to their living quarters to get some rest and be ready to travel to the next town.

The Sms Anatomy of a Touring Show

Here we are again going into the “anatomy” of a thing as we did in Chapter 2, “The Anatomy of a Good SM.” Now it is the anatomy of a touring show. To better understand and visualize the makeup and nature of a touring show, know that it is divided into three parts:

► **Part One:** Closing out the show and packing. Within this part there are two phases:

Phase One: Making preparations to close out the show

Phase Two: Striking the show and packing it away to travel

► **Part Two:** Traveling the show—cast, crew, and all things technical.

► **Part Three:** Settling into the new town and venue—getting the performers settled into their new living quarters, getting the show technically set up in the new venue, and making the show ready for the first performance.

These are the parts and phases to a touring show in which the SM works in moving the show from one town or city to the next.

Part One: Closing Out the Show and Packing

In the anatomy of touring a show, it might seem unusual to start with closing out the show. However, once a show is on the road, the cycle of moving the show and company from one place to the other begins with closing out the show. Closing out the show and packing to move it to the next town is different from closing out the show permanently at the end of its run, which we will discuss in the next chapter. Closing out a show on the road means taking things apart, keeping every nut and bolt, every costume and prop, and every scrap of administrative paper, and packing them away neatly and safely so they can be traveled, set up, and used in the next place.

The Producer's Transition Time

The transition time between the final performance in one city and the opening performance in the next is an expensive time for the producer, not to mention the box office downtime. In concern for budget and costs, the producer keeps the transition as short as possible. The time the producer allows for this is often *ideal time* and not *realistic time*. The producer allows only for a perfect experience with no problems or setbacks. Whenever possible, and with Equity's consent, the producer will travel the cast on their day off. This saves the producer from losing still another day. The SM can give the actors some compensation for this personal time lost by delaying their rehearsal call at the new theatre until the last moment possible, which is usually in early or mid afternoon on the day of the opening performance.

The Two Phases to Closing Out a Touring Show

As stated above, there are two phases in closing out a show while on the road. The first phase is in *preparation* of moving out. In other words, the SM and each department does whatever it needs to do in *advance* to ensure that once the strike and packing begin, things will go smoothly, quickly, and safely. Once the strike and packing start, there will be no time for anything else. For the most part, preparations for the move begin in the last week of the run in a particular town, and get finalized in the last two or three days before the final performance. In some situations, the company manager begins preparation work for the next location even earlier.

The SM's Preparations

In the final week in a city, preferably at the beginning of that week, the SM posts and passes out a schedule, along with pertinent information such as addresses, phone numbers, flight information, and procedures to be followed for the trip to the new location. This schedule is produced in conjunction with the company manager plans, reservations, and arrangements. The SM confers with the company manager and gets approval before the schedule is posted and passed out. Also as a service to all, the SM might email this notice and information to all so that they have it on their smart phones to refer to should they forget any one piece of information.

Next, the SM consults with the company manager, checking to see that all advance, follow-up, or confirmation calls for travel and housing have been made for the next town. If there is no company manager with the show, the production office usually handles this business. In such cases, the SM confers with the production office. When the production office is handling this business, it is wise that the SM also call to confirm things; it is more assuring if the

SM has direct conversation with the people with whom the SM will be dealing in the next town, checking to see if everyone is coordinated, is working in the same time frame, and has the correct arrangements and information.

Another important matter in preparation to moving is to see that a housing list for the next town is put up in enough time for the members of the company to sign up. Once again, the company manager handles this business, but in the company manager's absence, the SM does it. Equity has some very specific requirements, restrictions, and rules governing housing. The SM needs to be familiar with the details and see that they are followed. So it is up to the SM to have studied this part of the Equity Rulebook to make sure there are no infractions.

Last on the SM's list of things to do is something for him- or herself. It may appear to be unimportant, but if left to the last minute it will be an inconvenience to all and maybe even set the SM behind in packing out his or her part of the move.

Sometime before the final day in a city, and certainly before the final curtain, the SM should ask the prop department or carpentry department to dig out from storage the crates and boxes that will carry the SM's equipment. Usually the SM's packing crates become buried, and after the last performance when the crew starts taking out their own crates, the SM's crates become even more buried. To wait and ask for the crates after the final curtain and after the crew has begun striking the show becomes an inconvenience, because by then the crew heads and stage technicians are busy packing away their own areas.

The Last Performance

Often on the day of the last performance the feeling backstage is charged with a different energy. The SM feels it, not only from the performers but from the crew, too. Perhaps it is the excitement of moving to a new city, or maybe it is the anticipation of the whirlwind and marathon work of striking the show, packing, traveling, setting up in the new town, and having the show ready for the first performance. On occasion the feeling can be one of sadness for leaving a place where the company has felt most welcomed and has made new friends.

Advance Packing

It is unwritten but strongly believed that the last performance should be delivered with the same focus, attention, and energy as the opening performance. It is everyone's intention to give their best. However, in anticipation of the move, people's thoughts, especially the crew members', slip into striking, packing, and the travel ahead. With any task that is difficult and tiring, it is natural for people to want to make the job easier. The crew has found that one of the ways to lighten the load is to start packing in advance. The prop and costume departments especially will start packing things while the last performance is still going on—things that have been used and are no longer needed for the rest of the performance. There is nothing wrong with the practice, and those who do it should be commended for their conscientious work and forethought. However, this practice should be of concern to the SM. Two things can happen. Invariably, something gets packed away that is needed later in the show, and on occasion the people doing this work tend to concentrate more on packing than on the performance. Sometimes they are late for a cue or miss it entirely. It happens, and every SM who has the experience quickly learns to make it a standard practice to announce at the half-hour call before the final performance that everyone must remain focused and concentrated on the show and not drift off to thoughts of packing and moving.

Let the Packing Begin

Phase two of part one—striking the show and packing it away to travel. With the fall of the final curtain the backstage becomes transformed into a metropolis of action, movement, and activity. The crew becomes a high-powered, fine-tuned, well-oiled working machine with all its parts performing efficiently and with speed.

The Company Manager and Touring Manager: At least two or three days before the final show, the touring manager's office is packed away and the touring manager is off to the next town, making arrangements for the arrival of the company and show. The company manager, on the other hand, will often begin packing on the day of the final performance and can have the office closed out and packed away within an hour of the final curtain. Once the company manager's work is done and he or she is no longer needed at the theatre that night, the company manager

can return to the hotel to get some sleep and be ready to transport the cast, usually on the next day. It goes without saying that until the show is packed out of the theatre and the crew is either back at their living quarters or on the way to the new location, the company manager is on call.

The SMs: With the fall of the final curtain, the SMs too become whirling dervishes of action in packing. More than likely, while one SM was calling cues for the final performance, the other was beginning the process of packing. The real work cannot begin until after the final curtain falls. The SMs are responsible for clearing and packing away the callboard and having their office packed into the travel containers provided. They are also responsible to begin packing some of the things on the SM's console, saving the more technical equipment for the sound and lighting departments. Once the lighting and sound departments complete packing the console, the prop department takes over and becomes responsible for moving the console and the SM's stool, seeing that they get put on the truck and arrive safely at the next location. For assurance that the SM's stool does not get left behind or picked up and used by someone else, the SM should have the stool clearly marked "STG.MGR."

At some point in the SM's pack-out, one of the SMs needs to go out to the front of the house to retrieve the Equity cast list, which was placed in the lobby when the company first arrived. The SMs are also responsible for seeing that the actors have left the dressing rooms and their general living spaces backstage in neat order, cleared of garbage, and have left nothing behind. In addition, they check to see that no pieces of costumes are left behind, and they make a note of those rooms or actors who left their dressing rooms in unsatisfactory condition.

Once the SM's things are packed, the boxes and crates need to be securely closed with tape or locks. The boxes and crates also need to be clearly and boldly marked "STAGE MANAGER." The prop department is responsible for traveling the SMs' things. Upon completion of packing, the SMs check with the head of the prop department, asking where they should pile their boxes and crates so they will not be forgotten or left behind. Also, in thinking ahead to the arrival at the new theatre, the experienced SM has learned to remind the prop person that when the SMs' boxes and crates are unloaded from the truck, they should be placed where the SMs can easily retrieve them. The SM knows these things can easily end up in some corner, buried, behind pieces of scenery or other crates.

There continues to prevail the myth that the SMs must stay at the theatre on strike night until the last piece of equipment is packed and on its way. That is the job of the TD or head carpenter. In a professional situation, the SMs are not permitted to do any work that is done by union technicians. If they stay until the strike and drag-out is completed, they will just be standing around watching. It is better for the SMs to return to their living quarters to get some sleep. More than likely the next day will be filled with the business of traveling the cast to the new city.

Before leaving the theatre that night, the SMs check with the company manager, the TD, and department heads to see if anything more is needed of them. Seldom are the SMs needed at this time. However, like the company manager, the SMs are on call for any matter that might need their attention.

Once the SMs know they are free to go, out of politeness, professional courtesy, and good politics, they go around to the house crew and local crew members to extend their thanks and appreciation and to say goodbye. This particular evening may be made of goodbyes, but chances are the SM who works a lot will be saying hello at another time.

Part Two: Traveling the Show—Cast, Crew, and All Things Technical

It is the goal of everyone in the touring company to move, set up, and have the show ready for the first scheduled performance in the new city. Almost always, the technical portion of the show travels by truck. Depending on the budget of the show, the distance to be traveled, and the type of tour, the company members may travel by bus, van, or airplane. Traveling has its degree of wear and tear on everyone. At best it is tiring. The most welcomed part is arriving at the next location, being set up in the new living quarters, and being back into the performances.

It is important to get the road crew to the next location as quickly as possible, to give them some time to sleep and be at the new theatre early to begin setup (the drag-in). In many cases the producer will fly the crew while the rest of the company travels by bus or van. If the company manager is not needed in the next town early, he or she may travel with the cast, along with the SMs. At least one if not both SMs always travels with the cast. If the company manager is present, the SM aids and shares in the duties. If not, the SM takes full responsibility.

Traveling the Cast

Either the company manager or the production office makes the arrangements and handles the business for transportation and the new living accommodations for the company. It is the SM's job to be in communication with the company manager or production office and get from them whatever information is needed to create a schedule and lay out instructions pertinent to the particular move. A lot can go wrong, even on a short trip.

A Company Traveling Information Notice

Right from the start, even before leaving home base, the SM needs to get out to all in the company some kind of information/instructions notice (see Fig. 18-1). Note the detail into which the SM has gone, creating a picture of what the company members can expect and what is expected of them, laying out what can be done and what cannot be done and procedures to be followed, and possibly answering questions before they are asked.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

LUGGAGE / BAGGAGE

Because of the length of the tour and the different climates in which we will be traveling, the producer is allowing each company member an extra suitcase or footlocker-sized piece of luggage, in addition to the two suitcases which will travel with you. This extra piece will not travel with you when traveling by plane, unless you are willing to pay the fee for the extra luggage. Instead, this extra piece will travel with the show and the prop department. Carry-on bags are separate and not counted as the two pieces of luggage allowed. Remember, your carry-ons must be small enough to place one of them under the seat in front of you and one of them above in the overhead bin.

Starting with traveling from our first city, and with every city thereafter, you will be required to have your extra piece of luggage at the theatre, no later than your arrival time for the first performance of the last day.

Once we are in the new city, this luggage will be delivered to you on the morning after the opening performance. Please pack it with things you will not need for a day or two. If you wish to retrieve this luggage sooner, you can come to the theatre on the morning of the opening performance to get it. However neither the staff nor the crew will be able to assist you, other than leading you to where the luggage is stored.

If something is not clear or if you have any questions, please see me!

Thanks,
Sarah J.

Figure 18-1 Travel information to the cast telling them some of the procedures to follow and what to expect as they embark on touring with the show.

A Time Schedule for Departing the Old Town, Arriving at the New Town

In creating the schedule for departing one town and arriving at the next, the SM must once again be detailed, specific, and clear and answer questions before they are asked. The information is posted on the callboard and probably sent out via email, and if the SM wants to be a "noodge," he or she might even hand out hard copies (see Fig. 18-2).

During the move, each group within the company is working within its own time frames, but at one point on the day of the first performance the SM must have in the schedule a time to bring everyone together to get the show

working for the first performance at the new location. In creating the different time frames for the schedule, the SM is wise to schedule more time than is actually needed. This allows for emergencies, latecomers, or unexpected problems.

The Partner or Buddy System

With a large number of company members traveling, the SM uses any devices possible to aid in keeping organized and have control. Another effective tool is to incorporate the partner or buddy system. That is, whenever the group is traveling, each person within the group is assigned and paired off with another person in the company. They are not required to sit together when traveling or be best friends. On the day of travel they call each other, checking to see that each knows the schedule and is on time. Then when on the bus or at the airport just before departure or boarding the plane, each person looks around, checking to see if their partner or buddy is present. If not, they notify the SM or company manager.

When traveling by ground transportation and traveling long distances, there will be frequent stops throughout the day. It can be time consuming for the SM to do a role call each time the members of the company load onto the transportation. The SM merely reminds the travelers to check if their buddies are present before moving on. There is, however, a flaw in this way of working: if both people of a partnership are absent from the point of departure, there is no one to report their absence. For assurance and as a failsafe device, the SM can implement this system by assigning to each pair another pair of buddies. Their only job is at the time of boarding or departure, when each person of each pair looks around, first for the individual buddy, and then for the pair to which they have been assigned. Now there are four people checking on each other. The SM has reduced the odds of no one being

Schedule	
DEPARTURE, from Chicago to Denver	
Sunday, June 27.	
All extra baggage traveling on the prop truck, must be at the theatre before the matinee performance today. REMEMBER; There is no evening performance!	
Monday, June 28.	
6:30 AM, all baggage traveling on the airlines, be in the Stranton Hotel lobby.	
Cast members not staying at the Stranton, if you choose, you can bring your luggage the night before. We have made arrangements with the concierge to lock them up in a separate closet. HOWEVER, when dropping off your luggage, personally see that it gets locked up.	
8:15 AM, bus pick-up at the Miller Apts.	
8:30 AM, bus pick-up at the Hilltop Hotel	
9:00 AM, EVERYONE , meet in Stranton lobby for head count. <i>Please be on time!!!</i> Bus departs for the airport, PROMPTLY , at 9:15am. (Have breakfast before this time. There will be no time to stop and eat.)	
11:05 AM, American Airlines Flight # 117 Departs Chicago, O'Hare Airport 11:05 AM Arrives Denver, 12:42 PM	
(REMEMBER: Time Zone Change - ONE HOUR)	
UPON ARRIVAL:	
- EVERYONE, meet at baggage claim for baggage pick-up and head count. - Bus will travel to the various hotels from the airport. - Settle in, get rest (tomorrow's call, earlier than normal)	
TUESDAY, June 29.	
12:00 PM, All ensemble performers meet in theater lobby for rehearsal with orchestra.	
1:30 PM, All Principals meet in lobby for rehearsal with orchestra. All ensemble performers meet with Dance Captain in rehearsal room, backstage, at theater.	
3:00 PM, Settle into dressing rooms and be ready for tech rehearsal.	
3:30 PM, Cue to Cue Tech with new crew.	
5:00 PM, BREAK for DINNER	
7:30 PM, HALF-HOUR CALL	
8:00 PM, OPENING PERFORMANCE, Denver	

Figure 18-2 Schedule for the cast traveling from Chicago to Denver, detailing the times they must meet and the procedures they must follow from June 27 to June 29.

present to report on the others and can work with greater assurance, efficiency, and control.

Establishing Promptness

If the SM has been with the show since its rehearsals, the SM's expectations for people being on time are well established. Being on time remains as important in traveling as it does in all parts of working in theatre. Neither the plane schedule nor the time to travel from one place to another, much less the opening performance in the new town, can be delayed or changed. At the meeting with the company just before starting out on the tour, the SM reminds everyone about being on time and adds the following as a statement of fact and policy:

Please note that any time you are required to be on the bus or be where the bus is supposed to pick you up and you are not there, that the bus will leave on the time it is scheduled and it will then be up to you to find your own way and transportation, be it to the airport or to the next city.

Having established such a firm and rigid rule, the SM must follow through on it should such a situation arise. However, the SM can build in an unknown and hidden period of grace. First of all the wise and experienced SM has scheduled the departure time at least ten to fifteen minutes earlier than what is needed, so there is a small window of time should any problems arise, like someone being a few minutes late. However, to create that period of grace, the SM will need to go through a bit of acting:

When are all seated, make your way on to the bus and do a check. If a person is missing, take out your cell phone and give the missing person a call. As the call is being connected, start leaving the bus, making your way toward the entrance of the hotel, keeping yourself in view of the cast members on the bus. Once connected, first find out if the person is okay, and then the reason for their not being at the meeting place. If the excuse is legitimate enough and if the person can get to the bus within the next five minutes, then offer that you will wait a few minutes more, but also warn that if they take any longer, the bus will leave and they will have to find their own means of transportation to get to the airport or to the next town.

Now this is where you as the SM can do a bit more acting. To create that period of grace without the rest of the cast knowing, make your way back into the hotel and to the front desk as if you need to complete some unfinished or forgotten business. If within a reasonable time the person has not arrived, then return to the bus and with a sharp order to the bus driver, say for all to hear, "We can't wait any longer. Close the door and let's go!"

Persons Traveling on Their Own

There may be some members of the company who have made arrangements with the production office or the company manager that they will bring their car on the road and travel to each city on their own. For the SM this is a bit unnerving. It puts the SM out of control and leaves open a lot more possibilities of things going wrong that could result in the performer not getting to the next site on time.

The most the SM can do is instruct these people that before leaving each city they make sure the car is in good running condition and that they be in cellular contact, reporting their progress as they travel along the way. The SM must remind the person, however, that calling does not relieve them of their responsibility for being at the new location and on time to meet the schedule.

Luggage and Baggage Handling

The SM takes as much care and concern in handling and moving luggage as he or she does for the members of the company. For the people traveling, the contents of their suitcases are their life support—the necessities and comforts for living. For performers out on the road, the suitcase is their home away from home—the items that make them feel at home no matter where they hang their hats and set out their makeup cases.

Tagging Each Piece of Luggage

All luggage and carry-on pieces must be clearly and identifiably marked and tagged so if a piece is separated from the group it can be quickly recovered. The production company often provides tags or stickers with the name of the show. In addition, the SM sees that each piece is marked with the person's name and three contact phone numbers: the SM's cell phone, the production office, and the company manager's cell phone number. The SM should instruct the company members not to put their home address or city. It is best to have the luggage remain where it was found. This allows greater control in retrieving it and cuts down on the time the lost piece is separated from its owner. If the SM provides the tags to the company members, it is most helpful at the baggage claim to have them in a bright fluorescent color.

Baggage Check-In

When traveling with a large company there can be well over a hundred pieces of luggage. Whether traveling by ground transportation or by air, the SM leaves all people responsible for their own luggage. It is their job to see that their pieces get loaded on the bus or truck. If they are traveling by air, they continue to be responsible for their pieces once they are at the air terminal, seeing that each piece gets properly tagged with the correct destination information and is sent off to be loaded on the plane.

Once again the SM facilitates and oversees—seeing that all do their part and that the bags get safely loaded on the ground transportation and none get left behind. If the company is traveling by air, at the air terminal the SM has the luggage unloaded at curbside and checks to see if the luggage can be checked in at this point. If it can, the individual bags are tagged as a group, but each person is still responsible to see that their bags are properly tagged and sent off. As a double check, the SM also keeps an eye out, seeing that the porters tag the bags with the correct destination and send the bags off to be loaded on the plane. If the bags must be processed inside and cannot be checked in as a group, the SM directs the group to the inside and sees that each person checks in his or her own bags.

Baggage Claim

When at the baggage claim in the new city, each person in the company continues to be responsible for retrieving their own luggage. This is when the colorful tags help as the different pieces come around on the conveyor belt. Meanwhile, one SM seeks out several porters with carts to help move the luggage, while the other SM checks and makes contact with the drivers of the ground transportation. Often, the drivers are at the baggage claim and make themselves known. After the luggage is retrieved and a head count is taken, the SM has the porters take the baggage to the ground transportation vehicles that take the company members to their new living quarters. Don't forget to tip the porters.

Part Three: Settling into the New Town and Venue

This is the last and final part in the cycle of touring a show: settling into the new town and venue, getting the performers settled into their new living quarters, getting the show technically set up in the new venue, and making the show ready for the first performance.

On-the-Road Living

When arriving in each new town, the first thing to be done is for all to get situated and set up in their new living quarters—the SM, too, even before going to the theatre to begin working at the new venue. Between the time of arrival in a new place and the opening performance, everyone will be putting in a long day at the theatre. At the end of such a day, everyone should be able to return to the lodgings to rest, without first having to unpack and settle in.

Unfortunately, often times the show crew members choose to go directly to the theatre and will settle into their living quarters at the end of the day.

Making Yourself at Home

An important key to living on the road is to not live out of the suitcase—unpack, especially when living in a hotel or motel room. Even if it is for only a week, use the drawer space, hang things in the closet, set toilet articles out on the counter, create a kitchen area for snacks, set up your music, move the TV for best viewing, and set up the desk for your books, writing material, and laptop. In fact, after the suitcases have been emptied, put them away. As for split-week engagements or one-night stands, there is no choice but to live out of the suitcase. Even then, living can be made tolerable and convenient by packing neatly and putting things in departmental groups. Then in a matter of a few minutes you can place your luggage on countertops and about the room.

Living Accommodations

Living accommodations, though monitored and regulated by Equity, vary greatly. Some places might be upscale and swanky, while others, though nice, are very basic. Most will be at hotels or motels, usually single rooms, but if they are available and members of the company choose, they can share an apartment. At times, the entire company will stay in one establishment, and at other times they might be split up, living in two or three different places. Information for living accommodations usually is posted on the callboard several weeks in advance of each city, allowing enough time for the cast members to sign up and for the company manager or production office to make the arrangements and confirm the reservations. Once the company gets to each city, it is up to the company manager or SM to keep track of who is staying where and create a list of room numbers, along with the phone number for the front desk and possibly the manager's office.

The Temporary Callboard

From the start of the tour, the SM establishes with the company members that for the first few days at each new city, a temporary callboard will be set up in the lobby or entrance area to the living accommodations. This board will be whatever the hotel can provide and will contain only the most immediate information needed for the cast. The company members are responsible for checking this board until the official callboard is set up in the theatre and everyone is settled in and performing.

The New Performance Site

Sometimes the theatre is located just around the corner or a few blocks away from the living accommodations. Other times it may require transportation to get there. By Equity rule, the producer must provide transportation if the theatre is over a certain distance from where the cast members are living. The producer may pay for the use of public transportation in the city or may provide a bus or van that will pick up the company members each day. In a big-budget show, the SMs may be fortunate to have a car at their disposal, which is for staff use and has been rented by the company.

Also, each theatre will be unique. Some will be brand new with state-of-the-art equipment and spacious dressing rooms for individuals as well as ensemble performers. Others may be historical landmarks, with a raked stage, sumptuous decor, and dressing rooms going up three or four flights of stairs. There will be one or two theatres that are just downright old and almost unusable, forcing everyone in the company to do what they can to set up the show and live in the backstage space.

The Show Crew, House Crew, and Local Crew

We have already met the ***show crew***—the heads of the different technical departments that travel with the show, also called the ***roadies***. When the show arrives at a performance site, the show crew meets up with the ***house crew***—the stage technicians hired by the performance site to head the technical departments at their theatre. These two groups, the show crew and the house crew, join forces to set up the show, work the performances, and strike the show at the end of its run in that particular city. However, with most shows the show crew and the house crew are not enough to do the job. More stage technicians are needed. It would be extremely costly for the producer to travel a full crew. Instead, the additional crew members are picked up in each town—the ***local crew***. The producer’s office, tour manager, company manager, or TD handles this business, making the arrangements for the additional crew members through the IATSE office in each town. Only in rare instances does the SM have anything to do with this work.

For the most part, stage crews are the same the country over. Only the accents or colloquial expressions may differ. They are glad to have the show in town and glad for the work. Time permitting, they will guide the company members to some of their landmarks and local color and offer their brand of hospitality.

A Mini-Tech

Yes, it is back into technical rehearsals! To one degree or another, everyone traveling with the show repeats the work done in technical rehearsals when the show was first being put together. The difference is, the technical kinks have been worked out and everyone is more experienced in the setup. It is now a matter of working with the new crew, teaching them what to do during performance, and resolving any problems that might come up in putting the show in this particular venue. With the transition time being so short from one city to the next, the pressure and urgency in this mini-tech can be great, and the hours for the crew and SM just as long as in the original techs.

Setting up at a New Performance Site

The work procedure for the SM in setting up at the new theatre is just as it was laid out and described in Chapter 15 on technical rehearsals. For review, this might be a good time to turn back and scan that part of the chapter, but the following is a checklist of the things the SM must do:

- Meet the local house crew and house person.
- Start set-up of the SM’s console.
- Tour the theatre.
- Talk to the people working the front of the house, set up the Equity cast board in the lobby, and discuss the procedure to be followed to begin each performance.
- From halfway down into the middle of the audience, walk across the audience from side to side checking sight lines, and do the same positioning yourself closer to the stage.
- Set up the SM’s office, be it in a space for that purpose or in some dressing room backstage—if nothing is available, then where the console is located.
- Assign dressing rooms (keys and nameplates, and make a schematic drawing of the room assignments).
- Set up the callboard.
- Post directional signs (if needed).
- Check to see that quick-change areas are set up.
- Post show rundowns throughout the backstage areas.
- Lay in white tape backstage for sight lines and places where it is needed for safety.

Putting It Together

On the afternoon of the performance, the SM uses this time to once again put the show together. If the show is technically simple, the SM has a *dry tech* to teach the new members of the crew the show. If the show is technically difficult or a musical, the SM will more than likely have a cue-to-cue tech with the cast and crew.

► **The Cast:** With each new performance site, the cast needs time onstage. With a musical or a show with difficult blocking, the performers need to go over the spacing and sight lines for the new stage. They may need to run certain

scenes and most definitely one or two of the dance numbers. They will also need to do a sound check.

► **The Orchestra:** If the show is a musical, the producer will more than likely bring with the show only the conductor or music director and certain key musicians: the assistant conductor, who usually is the lead keyboard person; maybe a base player, a trumpet player, or lead violinist if their particular instrument is important to the score; more than likely a drummer; and if the show requires, a percussionist. The rest of the musicians are picked up locally. Again, the production office, the company manager, or the conductor handles this business and makes the arrangements with the local musicians' union.

The orchestra is brought in on the day of the performance. Sometimes they work in the orchestra pit while the conductor runs them through the music. Other times, they will work in the morning in some other place and come to the theatre in the late afternoon to work in the pit, working with the cast and doing a sound check.

► **Making Changes:** Each new performance site brings its own set of problems—some simple, some more complex, each affecting the show in some way. Sometimes it means cutting down the set or changing blocking, perhaps adding or eliminating cues. Remember, the TD is responsible for handling all technical problems and changes. The TD advises and apprises the SM of the changes, while the SM envisions how the changes might affect the show. The SM, along with the dance captain (if the show is a musical), will make whatever changes are needed on the stage with the actors.

Another Opening

No matter how many opening performances the company goes through while touring a show, each takes on an excitement similar to the first opening performance. The excitement is often generated by the presence of the local press, dignitaries, and special guests, perhaps people dressed in formal wear, and possibly a gala gathering after the performance at which the cast becomes the honored guests. For the SM, this opening performance excitement or keyed-up feeling may be due more to the fact that the local crew is new to the show and has had very little time to learn their parts.

The ASM

For the first two or three performances in a new city with a new crew, the PSM calls the cues to the show while the ASM remains free backstage to move about and troubleshoot any problems that might occur during the performance.

Additional Work for the Touring SM

Spike Marks and Taping

Practically every show has spike marks to which the SM must attend at each new performance site. They might be to mark the placement of a set unit, to tell the prop department where to put a piece of furniture, or to mark the center of a special light where an actor must stand. If there are only a few spike marks, as in a small straight play, the SM may have the spike mark locations committed to memory. If there are many, as in a musical, the SM should have them noted on a set of the personal floor plans that were created for the show, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy."

Many shows today, especially musicals, travel with their own floors. With *automation* being an important part of the scenery change, these floors are a must for they house all the mechanism that enables the scenery pieces to glide on and off stage. For the purpose of traveling and easy installment at each theatre, the flooring is made in four-by-eight-foot sections, and the sections are numbered. When the flooring is taken up at one performance site, the spike marks and dance/blocking numbers along the edge of the apron remain and travel with the different sections. When the floor is installed in its numerical order at the new theatre, the spike marks and dance/blocking numbers are in

place. It is then the SM's job to see if the marks are suitable for the particular house in which the show is now going to perform. If they are not, the SM changes them.

Installing these decks can take the good part of a day, so as time-saver, oftentimes a second deck is carried with the show. While the show is in its last week at one performance site, the second deck is sent ahead to the next performance site and installed so there is no delay in dragging in the set when the scenery arrives at the new site.

Additional Conversation with the Front of the House

During the time the SM meets and talks with the house manager and maybe even meets those in charge of the box office, the SM needs to check on performance times and matinee days. The SM should ask to see a copy of the playbill the theatre will be giving to its patrons, and take a stroll out front to check the marquee for names, spelling, and billing. The company manager usually does this business, but if there is no company manager, it is important that the SM take up the slack. In addition, the SM will need to talk with the box office about cashing checks for the company members, how to handle the use of house seats, and complementary seats.

The SM may also have to locate the administrative offices for the theatre. If the show is not traveling with its own copy machine, the SM will need to make arrangements to use the theatre's machine, offering to pay for whatever copies are made. As a matter of being thorough and efficient, the SM enters into his or her smart phone the phone numbers of the box office and the house manager.

Focusing the Show Lights—a Job for the ASM

Another job an SM might be required to do while out on the road is to assist the lighting department in focusing the lights at each new venue. More than likely the ASM is assigned this job. Once the lighting instruments are hung, the lighting department then needs to adjust each lighting instrument to shine on the stage as dictated by the lighting design and plot. This job requires two people—one who climbs up to each lighting instrument to adjust the lamp, and one who stands on the stage in the center of where the light is to shine. Actually, with the use of *moving lights*, the person standing on deck has become lessened or nonexistent. As long as the lighting instrument is hung according to the light plot, whatever focusing is needed can be done remotely by computer adjustment.

But at times when the lights need to be manually focused and adjusted, and the ASM is called upon to assist, then this is where the old way of doing things comes into play, and this is the time when the ASM must reach into the recesses of his or her academic training and bring to surface how things were done in less technological times.

As the lighting technician above moves the lamp into position, the ASM on the deck looks up into the light, telling the technician to stop when the brightest part of the light (the hot spot) is shining in his or her eyes. The technician then locks the lamp into place, shutters off the light to fill the area, and then moves the barn doors into place to prevent the spill of light into other areas. Last, the lighting technician checks to see that the safety chain or safety line is securely in place, and moves on to the next lighting instrument.

This is a time-consuming job for the SMs and is work in addition to all that must be done when moving into a new facility. SMs must learn to budget their time. The SM should always be working ahead of the time that something should be done. This allows for those pesky, unexpected things that always come to surface.

Spotlight Cues

In shows where there are many spotlight cues and more than one spotlight is used, the assistant to the head electrician traveling with the show usually doubles as the head spotlight operator. The assistant finishes helping in setting up the lights on the stage and then retires to the spotlight booth with the new operators, who have been hired as part of the local crew. The assistant teaches the new operators the cues and in performance calls the cues.

In the more economical, tightly budgeted touring shows, or in shows where the SM is required to call all spotlight cues during the performance, the SM is given the dubious honor of teaching the new spotlight operators their cues. With the transition time from one city to the next as short as it usually is, the SM seldom has enough time to go over all cues with the new operators and instead gives them a crash course. The SM explains the more difficult cues, familiarizes them with how the cues will be called, and assures them that the other cues are easy and that the SM will

talk them through those cues during the performance. They will also have a chance in the mini-tech to become a little more familiar with the show.

Local Actors

With some touring shows local actors are hired as extras or to play small roles. In most cases the preliminary work of finding and hiring these actors has been done by the production office, tour manager, or company manager. However, once the company gets in town and while the show is being set up, it is the SM's job to rehearse these new people and work them into the show. With a musical show, the SM has the help of the dance captain and the music director or conductor. Even with their assistance, this becomes additional work for the SM and consumes time in a schedule already filled with things to do.

An SM Myth

It is generally believed that when a show is planning to go out as a touring show, the SM is responsible for making cuts or alterations to the technical part of the show to make the show easier to travel and set up at the different venues. In a professional company, the producer, designers, director, and technical director traveling with the show are in charge of making changes. The SM may sit in on their meetings and may make suggestions, but for the most part changes are dictated to the SM. Once the changes have been made, the SM returns to the charts, plots, plans, lists, and cueing script, revising them to reflect the touring show.

The SM's Time of Supreme Authority

We said in Chapter 17, "Run of the Show," that although the position and authority of the producer and director are ever present and omnipotent, once the show gets into its run and the producer and director have gone on to other things, the company manager, the tour manager, and the SM become the lead positions of authority. While out on the road, although the producer and director are but a phone call, email, or text away, the company manager, tour manager, and SM become even more supreme in their authority.

Living Together

When the show was rehearsing and playing at home base, there were many days in which everyone spent at least nine hours together. For the most part, everyone was on their best professional behavior and some of their more annoying habits or ways of living were either not as prominent or did not have the opportunity to display themselves. Now that everyone is together, traveling, living, working, and socializing throughout every day, people become more revealing, and there is greater chance for differences and possible conflict. In addition, people out on the road will sometimes act in ways they normally do not act when at their home base. Things that were acceptable or of little concern to them at home sometimes become more important while on the road. Some may miss being at home, or even resent being away. Others find a new freedom and sometimes act in ways that are different, unbecoming, unprofessional, or unacceptable.

The more extreme cases are easy for the SM to identify and deal with. It is the subtle ones, in which a person begins to complain a little more, becomes a little more demanding, or is agitated and irritable, that are difficult to deal with. None of these things are excuses or justification for poor or unprofessional behavior, but the SM who is aware of and understands how being on the road can affect people can more effectively serve and deal with the affected company members.

The Performers

The tone or tenor of the company will change once a show gets on the road. Most times the change is gradual and subtle, with little shifts in relationships. At first, being on the road is fun, like a holiday—the honeymoon period. Gradually, the company members gravitate to each other, forming little groups, often pairing up as friends, lovers, companions, or for purely economic reasons. The romanticized view of being on the road with a show begins to wear thin, while the more strident difficulties of traveling and individual personalities become pronounced. As in life, sometimes the relationships created last the entire tour and beyond. Sometimes the relationships end when the tour ends. For others, a relationship may end abruptly at any time during the tour. Most times the relationship ends quietly, but other times it can be drawn out and cause a disturbance in the company.

During the time the relationships are developing and flourishing the SM watches quietly. In an effort to keep the company in a positive light, the SM, either through request or through observations, weaves these relationships into the fabric of the company. The SM sees that certain individuals travel together, sit at the same banquet table, are assigned to the same dressing room, or puts their names together to share the same living quarters. When breakups or separations occur, the SM acts quickly and quietly, making changes and arrangements not only for the general tenor of the company but for the show as well.

The Crew

The individuals of the crew appear to be the more seasoned and experienced in traveling with a show and living on the road. They demand equal consideration and care but require much less maintenance from the SM or company manager. They seem to be more accepting of the hardships, complain less, carry less baggage, and require fewer gadgets and creature comforts to make them happy.

Cast and Crew

In other parts of this book we have discussed the relationship, dynamics, and separation that can exist between the cast and crew members due to the nature of their jobs. If the cast and crew are very different, perhaps incompatible on many levels, the relationship can take a turn and become strained. Being on the road can magnify matters. During the times when the show is moving from one city to the next, the crew becomes separated from the cast, being totally consumed with striking, traveling, and setting up the show, with little time to eat, sleep, and do personal hygiene. The cast, on the other hand, has only to travel to the next place, set up in their new living quarters, perhaps explore the local neighborhood, and be ready to rehearse on the afternoon of the day of the opening performance. If both groups are not aware of the other's work, such a working situation can put more strain on the relationship. If the engagements in each town are short and the transition time between one city and the next is tight, the cast and crew have even less time together.

Despite the gulf and drawbacks, most cast and crew members overcome their differences, oftentimes striking up friendly and sometimes personal relationships. From time to time an SM will have a cast and crew who remain apart and separate despite any effort to bridge the gap. The reassuring part of such a relationship is that it never affects the performance. The atmosphere backstage, however, can be sterile. The SM will continually get complaints from each group about the other. An SM cannot prevent such a relationship from taking place but can deal with each group to keep things from escalating and perhaps affecting the show.

The reverse of a troubled relationship between the cast and crew, though welcomed, can create a new set of problems for the SM. They are now too friendly and sometime during a performance may forget about the show and become focused more on fun and good conversation.

The SM

The SM also feels and suffers all the highs and lows of touring the other company members experience. With each tour the SM should get better at stabilizing these personal feelings, living less at the extremes and more in the middle.

The SM's working relationships with the crew, technical heads, and assistants remain the same whether out on the road or at home. While out on the road, the SM needs to give more care and attention to the company and more specifically to the actors than would be normal when performing at the home base. The SM needs to be even more accessible, listening to the complaints, problems, and concerns of the individuals no matter how small or insignificant they might appear. The SM takes an active part in helping to resolve situations and problems that could affect the show or company, but at the same time is careful not to become a caretaker. The SM does not take away an individual's responsibility to be an adult, a professional, and in charge of his or her own life and actions. Some people want a caretaker or parent figure and will seek out anyone in the company who in the least way displays an inclination toward this kind of a relationship.

It is disheartening and destructive to the company and to the show to have a group of actors, stage technicians, and staff members who can't wait for the tour to end. This feeling is infectious and highly contagious. All that is needed is for one or two people to become afflicted and it can spread. It is also foolish for the SM to think that the company will remain joyous and harmonious, free from conflict and strife. The SM needs to remain alert in the good times as well as the bad. The SM should see that as the different groups or couples form they do not operate to the exclusion of others or to the company as a whole. The SM must also be alert and take care not to get pulled into the different factions and special interest groups. The SM takes everyone's interest into consideration.

The Performance on the Road

In all the time a show spends out on the road, the performance is least changed or affected. Only in extreme cases will actors take their problems out on the stage and let it affect their performance. Once the show has been tailored to travel, the show remains virtually the same. This is due in part to everyone being professional and the work the SM does to maintain the performance and artistic integrity. It is also due to the fact that once the scenery and props are in place, the audience is seated, and the lights on the stage come up, the real world momentarily disappears, while the imaginary world of the theatre takes over.

The Professional Experience

The following diary account was a photocopy left on my console while I was traveling on the road with a show. To this day I do not know who left it there. No one ever came forward to ask, "Did you read the article I left you?" No one responded when I thanked the person over the PA system. This diary account, though written in a lighthearted spirit, conveys what an SM can experience in the course of a day while out on the road.

The article had been copied directly from a newsletter published by the Stage Manager's Association in New York. At the bottom of the first page, separated from the text of the article, was the following information: Anne Sullivan was the recipient of the second annual Del Hughes Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Art of Stage Management.

Shamefully, I was not aware of this award until I went on the Internet. The Del Hughes Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in the Art of Stage Management is regarded throughout the theatrical community as the crowning achievement of a stage manager's career. It pleases me to see that SMs are recognized and acknowledged, for outside of theatre it is a silent job—a job that always needs explanation when told to a civilian.

As I read the article Anne wrote, I chuckled, laughed out loud, and one or two times even cried out, "Oh! Ain't that the truth!" I quickly bonded with Anne. It was as if she had walked in my shoes and I in hers. It was also a relief to hear another SM make the same comments, have the same complaints, and express the same feelings that I had. Being an SM is sometimes an isolating experience; as things happen with a show, there is only you and your assistant. There are times when you need to have the view and opinion of another SM and share your experiences.

As you read through the article, notice the change in times from back then to today. Notice the big and important phone problems and reference to the lighting board, which I am sure was either the one installed backstage or the “portable” ones brought in when more dimmers were needed for the particular show. Also the mention of “pit singers” and their problems, which today has become a thing of the past because now if pit singers are wanted, the ensemble performers are simply set up with wireless microphones, stand backstage, and follow the conductor’s lead as they watch on a monitor. Here is the article:

On the Road with a Major Musical, by Anne Sullivan

- **Monday, 6:35 am:** Arrive Nigends City via (bless the Company Manager) limousine after 2 1/2-hour ride from Nadaville. Dropped at Hotel Lataque. Given key to small dark room smelling of cigarette smoke. Windows won’t open. Dog starts coughing. Complain to front desk. Told to take it or leave; choicer selection of rooms might occur after 2 pm. Breakfast in coffee shoppe: bacon, scrambled eggs, toast, tea.
- **7:40 am:** Walk to theatre carrying heavy briefcase and urging sleepy dog along. Can’t find stage door. Look for trucks. Can’t find trucks. Have a sudden and piercing fear that I am in wrong city. See one truck skidding along icy street. Finally sight all trucks except one—doubtless truck with deck and hanging goods. Follow truck to circular building without doors. Walk all around building. Dog shivering. Briefcase growing leaden. Tears freeze on face.
- **7:58 am:** Still can’t find stage door. Enter by loading door. Boost dog and briefcase up. See stage. Stage left looks enormous. Stage right which is prompt side barely exists. Look at house. Cavernous. Balcony rail fully 90 miles away. No rational position for box booms. Seats taken out for sound man all the way over audience lift where he will be able to see little of second act. Orchestra pit presumably works on elevator. Is all the way down and completely out of sight now. Greet Advance Carpenter and Advance Electrician. Summon up big smiles and handshake as have not seen them for whole week. Advance Elec. says must use house fronts run off house boards. Ask where office is and if phones are in. Both look embarrassed and introduce House Carpenter who almost breaks hand with his shake. Ask who is House Propman. Old man drinking coffee in corner pointed out. Introduce self and dog. Ask where dressing rooms are and if phones in. Follow him on tour of dressing rooms. Find office. Phone is in. Pick it up. Phone not working. Breakfast for our crew provided by promoter: eat Danish and wash down with canned o.j.
- **8:15 am:** Loading doors opened and unloading starts. Arctic wind fills backstage. Settle dog on packing blanket in office and go around all dressing rooms with assistants, Tillie and Spike. Tillie actually located stage door. Figure out assignment of dressing rooms, wardrobe room, hair room, and offstage quick change rooms. Note washer and dryer have been rented by theatre and hooked up. Only choice for pit singers is damp and dismal location in basement. Locate Company Manager’s office. Check their phone. Doesn’t work. Find place where orchestra rehearses. See our Propman and tell him where orchestra rehearses and where wardrobe and offices located. Show Sound Man pit singers’ hole and dressing rooms.
- **9:05 am:** Stop on stage on way out front. Trucks are still unloading. Stage right totally covered up by scenery and crates. Electricians hanging upstage pipes. Carpenters screwing in deck downstage. Much shouting from fly floor as local flyman evidently deaf. Head out front. Very dark. Follow trail of old popcorn to front of house. Box office closed. Find cleaner and ask location of House Manager’s office. Go upstairs. House Manager not in but secretary is. Ask about phones. She says phone man coming. When? Soon. Ask for list of doctors. Coming soon. Find out where Xerox machine is. Ask for mail.
- **9:46 am:** Check to see that musical instruments and music trunk on way to rehearsal room. Deck is down. Carpenters hanging downstage. Trucks still unloading. Stage left now filling up with crates. Musicians trickling in. Local wardrobe people arrive for 10 o’clock call. Tell them call is at 1 pm. Says so right on Yellow Card. Walk dog. Spike goes to orchestra rehearsal to make sure it starts without problems.
- **10:20 am:** Trucks all unloaded and doors closed. Take off parka. Coffee and donuts served to crew. Have chocolate-covered donut and tea. Read mail. Try not to be distressed by bills which haven’t caught up. Tillie and Spike sort mail and distribute to our crew, put up name signs on dressing room doors, type out dressing room list with copies for stage door person, wardrobe, and hair. Find House Electrician and ask how he wants cue sheets for fronts written up. Start writing according to his specifications.

► **11:12 am:** House Manager appears backstage. Very pleasant. Complain to him about phones. Says he will call phone company again. Give him sheet of paper with times of acts, late seating policy. Give him duplicate for Head Usher. Tell him we take 15 minute intermission. He wants 20 minutes for bar business. Compromise on 17 minutes. Discuss starting times and who rings bells. He says they always start promptly at 8. Bug him about doctor list. Ask about restaurants close to theatre and if anything open after show. Nothing is. Check stage again. See uneaten sugar donut. Eat it. Tillie and Spike unpack office and set it up. Wardrobe Supervisor arrives. Show him dressing rooms and washer and dryer. He nods sourly.

► **11:56 am:** Phone man arrives. Walk dog. Feed dog. Go to McDonald's with Tillie and Spike. Have Big Mac, French fries, choc. shake.

► **1:01 pm:** Return to theatre. Phones functioning. Advance Electrician talking to infant daughter on ours. Advance Carpenter smoking large cigar in office. Dog coughing. Work resumes on stage. Units being put together. Electricians hang downstage pipes. Spike shops for stationery and first aid supplies, peanuts and tea. Tillie setting up callboard and posting dressing room list, Stage Managers' and Company Managers' phone numbers, doctor list Write out rehearsal schedule for week and post.

► **2:12 pm:** Send Tillie to hotel to try and change all our rooms. Discover office phone numbers completely different from those given out. Call N.Y. office with new numbers. Type up stage manager reports for last week.

► **2:49 pm:** Phone rings. Equity man wanting to know why cannot give vacation to chorus girl from company who is crying in his office. Explain that two other people already on vacation that week. Equity man not satisfied. Says she's crying. Tell Equity man I can cry louder.

► **2:56 pm:** Phone rings. It's Star wanting phone number of doctor as feeling horrible. Get flyfloor cue-sheets and write-in changes for this theatre. Also write changes in prompt book.

► **3:06 pm:** Bandage finger of local grip who bleeds over typed SM reports.

► **3:15 pm:** Coffee and donuts again for crew. Eat cinnamon donut. Company managers arrive with tales of travel with cast. Commiserate and show them to their office.

► **4:37 pm:** Electrician wants to know where SM desk is going. Go out and look at stage right. Though now cleared of crates still no room anywhere. Call Advance Carpenter. Ask him through clenched teeth where am I supposed to be. Advance Carpenter smiles sadly and shakes head and suggests I cue show from out front. No way. Advance Carpenter says I can't use desk and that Electrician will have to make up board with cue lights. Electrician swears. Have desk moved to office. Walk dog to calm rage. Feed dog. Chomp on peanuts that Spike has returned with. Wardrobe Supervisor bursts into office with news that washer has overflowed. Go out front to tell House Manager who swears.

► **5:25 pm:** Cleaners appear backstage with mops for flood already mopped up by dressers.

► **6:00 pm:** Eat dinner at Holiday Inn with Tillie and Spike. Have overdone and overpriced filet mignon, baked potato, salad, pie.

► **6:59 pm:** Return to theatre. Freezing. All heat off. House Carpenter laughs and says it is practice of management. Look for House Manager. His office locked. Get his number from ancient Propman who makes me swear not to reveal source. Call House Mgr. and order heat turned on. House Mgr. no longer pleasant. Go out on stage and start making focusing marks with chalk. Mark every 2 feet left and right and every foot going U.S. from portal line. Electrician brings walkie-talkie and asks if am ready to focus. Say yes and focus fronts with local electricians who are very good. Nine instruments lampless but all plugged correctly so must count blessings. Sound man plays Willie Nelson loudly to test speakers.

► **9:33 pm:** Break for tea and three Pepperidge Farm cookies scrounged by Tillie. Spike changes trunk list after 3 actors call to report change of hotels, gives list to our Propman and then walks dog.

► **10:48 pm:** Initiate discussions with our crew heads on whether to work until midnight or stop at 11 because all so tired. Everything in good shape so decide to stop at 11.

► **11:01 pm:** Walk to hotel. Tillie has changed me to larger room with real air. Unpack clock, tea, oatmeal cookies, mug and dog food and clean shirt for tomorrow. Bed.

► **Tuesday, 6:30 am:** Wake. Wonder where am, take shower, make tea, eat oatmeal cookies. Feed dog.

► **7:45 am:** Walk to theatre. Enter victoriously by stage door. Theatre nice and warm.

► **8:02 am:** Start focusing pipes and booms. Local truck delivering trunks.

► **10:09 am:** Coffee and donuts for crew. Eat glazed donut. Ask Tillie to phone star at 11 and ask about his health. Continue focusing. Wardrobe Supervisor says washer not fixed yet and how is he to do laundry. Ask Spike to bug House Manager and also to inform our Company Mgr. Tillie goes over SM cue lights with electrician.

► **11:29 am:** Have to replug 8th pipe. Walk dog. Phone rings. Local police. Someone has reported seeing a trunk fall off a truck on Main Street. Tell Spike, who turns pale and rushes out. Tillie says Star hoarse and feverish but will go on.

► **12:00 noon:** Lunch. McDonald's. Repeat yesterday. Sound department making pink noise on stage.

► **12:46 pm:** Return to theatre. Ask Wardrobe Supr. if washer functioning. Answer yes but dryer doesn't heat properly. Ask Tillie to follow up with House Manager. Spike goes to Xerox spec sheets for next 3 towns turned in by Advance men. Makes enough copies for all crew heads. Tillie put cast sign out front and sticks names in alphabetical order. Sound men putting up stage speakers, moved #1 booms.

► **1:10 pm:** Finish focusing 8th pipe and specials. Refocus #1 booms.

► **2:22 pm:** Set winch limits with Winch Man. Wardrobe department setting up quick change offstage.

► **2:24 pm:** Prop department moves refractory table and 5 chairs into space set up by wardrobe dept. Loud altercation into which Tillie steps. Compromise agreed upon and hated by both departments.

► **3:09 pm:** Start getting ready for Tech rehearsal. Ask Tillie and Spike if all actors who didn't travel with the company have called to check in. All accounted for except Principal Deputy. Spike calls Principal Deputy who is in hotel room and gives sass.

► **3:28 pm:** Tech rehearsal begins. Do all flyfloor cues and winch setups. Look at light cues for each set. DSR winch grazes own legs whenever goes by. Tell Advance Carpenter. Tell Carpenter. Tell House Carpenter. Finally devise dance movement to avoid being hit by winch.

► **3:58 pm:** Orchestra starts to move into pit. Discover pit elevator won't work. Our electrician fixes. Raging Wardrobe Supervisor comes on stage. Washer overflowed again. Tillie leads him off.

► **4:07 pm:** Orchestra starts to play. Loudly. Territorial dispute S.L. between Props, Carpenters, and Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor. Spike settles by screaming louder than any of them. Tech. rehearsal continues.

► **4:48 pm:** Tech. rehearsal ends. Ask to see act curtain.

► **5:00 pm:** Crew knocks off. Orchestra plays on loudly. Walk crossover. Tillie puts up signs with arrows. Check for hazards. Check set for hazards. Spike walks all over deck and marks screws coming up. Propman mops deck. Spike remarks loose screws. Walk dog. Gather thought about what to tell actors. Tillie and Spike test paging system from each dressing room. Catch up on catastrophes. Spike goes to McDonald's for food for all SMs. Go over problems with Dance Captain. Eat Big Mac, fries, choc. shake.

► **5:59 pm:** Orchestra stops. Actors start arriving. Can't find dressing room, stage, offices, anything. Tillie and Spike lead them around. Chat with Star who can only whisper.

► **6:30 pm:** All actors here. Yell at Principal Deputy for not reporting arrival. Call actors on stage. Show them x-over and quick change areas, tell them curtain is guillotine and works slowly, remind to check all costumes and props and let us know any change of address. Show pit singers their hole. Dance Captain plays piano and eats sandwich at same time. Sound man gets levels on wireless mics with principals. Also levels on pit singers' mikes. Actors rehearse quick changes with local dressers.

► **6:43 pm:** Singers' Deputy complains about safe and sanitary conditions in pit singers' hole. Wardrobe Supervisor complains that actor spoke sharply to local dresser. Hairdresser complains that ingénue not ready for appointment. Head Usher wants to know times of each act. Hand him another copy of sheet given to House Manager. Sound man complains one pit singer too close to mike. Male pit singer complains that female pit singer using perfume and he can't sing under such circumstances. Sniff female pit singer. Found to be clear of perfume and only smelling of soap. Star complains that dressing room too hot. Actor who changed hotel and told no one complains he didn't receive trunk. Tell Spike.

► **7:30 pm:** Spike calls half-hour, collects valuables. Crew returns, brings act curtain in, fixes screws on deck, rehearses fly cues involving actors. Check cue lights and all stations on headset again. Chorus dancer brings piece of birthday cake. Eat it. Crew makes opening setup.

► **8:00 pm:** Call places. Send conductor to pit. Conductor calls to say pit lights all out. House electrician unable to be found anywhere. Our electrician fixes pit lights. House Manager comes back and says hold curtain 20 minutes. Promoter's wife and two cousins and their wives materialize stage left. Tillie ejects them.

► **8:08 pm:** House lights out and curtain up. Say Hail Mary. Get through show without flyfloor falling or hurting anyone. Audience laughs in right places. Only hit by winch 3 times. No bad opening night.

► **10:28 pm:** Final curtain in. Say thank you to crew. Youngest dancer says thank you for good show. Producer comes back with 4 pages of notes. Promoter comes back with complaint about harsh treatment given his relations.

► **11:16 pm:** Go to party. Only place in town to eat. Wonder why party dress getting tight.

► **1:54 am:** Walk dog. Bed. Don't set alarm.

Touring Magic Show

In another part of my SMing life, both my wife and I traveled with a magic show filled with different magician acts and one master magician, who was the producer and star of the show, my wife being one of his assistants and me the SM. Well, it was more than being an SM. This was indeed a professional show traveling to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and parts of Europe. It was not, however, under the auspicious of Equity, so a lot more was asked of me and expected. I did not mind because it paid well, afforded me and my wife to be together and travel together for extended times, and also gave me the opportunity to flex my theatrical muscles in areas I did not or could not do while working union stage shows.

Throughout this book I have said time and time again that the "professional" SM does not do any of the work that is done in the different technical departments. So other than feeding all technical departments information, in professional Equity productions, the SM does not set light cues, plot out scene changes, track microphones, set the cues for sound, or lay out the work of the wardrobe department. Well, throw all that out of the window, because the very things I said a "professional" SM does not do were the things I had to do in this job. You have already seen in Chapter 6, "Hard Copy," Figures 6-21, 6-22, and 6-23, the sound lists I had to create for the touring show, "It Had to Be You."

To create the picture in broader strokes than what Anne Sullivan wrote above, let me lay out what my day was like in this touring magic show:

We would leave one town early in the morning. The travel time could be as long as eight hours or as short at two or three. If two or three hours, we (the two roadies who traveled with us, myself, and the producer/star who was also the tour manager) would be thrilled because that meant our day would be shorter and we would get to our rooms at a reasonable hour.

This was a fast and furious experience. Upon arrival in the new town, while the performers went to their hotel or motel, the rest of us would go directly to the theatre. We had arranged in advance for the house crew and local crew to be there for our arrival. We'd meet and greet, exchanging niceties, do a tour of the venue, including the front of the house, and then load-in (drag-in) all the magic props, which were large trunks and cases of illusions.

The Black Drapes

While the load-in was being done, I was off with the house technical director making sure that the entire stage was set with the *black drapes*, which had been specified, in no uncertain terms, in the packet of information that had been sent out to each venue. These curtains were a necessity for some of the magicians in the show to perform their *black art* trickery. Sometimes upon arrival, instead of having hung the black curtains that the house had said they had, the crew would have left up their deepest blue curtains, thinking they could get away with them because those were the curtains that were already up from a previous show. Of course we'd balk, but if the truth were known, we could get away with using them if we were *very careful* not to have any light spill on them.

If, however, the house crew had up their deepest gray drapes and tried to sell us on them, we'd have to stand our ground and say that if the black drapes (that they said they had) could not be hung within the hour, we'd have to cut out some very impressive acts that would weaken the entertainment value of the show and cut it down almost in half. That was not entirely true, but we would lose about twenty minutes of performing time. Sometimes the SM needs to push and exaggerate a bit to get what is needed. What helped even more was that some local group sponsored our magic show, and if the venue could not provide what they said they would, it would not stand well for the theatre and the possibility of it being rented in the future. While on the different tours with this magic show, this may have happened once or twice, but it goes to show what an SM must do to maintain the artistic integrity of the show.

Sidebar: While I remained in the trenches of battle over the black drapes, the producer/star/tour manager of the show would remain on the sidelines, maintaining the *good-guy* persona while I was becoming the *hard-nose* SM.

Electrics

Once the placement of the drapes was settled, I would set my sights on the lighting department. I don't ever recall having a problem. Always the lights were set and focused as had been requested and drawn out in the primitive lighting plots I had created and had been included in the technical packets that went out to each performance site (see Figs. 17-3a, 17-3b, and 17-3c below).

As you can see it was a very simple plot. It was a matter of having the head electrician bring up the different areas and special lights, making sure that no light spilled on to the drapes past the third leg/wing.

There was at first one list I had not sent out with the initial packet of information. I did not think of it until we were at our third venue on the tour and I was seeing the block of time spent during our technical rehearsals waiting while the light operator entered the cues into the computer. Quickly I saw that if I created a list of the cues in the show with the lights involved in each cue, this would free up some valuable time. So in my free time in the early mornings and late nights after the show, I created such a list and had it sent to each venue, saying that because of the limited time we had for techs, if the electrician set into his computer the lights as I had them written, once we would get into our tech we could set intensities and make changes when necessary. It worked! It was a great time-saver and also a lesson learned for future tours.

Spotlight Cues

As part of the electrics, I would ask to speak with the person who would be operating the spotlight. While sending out a list of cues for the lightboard operator was important, having such a list for the spotlight operator was useless. It would have been long, complicated, and too involved to follow during the performance. What I needed was a person

who was experienced and could “wing it” as I talked him or her through each cue during the show. For the most part, operating the spotlight for the show was quite easy: simply pick up the magician as he or she entered and stay on the magician until the end of the act. There were times when the spot had to change colors or black out completely, but once again I could talk the operator through those moments.

I wanted to have a conversation with the spotlight operator to see how experienced and competent was this person. There were two times when I requested a replacement. One technical director fought me tooth and nail, insulted that I would think his man was not capable. I gave in first to maintain a relationship, and then to help him save face, because I had asked in front of some of the other crew members. For the two shows that day it was like high school at the gym. I knew this was a problem I had to confront on the next day. This time I decided to speak to the TD in his office alone. But before I could get a word out, he threw his hands up in the air and said, “Don’t worry, the guy’s out!”

Sound

While our two roadies who traveled with us (who were, by the way, also our drivers from town to town) were placing the magic crates and props throughout the backstage, I would be off to the sound department. It was my mission to see that the sound person, who would be executing the cues during the show, had familiarized himor herself with the cues that we had been sent on CDs and were now downloaded into the house sound system, ready to be executed on my call. Almost always the sound person was on top of it and ready to go.

With this preliminary work done, our roadies, our master magician/tour manager, and me would head back to the hotel or motel. If our travel to the new town was only a short trip and if all went well at the first inspection of the theatre, then we could be back early enough to have a leisurely dinner and early bedtime. If not, it was then a rush to our quarters, grab a sandwich, and *hit the sack*. There were ten acts in the show; it was a cast of about twenty-five when counting the magician assistants.

Tech Day and Two Performances

No matter what kind of sleep we got or how much, myself, the two roadies, and our master magician/tour manager were back at the theatre by eight in the morning to begin technically putting the show together. We had a block of three hours before the cast was due to come, settle into their dressing rooms, set up their personal props, and be ready to do a technical rehearsal by 11:00. We all had to be ready for a 2:30 matinee. On our best days when all the parts worked, when all the information had been sent ahead, and when the crew was at their best, we could be done in enough time to grab a quick lunch in one of the dressing rooms before the house was opened to seat the audience. On our not-so-best days, sometimes we had to delay opening the house.

By touring show standards, this was a simple show, even taking into account the additional work and responsibilities that were put on me as the SM. The point of this story is first to paint a picture of what a SM might encounter in his or her career, but also to show that despite all I say about what an SM does not have to do, it is the wise student or beginning SM, one who wants to have as much employment as possible, who gets a working knowledge of all the skills he or she will not be required to have on a “professional” show.

Example: Magic Show Lighting Plot/Requirements

In further example, Figures 18-3a, 18-3b, and 18-3c are the light plot and floor plans I drew up to send out to the different performing site ahead of our arrival. A bit primitive and basic, they conveyed the information and gave the results we expected to have as we arrived at each venue.

Notice the following in Figure 18-3a:

- The lighting areas are set very close to the apron/down-stage area. This is so that whatever black art illusion there may be in the show, those units can be placed more upstage into a less lit area.
- For easy reference and communication when setting light cues, the areas are numbered. Early in my SMing career, an old-time, cantankerous electrician called me down for not numbering the center area as *area #1*,

and then instructed me that the area to the right had to be *area #2* and the area left of center was *area #3*. He was so insistent that I never questioned his word or looked to see if other electricians did it the same way.

- The areas overlap so that as the magicians and assistants move to different parts of the stage there are no dark spots before stepping into the new area.
- I asked that each area be lit with at least three instruments. I asked that the main lamp be focused head on, while the right and left lamps were focused so that the right lamp crossed over into the left part of the area and the left lamp crossed over into the right part of the area. I think that is basic lighting 101.

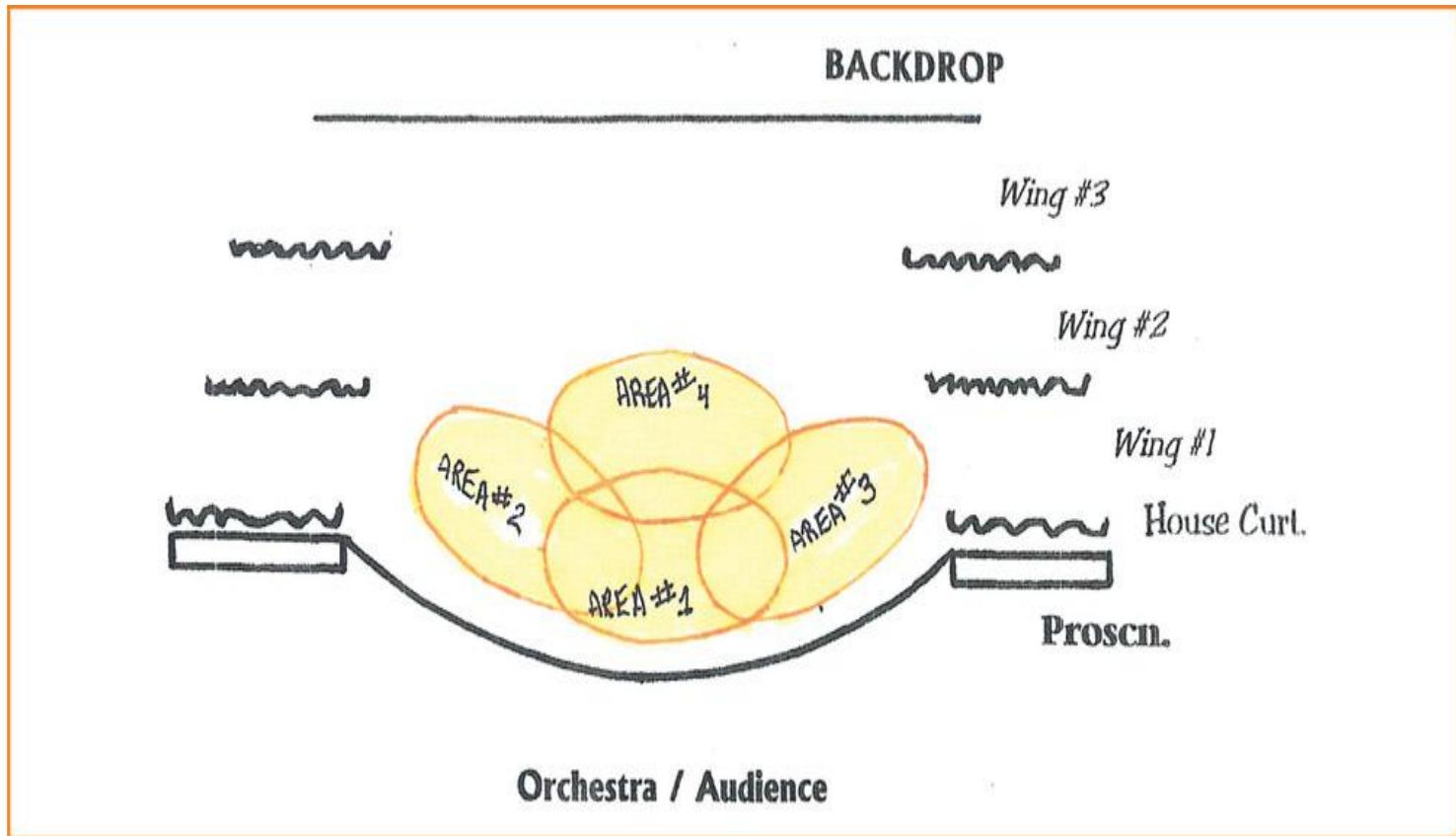
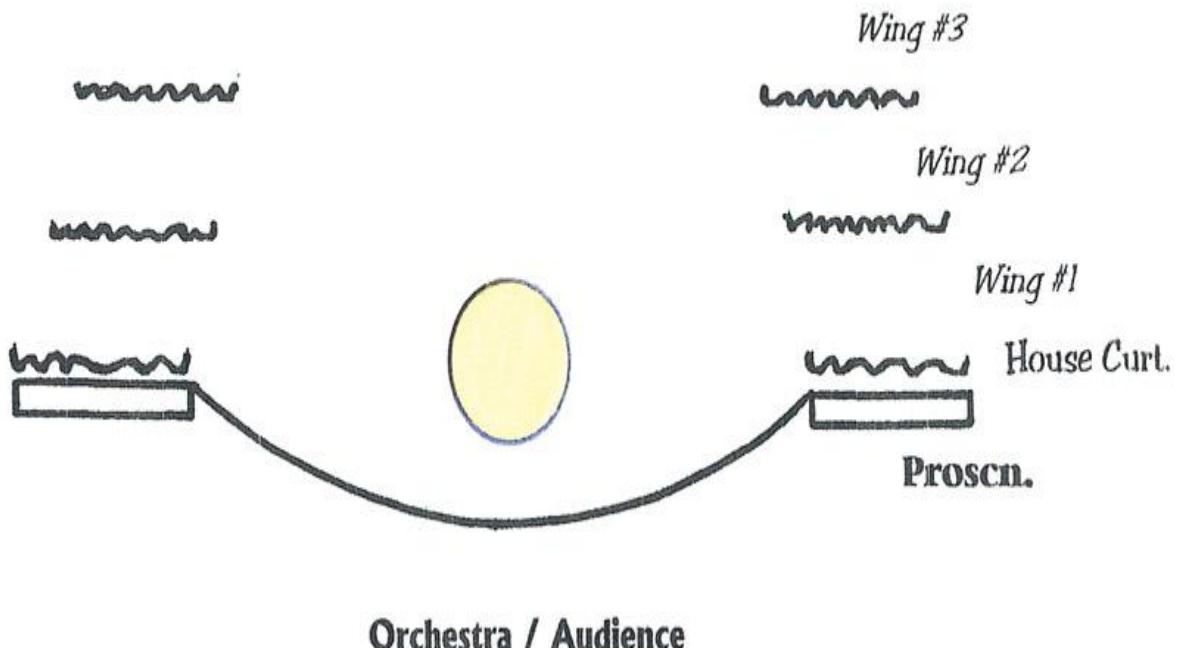


Figure 18-3a Simply and clearly defined here are the four areas of general lighting for a touring magic show. The areas overlap so when the magicians and assistants move to different parts of the stage there are no dark spots. Each area is to operate independent of each other.”

BACKDROP



Orchestra / Audience

Figure 18-3b Overhead down spot/pool of light, from directly above, six to seven feet in diameter, with clearly defined edges.

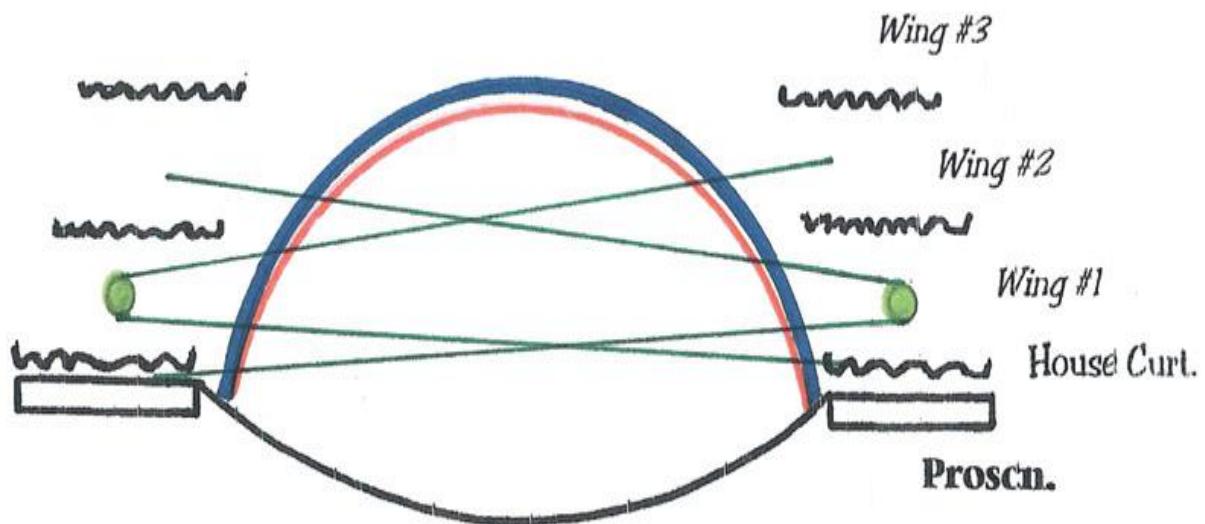
- I wanted each area to be operated independent of each other so different intensities could be set or changed during performance.
- I strongly specified that as much as possible no light spilled past the third leg/wing of the stage.
- I also wrote that I was hopeful the theatre was set up with LED lamps, which would give me the ability to change the coloring in each area to enhance the feeling and mood of the magic act being performed. If not, then I was leaving it up to the electrician to put whatever gels would give a warm glow.

The floor plan/light plot in Figure 18-3b could not be any simpler. It could have been included within the drawing in Figure 18-3a, but I wanted it to stand alone because it was an important special setting that several of the magicians used in their acts. I was also hoping that this too would be an LED light, but if not I instructed to make it a Leko with a lavender gel.

Out of the three light plots, the Figure 18-3c one could be the most complex, and yet by professional standards it still falls into the classification of a kid's drawing worthy of the refrigerator door. However, it served the purpose and delivered the information.

With this plot/floor plan I again asked that none of the lights be focused past the third wing drapes. I was also hoping that the lamps used to create the flood of light were LED units because, if they were, I could get a greater number of flood colors, going into purples and greens. If they were not, the red and the blue floods were workable.

BACKDROP



Orchestra / Audience

Figure 18-3c The blue arch is to represent a blue flood of light to fill the performing area down to the apron of the stage. Similarly, the red arch is to represent a red flood to fill the performing area. In addition, the green streaking lines projecting out from the first wing on each side of the stage represent singularly hung Leko lamps, on a light tree or pole, to provide streaking green side light.

Closing the Show

A show closes for two reasons: it is either at the end of its scheduled run, or box office receipts are down and it is no longer financially feasible for the producer to keep the show running.

The Closing Notice

It all starts with the official two-week-closing notice from the producer, which is posted on the callboard. A producer can close a show at any time, giving no notice. The producer is, however, bound by Equity agreement to either post a two-week notice or pay the actors two weeks' salary. A similar agreement exists between the producer and the stagehands' union, IATSE.

Feelings

For every opening of a show there comes a closing. The opening was joyous, and for the most part the closing is sad. No matter how seasoned in theatre the people are, no matter how many shows they might do, when it comes time to close a show (or to leave it), there is always sadness. With a show, whether it was successful or not, the members of the company have bonded—sometimes as a group and extended family, other times between individuals. Some will remain in touch with each other regardless of the separation. With others, their paths may cross either at an audition or with some other show. For many, this will be the last time seeing anyone from the group. In addition to the sadness come feelings of worry, fear, and loss: loss of friends, loss of a steady job, and loss of a weekly paycheck. There is typically fear and worry that the next job will not come before the money runs out or one has to take another one of those temporary jobs.

There are those few occasions when the closing of a show for some or all of the members of the company is a joyous occasion. SMs especially will find throughout their careers one show, if not several, where the closing is at least a relief, if not joyous.

The SM's Obligation to the End

In the tradition of theatre, the show must go on, and the final performances must be performed and delivered with the same spirit and energy as the first. An SM cannot prevent the members of the company from having their feelings, but the SM can prevent their feelings from affecting the show and taking away from the last performances. The SM cannot allow the company to abandon the show—close it before its time. The SM has an obligation to the producer, to the artists and creators who put the show together, and to the members of the company, in spite of their feelings. Most of all, the SM and the company have their professional obligation to the last audiences who have paid the price and expect the same value as was given to the first audience.

The SM too is open and vulnerable to feelings. While keeping the show together, SMs must keep their feelings in check and not allow them to get in the way of doing their job to full capacity and to the very end.

A Final SM Myth

For the SM, the easiest part of working a production is closing out the show. To dispel a final myth, the professional SM has only to close out the SM's part of the show and not the entire production, as might happen in waiver, community, or academic theatre. The heads of each technical department take responsibility for closing out their own areas. Upon striking the show for the last time, the lighting and sound departments pack and return the equipment to the rental house from where it came. The head carpenter and crew are in charge of dismantling the set. In some cases, the set was built specifically for the production and is the property of the producer. At the close of the show, the producer puts the set in storage for future use, sells it to a company that buys used sets, gives it away to a school or local college, or destroys it. The props are often a combination of rentals and purchases. What was rented is of course returned, and what was bought usually goes with the set. Sometimes the costumes are rented, sometimes they are made specifically for the show, and other times they are a combination of both. Those that were rented are returned, and those belonging to the production company are either put in storage or sold to a costume house, which in turn rents the costumes for other productions.

The Silent Preparations

On notice of the show closing, the production office, company manager, tour manager, SMs, and heads of the various technical departments must begin their preparatory work. Each person must think and plan ahead, because when that final curtain falls there will be no time to think of anything but striking the show, packing the equipment into trucks, and getting out of the theatre. For the producer this is once again a matter of money. The producer cannot afford to stretch the strike and disperse the equipment over several days. The quicker the better. The preparatory work needs to be absolute and complete.

As the preparatory work is being done, there should be little fanfare or change backstage. As much as possible, things should remain as they have been for the run of the show. There should be no change in work procedures and the placement and order of things. The cast and crew should see, hear, or feel very little of the preparations and not continually be reminded of the pending closing.

The SM's Preparatory Work

The SM's preparatory work to close the show is minimal. If the SM has been complete and thorough in creating electronic files and hard-copy files—the plots, charts, plans, lists, cueing script, blocking script—and has kept them up to date, the only thing the SM will need to do upon notice of the show closing is return to the files and start creating the production book.

The Production Book

The production book will turn out to be a large three-ring binder that will house the *blocking script*, the *cueing script*, *files* that were only in hard-copy form, and *electronic files* stored on CDs, DVDs, and, probably the best way, thumb/stick/flash drive. Better still, if the production company is set up with a *cloud* service, those electronic files can be sent off to that service and possibly much of the existing hard copies can be scanned, saved as PDF files, and uploaded to that service.

Putting this book together is by far the most important work the SM does in closing out a show. The production book is the bible of the show and company. Contained also in this three-ring binder will be whatever drawings, sketches, or pictures the SM has collected. The production book should be divided and tabbed into sections for easy reference. The task of creating this book should be simple, possibly even joyous, giving a sense of pride and accomplishment. In a quiet way, it is a *show-off* of the SM's work. Putting this book together might bring closure to

the SM. If the SM has been delinquent in keeping good files and keeping the information up to date, the task ahead will be monumental and overwhelming, and the production book will probably end up being incomplete and of little value to the producer, archives, or future productions.

The Importance of the Production Book

Disregarding the caliber of the show and the prestige or lack of prestige of the production company, and setting aside the size of the show and company or its success, the SM should submit to the producer some sort of a production book. There are some factors and situations that dictate to the SM how detailed, accurate, and all-inclusive the information in the production book should be.

A New Show or a Revival

If the show was new, never having been produced before in Broadway, regional, or local theatre, or if the show was a revival, but an all-new production intended for touring or Broadway, it is the SM's responsibility to have a production book that is complete and filled with detail. In addition, the SM should include in the production book copies of things as they were changed as the show grew and developed, a primary example being the script changes. The SM is not responsible for gathering and including detailed information for each technical department. The heads of the departments remain responsible to the producer and will submit their own information. The SM must realize that the information gathered and turned in will be of tremendous value for the history of the show, future productions, and whatever publication of the script might occur.

When preparing a production book for a show that was the re-creation of one produced on Broadway, and was perhaps intended to play only in one place, the SM still submits all that was gathered and kept on file but can be less detailed and concerned in putting the production book together. Some producers, regardless of how small or limited their production, want the maximum that an SM can give in putting together the production book. Others are less interested and are satisfied with whatever the SM turns in.

The SM's Personal Library

Every SM should create a personal library and file for every show worked on. While putting together a production book for the producer, SMs should also assemble one for themselves. Not only will this copy act as a backup copy, but it can be used later for reference. There will be several times in an SM's career where the producer or director of a show will call the SM to regain information that they lost or neglected to gather and keep. Eventually, the SM's library can be given to a group, school, or organization that can use the information to teach or re-create its own productions.

The Cueing Script

It is not important that the producer or production company get the original copy of the color-coded cueing script. In referring back to this script, a person would be interested only in the placement of the cues. The color coding was for the SM's working ease. This being the case, the SM can keep the color-coded cueing script as part of the SM's library and submit to the producer or production office the extra copy (the security copy) the SM has kept in a safe place.

The Blocking Script

When assembling the production book, the SM does not need to include the original blocking script, which if you recall was the SM's rehearsal script. Instead, the SM can turn in a copy of the rehearsal/blocking script and keep the original for his or her library. Better still, if the SM has transferred the blocking notes to a clear script, as was

suggested in Chapter 17, “Run of the Show,” a copy of this script can be turned in to the producer, while the SM keeps the original.

Much to Do about Nothing

In spite of all the attention paid to the production book and the promise of it being used as a reference in the future, in many cases it ends up sitting on the shelf. When doing another production of a show, the producer, director, artists, and craftspeople want to make their own statement, express their own creative values, and bring life to the show in their own way. Many times these people make it a point not to look back and be influenced by someone else’s work. Only on occasion might a director check back to see what another director did with a particular scene, effect, or difficult moment in the show. The producer is more apt to refer back to old budgets and expenses. Even for the SM, it is easier to create new charts, plots, plans, and lists rather than take what was done by some other SM. Then why all this fuss and attention in putting a production book together? It is for the archives, posterity, and historical value, and for those few times when someone wants to look back.

A Production Book for the Director?

Only if the director asks for it! Keep in mind, every chart, plot, plan, or list the SM made was already given to the director. Most directors keep the information given to them and in some way create and keep their own production book. By the time the show goes into its run and the director leaves the show, the director probably has created a production book and has it sitting on the shelf in the director’s own personal library. Any additional information the SM might provide at the close of the show will be a supplement or update to what the director already has.

The Logbook

As discussed earlier, the SM’s logbook stays with the SM. It becomes part of the SM’s personal copy of the production book.

The Final Address List

Just when SMs thinks their list-making days are over, there comes one more list to be made—the *final address list*. To be all-inclusive, the SM might assemble the names and addresses of all the people associated with the show—the artists, creators, and office production staff, even the craftspeople, vendors, and rental houses. This list should be easy to make because the SM already has on the laptop in one file or another all this information. Now it is a matter making copies of those lists and changing and adding the more permanent information on each person. In addition to listing the person’s current address, the SM might also include a more permanent phone number or address, perhaps that of a family member or good friend—a place where the person can be reached regardless of any moves, travels, or jobs.

Once again, this information is strictly for the producer, the production book, and the director if he or she chooses to have it. It is not for general distribution. If the cast wants a final address list, the SM either has the cast members create their own or creates one for them, but before doing so the SM puts up a sign-up sheet, headed with a statement that the list will be released for general distribution throughout the company, and asks each person to write in the contact information they choose to have noted. Most times the information listed is the person’s cell phone number. Once again this is information the SM already has on the laptop. So now it becomes a matter of copying and pasting from one document into a new document. For the record and future reference, should someone contest their name having been on the list, the SM scans this sign-up sheet into the laptop and puts it into the folder with the other address lists.

Personal Props

There are two kinds of personal props: the props an actor brings to the show to use during the performance, and the kind that are gathered by the prop department but are specifically for the actor to use. Both are usually small and personal items, perhaps a pocket watch, a handkerchief, a piece of jewelry, or a pair of eyeglasses. Each is left in the actor's care throughout the run, and the actor remains responsible for bringing it onstage or having it in place to use during the performance.

At the close of the show, the props that belong to the show must be returned. In all respects, it is the prop person's responsibility to collect the item upon the final curtain. Personal props, however, are items easily forgotten. The SM does everyone a service if upon the closing notice the SM reminds first the prop person of the personal props and then the actors of the items left in their care and responsibility. Once again, when the final curtain falls, the actor will more than likely forget to turn in the props. While the SM is making rounds to return the actor's personal valuables and to collect the last of the scripts, the SM can also collect the personal props belonging to the show.

Last-Performance Pranks

There is one last thing that happens when a show is closing. It happens in the very last performance and can be unsettling for the SM who has cared for the show as his or her own. Some actors make it a tradition to play little jokes or pranks on their fellow performers during the last performance. The SM who wishes to maintain the show to the very end must take a stand against this, even if the SM privately thinks the jokes are funny and are not harmful to the show. At the half-hour call of the final performance, the SM must express disapproval of this practice and remind the cast and the company of their professional obligations for performing the show as it has been set and as it has been playing throughout the run.

These little jokes and pranks start out simple. They are funny mostly among the cast members. For the most part they do not hurt the show, nor is the audience aware of them, but these things have a tendency to grow and escalate. People have a great inclination toward wanting to top the last joke, making the next one bigger and funnier. In its most outrageous form, some actors will forget about the show, the character they are playing, and the audience and direct the thrust of their performance toward the joke and entertaining their fellow actors.

The SM cannot prevent the actors from doing as they choose, but this little speech prohibiting jokes often diminishes the severity of the jokes and pranks. If the cast is particularly difficult or unruly, and it seems that things might get out of control, the SM might remind everyone that there will be other shows on which the SM will be working and in which they might want to perform. It is not necessary to say any more than that. They will get the picture. (See the account at the end of this chapter under "The Professional Experience.")

The Equity Bond

Upon signing an agreement with Equity and before anyone can be hired, the producer must put up a bond—the amount of which is determined by Equity. The bond is held until the show closes and is delayed in being returned to the producer until Equity is assured the producer has met all financial obligations to the contract and to the membership. Whatever money remains outstanding or that the producer neglects to pay is taken out of the bond. The SM has no dealing with this matter other than to report to the Equity deputy or the Equity office all the payments the SM knows of that are delinquent or remain outstanding.

Departure and Goodbyes

Every show an SM works becomes an indelible part of that SM's life. In most cases, the work, responsibility, and obligation of the job became the center of the SM's life to the exclusion of some or all social life and relationships. No matter how hard an SM tries to keep a balance, the job and the show usually dominate. The SM who wants to be successful usually gives in. Good or bad, joyous or sorrowful, love filled or hate filled, the show and the company

become the SM's child. Now it is time to close it and set it aside. Never again will this production, the performances, the relationships, and the feelings be duplicated. Most of the memories will fade, leaving in mind only the more extreme experiences.

People will depart and separate from the SM's life, perhaps never to work together or see each other again. Others will pop up unexpectedly. Still others will be like perennial flowers and show up in several shows on which the SM works. Some friendships will remain long after the production while others will be strong and flourishing only as long as the show lasts.

For the most part, the SM should keep goodbyes simple and personal, going to those people to whom the SM particularly wants to express sentiments. However, as a professional gesture or social grace, the SM should express general thanks and appreciation either over the PA system or in posting a note on the callboard. With a group that has been particularly near and dear, the SM might bring in a basket or tray of goodies, or some parting champagne for toasting and extending best wishes.

No show is a casual or passing event to an SM. Each and every show becomes a part of the SM's soul. Some shows go on to become history with the SM's name forever connected to them. Some shows are like being with a family, while others are like being off to war. Some SMs will continue their work in teaching, or perhaps write a book. Some SMs will decide when they have had enough and will choose the time to stop, while others will have the time chosen for them. Some will be saddened by their departure from the work, while others will be glad to have only their memories.

The Professional Experience

I worked a touring show with a group of young professional actors. I had heard that for the last performance elaborate plans were being made to play jokes on each other. Throughout the time I was with the show, the cast displayed little respect for the standards or codes of theatre and what was expected of them as professionals. This included a lack of respect for the position of the SM.

In hearing about the jokes that were being planned for the last performance, I became greatly concerned. From what I had experienced of this particular cast, I knew they were quite capable of great impropriety on the stage. I knew I could not stop them, but I took a strong stand and was very clear about my disapproval.

During the performance, things escalated. To top each other, the humor turned blue. One performer, who was playing a lead role, thought it would be funny to drop his pants and display his rear to the actress playing opposite him. He was wearing tights, so his act was not as revealing as one would think, but his intentions were lewd and not in the remotest way in character. I was extremely upset with this person. This was the final straw in our working relationship. Throughout our time together, he had been unruly, disrespectful, and uncontrollable. He had little regard for anything but himself, his immediate gratification, and drawing attention to himself, whether onstage or in his everyday life.

Immediately after the performance, and despite the fact that this was the last performance, I called the actor into my office. I told him I was making a report of his actions. I said I would also include in this report my experiences with him during the time we worked together. I said I was sending the report to Equity, with a copy sent to the producer and a copy kept in my files. He was unimpressed and freely showed his disdain. I stated further that at any time I had the opportunity, I would freely, without solicitation, tell any producer, director, or casting person of his actions and my experience of him.

Only one time did I have the opportunity to tell of this actor's behavior, but it had no effect. He was hired anyway because he was fast becoming a performer who could sell tickets at the box office. This actor moved over to films and television, taking with him the same attitude and behaviors. He became one of Hollywood's bad boys, professionally as well as in his personal life. Eventually, his way of living and working caught up with him, and as soon as his name was no longer a draw on the marquee, producers were no longer willing to put up with him. When last heard of, he was playing dinner theatre and summer stock. Perhaps he has changed, or perhaps he has not, and is inflicting himself on some other SM.

In the Line of Fire

This chapter is included to give a complete picture of the professional experience. This story is based on one SM's experiences, but also includes a compilation of experiences from other shows. The details may be unique to this story and this SM, but the experiences can happen to any SM. Names of the people have been changed, and in most cases, things are described in general terms to keep this tale from sounding like tabloid journalism. As you travel through this adventure, take note not only of the things this SM goes through, but what things he may have contributed to the conflict.

Prologue

Unlike in the Dickens tale—"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"—for me, it was only the best of times. For five years I had been working for a top producing company with important talents from theatre, film, and television. I had only one direction to travel and that was to Broadway. Up to this time, Broadway had eluded me. Every show that promised to take me there was either stillborn or died as we traveled the country in tryouts.

Getting The job

It was late February. I read in the trade papers that the producing company for which I had been stage managing was doing a remake of a very famous musical show that was originally produced on Broadway in the mid-1940s, and that Gaylord Channing was directing and choreographing and Vera Darling was starring. The article said the show would have a complete makeover; it would have a West Coast run and then make its way across the country to Broadway. On reading such news, my heart raced with excitement. That was quickly followed with grave concern. Why had I not heard from the production company? In past years, by this time I had already talked to the office and was assigned the shows I would be doing for the season. Some of my fears kicked in. Rather than stay with my feelings for too long, I decided to call the production office. I had a good relationship with Connie, the producer's secretary. She would fill me in.

Connie said I was on the producer's list for him to call, but in his usual fashion he was late and doing things at the last minute, or when they reached near crisis. Connie said she would have called me herself, but the producer made a point of wanting to talk with me personally. This concerned me even more, because in the past whatever conversations the producer needed to have with me were done through Connie. Connie put me on hold to see if the producer could talk to me now. She returned and said to wait by my phone, that he would get right back to me. I knew he wouldn't and he didn't. It wasn't until the first week in March that I heard from him.

By this time my desire to have the job was even greater and my anxiety level was rising. When I received the call it was Connie wanting to set up an appointment for the next day. I canceled or postponed whatever I had scheduled and made myself available.

From the start of our meeting I could see the producer was preoccupied. My heart sank. He was direct and his very first words were that he could not offer me the job of the production stage manager, the PSM, on the Channing/Darling show. He said he had to give it to another stage manager who had been working for him for a much longer time. That was understandable. The person he chose was a friend and had been my mentor when I first started working for this producer. Before I could comment, the producer quickly went into a color commentary on the show, making it sound even more special, important, and enticing. He also said that because the show was going to be

completely made over and because Mr. Channing and Miss Darling were known to be somewhat difficult and demanding, and because the show was heading to Broadway, he wanted to have his two strongest stage managers on the show. He wanted the ASM to be as experienced and capable as the PSM... and would I be interested in the ASM position?

Would I be interested? Yes, I would be interested! I would have taken a job sweeping floors if that's all there was. I of course did not respond with such candor and juvenile expression. I maintained my composure. I expressed my desire to work on the show and said that I would love assisting with my friend and mentor again. "There's only one problem," the producer interjected. There came another sinking of my heart. It seemed Mr. Channing had his own choice for the stage manager. He wanted his person as the PSM, but the producer was adamant in having a PSM he knew and trusted, someone who had worked for him before and he knew would be loyal to him. Well, if Mr. Channing could not get his man on the show as the PSM, he was now insisting this person be hired as the ASM. The producer wanted double indemnity, having trust and loyalty from the ASM, too. There came a stalemate and test of wills between Mr. Channing and the producer. However, the producer had a plan that had already begun even before I had accepted the ASM position.

Mr. Channing's man was in New York and the producer had purposely held off making a decision on him. Auditions were only five days away. The producer had conveniently sent the man who was going to be the PSM out of town to troubleshoot on a show in San Francisco. It was not practical to bring out Gaylord's man at such short notice. The producer apologized to Mr. Channing for not making a decision sooner on the ASM position but promised he would within the week. Meanwhile, he told Mr. Channing that I would temporarily take over and handle the auditions. The idea behind this maneuvering and posturing was to give Mr. Channing a chance to meet me, know me, and see how I worked. Well, it worked. I did my usual bang-up job. By the end of the auditions Mr. Channing had warmed up to my presence, was comfortable, and stopped hawking his man as the ASM. The office quickly signed me to the contract. I got the job and that ended that.

The Honeymoon

The stage management was told over and over by the production office that this was not going to be an easy show—that rehearsals would be four weeks of hell. I did not find it that way. While everyone around me complained, I was energized. Each day, the rehearsals began at 10:00 am. The PSM and I usually got to the rehearsal hall by 9:00 am. Almost always, Gaylord and his assistant were already there working before any of the cast members arrived. Because Gaylord was both the choreographer and the director, he had to divide his time between working on the dances and working on the scenes. The plan was to have the dancers come in at 10:00 am and work with them until 1:30 pm. At 1:30 the dancers were excused for an hour-and-a-half lunch while the principal performers came in to begin their workday. According to union agreement, the actors' workday was eight and a half hours long. This meant that by 6:30 pm the people who had come in at 10:00 am had to be excused, and the people who came in at 1:30 pm had to be excused for the day by 10:00 pm. With this kind of a schedule it sure taxed the stage management's skills in scheduling. I sure was glad that I was the ASM and all of that was left to the PSM.

Our day was long. Whatever rules applied to the performers about the amount of time they could work in a day did not apply to the SMs. But we did not mind because we were loving what we were doing and, if I must say so, were thankful for the job! Gaylord often missed lunch entirely or had his assistant get him a sandwich from the catering truck. The PSM and I brown-bagged our lunches. We staggered our breaks so someone was always with Gaylord and went off into an empty rehearsal room or down to the office lounge. I never took more than a half-hour because I was anxious to get back to watch Gaylord work. For our dinner break we either brown-bagged it again or had the production assistant (PA) bring in something. Gaylord did take the time for dinner. For us, there were always things to do. We welcomed the quiet time and usually got lots of quality work done.

By the time the actors were released at 10:00 pm and we met with Gaylord and closed up the rehearsal hall, it was at least eleven o'clock. Fortunately, I lived close by, so by midnight I was home, showered, and in bed. I had no trouble sleeping.

The PSM and I dared not divide or stagger the time we came in each day so our workday could be shorter. We agreed, and the office encouraged, that we should both be at the rehearsal hall at all times. Gaylord was a man of many whims, needs, and changing moods. When he wanted something, he wanted it *now!* Within a moment, without any warning, he would change the rehearsal schedule, sometimes deciding to do something that had not even been

scheduled. He would have the stage management call up performers and insist they come to the rehearsal within the hour—sooner, if possible.

In the first week of the rehearsals, Gaylord complained to the office that he was very dissatisfied with the stage managers; he hated the idea that one time the PSM worked the rehearsal room, and then another time I worked it. The reason the PSM and I chose to work this way was so we could both learn the show, both have the experience of working directly with Gaylord, and if the truth be known, both have relief from the extreme tension of working the rehearsal room. Gaylord wanted only one SM to work the rehearsal room at all times. To look over at the SM's table and see a different face disturbed him; it broke his concentration. He told the production office that he wanted me to remain in the rehearsal hall and to have the PSM running around taking care of the business of the show and the company. The PSM was mortified at such a suggestion and refused, saying it was insanity to work in this way. All the points he argued seemed to fall on deaf ears. The producer said he had to give Mr. Channing the best possible working environment he could, and if this was how Mr. Channing wanted to work, this was how it would be. This was one of those moments of defeat every stage manager experiences in a career. As for myself, I was secretly thrilled. I wanted to be with Gaylord, having a front-row seat as he created, spun his brand of theatre magic, and exercised the genius for which he had received several Tony Awards. I, of course, concealed my delight. The PSM felt Gaylord favored me and that he was being treated as the assistant.

Working with Gaylord was like being on one of those loop-de-loop roller coaster rides for fourteen hours each day. I was younger then, resilient, eager to experience all that being a stage manager had to offer. On the other hand, the PSM was not as anxious to take that kind of a ride again. Each day after seeing the hoops through which I had to jump to do the job and keep Gaylord happy, he quickly became happy with the working arrangement. I was the perfect candidate to be with Gaylord. I worked very hard at being the perfect stage manager he wanted. I worked in textbook fashion. I was flexible and accommodating. I became quite adept at anticipating Gaylord's every need and mood. I kept the rehearsal room quiet and orderly, fending off any outside disturbances. I kept the actors in another room, having only those actors with whom Gaylord was working in the main rehearsal room. Without realizing it, I had stepped well past the bounds of giving service and became a servant. I was praised and commended for my work. Gaylord was pleased, too. In a rare moment of expression to the producer he said, "Those two guys you got down there are dynamite." The stage managers became the fair-haired boys and heroes of the production office.

Enter Miss Darling

Miss Darling was unable to be with us for the first three weeks of rehearsals because she was still out on the road doing another show. You would think Gaylord would have been upset not to have the star at rehearsals from the start. Instead, he was quite pleased. One day when I expressed concern for Miss Darling's absence and all the work that had to be done with her in the last week of rehearsals, Gaylord laughed. "Don't worry about Vera Darling. She'll have it down quicker than you can write it in your script." Then he added in confidence, "I'd just as soon get her in the last week than have her in my hair all this time while working on the show." I was taken aback by the change in his tone of voice.

Because of Vera's absence, the book part of the show suffered greatly. Gaylord spent hardly any time on the script, devoting most of his time to the choreography and staging of musical numbers. Vera's understudy filled in. "We'll concentrate on the book after Vera gets here," Gaylord promised. Many of the principal performers expressed among themselves and to the stage management their annoyance at Miss Darling's absence. They were careful, however, not to reveal their feelings to Gaylord.

It was Monday, the beginning of the fourth week of rehearsals. Miss Darling was expected at noon to meet everyone, get settled in, and be ready to begin work with Gaylord at 1:30 pm, while the dancers were at lunch. This was the day we had all waited for with great excitement and anticipation—that is, everyone except Gaylord, who said earlier that morning, "The whole morning's gonna be lost with her taking over and distracting everyone."

We had heard some inside, industry nightmare stories about Miss Darling. The production office kept saying to the stage managers, "Be sure you guys are pulled together. Have as much done as possible. If you think Gaylord Channing is a handful, wait until Vera Darling gets here!"

By this time, a second assistant stage manager had been chosen. She had been hired as a pit singer, so she had enough free time to aid us in our work. Both the PSM and I had worked with her before and we were glad to have her. The producer quickly gave his blessings for our choice. He felt Miss Darling would be pleased to have a female representative on the stage management staff.

Gaylord too was concerned about Vera. He had us set aside a rehearsal room just for her. "Put her someplace where she can hold court," he said with disdain. He also ordered that when he was not working with her, we had to keep her out of the rehearsal room and keep her busy working with other things. "Have a phone put in her room and under no circumstances is she to use the production phone in the rehearsal room. In fact hide it! Put it in your briefcase if you have to." At that time, pagers were the only means of contacting a person, and the idea of smart phones was still locked away in some imaginative person's mind.

By 12:20 pm Vera had not yet arrived. The PSM called her at home. Her secretary said they were running late and were just leaving. Gaylord was not at all surprised and kept rehearsing. By 1:30 pm she still had not arrived. The dancers were excused for lunch and we began work with the principal performers with Miss Darling's understudy filling in.

At about 1:55 pm I accidentally ran into Vera and her entourage as they were wandering the halls, looking for the rehearsal hall. Six of them, all carrying packages, bags, and bundles. At first I did not know it was her. She was unrecognizably dressed in a turban, dark sunglasses, tailored slacks, a raglike scarf wrapped several times around to protect her throat, and a tattered, green, bulky knit cardigan sweater, revealing years of use. She carried a Gucci shopping bag that also showed years of use, a personal-size Igloo ice cooler, and a brown paper sack with snacks and goodies from a local supermarket. Over her shoulder was a tote bag containing Tiger, a miniature breed dog with lots of hair.

I recognized first the flaming red wig on the wig-block, dressed in the famous Vera Darling style. It was being carried carefully and ceremoniously by her hairdresser, Daisy. Daisy was a large, buxom, impressive woman whose rolling walk demanded you step aside, unless you were willing to be trampled. "Miss Darling?" I said with a giant question mark, and then introduced myself. She was glad to see me and without delay or formality unloaded her baggage on to me—Tiger remained with her. As we traveled down the hall she chatted as if we had been friends for a long time. Once in her personal rehearsal room, she was pleased with many of the comforts and perks the producer had set up for her. Within a short time of meeting Vera, I was charmed and enchanted. I was certain that whatever nightmare stories I had heard were blown out of proportion.

Vera was anxious to see Gaylord and the "kids" as she called them. She wanted to "pop" into the rehearsal room. "No," I said with alarm, but then calmly added, "Gaylord's in the middle of working on one of the numbers in the show. Everyone's anxious to see you and meet you. If you walk in now everyone will lose concentration. You know how Gaylord is about rehearsals."

"You're absolutely right," Vera said as she touched my arm warmly in a friendly gesture. "Don't tell me about Gaylord! I know him all too well."

"Why don't you get settled in and when Gaylord is finished, we'll come to get you," I said as I was leaving the room.

"Great," she called out.

I left Vera and entered the main rehearsal room. Gaylord looked up angrily, as he always did whenever someone entered the room. As I passed him, he said half under his breath and from out of the corner of his mouth, "Is she here yet?"

"Yes," I responded in somewhat the same under-the-breath manner, and Gaylord continued to rehearse. On several occasions, when it was apparent Gaylord was through with a segment of his work, I asked if I should go and get Vera.

"No!" he would reply and continue to work, going to something new. Meanwhile, Vera was becoming impatient. She sent in Daisy several times to find out what was taking so long.

This sort of thing went on for over three hours. Finally at 5:45 pm, Gaylord turned to me and said, "Go get her," and he left the room for what I thought was one of his many trips to the bathroom. I sent the second ASM to get Miss Darling. The assistant returned and we sat and waited. Just when our waiting was becoming awkward and our patience began running short, the doors to the rehearsal room flung open and in walked Vera! She made a Western-type cattle call, "YEEEEEE-HA!!!!" threw the short end of her scarf over her shoulder, took a cheese-cake pose, and said in her best Zsa Zsa Gabor impersonation, "Darlings!" She was as clownish and crazy as we had all seen her on TV and in the movies. It was a thrill to see her in person and performing for us. We roared with laughter and applauded as she now dipped and strutted across the floor like Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, stopping in the middle of the rehearsal room, where she held court. Vera knew her audience and how to work the room. She disappointed no one. She greeted everyone and personalized her conversation with a comment, joke, or quick story. She charmed and captivated us all.

About a half-hour later, Gaylord returned in just enough time to perform his greeting and reunion with Vera. Gaylord also knew how to work his audience. He was witty, charming, and had impeccable timing in his dialogue and delivery. This was a side of him we seldom saw in rehearsals. My PSM friend was most amused as he watched. "A play within a play," he said. "Isn't it interesting how Gaylord waited until forty-five minutes before sending the

dancer's home before he had Vera come in? And isn't it interesting how he disappeared for her entrance, but then made one of his own? I guarantee you there will be more to come." None of this was apparent to me. I felt my friend was jaded in his observations. I did not hear his words coming from wisdom and experience.

The Honeymoon Is Over

Little by little, all that the PSM, myself, and the second ASM had built in our working relationship with Gaylord slowly disintegrated. It was a process of which we were not aware until we were in the middle of it all. The last week of rehearsals became harder than the first three weeks combined. There was just too much to do and the pressure was on to get it done, because in the following week we were scheduled to move into the theatre to start technical rehearsals. Gaylord tried postponing techs, but the producer held fast. The producer stood to lose too much money if the delay was even for a day. Fortunately, the technical rehearsals were scheduled for two full weeks and not the abbreviated ten days that producers prefer.

The production office was right. Vera was a handful. All three stage managers were like acrobats and jugglers, trying to keep both her and Gaylord serviced and happy. The script was a major problem for Gaylord. Now that Vera was at rehearsals and they were working on it full-time, Gaylord felt the dialogue was antiquated, and he continually arranged and rearranged scenes and their order. This created a lot of work for the stage management, but fortunately Gaylord's assistant helped, too.

Vera, just by being Vera, could set off Gaylord into moods or fits of anger. On one of the day's rehearsals, it was Vera's birthday. At different times, she had no less than three cakes brought in to the rehearsal room as a surprise to her. Upon arrival of the third cake, I insisted it be brought into her room to surprise her there, but Daisy intervened and said Vera would be very upset if she couldn't share this cake too with everyone. Upon entry of this cake, Gaylord angrily looked over at me, holding me responsible for the interruption. He threw his hands up in the air and left.

Vera loved having long, drawn-out conversations about character, motivation, dialogue, or the timing of acting moments. This drove Gaylord mad. His patience and temper grew even shorter. He attacked whoever happened to be in his line of sight. His assistant caught the brunt of most things. Once or twice I came in the line of fire, and when it happened my confidence was shaken. Thanks to the PSM and the production office, I was reassured and sent back into combat.

In this last week at the rehearsal hall, and especially in the last two or three days, people's tempers in all departments were beginning to flare. They needed to have information and wanted answers so they could be prepared for the technical rehearsals—answers that only Gaylord could give. Gaylord continually put them off, saying that if he didn't get this part of the show done, there would be no show at all.

The costume people needed to have Vera for fittings, but Gaylord would not release her from the rehearsals. He wanted her to go after hours. Vera refused. She was too tired after rehearsals. We had the costume people set up a little alteration shop in a storage closet down the hall from the rehearsal room, and every chance they got, they had Vera in with them stitching, pinning, fitting, and even redesigning.

You could feel the tension and fear from the production office, too. One morning, just as we were beginning rehearsals, the producer came down to the rehearsal room, something he never did. He stuck his head in the door and motioned for me to join him in the hallway. He spent the next few minutes telling me how I needed to be more in charge and take greater control of the rehearsal. He said that whenever I saw Gaylord and Vera getting into one of their drawn-out conversations or about to get into some conflict, I needed to step in and get the rehearsal back on track. As a stage manager, I had learned to do that, and in other shows I did it. Gaylord and Vera were something else. The few times I tried getting the rehearsal back on track, they glared at me, and then continued as they chose. I felt highly responsible to the producer, but felt helpless in doing as he instructed. I also felt it was unfair of him to transfer the responsibility for Gaylord's and Vera's behavior to the stage manager. They were professionals and should have remained responsible for their own actions. That sense of enjoyment and pleasure I once had for working on this show and working with Gaylord and Vera was fading fast.

Technical Rehearsals

Technical rehearsals came much too soon. We needed at least another week. Before I knew it, we were closing out the rehearsal hall, and I was driving up to San Francisco where we would do our techs, have previews, and have a tryout run before returning to LA. Fortunately, the PSM was on top of all that needed to be done in leaving the rehearsal hall, while I continued to work with Gaylord without interruption. From our perspective, the stage managers were prepared. The same could not be said for some of the technical departments. Once we got into techs, I felt a sense of relief. The PSM was now in full charge, and I was there as the ASM.

The show was technically very difficult. The set was new and innovative in design. It had many mechanical kinks to work out. The opening scene alone took a great amount of time. The scene started with an empty stage, with just a backdrop and some portals. Then, as the show began, the stage grew and filled with sets, props, lights, and people. It was a signature trademark of Gaylord's directing and staging. The cues were monumental for the PSM and I was glad just to be the ASM. I knew, however, later I would have to learn to call this sequence. I watched as it developed and was set.

In addition to all our internal problems, the theatre at which we were working had just been renovated from a movie house to a legitimate theatre. We were the first show to perform there. There were problems with some of the equipment installed in the backstage, which caused further delay and setbacks.

The stage manager's console was set up on stage right. The PSM instructed me to work from stage left and remain free to troubleshoot and facilitate wherever I was needed and most of all to keep him informed and apprised of all things. Whenever there was a problem onstage, I was the SM to step out on the stage to oversee and facilitate. This increased my visibility to Gaylord, who sat in the darkened theatre at the production table, and put me in the direct line of fire. Whenever Gaylord became dissatisfied or unhappy about something on stage he would call out my name over the God mic—the booming voice coming from out of the darkness. At first I did not mind being put in this position because I was being very helpful to the PSM. As I took care of the problems onstage the PSM was able to use the time to put cues in his cueing script and rewrite some of the ones that had already been set. However, as time grew short in the techs, Gaylord's fears turned into anger, and I became the object of all his ill feelings. He was merciless, attacking with ferocity, vengeance, and venom, anything he could use to get out his frustrations.

For the most part, stage managers learn to develop a thick skin, ignoring this kind of behavior from directors, and taking the abuse. I did quite well—for a while. While I was growing up I learned to be highly assertive and express whatever was bothering me. I sometimes did it aggressively, so I had to learn to keep that in check. In addition to all that I was experiencing from Gaylord, I was also feeling alone. The producer and PSM had their own problems, worries, and insecurities. They no longer had time to acknowledge my work or assure me my work still pleased them.

My skin was only so thick and the control I maintained over my aggressive behavior could hold out for only so long. With the next outburst and tirade aimed at me from Gaylord, I stood my ground at the apron of the stage and told him exactly what I thought. When I was through I felt justified and relieved. I left the theatre for a while to clear my head. As my anger subsided, a new set of thoughts and feelings settled in. What I had just done was not the thing to do. I felt I had broken a rule or code of being a stage manager. When I returned, I felt even more alone. No one came to console me. Some looked away; others talked of other things. The PSM didn't even ask where I had been for the past hour. In that moment of outburst at Gaylord, I had weakened myself as an SM. My action had no effect on Gaylord. He continued to work as he had been, finding someone to receive his abusive behavior. I did not, however, learn the lesson of this experience until after I left the show and had time to reflect more clearly.

That evening after rehearsals, at the local bar just outside the theatre, I did have a moment of consolation. It was what I needed and it came from Vera herself. "Sweetie, don't let Gaylord get to you. He thrives on that kind of stuff. It gives him power over you. He likes to find people's weaknesses, then see them squirm. The man's under a lot of pressure right now. He hasn't had a hit in years, and this show's gotta do it for him. For me, if it doesn't work, I can go back on the road." Then she added in confidence, "You know, I was the one who got him this job. No one would hire him. He's the right person for this show and I wouldn't do it unless he directed it. He's brilliant, but he's a nutcase. I just let him rage and carry on. Then when he's through, I do what I want anyway." I could not have been more consoled, and having it come from Vera Darling herself had even greater impact. We had a drink together and began a social friendship.

The closer we got to preview performance the stormier techs became. Battles and skirmishes flared up everywhere. There wasn't one person or one department who did not come under Gaylord's fire. During the quiet times, when everyone was out on meal break and the PSM and I remained to complete work, we would see Gaylord pensively walking the stage, solemn and glum. Darkness hung over him. His eyes were at times filled with storm and fury. Other times they were sorrowful and filled with fear. He would move about the set or sit on the prop bench. Sometimes he would do a step from one of the dances he had created, and other times he would measure out the performance space by taking long strides and counting the steps he took.

One could not help but feel for the man. Usually I went about my business and gave him his private time. One time, however, I tried making contact. I wanted to try to get back some of what we'd had in early days of rehearsals. I approached him and clumsily expressed myself. He listened and with dark eyes he stared at me. Then with hardness and powerful directness, he said, "Have more concern for your job and you'll be better off in this business." His words were crushing. I retreated like a wounded child. Later that evening after rehearsals, I was able to bounce back with more support from Vera over drinks. What I did not know at the time was that Gaylord's words were words of great wisdom and advice. I believe he was expressing the nature of the business and how as an SM I could be eaten alive if I didn't take care of myself. Instead, I took his words at face value, in the context of our present relationship.

The San Francisco Tryout

As expected, the technical rehearsal time was not nearly enough. The preview performances were upon us. Everyone swore it could not be done and predicted disaster for that first performance. It was amazing how smoothly everything went. There were glitches, but few were revealed to the audience. In preparation for any possible mistakes, just before the rise of the curtain for each preview performance, Vera would slip out on the apron of the stage to greet the audience. Within seconds she had them all charmed. Then, just before she left the stage, she would remind the audience that this was a preview by making a joke about the discounted prices they paid for their tickets, and how she needed the money. She'd add that the show was still being prepared for Broadway and that we were a work in progress, which allowed us to make mistakes or even stop the show if we had to. Of course we never stopped the show and with each performance the mistakes were fewer and fewer.

We were indeed a work in progress. The show changed daily. We'd rehearse all day, and then perform the show at night with the changes. As stage managers, our day began at the theatre at 10:00 am and lasted to about midnight, sometimes until 1:00 am, especially when we had to meet with Gaylord after the show. My day started even earlier. Most mornings, I would meet Vera and a small contingency of her entourage at the coffee shop to have breakfast and go over schedule, script changes, or just generally socialize—which really consisted of Vera telling old show-biz war stories, which I loved hearing.

The show finally opened. The evening was a gala event. It was heavily covered by the San Francisco press. The press, however, was asked not to review the show until the second or third week of our run. They were most accommodating and waited. They wrote articles on us, repeating Vera's words that we were a work in progress. Gaylord stayed with us for one more week, and then left us for three weeks. His plan was to give everyone a rest, let the show play, and then when he returned he would make whatever changes were necessary.

Normally, within the second week of any show, the ASM begins learning and calling the cues for the show. With this show, the PSM decided it would be best if we waited until after we opened in LA. "Let's not give Gaylord anything more to pick on," he said. It was okay with me! This was not an easy show and there were some killer scene changes that took place right in front of the audience. We had a long run ahead of us and there would be plenty of time to call the show. Besides, I was still busy backstage overseeing and troubleshooting.

The PSM's Turn

In the third week Gaylord returned. Surprisingly, it was nice to have him back. He was rested and a lot more civil—for a few days anyway. The changes he made in the show were neither as many nor as great as we thought they would be. Once again, we rehearsed every day and performed every night. On matinee days he had the cast come in an hour earlier just to give notes.

Each night before the cast leaves the theatre, and if there is to be a rehearsal for the next day, the stage manager is required by Equity to have posted the rehearsal call. Management is required to give the cast twelve hours' notice. If the rehearsal is being called by the director, it is a common practice for the stage manager to get the schedule from the director during intermission and post the notice sometime during the second act. Sometimes we'd see Gaylord during intermission and he would give us the schedule, but other times he would not show up backstage until after the performance. During the times we did not see him, the cast would have to wait until we got the information. Of course we preferred getting and posting the information early and not making the cast wait.

On one particular evening the PSM saw Gaylord backstage during intermission, giving the actors notes. For whatever reason, Gaylord was in one of his moods. When the PSM asked him for the rehearsal schedule, Gaylord snapped, "How can I give you the rehearsal call when I haven't seen the rest of the show?" The PSM, caught off guard, retorted, "The same as you have any other night since previews. You know the Equity rule!" With a few profane expletives, Gaylord told us what he thought of Equity and disappeared somewhere backstage.

To keep the cast informed, to prepare them to wait after the performance, and to keep them from coming to us and asking what the schedule was, before the intermission was over, the PSM posted a notice on the callboard saying there would be a rehearsal for the next day, but we would get the information after the performance. The PSM posted the notice, called places and was ready to start the second act, when all of a sudden we saw Gaylord coming across the stage toward the stage manager's console at a very quick pace. He had crumpled in his hand the PSM's notice. "How dare you overstep my authority! I had already told the kids there would be no rehearsal tomorrow!" The PSM, being a person of greater presence and experience than myself, allowed Gaylord to rave. When the PSM decided he'd had all he could take, he asked Gaylord to leave the backstage so that he could start the show. Gaylord became even more enraged. The PSM ignored him and went about his business. Gaylord left. Before the PSM brought up the curtain for the second act, he called me over to his console and said, "Stand by me and start learning the show. By the end of this week, I am out of here!"

The PSM turned in his notice that very night. Next morning I was called early and told to be in the producer's office at 9:00 sharp. I was worried. As much as I liked being a PSM, I did not want to be one on this show. To my great relief, the producer talked the PSM out of quitting. He thanked us both for doing a job above and beyond what a stage manager should endure. He jokingly added, "I told you it was going to be hell. That's why I wanted you two guys."

Vera's Madness

The reviews came out. Generally they complimented Gaylord's work but were extremely hard on Vera. Their greatest complaint was that she was too old for the part. Vera swore she did not read reviews, but from that point, she changed. The critics hit a tender spot. Vera loved being the senior member of the group she had gathered around her. It was okay for her to make jokes about her age, but she got angry when someone else even approached the subject. On official documents she only included the month and day of her birth, never the year.

By the time the reviews came out, Gaylord was back in New York, scheduled to return the week before we were to go to Los Angeles. During this time Vera became isolated from everyone except for Daisy and Frank, Vera's hairdresser and driver. They were now her constant companions. Practically everyone had to go through them to get to Vera. My breakfast meetings with Vera were cut off. Daisy said Miss Darling was tired and wanted to sleep in the mornings.

Vera found fault with everything. She complained that the ensemble performers were unprofessional. They upstaged and distracted her. Her costumes, which were once acceptable, were now wretched and she wanted all new ones. The designer had to be flown in to appease her and redo many of them. Vera said some of the principal performers had changed their parts and wanted the stage management to rehearse them back to the way Gaylord had directed them. When we watched the performances, when we approached the actors, and when we checked our blocking notes, very little change had occurred—certainly not enough to call a rehearsal. We reported our findings to Vera and she became irate. She lashed out at the PSM. "Don't tell me what I see onstage. I didn't start in this business yesterday!" Any messages Vera had for the stage managers were now verbally delivered by Daisy. Before each performance we'd see Daisy steamrolling across the stage. We nicknamed her the Sherman Tank. Daisy thrived on this part of her job. She delivered the messages with relish, great authority, and a righteous air.

No area went untouched by Vera. She now set her sights on the lighting of the show. In a note to the stage managers, which was of course delivered by Daisy, Vera said the blue lights in the night scene made her look sick and haggard. She wanted more pink light onstage. Adding pink light would destroy the night effect the lighting designer had created and the director wanted. The PSM went to Vera's dressing room and assured her that although the lights onstage were blue, she was in a soft lavender spotlight and the brightness of the spotlight overrode the blue lights onstage. Again she attacked. "Blue lights and green lights are murder on flesh tones. I don't care how many lavender spotlights you have on me!" Her suggestion was that the stage manager have some of the ensemble performers come onstage with lanterns, which would give a reason to bring up more pink light on stage. The PSM brought the suggestion to the lighting designer and the designer refused. However, in a few days we saw the prop man coming in

with six lanterns and the head electrician informed the PSM that by order of the producer, a new light cue, bringing up pink light, had been added to the show.

The conductor of the orchestra was next to come under fire. During one of the performances, as sometimes happens, the conductor accelerated the speed and tempo of the big dance number in the second act, which ran almost eight minutes and in which Vera danced almost all of that time. Even the dancers came off huffing and puffing that night. The conductor acknowledged his mistake and before the next performance he went around to everyone and personally apologized. The man was an experienced and excellent conductor, having conducted many shows on Broadway, and he was usually very consistent in his work. When he approached Vera's dressing room, she refused to see him, saying she had to get ready for the show. Within a few days the conductor was gone and a music director with whom Vera had worked on other shows took over.

Vera was on a mission. She was determined to save the show and insisted on many changes. She changed her part considerably, much of which was in direct opposition to Gaylord's direction. By this time the producer had returned to Los Angeles, but the PSM kept him informed with daily calls. Generally, there seemed to be a lack of response to anything the PSM reported to the production office. It was as if someone had proclaimed a hands-off policy, and Vera was free to do as she chose.

Last Week in San Francisco

Once again, as planned, Gaylord returned in the last week of San Francisco to prepare us for our run in Los Angeles. On the first evening of his return he saw the performance. We did not see him at intermission. When he came backstage after the performance he passed the stage manager's console without stopping, but saying on the run, "Take out all those ridiculous lanterns in the night scene and put the lights back to the way I had them!" He streaked across the stage, going directly to Vera's dressing room. He ordered everyone out, even Vera's guests who had come to see the performance that night. For the next two hours he and Vera went at it, head to head. We could not hear what was being said, but there was a lot of yelling. Daisy stayed glued to the door, straining to hear. At one point she tried entering the room and we heard Gaylord yell, "*Get out!*" Daisy sent the rest of the entourage home. Only she and Frank remained. The PSM and I stayed a while longer, but then we left, too. Next day we got a full account from the doorman who said he ended up leaving at 1:00 am after everyone left.

The next day was matinee day, so there was no rehearsal, but for the rest of the week, on every day the Equity rules allowed, we rehearsed. Each day Gaylord had the principal performers come in along with Vera's under-study. He would make his changes, usually bringing the show back to the way he had directed it. Then around 4:00 pm he had Vera come in. Between the understudy and the stage managers, Vera was given the changes while Gaylord disappeared. He would return with just enough time to run Vera and the actors through the changes and disappear again, leaving Vera and the cast to the stage managers to dismiss.

The Los Angeles Run

Moving the show to Los Angeles was like starting technical rehearsals all over, but only in a more consolidated fashion. Gaylord rehearsed the cast at the rehearsal hall while the crew set up the show at the theatre. Once all the technical elements were set up, the cast moved to the theatre and we went into technical rehearsals for two days.

The opening in LA was a gala, but not the event it was in SF. Generally, the show received better reviews. Vera was complimented on parts of her performance, but her age continued to be an issue. However, we did not think the opening performance would even take place. Vera came in that afternoon wrapped in a winter coat, speaking in hushed tones and whispers, pantomiming much of her conversation, and practically turned her dressing room into a hospital. She said, or rather Daisy said, that Vera had a throat infection and she was under the doctor's care. Gaylord was the only one who showed little concern: "I've yet to see Miss Vera miss a performance, let alone an opening night." An hour before the half-hour call, the doctor came with his magic medicine, and shortly after he left, Daisy came out to announce that Vera would be performing that night but that before the overture began Vera wanted to make a curtain speech to the audience.

Vera was simple and effective. In a hushed foggy voice, she told the audience she had been sick all day and that if in the musical numbers she should bray like a mule then the audience should please forgive her. In her sincerest voice,

with perhaps a tear in her eye, she said that she had never missed a performance, and she didn't want to disappoint the wonderful people who had come tonight (she got generous applause). She thanked the audience for their support and added, "If you are dissatisfied, *please*, tell the lovely people at the box office, and your money will be refunded or you can come back another time as my personal guest" followed by a (bigger applause, with a few whistles and a catcall of "Thata girl, Vera!"). Vera knew how to work the room.

In the truest tradition of the theatre, the show went on. Vera performed beautifully. In her first song she was shaky, just enough to make us all nervous. In the reprise, she cracked, but went on to the big finish. By the third song, the symptoms of her illness were all but gone. In the big dance number in the second act, she sang and danced with magnificent energy and spirit. At the end of the scene, the audience cheered and applauded longer than they ever had for this number. Backstage, the cast members surrounded Vera, congratulating her as Daisy intervened and whisked Vera off for her costume for the final scene.

During the last scene of the performance that night, whoever was not onstage watched from the wings. This was the stuff of which drama was made. We had seen this scene many times in one of those MGM movies. The applause that night warranted six extra curtain bows. We were all certain we had a hit on our hands and we were ready to settle in for an extended tour across the country, and then a long run on Broadway. The opening-night party was the most exciting I had ever attended. Vera, being fashionably late, made an entrance more grand and more spectacular than I had ever seen. Again, it was an MGM entrance. Gaylord did not attend.

The next day the story of Vera's illness was in the trade papers and in all the city newspapers. Even the tabloids, within the week, carried a twisted and somewhat perverted story on the event. That evening, Vera once again came to the theatre wrapped in winter clothing and was back to whispering. Once again, the good doctor came, and once again after the doctor had left Daisy announced to the stage managers that Miss Darling would perform, adding that Miss Darling wanted to give her curtain speech again. Almost word for word, Vera repeated her speech from the night before, promising a refund or a return as her guest. In fact, she repeated her whole performance. She was shaky in her first song, cracked in the reprise, and went on to the big finish. She was as spirited in the big dance number in the second act, but this time for the final scene, there weren't as many people backstage watching from the wings. Vera continued for almost a week making her preshow curtain speech, even after the doctor stopped coming and she no longer had to whisper when she talked.

Spiraling Downward

After the opening in LA, the quality of life backstage became less stormy. Gaylord was back in New York and whatever problems Vera had, the producer was close at hand and dealt with them daily. All their business was done behind closed doors and that was a relief to the rest of the company. We knew there was unrest with our star, but we all slipped into complacency, secretly hoping the past was behind us and it would be smooth sailing from here on. Well, it wasn't! Problems in every area popped up. The stage management had its share.

Throughout my career, I have experienced that the stage manager is expected to be perfect in the job in all ways and at all times. This was not something I thought for myself but rather picked up from the way peers, associates, and superiors reacted each time a stage manager made a mistake. They seemed intolerant, showed little forgiveness, or displayed little understanding or compassion.

In a less complicated production, the stage manager's continuous perfection is easily achieved. In a show, especially in a musical, or in a musical Gaylord directs, expectations for sustained perfection are unreasonable and are not humanly possible. The stage manager is going to make mistakes. However, in my drive to do my best, I did not take into account the degree of difficulty of the show. When I started calling the cues for the performances, my expectations for perfection were even higher than others expected of me. That became a calling card for unhappiness and eventually disaster. I had my share of imperfection.

The "Ha!" Cue

Being a master at his craft and art, and creative and innovative too, Gaylord knew how to create magic and illusion in the theatre. Being a choreographer, he was very much aware of timing, counts, and intricate moves. He loved doing set changes in view of the audience. He loved building the stage from nothing into something, as he did with the

opening. For a stage manager, calling cues for one of Gaylord's shows was like conducting a symphony. It demanded perfect timing and most times any mistakes became magnified and glaring.

In the first big dance number of the show, Gaylord once again started with an empty stage. Vera, as the character she was portraying, was alone on the stage silhouetted against a cyc, which was lit in blue and filled the back part of the stage. From behind the stage right proscenium a hand pops out (spotlight pickup), and a finger beckons Vera. Vera takes the hand and for the next thirty-seven counts of music a line of dancers appears, one by one, dressed in characters that were in the mind of Vera's character and imagination. The number built beautifully and was a major contribution to this new version of the show. From the start all of us in the company loved the number. I was thrilled to see it being created, growing, and developing before my very eyes in rehearsals. I was certain I was witnessing theatre history. We were all sure it would become as famous as the "mirror" dance in *A Chorus Line*, the "small house of Uncle Thomas" production number from *The King and I*, or the "dance at the gym" in *West Side Story*.

On the thirty-seventh count, when all the dancers/characters were out on the stage, everyone was directed to say "Ha!" in a soft whisper, and at the same time the stage manager was directed to call a light cue that popped on a change of lights. For everyone this became the "Ha! Cue." Simple enough? Sounds like it should be, but it wasn't. Both the PSM and myself had a very difficult time calling this cue with the perfection and timing Gaylord wanted.

Without going into a lot of explanation and excuse making, let it be sufficient to say that the cue was problematic for the stage managers and a sore point for both Gaylord and Vera. One day Vera asked me, "Are you ever going to get the 'Ha Cue' right?" I apologized and tried to explain. She was not open to anything I had to say. Her only comment was, "Well, it certainly does not help the show." I felt even worse than I had. It wasn't until the second week in our LA run that I finally stumbled upon the right timing. When it happened and the light onstage popped on at the perfect moment, Vera did one of her famous, clownish double takes. The audience laughed and applauded. Each performance thereafter, Vera reacted to the light coming on, but it never played as spontaneously or got nearly the same audience reaction.

The Curtain Bows

While in preview performances in SF, it was decided that if there were to be additional curtain bows after those that had been set by Gaylord, Vera would be in control (and not the stage managers as is usually the case). Vera was to signal the stage manager to bring up the curtain for the additional bows. Although this was an established plan, it was never executed because the bows set by Gaylord were extensive, and after they were taken the applause did not warrant more bows. Generally, the plan was forgotten. However, on one particular night, one or two days after Vera and Gaylord had their big blowout in her dressing room, Vera decided to exercise her option to take additional bows.

Unfortunately, I was calling the show that evening. The applause was barely strong enough to carry through the bows Gaylord had set, let alone any extra bows. After I called what I thought was our final bow, I called the cue for the house curtain to come in and for the house lights to come up. Seeing the house lights was the conductor's cue to begin the exit music. On this night Vera signaled to me for the extra bows. I did not see her and was already making notes in the stage manager's log. When Vera heard the music, she came storming offstage to the stage manager's console. "Didn't you see me signal you for extra bows?"

"No. In all this time we have never taken extra bows. Truthfully, I had forgotten all about it!"

"You're supposed to be a professional. You're suppose to do what the director sets, not what you decide," and she stormed off to her dressing room, with Daisy close behind.

About ten minutes later, Gaylord came storming across the stage toward the stage manager's console. Even before he reached me at the console, he started shouting, "DON'T YOU EVER change something that I have set. When a star of Miss Darling's standing wants to take an extra curtain bow, YOU GIVE IT TO HER!" and he too stormed away.

There I stood, totally perplexed. I thought to myself, "Have I gone mad? Where did I go wrong? How did this become my fault?" I told the PSM of the incident. I was left with the impression he was glad it did not happen to him. He gave no support or consolation. He just warned me to watch for Vera's signal. From that evening on, Vera never again signaled to take extra bows, even on opening night in Los Angeles.

Several years later while on a sound stage in Hollywood, I was visiting one of the principal performers who had been in the show. He was now starring in his own TV series. As we recalled the incident, he said, "Don't you know what was going on back then? You were a pawn in a vicious fight between Vera and Gaylord. If you remember, that

was right after Gaylord and Vera had their big blowout. Vera was now getting back at Gaylord. This was one of the ways she could show him that she was still in control, by taking extra bows.”

“But why did Gaylord come down so hard on me? I would have thought he would have at least understood,” I asked with the same perplexed feelings I had back then.

My friend smiled and said, “Foolish boy! His reaction was all for show. To make things look better between him and Vera and to show he still supported her.”

The Portrait Cue

For this next incident I take full responsibility. I had become distracted at the moment the cue should have been called. There is a Murphy-like law for stage managers when calling cues during an extended run of a show: the cues that are easy become hard, and the hard cues become easy. The hard cues become easy because the SM studies them and becomes concentrated and stays focused when they come up in the performance. With an easy cue, the stage manager is confident from the start and during the run of the show becomes too comfortable. Thus, the cue can be missed. The portrait cue was one of those cues for me.

The portrait cue came in that part of the show where Vera stood under a ten-foot portrait of her character and sang a very moving and poignant song. The number was simply staged. The lights were dimmed part way with a glow on the portrait, while Vera stood in a soft pink spotlight.

Just prior to the cue, I had become momentarily distracted. When I looked out on the stage, I wondered why the stage felt and looked so different. Then it hit me—*the lights! The cue!* My heart sank. My mind raced wildly. What should I do? Should I have the lightboard operator manually bring up the cue slowly? No, that would distract Vera. Leave it alone—keep it simple. The cue being missing does not hurt the play. The audience will never know there was supposed to be a light change there. So I made the decision not to have the cue executed, and said to the lightboard operators over my headset, “Guys, I missed the cue. We won’t bring it up now, we’ll just move on to the next cue when the time comes.”

The missing light cue did not seem to affect Vera or her performance. I had hoped she might not have been aware of it what with the bright spotlight shining in her eyes. I should have known better. During intermission, Daisy came steamrolling across the stage. She delivered the message full out. She made no effort to temper her words or the feelings she expressed on Vera’s behalf. I felt absolutely awful. I didn’t want this to ruin the rest of Vera’s performance. I thought if I went to her and apologized now, instead of waiting until after the show, it would relieve some of her anger. I went to Vera’s dressing room. Daisy raced ahead of me. She opened the door to warn Vera. “I don’t want to talk to him!” I heard Vera yell out. “How dare he come in the middle of my performance to talk about this. Isn’t it bad enough he ruined the scene?”

The Chicken Caper

While in the middle of each event, each skirmish with Vera, it was like living through an earthquake. Things happened quickly and without warning. One moment I was going along doing my job perfectly; the next moment my world was turned upside down. All I could do was try to get myself to a protected place and hold on. This next event had to do with a chicken’s head.

In the play, Vera’s character is required to shoot off the head of a metal, weathervane chicken, placed high above a set piece over on stage left. Of course, we used blank ammunition, and of course the chicken’s head was rigged to pop off, and of course this was a critical cue for the stage manager. It required exact timing to create the illusion that the chicken’s head had indeed been shot off.

To get my best timing, each time that it was this point in the show I would stand in the stage right wing to call this cue. From this vantage point, Vera was standing in profile to me and very close to the stage right wing. I could see clearly as she pulled the trigger. Just as she squeezed, I’d call the GO! part of the cue. This allowed enough time for the electrician to react and push the button that activated the solenoid, which in turn popped off the chicken’s head. It was a fun moment for both me and the audience: for me, because I had perfect timing in calling this cue, and for the audience, because the illusion was so good. Of course, Vera made the laugh even greater by her comic antics.

On this particular night, I stood in the wing as usual. As Vera squeezed the trigger, I called the GO! The rifle fired, but the chicken's head did not pop off. All we could hear was the electrical buzzing sound of the solenoid, trying to free itself to make the chicken's head pop off. Vera, never expecting this to happen, gave a double take. The audience went into hysterics. Both Vera and I were surprised. Of course, Vera took full advantage of the moment and began ad-libbing as she cocked her rifle. The empty cartridge ejected from the rifle and landed on the stage floor. As Vera took aim, I warned the electrician to stand by to execute the cue again. Vera squeezed the trigger, and I called the GO! The rifle fired, but still the chicken's head did not pop off. There was just the buzzing sound of the solenoid. This time Vera, as her character, pretended to be angry and determined to shoot the head off of this chicken. She shuffled her feet as a bull would just before he is ready to attack. She planted herself squarely into position and cocked the rifle. Another empty cartridge ejected on to the stage floor. She took aim, squeezed, and once again I called the GO! Still, the chicken's head did not pop off. Out of frustration and anger as the character, Vera threw her rifle aside, picked an empty cartridge from the stage floor, and threw it at the chicken. Just at that moment the chicken's head popped off. The show was stopped. Vera spent the next three or four minutes working the audience. At one point she came to the wing in which I was standing and pulled me out on to the stage, headset and all. In pantomime she indicated that it was my fault the chicken's head did not pop off. The audience loved this and applauded. Then, with an Italian gesture of brushing the fingertips under her chin, which loosely translated means *good-for-nothing*, Vera sent me back offstage. It was taken in good fun and I thought nothing more of it.

Next morning in both of the trade papers and in the city newspapers, there was a story praising Vera's genius improvisation, and discrediting "a very forgetful stage manager." I didn't know it at the time, but Vera's manager had called the different papers, getting out the story for the publicity. I was annoyed that it made me look incompetent, but was not concerned because I was not mentioned by name, and the people who mattered, like my bosses, knew the real story. Two days later, in a radio interview, Vera told this story to the interviewer, but at the end she said, "The stage manager said that it was a mechanical error, but I think he forgot his cue."

I was flabbergasted, shocked, hurt, and angry. How could she possibly think that and say that! The most inexperienced person in theatre would know that it was a mechanical error. I went to the theatre early that night to allow time to talk with Vera. When I questioned her on the matter she looked me directly in the eyes and coldly said, "Well, honey, didn't you forget?"

I was shocked even more. I asked if she saw me in the wing that night. I reasoned with her, saying, "Yes, I could have missed it one time, but certainly not a second and third time!" I asked if she heard the solenoid buzzing. None of that seemed to matter. Vera was convinced that the chicken's head not popping off was my mistake. Even sending the electrician to her dressing room made no difference. I could not understand her unreasonable behavior. I should have known at that time I was history. That Italian gesture meant more than *good-for-nothing*—it was "*la bacca morte*," "the kiss of death." I had two more scenes to play out before my demise and fatal day.

The PSM and I

Things also happened when the PSM called the show. With the show being so technically difficult and the timing so critical, the PSM and I were always thankful to get through a performance without error. If there had to be error, we prayed it was hidden from both the audience and Vera.

Vera attacked the PSM, too, but she didn't seem to hold his mistakes against him with the same voracity. Also, it appeared that I made more mistakes because I called most of the shows during the week. Normally, the PSM and the ASM share more equally the number of shows each calls during the week. On this show, once I learned the cues, the PSM only called one of the shows on the matinee days. This meant I was calling a show every day—six shows to the PSM's two. This, of course, gave me greater visibility to Vera and increased the chances that if an error was to take place, I was the stage manager doing the job.

The Flood of Blue Lights

This next episode was spread over three performances. To set up this next incident, we must go back to the night scene and those blue lights that Vera hated. At one point in the scene Vera goes through a door and behind a flat of scenery, as if she had gone into her bedroom. She continues the scene by yelling out dialogue from behind the flat, or popping

her head through a cutout window in the flat. While doing all of this, Daisy and two dressers are also behind the flat, hidden from view of the audience, helping Vera to change into a formal and an elaborately dressed and styled wig for the next scene, the big dance number in the second act—the eleven o'clock number.

During each performance, when Vera left to go behind the scenery, I'd call cue sixty-five. With this cue, whatever white light was onstage became lower, more blue night light was added, and the light around the window became brighter, drawing the audience's attention to Vera as she popped her head in and out.

On this particular night, as the lights changed to cue sixty-five, the area just behind the flat, where Vera was getting dressed, became flooded with blue light. That would not have been so bad, because Vera was not modest. She had no problem if the crew or cast members saw her when she stripped down to her bra and pants, as she had to do in one other change in the wings during the show. This time, however, parts of the audience could see her—those who sat on the extreme sides and in the third balcony. She had to huddle close to the back of the scenery so as not to be seen and at the same time continue her dialogue and get dressed.

These were the days before computer-operated light-boards were used. This was a time when we were still using those large dimmer boards backstage, which required several stagehands to run. Chances of an extra switch, lever, or dimmer being brought up with a cue were greater, and in every long-running show, it happened at least once if not several times. This is part of the reason why stage managers make it a habit to watch the lights onstage as a light cue is being executed.

On this night, I saw the blue lights come up on Vera. Immediately, I called through my headset to the head electrician on the lightboard, "Blue lights! You got some extra blue lights on the stage and they're flooding behind the flat where Vera is getting dressed!"

The electrician checked all the settings of the dimmers and reported back, "We got no extra dimmers up back here. Every dimmer up is supposed to be up!" Meanwhile, Vera, Daisy, and the dressers were waving their arms furiously to get my attention and pointing to the blue lights. I acknowledged them with a wave and continued my conversation with the head electrician. "I'm telling you, either you or one of your men has an extra dimmer up and Vera is having a fit!" The electrician checked again, and again he reported back that he could find nothing out of place. By this time Vera was nearly dressed. The worst was over and it was time to call the cues to change the lights and the scenery into the next scene, which was done in view of the audience.

Within seconds of the scene ending and as the scenery changed Daisy was at my console wanting to know what had happened and was telling me how mad Vera was, and that if she could have, Vera would have come right off the stage and slapped me in the face. I thought that to be strange professional behavior and passed it off as what Daisy was saying and not Vera. Finally I said, "Daisy, I have a show to run! I'll talk to Vera after the show."

At the end of the show, no sooner did the curtain fall than Daisy was steaming across the stage toward me. "Vera wants to see you. Now!"

Vera was blazing mad—madder than I had ever seen her before. Her eyes bulged. She allowed me no space to speak and explain. She said that she was sick and tired of my excuses—that it was my job as the stage manager to see that these things didn't happen—and if they did, I was to correct them right away. She accused me of ignoring her and the dressers as they tried to get my attention. Now the fires within me flamed, but she would not hear anything I had to say. She blocked her ears and screamed, "I don't want to hear anymore about this!" Daisy came running to her rescue and pulled me out of the room.

I was so angry, so frustrated, so confused that all I could do was go to some secluded stairwell and let out exasperated yells—several of them. It felt good. The sound echoed up and down the stairs and I'm sure reverberated into the building. I didn't care. However, I did not sleep most of that night. My instincts told me to go to the production office in the morning and quit, but I didn't. I didn't want to give up the job, the weekly salary, the long run, and the chance to work on Broadway. Next day was matinee day, and I went in to work, determined this would be the beginning of a new day. I would set my feelings aside and do the job without error. That in itself was a mistake. Perfection on this show was impossible, and yet that was the standard I set for myself. Was I working toward my own demise?

During that afternoon in calling the cues for the performance, I was doing quite well—not one mistake, not one glitch in timing. I was achieving my goal of perfection. I had no concerns about cue sixty-five. I was certain one of the stagehands working the boards had made a mistake and perhaps the head electrician was covering for his man, especially because of Vera's reaction. But, I'll be damned, those blue lights came up again, and again Vera squirmed and pressed against the scenery. In addition, Vera yelled out at me, in a very loud stage whisper, some descriptive and profane adjectives, in reference to my character and my work as a stage manager. Over the headset, I ordered the head electrician to leave the boards and come into the wings where I was standing. He did and we looked. He could not see any extra blue lights lit other than the ones above our heads in the stage right wing that were supposed to be lit. I

dreaded the coming of the end of the performance, but after the curtain fell, I heard nothing from Vera's encampment. Daisy did not descend upon me.

Being a matinee day, immediately following the performance, everyone went to dinner and did not have to be back until the half-hour call. Without discussing it with or getting approval from the PSM, I ordered the TD and the crew to stay after the show, cutting into their mealtime. I asked for the scenery for the night scene to be set up along with the lights for cue sixty-five. I didn't care if it would cost the producer overtime and penalty. The crew was annoyed with me. They felt I was overreacting. They promised they would check the matter at half-hour, but that was too late for me. By then the audience would be coming in and if the blue lights out front needed to be adjusted, they couldn't without raising the curtain and revealing the stage to the audience.

With great reluctance they did as I asked. I buckled somewhat under their feelings when the TD said that we didn't need to fly in the flat behind which Vera stood to get dressed. He said we knew where on the stage the piece landed and that we could just stand there in its place. We did, and there shining in our eyes were blue lights coming from the stage right wing. I said, "It's those blue lights hanging on the light tree." The electrician checked his cue sheet and reported that those lights were supposed to be on. "Maybe they got moved and are now out of focus," I suggested.

"That's not possible," the electrician said. "They're locked off. Nothing flies past them from the flies, and we don't have scenery going in and out of the wings that goes up that high." I deferred my instincts to his experience, assumed I was wrong, and we all went to dinner.

That night, the PSM, the head electrician, and I stood in the wings and as I called cue sixty-five, we watched the blue lights come up and flood on Vera. This time Vera pushed the dressers away and without regard for the audience, called out to the PSM, sotto voce, "Is that (she used the same profane and descriptive adjectives in reference to me) ever gonna get this cue right?"

The next day the crew was brought in to set up the scenery and refocus the blue lights. The problem was resolved. The PSM and TD explained to Vera and spoke on my behalf. She listened but she didn't seem to hear. Her only comment was, "I've had other problems with him. Problems only seem to happen when he's calling the show!"

Epilogue to the Blue Lights

There is a tag or epilogue to this incident. It does not, however, change the course of my fate at the time. During a performance about a week later I was standing in the wing. I called cue sixty-five. The lights came up. Everything was as it should be except that there was strong blue light hitting the edge of the flat behind which Vera was standing and it was just beginning to spill over behind the flat. I need not tell you the fear that came over me. I stepped back to look up at the blue lights above my head in the stage right wing. As I did, several dancers moved into the wing to get ready for the next scene. As part of keeping their bodies warm and limber while they waited, they continued to stretch and bend. As I looked up, I saw the light units that projected the blue lights on the stage shake. When I looked among the dancers, there was one dancer holding on to the pole of the light tree with both hands doing deep knee bends. With each movement he made, the blue lights above vibrated and shook.

I called the cues for the scenery to change into the next scene. Then while everyone was onstage, I went to the pole of the light tree. First I shook it. Naturally, the lights above shook and vibrated. Then I placed both of my hands on the pole, as I had seen the dancer do, and I twisted. The pole moved ever so slightly. So slightly, in fact, that I was not sure it had moved at all. I tried it again and again. Each time the pole moved a fraction of an inch. I gasped. I was shocked and at the same time elated. So this was how the blue lights had been knocked out of focus and flooded behind the flat and on Vera! In that moment I felt relieved and vindicated. After the performance, I announced my discovery to the world. No one seemed to be impressed. The PSM put up a notice on the callboard asking everyone not to touch the poles to the light trees and the incident was forgotten. I had hoped this new information would change Vera's mind about me. It didn't, and it didn't stop what was to happen next.

Mechanical Failure

When the axe fell, it was swift and final. It came in the scene in which Vera was placed on a trapeze at center stage by some of the ensemble performers. They'd spin the trapeze around and at the same time I'd call cues for the trapeze to

be raised up to a thirteen-foot level above the stage, and for the lights to change. With the change of lights, the stage was plummeted into darkness, with only a very bright pool of light (pink) coming from above.

Once the trapeze reached high trim, Vera took out a six-shooter she wore in a holster at her side and would shoot upstage toward a black backdrop. With each shot, a giant star lit up on the backdrop. For the climax to this spectacle, Vera took out another six-shooter, and as she fired shots in rapid succession, I called cues that sent the stars spinning and the lights chasing.

After Vera's final gunshot, I called a series of other cues that brought the trapeze down to stage level, changed the lights, and started the scenery changing. As this was happening, the ensemble performers were directed to enter stage from all directions, help Vera off the trapeze, lift her on to their shoulders, and carry her off to stage left in celebration and jubilation. This scene change and transition was not as involved as some of the others, but it was dangerous because of the number of performers onstage. If a cue for the scenery to move on and off stage was called at the wrong timing, someone could be injured.

On this particular ill-fated night, after the trapeze was spun around, I called the cues for both the trapeze to ascend and the lights to change. The trapeze started upward, the stage plummeted into darkness, but there was no bright pool of pink light coming from above. Vera was left in total darkness as she ascended to a high point, while twirling around on the trapeze. All my greatest fears and worst nightmares as a stage manager came full blown. I yelled into the headset, "John, bring up the pink special above Vera!"

He yelled back, "I did!"

I yelled back, "It's not on—she's in the dark!"

Through the headset I could hear John scuffling, turning on and off the switch that brought up the pool of pink light. "I think it's broken," he yelled out. "I'll have to patch it in to something else!" Meanwhile, I could hear Vera yelling out things at me in full voice. I was panicked. "John, bring up some light—any light!" Vera started shooting. "Forget the stage lights! Start bringing up the stars!"

Vera was now silhouetted against the lighted stars, and if I added any other light to the stage, it would have revealed the black drop on which the stars were mounted and would have spoiled the illusion of the stars being suspended. I didn't notice that night, but someone told me later that, when Vera shot her gun, she didn't aim it at the backdrop as she normally did, but rather shot off into the wing where I stood at the stage manager's console.

On Vera's final shot, I called the cues for the trapeze to come down to stage level and for the lights to change. This time, however, Vera did not allow the ensemble performers to pick her up onto their shoulders, to carry her off stage left. Instead, she pushed them aside and made a beeline to stage right, directly toward me. The ensemble performers were confused and uncertain. They were now scattered all over the stage and standing in places where the scenery was coming in. Some followed Vera off; others drifted into different wings. I had all I could do to watch and see that no one got hurt. Meanwhile, in my peripheral vision, I could see Vera coming at me. When she reached me, she began beating on me and kicking, using abusive language fit only for a barroom brawl. I held up one arm to protect myself and I must confess my language became equally abusive as I tried to ward off Vera and make the set change at the same time.

Upon completion of the set change, I lost all control and my senses. I ripped off my headset and dove into the group that by now had surrounded Vera. It was the only time in my life I felt murder in my heart. Fortunately, it was too late. Daisy had pulled Vera back, and three stage-hands grabbed me and took me from out of the backstage area. I cannot tell you what happened for the rest of the performance. The PSM took over calling the show, and I was sent home.

Next morning, I was called and ordered to be in the producer's office by 9:00 am. When I arrived, no time was wasted. The producer and his associate told me I was being taken off the show, to which I felt great relief. They said I was being paid two weeks' salary, and that I would no longer be working for the production company. Ever again. I sincerely thought the last part of their statement was a joke. I smiled, but they were serious. The producer and his associate felt that I was incapable of working as a stage manager. They said I was combative and prone to emotional outbursts. They preached how a stage manager, under any conditions, must maintain composure, propriety, and calmness. I then spent the next hour trying to understand the producer's reversal toward me and my work. Did my past work record not count for anything? Did they not take into account the people with whom I was working and how they themselves said that this would be a difficult job? No, they didn't. Their responses were vague and evasive. They said Vera had written in her contract approval of everyone who worked on the show and that they had to let me go. I understood that part, but why would they not hire me to work on other shows? They remained cold and distant, returning to how I had behaved with Gaylord during techs and now with Vera. They continued to say I was no longer fit to be a stage manager. This, of course, was devastating.

On the second day after the incident, the entire story was in the trade paper. Vera's manager was once again at work, getting as much publicity out for the show as he could. The story, as told to the newspapers, was written to make Vera a victim of an incompetent stage manager, whom they now named. They made Vera look like a hero for surviving the

ordeal high on the trapeze. By the end of the week the local papers had picked up the story, the tabloids reworked it to make it even more sensational, and two months later, a friend working in London read about it in a British magazine.

Needless to say, the time that followed was not the best of times. I felt a range of emotions. I looked to Actors' Equity for help, but they were limited in what they could do. I was told this would pass and that it was not the end of my career. They were right, but at that time I could not see it that way. There were no other companies in town that produced the same caliber of shows. The only thing I seemed to have left was to go back to working at the things I did when I was in between jobs, waiting for the next big show.

Vera and the show never made it to Broadway. It toured in a few cities but then closed. There was a part of me that was glad. Two years later, the producing company that had fired me went out of business. I was saddened but at the same time relieved, because each time I read in the papers about their next production, I went into a state of depression. Shortly afterward, the associate producer who was present when I was fired called and offered me the PSM position in a show he was independently producing. I was flabbergasted. He never offered information on what had happened with the Vera incident and we never talked about it. I worked for him on this production and at the end he gave me a bonus check for the good work I had done. We became good friends and working associates, and our families have gathered on many social outings since then.

In Closing

My experiences as a stage manager have been growth filled and maturing. They have taught me things about being in show business, about the behavior of people in theatre, and about being a stage manager that I was never able to read in a book. I had to live the experiences to learn.

As an SM you will have your own experiences and learn your own lessons. If, however, you find yourself on the same path as the one I have traveled and are about to cross the same muddy waters, I hope you can learn your lesson from my experience and cross the bridge I have built over such turbulent waters. If not, then by all means bypass the bridge and have the experience for yourself.

Glossary

The SM's Working Vocabulary

The glossary that you are about to browse and search through is monumental in scope. It contains more than 750 terms, phrases, expressions, and cross-referenced definitions. I will venture to say that no other book on SMing has such as comprehensive a list. The vocabulary in some professions can be like another language. Fortunately, most terms in theatre are familiar. It is a matter of learning how they are used within the context and framework of a production.

Do not feel you must master each term. Your initial contact is the important part. Just know they are here for you to return to as you read this book. As you work and grow as an SM, they will have greater meaning and relevance.

Each term is defined for the SM and delivered from this point of view. For many definitions, additional information is given to create a greater picture and understanding. In some definitions, technical details have been simplified or left out. Also, in some definitions, other theatrical terms are used to help define their meaning. These terms have been *italicized* and made **bold**, and can be cross-referenced. Similarly, at the end of many definitions there are still other terms (noted in parentheses) that are related or have the same meaning. They too can be cross-referenced.

Working on this Glossary was one of the more challenging and rewarding parts of putting this book together. This is a collection of words, terms, expressions, and definitions I wish I had when I was first starting out. But I prevailed. I was like a sponge. As soon as I heard a term I did not know and if I could not figure it out for myself, I asked for its meaning. While this displayed my lack of knowledge and perhaps weakness as an SM, I was always pleased and surprised to see how actors, directors, technicians, designers, craftspeople, and producers were more than willing to teach and appreciated my interest in their part of the job.

For definitions of the different positions in the production staff, acting company, and technical staff, see Chapter 3, “The SM’s Chain-of-Command List.” There are certainly *many* more terms that could be included, but then we would be getting more into a dictionary than a glossary.

A

Above Aside from the usual meaning of something being higher or over something else, directors will use this term when giving directions, asking an actor to, “cross above the sofa” or asking a prop man to place the chair “above the table.” In each case, the director is asking to have the action or the placement take place further upstage, away from the audience.

Act curtain Also called the *front curtain*, the *main curtain*, the *grand drape*, the *house curtain*, the *show curtain*, and, in slang or colloquial terms, the *rag*. This is the curtain that hangs at the front of the stage and covers the opening through which the audience views the performance. When raised or parted, it reveals to the audience the scenery and performers.

Acting notes Critiquing a performer: a producer, director, or SM telling actors something complimentary or critical about their work/performance. Acting notes reinforce the performer’s good work, or ask the performer to change something that is not acceptable or desirable for the show, the director, or the producer.

Action

1. The physical movement onstage as seen by the audience during the performance, the **blocking**. The action seen onstage comes from the storyline and in some places is suggested by the author. However, for the most part, the action is created and set by the director and performers.
2. The action may also be the course or direction in which the plot and storyline move—the progression and order of the scenes and events. It is the things that motivate and move the characters into doing the things they do.

Actors' Equity Association (AEA) Commonly called Equity: the union to which professional actors and SMs belong when working in live theatre, performing plays, or doing Broadway musical-type shows. The union has set the rules and regulations by which actors and producers must work, and SMs must know and see that these are enforced.

Actor's measurements (*See Measurements*)

Ad-lib An ad-lib is dialogue, music, or action performed on stage that is not written into the script or score, or has not been set by the director. It can also mean to *improvise*, to perform extemporaneously, without having planned or rehearsed.

A line reading (*See Line reading*)

Amateur By standards used in this book, a professional is a member of an established actors', stage technicians', or craftspeople' work union, while an amateur/nonprofessional has not achieved such membership and status.

1. In general terms, amateurs are people who may be just beginning to learn and work in their chosen profession. They have yet to achieve the degree of knowledge, artistry, and craftsmanship that makes them desirable to be hired by people in professional standing.
2. Sometimes the difference between professional and amateur is defined by whether or not one is being paid for the work.
3. On some occasions, the term *amateur* can be used negatively, either in a snobbish way or to be critical of a person's work, performance, or behavior.

Amber A yellowish-orange or golden-orange color often used in creating a sunrise or sunset lighting effect onstage. Its warm glow can be the reflection of a fire or general lighting for a remembered scene from the past.

Amphitheatre A theatre with a bowl-like seating arrangement—successive rows of seats are raised on a somewhat steep incline to afford each person a good viewing position. Ancient amphitheatres include the open, outdoor structures in which the Greeks performed their plays and the circular Roman Coliseum. The Hollywood Bowl and Rose Bowl are examples of modern amphitheatres.

Anticipate To be ready and focused; to be waiting and thinking ahead for a particular thing or event to take place during a performance. An SM is often required to anticipate calling a cue on a particular word or action to achieve perfect timing or a desired effect as prescribed by the director. By anticipating, the SM calls the cue precisely at the moment needed. For the same reasons, actors also may be asked to anticipate saying a line of dialogue or doing a particular action.

Anti-pros The area in front of the proscenium above the heads of the audience who sit in the first few rows. This is where some of the lighting units and other technical equipment can be hung. Sometimes the anti-pros is simply a steel pipe suspended from the ceiling, in full view of the audience, on which the equipment is hung. More and more, with their framework and strength, **trusses** are being used. Anti-pros can also be built into the ceiling, concealing the equipment. When built into the ceiling, the space may be just large enough for a technician to crawl on hands and knees to hang the equipment and adjust the lights or large enough for a technician to stand and even operate a spotlight. When built into the ceiling, this space may also be called the ceiling beam. (*See also Bridge; Catwalk*)

Apron The forward part of the stage floor and performing area. When the house or main curtain is in place, the apron is that clearly defined area of the stage just in front of the curtain.

Arbor The metal framework that houses the ropes, pulleys, and steel-bar counterweights of the fly or rail system. This structure is placed backstage on one side or the other of the stage. It is designed to make the work easier for the

stagehands to fly the drops, curtains, or pieces of scenery in and out.

Area lighting A section of stage generally lit by two or more lighting units. Lighting designers break up the stage into areas, using as many areas of light as needed to cover the entire stage. These areas are usually numbered. They can be operated independently, creating isolated areas on the stage, or used in combination, creating larger areas or lighting the entire stage.

Arena stage An acting/performance area surrounded on all sides by the audience. Thus, there is no proscenium per se. Sometimes circular, square, or rectangular in form. Also called *theatre-in-the-round*. Aisles dividing the audience into sections also permit the actors to make their entrances and exits on and off stage. (See also **Horseshoe stage**; **Thrust stage**)

Artists' entrance The entrance to the theatre used by members of the company. This entrance is separate from the public entrance. It is usually off to the side or at the back of the building and most often leads directly to the backstage area.

Asbestos curtain (See **Fire curtain**)

Aside A line of dialogue that is delivered directly to the audience by an actor who the other characters on stage do not hear. (See **Breaking the fourth wall**; **Fourth wall**)

Assisted listening A sound system within the theatre to assist hard-of-hearing patrons to better hear the performance. This is a free service. Headsets can be attained in the lobby by leaving some kind of identification (driver's license) before the performance, and then retuned on the way out at the end of the play.

Atmosphere people Performers appearing in a show who have no lines of dialogue: people used in scenes to do minor tasks or background action. Sometimes they are used simply to dress the stage as attendants or guards. This feature is greatly used in opera productions but they are called instead **supernumeraries** or supers.

At the top, from the top A phrase used mostly by directors and SMs in rehearsals, instructing the actors to start at the beginning of whatever section of the play they may be working on at the time.

Austrian curtain A curtain hanging across the stage or in the closed position with pleats or folds like a normal curtain. At the back of the curtain there is a series of ropes traveling from the bottom to the top that divide the curtain into vertical sections. When operated, the ropes travel upward, causing the curtain to rise horizontally. From the audience's point of view, the curtain rises from the bottom upward. As it rises, the material of the curtain gathers at the bottom, creating scallop or **bunting** folds in each divided, roped section.

AutoCAD A computer software program for both Windows and Mac favored by set designers, technical directors, and SMs for the two- and three-dimensional drawing of the set, the **floor plans**. Undecidedly, CAD is the acronym for *computer-aided drafting* or *computer-aided design*.

Automated light A stage lighting instrument/fixtures generally called a moving light that is controlled and operated by computer. It can tilt, pan, swivel, focus, dim, shape the beam, or project **gobo** designs and pictures on to the stage and provides the desired coloring of light that was once done with **gels**. It can also take the place of ten to twelve **conventional lights**.

Automation Electronically moving scenery on and off stage by computer that was once done by stage technicians hidden by the piece they were moving or out completely in view of the audience and scenery that was once cranked by hand or pushed and pulled by a push/pull stick. Let us not forget the curtains, drapes, and flat pieces of scenery (**sliders**) that glided across the stage, all manually done by rope and pulley. (See **Dog**; **Knife**; **Low-profile casters**; **Pallet**; **Pizza cutter**; **Target**; **Winch**; **Wire rope**)

Backdrop A large flat piece of **muslin** or canvas material with scenery or designs painted on it that is stretched across the entire back part of the stage. These drops help complete the illusion of a particular **setting** in the play and separate the backstage area from the onstage area. (See **Video wall**)

Backers The people who invest their money in the show to get it started and subsidize it until the show becomes successful and returns a profit.

Backers' audition The presentation of the play to a group of potential investors. The presentation can be done simply with the actors sitting and reading the play from scripts, be a fully produced production, or be presented somewhere in between.

Backing

1. Financial support by investors to get a show produced and started in performances.
2. Flats or pieces of scenery that are placed on the set behind windows or where doors open to help create the illusion that there is something more beyond the boundaries of the setting onstage. Backings prevent the audience from seeing through to the activity backstage.

Back lighting Luminaries onstage hung from above and further upstage. These lights are turned to shine down on the backs of the performers. At one time, they were hidden from view of the audience by a **border**, **teaser**, or **tormentor**. More and more, they are seen in full views as part of the set and stage design. This technique in lighting helps give greater depth to the stage by making the performers stand out from their background. This design started in films and television and carried over into theatre. Today, every lighting design and plot includes some kind of back lighting.

Balcony lights Lighting instruments placed on the front part of the balcony and hung low enough to be out of view of people sitting in the balcony. These lights are best used as **fill lights** or **washes** to generally light the stage. (See **Balcony rail**; **Front lights**)

Balcony rail

1. A rail placed at the front of the balcony to help prevent audience members from accidentally falling over the balcony and into the orchestra.
2. The balcony rail with which the SM will have the most interaction is a steel pipe placed in front of the balcony and out of view of the audience, where lighting instruments are hung. With the addition of electricity to light the stage, designers found the balcony to be in an excellent position and eventually the balcony rail became a permanent part of lighting design and theatre construction.
3. This is also a good place for the projection units. The units at center are good for filling the entire stage with images, while smaller units placed at the far ends of this balcony rail are good for projecting images on the scenery piece, flats, or curtains that make up and define the wings.

Ballyhoo A flurry of many moving lights focused into spotlights and hanging from up above the stage or out on the **balcony rail**, creating an exciting display of shining and swishing lights moving in different directions. Before the advent of moving lights, this lighting effect was created by the spotlight from the spotlight booth, and should there be two or more spotlights, the effect was even greater.

Band A small group of musicians, as in a rock band. In a more classical sense, a band is a group consisting mostly of wind, horn, and percussion instruments, as in a marching band, dance band, or jazz band. (See **Orchestra**)

Barn doors A metal unit placed at the front end of a lighting instrument. It has two or four adjustable flaps that help prevent light from spilling into unwanted places on the stage. Barn doors aid greatly in **focusing lights**. These devices are still used with the **conventional lighting** units, while in the more advanced moving or **intelligent lighting** units this is done internally by computer. (See **Focus**)

Batten A horizontal pipe or piece of wood (two-by-four) from six to ten feet long suspended from the fly grid upon which curtains or flats are hung to create the openings of the wings and to cover over the backstage view from the audience. A batten can also be used to hang smaller pieces of scenery or set pieces that are to fly in to the stage during the performance.

Beat

1. In music, a beat is the drive behind the music, the unit of time or accent within a measure.
2. In acting and directing, a beat is a moment of time—usually a second and usually a rest or moment of silence. Directors will often ask actors to take a beat before saying their next line or performing their next bit of **business**.

Being thrown This expression is commonly used when a performer is distracted during a performance, becoming momentarily lost or confused, not remembering the next line of dialogue, or forgetting a piece of business.

Biography, bio A written paragraph printed in the program briefly telling interesting facts, listing awards, and giving past credits of the actors, director, producer, and some of the main designers. On occasion, a bio on the SM may be included. The term *bio* is more commonly used. At some time during every rehearsal period on a show, the SM will receive word from the publicity department to gather bios or have them sent to the publicity department via email.

Biscuit monitors Small speakers placed throughout the backstage areas at various technical stations through which stage technicians can hear the SM call the cues for the performance. Many biscuit monitors have been replaced by wireless headsets, but on a large show in which several stage technicians are executing cues, headsets for each person is either not practical or not financially feasible and biscuits continue to be used. Each biscuit has its own volume control knob, which should be adjusted so that the SM's voice calling the cues does not resound throughout the backstage area.

Bit A small section of **action** or **business** performed by an actor as part of the performance. Usually a bit is a physical and comical thing. Sometimes a bit is invented by the actor or director to create a greater illusion of reality, add color to the character, or heighten the drama or comedy. (See **Blocking; Stage business**)

Bit part, walk-on part A small role in a play or musical. The actor is usually onstage for a very short time and can have few to no lines of dialogue. ASMs are sometimes given these parts.

Black A term used by directors, technicians, and SMs to describe the stage when it is totally dark: “Bring the stage to black.” “Start the scene change in the black.” “When you are ready, go to black.” (See **Blacks**)

Black box theatre In the strictest sense, this is a large empty room or space usually square in shape with walls and ceiling painted black where experimental-type theatre is presented. It is sparsely technically supported. The seating arrangement can be in the round, on three sides, or sometimes in a quasi-proscenium performance with of course no proscenium. Practically, any open space in a warehouse, storefront, or long-forgotten café can be transformed into black box theatre. Gilmore Brown, creator, fonder, and manager of the world famous Pasadena Playhouse, is accredited with having invented such theatre. It started in the living room of his home and eventually moved on to the main stage of the Pasadena Playhouse, where the audience sat on the stage surrounding the performers.

Blacklight, ultraviolet light (UV light) A deep purple light that gives off invisible ultraviolet rays. When directed against black curtains and with no other lights present, blacklight gives the appearance that the stage is in darkness. Only white objects, strongly bleached objects (such as clothes or hair), or objects dyed or painted in special iridescent fluorescent colors are vividly reflected by this light and appear to glow in the dark. All other colors are reflected to a much lesser degree, appearing very muted or almost black.

Blackout (BO) A blackout is when all the lights onstage are turned out at the same time, plunging the stage into darkness.

Blacks This term can refer either to curtains used onstage or to the clothing that stage technicians are required to wear when working a show backstage during a performance. As curtains, the black can be sued to create the **wings**, dress the back part of the stage, and make up the **borders, teasers**, or **travelers**. Magicians often prefer having the stage dressed totally in blacks to aid in the illusion and deception of their work.

Block and tackle The block and tackle is designed to hoist into the air extremely heavy objects or payloads. The rope is laced through and around two or more wheels or pulleys, which makes it possible for one person to operate. The

block and tackle allows the operator to stop and rest or change hand positions while the object remains suspended in the air at whatever level it was stopped. Today, most block and tackles are motorized and use chains in place of ropes.

Blocking The placement and movement of actors as they perform their parts during a performance. The blocking is created by the director and actors during rehearsals. The SM notes the blocking in the rehearsal script. The blocking is set and subsequently repeated for each performance. Blocking is the *action, movement, bits of stage business, and timing* performed on the stage.

Blocking notes, blocking script The notes that actors, directors, and SMs write in their scripts to remind themselves of the movement, placement, *business*, action, and timing of the characters onstage. Blocking notes are written in a theatrical shorthand, using abbreviations, symbols, initials, and stick-figure diagrams with arrows. For SMs, making a blocking script with detailed notations is a major part of the job during rehearsals and is very important later for understudy rehearsals, putting in replacement actors, reminding actors who forget or change their performance, publication of the play, or the producer's archives. (*See Action; Blocking; Block the show; Stage business; Stage directions*)

Block the show To block the show is to move the actors around the stage as they say their lines. Blocking is creating *action, movement, bits of business, and working out timing*. This is the first stage of rehearsals.

Blueprints, blueprint drawings This has become an antiquated term that some older stage technicians might use. In times past, the only method available to make copies of a designer's set/floor plans was a machine that produced a negative image with the overall background of the page being blue and the line drawing in white—thus the term *blueprints*. Today with the set/floor plans being drawn electronically and then printed out on special large printing/copying machines, these plans are now simply called drawings.

The set/floor plan drawings are most commonly drawn to one-inch or half-inch scale. They are made by the designer and detail the design of the set. The various pages of a set of drawings note the size of the stage and the layout and floor plan of the set, and give construction specifications, measurements, and dimensions of the individual pieces of scenery. (*See Drawn to scale; Elevations; Elevation drawings; Scale drawings*)

Boards A colloquial expression used by people in theatre when referring to the stage. Most stages are made of tightly fitted pieces of wood or boards. An actor who has been out of work but is now performing in a show may say, "It's good to be back on the boards."

Body microphone, body mic, body pack, radio pack A body mic is a miniature microphone head with a transistor body pack that is hidden under the actor's costume and goes virtually unseen by the audience. The microphone is placed either near the throat, over the ear, or on the forehead near the hairline. The body pack is no bigger than a pocket calculator or bulky smart phone. It is placed in a cotton pouch and strapped on the actor, either at the waist, with the bulky part placed in the small of the back, or on some other part of the body where it is comfortable and at the same time cannot be seen by the audience. The only wire with which the actor must contend is the one traveling from the microphone head to the body pack. The body pack is battery operated. It transmits the sound signals to a radio receiver, which is usually somewhere backstage. The receiver sends the signal to the amplifier, which in turn broadcasts the signal through speakers to the audience. Body mics are also called wireless mics, radial mics, or radio mics. The cotton pouch is used to absorb perspiration. If a performer becomes wet during the performance or has a tendency to perspire heavily, the sound person will first place the body pack in a plastic baggie or condom to prevent the unit from shorting out.

Book This term is used mostly when talking about a musical play. It refers specifically to the script—the dialogue, plot, and storyline of the play.

Booking flats, twofold or threefold Two or three ten-by-four-foot flats, hinged together. They are usually freestanding units that are convenient for technicians and SMs to use in many situations backstage. They are especially good for setting up *quick-change* dressing rooms in some out-of-the-way corner backstage or just behind the set.

Book show A musical show that has a script with a storyline, dialogue, and plot. The songs in a book show are character driven—they come from the storyline and are integrated to help move the play along. The storyline does not

stop to let characters sing or perform their specialty, as often happens in a variety or vaudeville show. The characters in a book show sing because their feelings can no longer be expressed in dialogue and are best expressed in song and music.

Boom base A heavy steel or iron base used to support a boom pole with *lighting instruments* attached above. (See **Booms**)

Booms (light booms) A heavy metal base with one pole going straight up upon which light units are clamped. They often appear in the *wings* to provide *side lighting*. The terms *booms* and *light trees* are used interchangeably. Booms go straight up from the stage floor while light trees and *ladder trees* hang from above. However, for the sake of clarity, the SM should keep the terms separate when having conversations with lighting technicians.

Border lights, strip lights, teaser lights, bank of lights These are long units or strips of lights. At one time, each unit was divided into many sections or slots of equal size, and within each slot a light bulb is placed. Today, the units are slimmer and the sections are packed with clusters of red, green, blue, and white (*RGBW*) light-emitting diodes (*LEDs*). These units are usually hung above the stage and behind the *border* or *teaser*. They are set to project their light straight down on to the floor of the stage. When lit, they flood a wide strip of light in their immediate area and do not cover the entire stage. These same *lighting fixtures* can be placed on the floor with their lights tilted on an angle and upward. When placed on the *apron* of the stage they become *foot-lights*. When placed at the back of the stage with their light projected on to *backdrops* or the *cyclorama (cyc)*, they are called a *ground row* or *cyc lights*.

Borders, teasers, valance Short curtains or narrow flats hung high above the stage across the top, and running the full length of the stage. They are used to conceal from the audience the unsightly light units, electrical wiring, and other technical things that are hung above in the *flys*. Sometimes these borders or flats are painted, designed, and cut out to be part of the scenery, completing and complementing the overall look of the stage; at other times they are made of black material or painted black. (See **Tormentors**)

Box booms, box boom lights The *lighting instruments* set up in the audience off to each side and close to the stage where the *box seats* are traditionally placed. With the advent of electrical lighting and sophisticated lighting design, in many theaters the box seats were removed and pipes were set up and rigged to hang lighting instruments. Because of their extreme angle, these lights make excellent *side lighting*. When box boom lights are used in combination with other lights onstage, they give depth to things on the stage that might appear to be flat if lit only from the front. When box boom lights are used by themselves they create dramatic highlights and shadows.

Boxes The balconies or openings alongside walls of the audience where once people sat but mostly now house light trees in aid of lighting the stage. (See **Box seats**)

Box office receipts The number of tickets sold for a performance for a day, a week, or the entire run of the show; the amount of money made.

Box office, ticket office The place at the front of the theatre from which the patrons purchase their tickets for the various performances.

Box seats Seats at the extreme sides of the theatre and close to the stage, probably the most famous being the one in which President Lincoln sat at the Ford Theatre in Washington, DC. At one time these were prestigious seats reserved for royalty, dignitaries, or the rich. They are not the best seats in the theatre for viewing a performance, but were in great demand among the aristocracy so they could be on display and be seen by the other members of the audience.

With the advent of electrical lighting and sophisticated lighting design, the box seats were replaced with pipes and rigging to hang *light units* and became known to people working in the theatre as the *box booms*. For a long time theatres were built without box seats, but they have had a resurgence. For SMs these seats present an almost unsolvable *sight line* problem.

Box set A simple, three-sided set, usually the interior of a room for a drama or comedy. The *fourth wall* of this room is an imaginary wall through which the audience views the play.

Break a leg This is one of many superstitions in theatre. Never do you wish a person in theatre “good luck”; you wish them to “break a leg.” Breaking a leg means for the performer to break through the leg of the wing to take an extra bow, or for an actress to bend a leg as she curtsies in taking a bow.

Breakaway Anything that is designed to be easily separated from something else, such as a breakaway costume, where either a piece of the costume or the whole costume is easily separated from the performer. Velcro makes for easy breakaway, especially in quick changes. Props such as a chair or table can be constructed to easily break away.

Breaking character This is something performers do when they stop speaking or acting as the character—when they do something that is not true to the character. (See **Breaking the fourth wall**)

Breaking the fourth wall The fourth wall is the imaginary wall through which the audience is viewing the play, be it an interior scene or outdoors. It is the actor’s job to maintain that illusion of the fourth wall by not looking out directly at the people seated. They can look out but only as if they are looking out a window, off in the distance, or maybe into a mirror. The fourth wall is further broken when an actor acknowledges the audience in some way or speaks directly to them. Sometimes the fourth wall is broken simply by the actor crossing too far downstage on to the **apron** of the stage, breaking the illusion of the boundaries of the setting or room in which the characters are supposed to be living. (See **Fourth wall**)

Bridge, catwalk A long, narrow walkway that runs above and across the top of the stage. It is in the fly space, hidden behind the **borders** or **teasers**. Technicians use the bridge or catwalk for better access to hang and focus lights or to operate special effects. Sometimes actors use this space to make a special or unusual entrance or exit.

Sometimes a bridge or catwalk is concealed in the ceiling of the theatre just above the heads of the people who sit in the first few rows of the audience. This bridge serves the same purpose as the walkway built in the fly space onstage. Technicians will also refer to this bridge above the audience’s heads as the ceiling beam or the **anti-pros**.

Bring up the lights A direction given most often to the technician operating the lightboard or to the SM, asking that some light be brought up onstage, be it for rehearsals, for performance, or in the audience at the end of the show. Most times the lights are on a dimmer, thus the expression, “Bring up the lights!”

Brush-up rehearsal A rehearsal the director or SM might hold after the show has opened and is in performance. Brush-up rehearsals are often called when the actors or the company have had more time off from performing than usual. An SM can also call a brush-up rehearsal if, during the run, the actors have become sloppy in their performance or have made unacceptable changes in their performance or in the show.

Bump, bump-up An abrupt or popping movement of lights onstage from a lower intensity to a brighter one. Commonly used at the end of musical numbers with big endings to emphasize and heighten the emotional feeling for the audience. The opposite of a bump would be a **blackout**. (See **Bump cue**)

Bump cue A lighting cue that pops the lights up. Sometimes the bump can happen from a blackened stage to a lighted stage as if someone had switched on the lights in a room. Other time, a bump cue is popping the lights that are already onstage to a brighter intensity. When this term is used among lighting designers, technicians, directors, and SMs, everyone understands the expected action of the lights and the effect that should appear on the stage. (See **Bump, bump-up**)

Bunting A piece of material or drapery folded and hung in scallop or swag fashion. Bunting-type folds are often seen at the top part of curtains or **grand drapes** for a decorative and detailed look. Bunting is commonly seen in red, white, and blue and is hung on grandstands or anything having to do with an American holiday or event.

Business, stage business The movement and **action** of the actors as they perform their parts. Lighting a cigarette or crossing to the door are simple forms of stage business. (See **Blocking**)

business, the, the biz Sometimes used to refer to show business.

Buttons

1. In musical terms, a button is additional music played immediately following the end of a song or instrumental number. It can be as brief as one note or a single chord, or it can be extended to a series of notes and chords. Its purpose is to punctuate, emphasize, or finalize the ending.
2. Broader usage of this term by directors and actors means much the same thing; their buttons, however, may be a gesture or a look just before exiting or ending a scene. The sound of a door slamming behind an actor can be a button. (*See Tag*)
3. In some parts of the country, a button or button cue is when there is a light cue to accent musical moment, a comedic moment, or even a dramatic moment, usually with a *bump up* of the stage lights to a brighter setting.

C

Cable

1. A rope of wire used to transmit electricity or data.
2. A strong, flexible, wire rope made of steel used to support pipes, battens, trusses, etc., from an overhead structure.

Call

1. This term pertains mostly to scheduling—telling the actors when and where they should be, be it for a rehearsal, a performance, or meeting a bus to go to the airport. Each day the SM gives the actors their call for the next day.
2. “Call the actors.” Throughout rehearsals, the SM will hear this direction many times from the director. The director is asking that the actors be assembled in one place. Calling the actors can simply be calling them from one rehearsal room to the other or getting them from their dressing rooms to the stage, or it can literally mean calling them on the phone. (*See Half-hour call*)

Callback auditions, callbacks The auditions after the first audition. If a performer’s initial audition seems to provide what a producer, director, or casting people want, the performer is asked to return for a second audition—a *callback* audition. These auditions often take place on another day. There are fewer people in competition, but the performer is up against the best of the competition. Callbacks give the casting people an opportunity to view the talent once again and, if they choose, put individuals together in pairs or in groups.

Callboard The official bulletin board for the actors. It is the place where all important information, official notices, Equity notices, and schedules are posted. It is required by Equity that a callboard be set up, in clear view, and be accessible wherever the performers report daily. This is not a community board for everyone’s use; anything placed on this board must first be cleared by the SM.

Calling cues, calling the show During each performance, the SM sits at a console using the cueing script to follow the dialogue. Using both a headset or using visual signals, the SM communicates to the various technical departments when to execute their particular cues. There are three steps an SM must follow in calling cues (*See Chapter 13, “The Cueing/Calling/Prompt Script”*). A minute or so before a cue or group of cues is to be executed, the SM gives the *warning*, telling which cues are to be executed. About fifteen seconds before the execution, the SM gives the *stand by*, which tells all those involved to be ready and alert. At the appropriate time, the SM then gives the *GO! cue*. (*See Timing*)

Calling places (*See Places, places please!*)

Calling script, cueing script This is a script void of all SM’s notes except those dealing directly with the cues for the show during the performance. This script may also be called the *prompt book* or the *prompt script*.

Cameo, cameo role A role not large enough to be considered a supporting role, although it might be important, significant, or pivotal to the play in some way. A cameo may be merely a walk-on appearance with few to no lines, or

it can be larger, possibly involving several scenes and a good amount of dialogue. On occasion, these roles are played by prominent performers with name value, which also helps to generate ***box office receipts***.

Carbon arc spotlight Two carbon rods are clamped into a lighting instrument called a spotlight; one rod is negatively charged, the other positive. The ends of the rods are placed opposite each other with a small space left between. An electrical current is sent through the rods and an intense and blinding arc of light is created within the small space between the rods. This light is reflected on to the stage from a mirror and through a lens, creating a circular area of light brighter than most lighting instruments on the stage. The carbon arc spotlight is commonly used in musical and variety shows.

The carbon arc is inconvenient to use during a performance because the carbons burn down and need to be changed. With improved technology, carbon arc spotlights are being replaced by lighting instruments that use lamps that give off a brighter intensity of light, such as the **xenon** (pronounced *zee-non*) spotlight. Spotlights are often simply called “spots.” (*See Follow spot; Limelight*)

Card stock Lightweight cardboard, three or four times the weight and thickness of typing paper, but not as thick as poster board. Good for making small signs, nameplates for dressing room doors, or as a tabbed dividing page in a three-ring binder.

Cast The group of actors chosen to perform in the show, from the starring and/or lead role to the smallest walk-on part. The SM too is considered part of the cast.

Casters Wheels under platforms and set units that allow the units to be rolled on and off stage. There are swivel casters, sometimes called ***smart casters***, which allow a unit to be pushed and moved in any direction, and there are directional casters or fixed casters, which limit the unit’s movement to a straight line or a single plane. (*See Low-profile casters*)

Casting The process of choosing actors to play the various roles in the play.

Cast party A social event in which the cast gets together to celebrate the opening of a show, the success of a show, or the closing of a show. Most times the cast party is for the entire company, including friends, relatives, and guests. Only on rare occasions is it limited to only cast members. A cast party may take place in the greenroom of the theatre, in someone’s apartment or home, or in a hall or grand ballroom.

Caterer A food-service business that prepares, delivers, or sets up food at any location requested. The catering may be a truck—a kitchen on wheels that parks outside the rehearsal hall—or simply a platter of cold cuts and potato salad delivered. On a grander scale, the caterer may serve a banquet for the entire company at a ***cast party***.

Cattle call (*See Open auditions*)

Catwalk In theatre, a catwalk is a narrow ramp or walkway found mostly above the stage, up in the flies or in enclosed spaces where lighting instruments can be hung, such as up in the ***anti-pros***. The catwalk provides walking space and will have a railing for safety and to ensure footing. (*See Bridge*)

Ceiling beam (*See Anti-pros; Bridge*)

Characterization An actor’s portrayal and realization of a character. The actor finds the feelings and drives—the force and impetus that make the character act, behave, and respond as it does. The actor uses these things to make the character come alive as a real, unique individual.

Characters The individual people within the play who have been created by the author and around whom the plot and storyline revolve.

Chewing up the scenery An actor who gives a completely hammy and over-the-top performance is said to be “chewing up the scenery.”

Chit Noting on a small piece of paper an amount of money spent, along with the date and the reason for which the money was spent. Chits can be used by the SM as receipts as long as they are not for large sums of money. Chits are

used for receipts that have been lost or for money spent where receipts are not given, such as public phones, parking meters, and vending machines.

Choreographer The artist who creates the physical and visual pattern onstage. The artist who creates the emotional movement, arrangement, and order of steps within a dance.

Choreography The physical and emotional movement of a dance created by the choreographer.

Circuit

1. In terms of stage lighting, a circuit is the flow of electrical current to a single **light unit** or to a group of **lighting instruments**. There are many circuits of lights within the lighting design and light plot of a play. Circuits can be operated individually or in combination with each other.
2. In terms of business and theatre talk, a circuit is a group of theaters or performance sites to which a show can travel and perform. Sometimes the circuit is regional, such as the Florida circuit or the Borscht circuit, but it may also be national, such as the old Orpheum Circuit. A circuit may also be a chain of theaters owned by one managing company, such as the Schubert theaters or the Nederlanders.

Claques, shills People placed in the audience to applaud, laugh, react, or take part in the show. Shills pretend to be normal audience members.

Clean entrance or exit When a director or SM asks an actor to make a clean entrance, they are asking that while the actor waits to enter, he or she should stand back far enough to avoid being seen by the audience. Another element in making a clean entrance or exit is that the actor enters the stage, in a direct approach, without being hesitant or tentative, unless that kind of entrance or exit is by design. Most of all, when asking an actor to make a clean entrance, the director or SM is asking the actor to be in character, be at performance level, and give the impression that the character is entering with a purpose or intent and has just come from another place or location.

Cleaning, cleaning a scene The director and/or actors refining their work—be it just a moment in the play or an entire scene. Actors perfecting their parts in character, motivation, and delivery and directors working on timing, pace, tempo, stage business, stage pictures, or making whatever changes they feel will improve the play. (See **Clean-up rehearsal**)

Clean-up rehearsal After a scene, an act, or the entire play has been *set* with the **blocking**, **bits of business**, **timing**, and **characterizations**, a director will have clean-up rehearsals to improve, retime, rework, or change the performance. Throughout the run of a show, if the actors become sloppy in their performance or if the actors make changes that do not meet with the approval of the director, producer, or SM, a clean-up rehearsal might be called to get the show back to the way it was originally set.

Clear!

1. A statement or call of warning made backstage by technicians and SMs asking people to move and clear an area. The expression “Clear, please!” is a courteous yet firm way of asking people to move quickly. In situations of safety, the tone of voice used tells the people of urgency or eminent danger.
2. “Clear” is also a statement or call telling others that it is safe to proceed with their work or next move. (See **Clearance; Head high; Heads!, Heads up!**)

Clearance In backstage jargon, clearance is the amount of space between one thing and another. During **set changes**, stage technicians look for the clearance on the sides and above as they move the set pieces on and off stage. The stage technicians working the **flys** are always concerned with clearance, as many of the drops, **flats**, **curtains**, and so forth, are hung with only six inches of clearance on either side.

Click (clique) track Mixing prerecorded music with live music being played on the stage or from the orchestra pit. When working with music in this way, on an additional track there is recorded an electronic metronome beat that has been set to the recorded music. This track is broadcast only to the conductor, who during the performance wears a headset to hear both the prerecorded music and the click track. The click track enables the conductor to keep the live music synchronized with the recorded music.

Clip light These are hooded utility lights that can be clipped on to something anywhere backstage. Sometimes they are used to light a pathway for the actors or set pieces to move along safely. Other times they are placed in **quick-change** booths to aid the dressers and performers in a costume change. They can also be used on the SM's console in lighting up the **cueing script** or parts of the console.

Closed rehearsal Generally speaking, a closed rehearsal is one in which only the company members are allowed to attend or enter the room while the rehearsal is in progress. A more restrictive closed rehearsal limits severely who can be present and/or can enter the room. An even more restricted closed rehearsal allows no one except the director, SMs, and the actors who are rehearsing to be present.

Cold reading Sometimes at an audition an actor is given a script and is asked to read a scene without preparation as part of the audition. The actor may be given some information on the scene or the characters in the scene, but little else.

Collating Putting together, in order or sequence, the pages of scripts or packets of information. Before the advent of copying and printing machines with a collating feature, ASMs spent a lot of time doing this process by hand, especially when working a show with major script changes or rewrites.

Color changer, color scroll An electronic, motorized apparatus that mounts on the front of a lighting fixture. They are boxes with one large solid gel piece with different colors that is looped together and can be scrolled to get the different colors.

Comedy of manners A style of plays performed in the nineteenth century dealing mostly with human weakness as the central theme, as in the penny-pinching miser from the play *The Miser*.

Company The company consists of the entire group of people who have been hired to work on a particular show. The producer, director, creators, designers, SMs, performers, technicians, production assistants, and administrative staff make up the company.

Company bow The entire cast of performers onstage at the end of the show bow together. During the *curtain call*, bows begin with the individual performers playing the smaller roles, and then builds up to the lead and starring roles. Finally, the entire cast takes the company bow.

Company doctor Each show has a doctor on call for anyone in the company. This doctor gives general care and advice, functioning like a family doctor. Any condition requiring more serious care is turned over to a specialist.

Comps, comp tickets, being comped The term *comp* is an abbreviation for the word *complementary*. *Being comped* means to receive tickets to see a performance without having to pay for the tickets.

Computer-driven automation (*See Automation*)

Computer lightboard (*See Lightboard; Light-board operator*)

Conductor The person who leads the musicians/orchestra during a performance.

Conductor's podium A podium that has a larger-than-normal top for musical scores or large sheets of manuscript music. The podium is traditionally placed in the center of the orchestra pit on a raised platform. From this position the conductor can see the musicians as well as the performers onstage and can also be seen by them. However, with the use of cameras trained on the conductor and with video monitors strategically placed for the performers to see the conductor, the conductor no longer has to be positioned for both the members of the orchestra and cast to see the conductor in person.

Construction shop The place where the set/scenery is built and painted. This may be a commercial place that specializes in such work, or it may be part of the backstage area set up to do this work. This place may also be called the scene shop, or simply the shop.

Conventionals A general term used by stage technicians referring to lighting units that are not smart/intelligent—in short, nonmoving lights.

Costume The clothing, accessories, and undergarments each performer wears during the performance while appearing onstage. This can range from today's street wear bought directly off the racks in department stores to elaborate period and specialty pieces designed and constructed specifically for a particular show.

Costume construction The making or construction of a costume—from the designer's and artist's conception on paper, to cutting out the pattern and assembling the pieces, to fitting and altering the costume for the performer.

Costumer The individual or company who provides the costumes for the show.

Costume shop The place where the costumes for a show can be made, purchased, or rented. Most costume shops have in stock a variety of costumes that cover periods past, present, future, or fantasy. Some of the costumes are new, but most have been used in other shows. When a producer decides to use ready-made costumes, the costumes are pulled from the racks, fitted, and altered to each performer.

Costume sketches Drawings or renderings the costume designer makes to show the designs of the costumes being created for the show. Sometimes these sketches are done in black and white in pencil, ink, or charcoal, other times in full-color renderings. Almost always, the designer attaches swatches of material that will be used to make the costume.

Counter, make a countermove This term is most commonly used among actors, directors, and SMs when blocking the show. Countermoves are secondary moves made by one or more actors in response to a primary move made by another actor. A countermove is made to change the composition of the stage picture and to direct the attention or focus to where the director wants it to be. A countermove can be as simple as a turn of the head, a twist of the body, or a shift in weight from one leg to the other or as large as a complete body turn to face another direction or move to another position on the stage.

Counterweights, counterweight system The counterweight system is part of the rail or **fly system**. It is designed to counter the weight of a drop, curtain, or piece of scenery that is being pulled in and out (on and off the stage). Without a counterweight system, the technician pulling a rope would be pulling the total weight of the item being flown, and it could take two or more stage technicians to pull one rope, depending on the weight of the item. Today, large steel bricks are used as counter-weights. When placed in the cradles between each rope, they make it possible for one stage technician to operate the rope with ease. The first counterweights in theatre were flour sacks or canvas bags filled with sand (thus the term **sandbags**). A good counterweight system is especially important when doing musical shows where the fly system can be an intricate part of the scene changes. (See **Flys**)

Crash box A box made for the purpose of creating a crash sound effect offstage. These boxes are made by the prop department and usually are constructed of wood for durability and repeated use. The crash box is often filled with broken glass or junk pieces of metal and nailed shut. During the performance, at the appropriate time and on cue, the box is dropped, rattled, or rolled, or a combination of all three, depending on the desired effect.

Crew In professional situations, the crew is a group of union stage technicians hired to head, work, operate, and maintain the various technical elements of a show. During the performance, the crew works and runs all the technical elements of the show.

Critic (See **Reviewer; Reviews, notices**)

Cross lighting

1. Lighting units hung from the extreme sides of the stage with their beams of light projected across the stage. Lights hung in the **box booms** or from the wings on **light trees** are used as cross lighting. (See **Kickers; Shin busters**)
2. In terms of **lighting design** lighting instruments that light an area or a particular thing are often hung from different sides of the stage. When the lights are focused on the area or on the item, they cross from the different sides. This ensures that the area is lit well and gives greater dimension to things in the area or to the particular item.

Crossover The space backstage where the performers and crew members can cross over from one side of the stage to the other without being seen by the audience. A crossover usually is behind the set, a drop, or a curtain. On occasion, due to the lack of space backstage, the crossover may be down the stairs, through the basement, and up the stairs to the other side of the stage.

Cue A cue is something done during a performance at a precise time. Cues are the threads and stitches woven into the tapestry of a performance. Some cues are designed to provide technical support, others to help create illusion, move the show at an entertaining pace, or generate the magic of seeing a live performance.

1. For the SM, cues are sections of information that were set during technical rehearsals and noted in the *cueing script* to allow them to be called out during each performance with impeccable *timing*. During the performance, the SM sits at a console with the cueing script and, through a headset or with visual gestures, tells the various technical departments, and sometimes the actors, when to execute their cues. (See **Calling cues**; **Calling script**; **Calling the show**; **Prompt book**)
2. For the actors a cue may be a word, a line of dialogue, or an action that tells them when to speak, do their next bit of business, or make an entrance or exit. During rehearsals, actors may also use this term when they have forgotten their next line of dialogue; they may ask the SM, “Cue?” (See **Line please!**)
3. When actors are first learning lines or need to be refreshed on their lines, the SM or some other person may sit to cue them by reading from the script all the other characters’ lines as the actors recite their lines from memorization. (See **Cue line**)

Cueing script, calling script, prompt book Whatever the name of this book, it is the SM’s bible in running the show. In it is noted all of the technical *cues* that are to be executed during each and every performance, and the precise timing of each. The cueing script is created during technical rehearsals and is written by the SM as the cues and timing are given by the director and technical heads. The cueing script is kept separate from the rehearsal script and the production notebook. A copy should be kept in a safe and different place, and many SM choose to color code the cues.

Cue light, a panel of switches This is a panel of toggle switches placed at the SM’s console backstage and are in easy reach as the SM is calling cues for the show. (See **Cue Lights, Q-Lites**)

Cue lights, Q-Lites Cue lights are used by the SM when calling cues during the performance. They are controlled by a panel of toggle switches placed at the SM’s console. They are free-hanging light bulbs, usually red, amber, or blue. They are strategically placed backstage, for easy viewing in the stage technicians’ work areas. When they are turned on this alerts the technician and acts as a *warning*. When turned off, this is the stage technician’s *GO! cue*. They are used in places or situations where the SM is not in communication with a stage technician or the stage technician’s work area. Other times they are used in a major scene change where there are many cues. While the SM is verbally calling other cues, he or she is flipping off the cue light switch to have those cues executed, too.

Cue line The last line of dialogue a character speaks just before the next character speaks. The cue line is the line of dialogue actors listen for to know that another actor’s speech is ending and their speech should begin.

Cue-to-cue tech rehearsal A rehearsal that takes place in the theatre just after the technical elements have been added to the show. This rehearsal is directed toward working and running the technical cues. Instead of having the actors recite all their dialogue, the SM moves the rehearsal along and keeps it focused on the technical parts by having the actors start their dialogue a line or two before a technical cue is to take place. After the cue has been executed, the SM stops performers and tells them where to start the dialogue for the next technical cue.

Curtain The soft cloth items that hang onstage to create performing areas, to cover the lighting instruments and other technical equipment hanging above the stage, to block the audience’s view of the distracting backstage activity, or to create wings from which the performers can make entrances and exits. A primary example is the curtain that is draped across the front of the stage, covering the *proscenium opening*, which is not raised or opened until the show is ready to be presented and seen by the audience. (See **Act curtain**; **Curtain!**)

Curtain! An expression often called out by an SM or director during rehearsals to create the image of the curtain opening or closing to signify the beginning or ending of a scene, an act, or the entire play.

Curtain bows, curtain calls Bows the actors take at the end of the performance. These terms are used interchangeably; however, curtain bows pertain mostly to the bows the director sets, while curtain calls pertain mostly to the additional bows the performers take due to the continued applause of the audience. (See **Encore**)

Curtain line An imaginary line across the stage where a curtain touches down or travels across the stage floor. Most times the curtain line refers to where the main house curtain stands, which is usually just behind the **proscenium** arch. When this curtain is being lowered, it is important that SMs and actors remain aware of the curtain line to prevent curtain collisions with actors or damage to props or pieces of scenery that might be standing on the line.

Curtain speech A speech by someone who goes onstage, either before or after the performance, and talks with the audience. This usually is done by the producer, director, or star. On occasion, for some special reason, the SM may be called upon to do this. Recorded announcements or announcements made to the audience from a backstage mic are not considered curtain speeches. (See **Preshow announcement**)

Curtain warmers, warmers, the preset These are the lights projected on the curtain, scrim, or open stage as the audience enters to be seated. They are set at a low intensity to give color, add interest, or perhaps set a mood for the show. They are turned on by the show electrician before the audience enters and disappear on the SM's cue as the show is about to begin.

Cut-out drop A canvas or muslin drop with cut-out openings that are part of the design. Through the cutout design, the audience can see beyond to another drop or pieces of scenery. Cut-out drops aid greatly in the illusion of depth. They create a reality for both the scene and scenery. A good example would be in a garden setting where a cut-out drop might have the trunks of trees, leaves hanging from above, and a rose-covered trellis. As the actors enter or exit from behind this drop, they can be seen by the audience.

Cyc lights This is a general term used for any lights that are focused or flooded on the cyc (**cyclorama**). The lights being projected on the cyc from above are almost always **border lights**. These same units, when placed on the floor with their light flooded up onto the cyc, are called **ground row** lights.

Cyclorama (cyc) The cyc is a large, seamless, white or off-white drop. It can be flat or curved at the ends and is stretched and pulled to be perfectly smooth. This drop is almost always the last drop at the back of the stage. It stretches across the entire length of the stage and is usually permanently in place. When lit with theatrical lighting or with projected images, this drop dramatically changes the look of the stage, creating full-stage silhouettes, sunrises or sunsets, cloudy skies, a skyline of buildings, or simply color and design for any desired mood, feeling, or effect. If the cyc is flat in form, stage technicians may refer to the cyc as the bounce.

CYM An acronym for:

C = **Cyan**, a bluish-green secondary color, complementary to Red.

Y = **Yellow**, a secondary color and complementary to Blue.

M = **Magenta**, purplish-red secondary color, complementary to Green.

These are three prismatic lenses built into smart/intelligent light units. They are stacked in front of each other. As the light passes through each lens, it is bent. These prisms take the place of the gels that were once slipped into the front of each lighting unit. This way of getting color is used in smart/intelligent light units using halogen lighting lamps, while **LED** lighting units get their color from the light-emitting diodes built into the LED unit.

D

Daily rehearsal report A form created by the SM that is sectioned off into the different departments of a production. In the first section the SM briefly and generally reports the happenings and progress of the day in the rehearsal hall. In the other titled sections, the SM notes information pertinent to that particular department.

Dance numbers

1. The dances in a musical show.
2. In a more literal sense and as used by the director, choreographer, dancers, or SM, these are large numbers placed across the entire edge or **apron** of the stage. They are set at two-foot intervals and are used by the dancers to help them maintain their placement and spacing onstage during the dances. The actors will also use these numbers in their **blocking**. A zero is placed at center stage, and then two feet away on each side of zero, the number 1 is placed. From there and traveling out to the respective sides of the stage, the numbers build numerically.

Dark

1. A term used to describe the stage when there is not enough lighting on it.
2. A lighting designer or director might ask the SM to “Go to dark,” which means they want all the lights on the stage to go out.
3. The mood or humor of a play or particular character that is filled with negative feelings and emotions. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *Othello* are examples of dark plays and dark characters.
4. The theatre is dark when there are no performances due to the cast’s day off or when the theatre is closed with no show set up and performing in it.

Dead spot A dark or dimly lit spot onstage.

Deck, Raised deck

1. The stage floor. This term was brought to the theatre when sailors were brought in as stagehands to work the **flys**.
2. There is also the **raised deck**. Raised decks have always been in use whenever there was a **turtable** or **wagons** and set pieces were being winched on to the stage.
3. Today, with **automation** being a major way of moving scenery (especially in musicals), raised decks are certain to be a part of the technical setup.

Delivery The way an actor says lines; the presentation of the actor’s performance.

Designer’s Set/Floor Plan Drawings (See Drawings)

Deus ex machina Latin for “God in the machine.” This was a mechanical device used in Greek and medieval drama to lower an actor playing one of the Gods from the heavens to resolve conflict that otherwise was inhumanly impossible to resolve.

Device In terms of acting and directing, a device is something an actor or director may add to enhance a performance or a character, such as a limp, a mannerism, a way of speaking, a smile, or even the use of a prop or costume. (See **Handle**)

Digital media projector While this is a lighting unit, it is also a digital projector that is programmed and operated by a keyboard operator. It pans, tilts, zooms, and focuses, as well as projects video. It can be a motion picture or just a moving light pattern projected on to the stage or scenery. Each cue can be programmed into the unit and then call by the SM as either a light cue or a projection cue. You can be sure that by the time you read this, a bigger, better, and more advanced unit will be in use to replace the DLP digital projector that is now the favorite.

Dimmer bays Sections or drawers holding **dimmers** that are stacked and contained within a cabinet called a **dimmer rack**. Each bay contains two dimmers. Each dimmer is attached to one light unit onstage.

Dimmer racks Cabinets housing **dimmers**. They are today’s version of what used to be those giant black **resistant dimmer boards**, with rows of levers taking up a whole wall backstage. Today’s dimmer racks can be installed backstage, taking up little room, or be somewhere else, in another room, in a closet, or even down in the basement of the theatre. Within the dimmer racks are the **dimmer bays** (slots/drawers), each holding two dimmers with each dimmer attached to one lighting instrument onstage. A good-size dimmer rack can control 150–200 lighting instruments. But even as I write these words, with the components mentioned above, they are getting smaller, more compact, holding more bays, and even have wireless operations.

Dimmers Dimmers control the amount of electrical power that goes to the **lighting instrument** onstage. More power—the brighter the light emitted. Less power—the dimmer the light. Thus, the terms **fade up and fade down** (or fade out).

Diode A diode is a very small square-shaped or dome-shaped solid piece of plastic-like material made up of a mixture of chemical elements. Encased within this treated plastic is a positive and negative conductor that when submitted to an electric current reacts with the chemical of the diode, and light of a particular color is emitted.

Directional casters (See Casters)

DMX cable (Data Matrix) DMX cable delivers electrical data from the desktop lightboard to intelligent lighting instruments onstage. The DMX cable's specific use is to run data, which gives the lighting designer and computer operator the ability to control the lighting unit in whatever way the unit is capable of being controlled.

Doctor (See Company doctor; Scene doctor)

Dog and knife You cannot have one without the other. To understand the function of the *dog* and the *knife*, you have to know something about **automation**—the system that electronically moves scenery and **pallets** on and off stage. The dog is securely attached to the **wire rope** under the **raised stage deck**. The wire rope is the cable under the deck leading to and from the **winch** that will bring the scenery or pallet on and off stage.

The dog is preset into position offstage in the wing. A stage technician puts the piece of scenery or scene pallet in place, lines up the lead end of the pallet with the dog under the deck, and then slips in the dog knife. The stage technician then slips in another knife on the back end of the piece of scenery or scene pallet so the piece will not fishtail as it rides on and off stage.

Dolly, truck A device with wheels used backstage to aid in moving heavy or awkward items:

1. A hand truck or hand dolly stands upright with two wheels or rubber tires at the bottom. There are one or two handles at the top to help direct and control the dolly. At the bottom and in front of the wheels is a large lip or metal shelf. The shelf is tucked under the cargo and then the payload is tilted back and wheeled to its new destination.
2. A flatbed dolly is a wooden or steel platform on wheels. Either a rope or a steel handlebar is attached at one end for pushing or pulling. Many items can be loaded on the flatbed at one time, or a very large and awkward thing can be loaded on and held by one person while another pushes or pulls.

Double take A comic bit of **business** in which the actor does at least two looks in rapid succession. The actor first looks at something or someone, and then looks away and quickly looks back. Some performers have perfected this bit of business using several looks or takes. This business or routine was worked and perfected in vaudeville and burlesque and has carried over into the present with performers doing their own variations and getting big laughs.

Douser A shutter-like device built into most spotlights that allows the operator to instantly **black out** the light falling onstage, without having to turn off the electricity to the spotlight.

Down stage (DS)

1. The area on the stage closest to the audience.
2. For a performer or anyone standing onstage, this term is used to describe a movement toward the audience. When **blocking** the show, the director may ask an actor to move downstage.
3. The SM notes this direction in the **blocking script** as DS.

Dragging For SMs, directors, and actors, when something is dragging, it means the timing or delivery is too slow. (See **Timing**)

Drag-in, drag-out (load-in, load-out) By any choice of name, depending upon the part of the country in which you are working, this is the act of bringing into a theatre or performance site the technical equipment and setting it up for a performance, and conversely, the taking out of the theatre or performance site the technical equipment.

Drama critics (See **Reviewer, critic**; **Reviews, notices**)

Drawing-room comedies High-spirited comedy plays, often lapsing into complete and utter farce, which were written and performed in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The setting and action of these plays usually took place in a salon, bedroom, or drawing room of a wealthy and sometimes extremely eccentric individual. The subject matter dealt with love, romance, wealth, fidelity, and adultery. The plays often became bawdy, challenged the intellect, and questioned the social and moral fabric of the day. Many times, one of the characters was afflicted with lunacy, madness, or idiocy—sometimes all three—which often drove the plot and storyline to greater farce.

Drawings

1. This is the more commonly used term for what technicians and designers use to call **blueprints**.
2. The term *drawings* may also refer to the designer's artistic drawing of the sets and costumes, also called **sketches** or **renderings**.

Drawn to scale To document on paper the scenery and floor plan of the stage and performing area, the dimensions for both the stage and scenery must be downsized so the entire stage and set can be drawn on a piece of paper of reasonable size, as in the designer's set/floor plan *drawings*. The scale for these drawings usually is one inch (sometimes a half-inch) for every foot of actual space the set and floor plan take. The scale of each drawing is noted in the bottom right-hand corner of the page. Knowing the scale, the SM can determine with a ruler the actual size of any part of the set or performing area and relay that information on request. (See **Elevations, elevation drawings; Scale drawings**)

Dresser A person hired to work backstage in the costume department. Dressers assist in the care and maintenance of the costumes and aid the performers in getting dressed in costume pieces that may be difficult to put on alone. Dressers are an essential factor in quick costume changes. The star dresser usually works only with the star and is more accommodating in providing personal service. If the show is a musical, there may be one or two dressers hired to be part of the company. If more dressers are needed they are brought in from the local dresser's union.

Dressing the set (See **Set dressing, set decorating**)

Dress parade The parade takes place during the **technical rehearsals**. After the scenery, sound, lights, and props have been put together with the actors' performance, the costumes are added so they may be viewed by director/designer/wardrobe staff against the set and under the lights. A dress parade usually includes makeup and hairstyles. Sometimes the dress parade is formally presented with each performer coming forward in parade fashion. Other times, the performers will wear their costumes and makeup for the different scenes as they continue to rehearse.

Dress rehearsal A performance-like rehearsal done in the theatre with full costume, makeup, hair styles, and all the technical elements of the show. Dress rehearsals come in the last week or last few days of **technical rehearsals**. Dress rehearsals are designed to give the cast, crew, and SMs the experience of performing the show as if an audience were present. (See **Final dress**)

Dropbox Presently, for SMs, Dropbox is the favored commercial "cloud" storage system for "sharing" files. For limited use it is free—for more extensive use, there is a fee as with the other cloud services Microsoft or Apple might offer. Any cloud service is a safe place to store away the files created for the show. It acts as a backup and is a safeguard should the SM's computer crash or be lost. Dropbox is set up and designed for the files to be shared with other members of the company. It is also convenient in that, whether at home on the desktop, at work on the laptop, or anywhere else with the smart phone, the files can be accessed and changed.

Dry tech A technical rehearsal in the theatre with only the crew, SM, and sometimes the director and designers present, running and working the technical cues and technical elements of the show without the actors present and performing their parts.

Dutchman A strip of material, usually black, that is placed over the space where two flats or pieces of scenery meet. A dutchman prevents the audience from seeing through to the distracting backstage activity, thus maintaining the illusion that walls are real and solid in their construction.

Duvetyn, velour, velveteen These materials are all similar in appearance and are used to make up the curtains that dress the stage. They are velvet-like cotton materials, usually black but also in a deep midnight blue. They are more durable than real velvet and less expensive. Pieces of these materials are often draped or stapled around the bottoms of platforms, large props, or set pieces to cover unsightly construction. When these items are set on the stage with curtains made of the same material and color, and when the stage is properly lit, the covered areas can virtually disappear from view.

E

Eight-by-ten (8" × 10") glossy (*See Head shot*)

Electrics A backstage expression for lighting and anything having to do with the electrical department. It is also a term used in reference to the pipes above the stage on to which the lighting fixtures are hung. (*See First electrics*)

Elevations, elevation drawings Elevation drawings are part of the set designer's set/floor plan *drawings* and are drawn in the same scale as the drawings on the other pages of the *floor plans*. While the floor plans give a flat perspective of the set looking down from above, the elevation drawings give a front view looking straight ahead at eye level. Elevation drawings detail the height of all things within the set and design. The elevations page is the brother to the floor plan page. When the elevations page is placed under the floor plan page so both pages can be seen at the same time, the measurements of the set design on each page line up. The reader needs only to run a finger from one page to the other to get the different perspectives. (*See Scale drawings*)

Elevator lift Part of the stag floor that is raised up by a hydraulic or scissor lift. The greatest example of this is at Radio City Music Hall in New York where an entire set, a full orchestra, or a line of dancing Rockettes can appear from out of nowhere. A note of American history: During World War II, the only other place lifts/elevators were used was on aircraft carriers. To prevent the technology from being stolen by spies, guards were stationed throughout the backstage and under the stage areas. (*See Trap door*)

Eleven o'clock number, eleventh hour number This term originates from the early days of musicals. At the time, shows started between 8:30 and 8:45 in the evening and could finish as late as midnight. By eleven o'clock a good strong song or dance number was needed to keep the audience's interest or possibly keep them awake, which would then carry them through to the end of the show. Today, shows start earlier in the evening and are shorter in length. The term *eleventh hour number* has remained in use, but the eleventh hour number now usually comes within the tenth hour of the evening. The song "Hello, Dolly!" and accompanying dance in the musical of the same name is the eleventh hour number for that show.

Encore

1. To return to the stage and perform further for the audience. A singer or musician performing in concert might return to perform additional numbers due to the audience's generous, appreciative, and continuous applause.
2. **Encore bows.** When the applause is generous, appreciative, and continuous, the SM might have the performers come out for additional or encore bows.
3. Encore performance. A star performer might do an encore performance by repeating a performance at another time, due to popular demand.
4. Built-in encores. Today, concert performers will build in an encore by doing a number that the audience believes is the last one. At the end of the number the performer will take the bows, leave the stage, return, take more bows, and then do one or more numbers that were planned and rehearsed and are part of the show. Some directors of musical plays make it a practice to build into their *curtain bows* an encore by reprising the songs and dances in the show.

Ensemble, ensemble performers Usually only found in musical shows. The group of performers who make up the singers, dancers, and extras. While the stars, principal performers, and supporting actors stand out as individuals, the members of the ensemble remain anonymous, doing their work as a group.

Entr'acte (Pronounced *on-teract*) In a musical play, the overture is played before the curtain rises and the play begins. The entr'acte is the music played leading from the intermission into the second act.

Epilogue The epilogue is a scene that follows the final scene of a play. The epilogue is like a *tag* or *button* to the play; it brings greater resolve or closure, ties up loose ends, and gives additional information to the audience, telling how the plot, characters, or action continues in the future. The opposite of the epilogue is the **prologue**, which appears at the beginning of the play.

Equity (*See Actors' Equity Association*)

Equity light (*See Ghost light*)

F

Fade-in, fade-out A transition of light, either fading from darkness to light or fading from light to darkness. (*See Fade to black*)

Fade to black, go to black Directors, designers, technicians, and SMs use this term when asking that the lights onstage fade out all the way to a dark or **black** stage.

False proscenium, show portal The false proscenium or show portal is a **flat** placed just behind the permanent proscenium arch of the stage/theatre. Many times false prosceniums and show portals are designed and decorated to complement the theme or scenery of the show. A false proscenium or show portal makes the opening to the stage smaller. Designers use this to their advantage when designing a small or intimate play, or when a small show must perform in a theatre with a large proscenium opening. (*See Proscenium*)

Feedback

1. That squealing sound heard when a microphone comes too close to a speaker, or when the volume of the sound (the **gain**) is turned up too high. Technically speaking, feedback is the same sound waves amplifying themselves over and over.
2. When performers ask for feedback on their performance, they are asking for conformation on doing a good job, or looking for constructive commentary with suggestions for improvement. The director should be the only person giving actors feedback on their performance. When an SM is in the position of having to give feedback, it must be given with care and concern for the performer and the show.

Female plug At one end of an electric cable or extension cord there is always a female plug—a plug that accepts the two or three prongs of the **male plug**. The female plug is always the source of power into which the male plug taps and then carries the power to the lighting instrument, appliance, or apparatus that requires electricity to function.

Fill light Fill lights are part of the light design to make a more even pattern of light, either in a specific area or across the entire stage. Fill lights fill in the dark spots onstage that usually occur between the different areas of light across the stage. Fill lights reduce deep shadows. Fill lights enhance the light already present onstage but, when lit by themselves, are flat and uninteresting. The blue light of the moon can also be considered a fill light.

Final dress The last **dress rehearsal** before **previews** or **opening night**. Many times the producer will open the final dress to invited guests to give the cast and crew the experience of performing the show for an audience.

Find your light This statement is made to actors onstage, asking them to stand in the brightest part of the light in the area in which they are performing. As part of their craft, performers learn to feel or sense the brightest part of a light (**hot spot**) coming from the different lighting instruments focused on the stage. (*See Key light*)

Fire curtain A highly **fire-retardant** drop hung in front of the main **house curtain** and set immediately behind the **proscenium** arch. In case of a fire, this drop is lowered to seal the audience part of the theatre from the stage and backstage areas. The fire curtain is designed mostly to protect the audience because fires are more apt to start onstage

and spread from there. Some fire curtains are made of steel. It was once made of asbestos until asbestos was discovered to be a carcinogen. Not too long ago, in case of fire, the curtain was lowered by hand by a stage technician or a fire marshal who might be on duty. Today, most fire curtains are automatically released, triggered similarly to the way a smoke alarm is set off. The curtain lowers at a moderate speed with the sound of a warning alarm. The alarm alerts anyone onstage that might be standing in the line or path of the curtain.

In some theaters the fire curtain has a scene or design painted on it. It is left in view as the audience enters and taken out ten or fifteen minutes before the show begins to reveal the main house curtain or **show curtain**. The best example of this is at the Pasadena Playhouse, whose fire curtain has painted on it a Spanish galleon ship in full sail—complementary to the Spanish architecture of the theatre.

Fire laws Rules and regulations governing the prevention of fire and the safety of the people in the theatre, both backstage and in the audience. Without invitation or announcement, a day or two before the **opening night** of every show, the SM will see a city fire marshal walking through the theatre and backstage areas. The fire marshal will be checking to see if the curtains have been flame proofed; the fire extinguishers are accessible and fully charged; all fire exits, escape routes, and pathways are left open; and all fire laws are being followed. The fire marshal will also check to see if the **fire curtain** is operational, if **open flames** are being used in the show, and that all necessary fire permits have been obtained. An even more thorough-working fire marshal might ask for a demonstration of the largest pyrotechnics being used. In the musical play of *Gone With the Wind*, the pyrotechnics for the burning of Atlanta were so many and so great that the fire marshal was asked to come to the first dress rehearsal to pass judgment on safety.

Fire retardant A chemical that can be sprayed on or soaked into materials to prevent them from burning easily and causing a fire to spread quickly. (*See Flame proof*)

Fire up An expression used by technicians and SMs when asking for electrical power to be turned on, either for the lights onstage or for some other instrument requiring power.

First electrics (second electrics, third electrics, etc.) Sections of lighting instruments that hang overhead onstage. In each section, lights are hung on a pipe along the entire width of the stage. The first electrics is the first pipe of lights, usually a foot or two away from the **proscenium** arch. Traveling upstage away from the audience is the second electrics, and then the third, and so forth. At one time five or six electrics was an outrageous number to be used. Today, ten or more is most common, with some of the lighting units being aimed and focused as back lighting (PAR cans), or even lighting units to swing out into the audience in **ballyhoo** fashion.

These different electric pipes provide a good portion of the light needed to illuminate the stage, scenery, and actors. Like all the other rigging and stage equipment hung overhead onstage, these lights are traditionally concealed from the audience by a **teaser** or **border**. More commonly today, the instruments are well in view of the audience and are part of the set and lighting design.

Fittings A term used in theatre primarily in costuming. Fittings are the beginning of the final phase in making or preparing costumes for a show. It is during this time that the performers must try on each costume to see how it fits so the costumers or wardrobe people can make alterations. Costumes sometimes are made specifically for the actor. Other times, the costumes are already made and pulled from the rack in the costume shop. In either case, the actor must go through one or more fittings.

Fix a scene The process of changing or redirecting a scene, or sometimes an entire act. This may mean reworking characterizations, changing **blocking**, rewriting the script, or all of the above. (*See Scene doctor*)

Fixed casters (*See Casters*)

Flame proof Material and items on the stage and in the backstage areas that have been treated with a **flameretardant** chemical to keep them spreading fire or bursting into flames.

Flash pot A small container, usually metal, that is hidden or disguised from the audience. It is electrically wired and capable of holding explosive flash powder or flash paper. When a current is sent to the device, the powder or paper explodes into a flash of fire and/or a puff of smoke. The use of flash pots is highly regulated by law and the fire department. In some situations, a licensed pyrotechnic operator is required. (*See Pyrotechnics*)

Flat lighting Lighting onstage that comes mostly from the front, giving no dimension or depth to the scenery or actors. Lighting with no **side lighting** or **back lighting**. (See **Wash**)

Flats Wooden frames braced at all joining corners. Flats usually are ten feet by four feet and are covered with muslin, canvas, or a thin veneer or plywood. Some are covered with **velour** or **duvetyn**, depending on the intended use and purpose of the flat. Most times, flats covered with muslin are painted to become part of the scenery. An SM's favorite use of flats is as **backing** at places on the set where the audience can see through to the backstage activity. Another is to book two or more flats together, making a **quick-change room** adjacent to the set or somewhere in the backstage area where it will not interfere with the moving of people or scenery.

Flood, flood light A light unit that allows the light to spread on to the stage in a wide and undefined area.

Floor plans, ground plans These are the drafted **drawings**, usually scaled to one inch for every foot of actual measurement on the stage. They are a bird's-eye view, looking down on to a flat, one-dimensional picture of lines and measurements of the set. The floor plans are the layout, boundaries, and limits of the scenery as it is placed on the stage. It is from these drawings that the SM gets information for taping the outline of the set on the rehearsal room floor, and for relaying information about the set to the director or actors during the rehearsal period.

There are three major parts with a possible forth:

1. The ground plans—the view from up above looking down on to the stage floor
2. The **sections**—the side view of the set pieces as if you are standing in the wings looking at the set from the side
3. The **elevations**—looking at the set head-on as if standing in the audience
4. And sometimes the **renderings**—the set from the front; the artist conception, a pretty painting to get a general feel of the set, the coloring, and the physical look

Flop An unsuccessful or failed show; a financial flop, a critical flop, or both. Also called a **turkey**.

Fluorescent, iridescent colors Vivid colors, usually lime, orange, or yellow. These colors are brilliantly reflected under an **ultraviolet** light when there is little to no other light present onstage.

Fly gallery The area on either side of the backstage where the technicians stand to pull the ropes that make drops, curtains, set pieces, or lighting equipment fly in or out, to and from the stage. In times gone by, this area usually was raised well above the floor backstage. This gave the stagehands a better view of the things that were flying in and out. With the perfection of the **fly system** and the addition of the steel-brick **counterweight system**, today most fly galleries are at the stage floor level.

Flymen The stage technicians who stand at the **fly rail** and pull the ropes that fly in and out the drops, curtains, set pieces, and lighting equipment that hangs overhead on the stage. (See **Fly gallery**)

Fly rail, pin rail In general terms, the fly rail is the place backstage where the stage technicians stand to operate the ropes of the **fly system**. More specifically, the fly rail or pin rail is that part of the fly system where the stage technicians stand to secure the ropes to ensure that the drops, scenery, and so forth, won't go crashing to the stage floor. Today, the apparatus to do this consists of a clamp, which holds the rope in place, and a safety ring, which ensures that the clamp won't come loose. In times past when the fly system was first introduced into theatre, the pin rail was a wooden pole or beam set on its side, about three or four feet off the floor. Along this pole or beam were pegs or wooden pins that penetrated through to both sides—thus the term **pin rail**. It was around these pegs that the ropes were tied and secured.

Flys Any part of the system that flies in and out the drops, curtains, set pieces, or lighting equipment that hangs above the stage, "up in the flys." (See **Fly gallery**)

Fly space The space or area above the stage that houses the **grid**, **pulleys**, **pipes**, and ropes needed to fly in and out the scenery and technical equipment that hangs above the stage.

Fly system The structure, steel framing, mechanisms, and rigging of ropes and cables backstage that aid in flying in and out the scenery and technical equipment that hangs above the stage. (See **Counter-weights**; **Fly gallery**)

Fly tower That high, dark, cavernous space above the stage, large enough and high enough to house the apparatus for the fly system and to keep the drops, curtains, and scenery out of view until they are to appear onstage.

Focus

1. In the world of stage lighting, this means to adjust each lighting instrument so its beam of light is aimed toward the stage in a particular direction and **shuttered** so the light covers only a desired area.
2. In acting and directing, this term is used in different ways:
 - a. *Taking focus* or *pulling focus* is when an actor in a scene draws the audience's attention. When done at the appropriate time, this is admired by all; when done inappropriately, it is soon followed with an **acting note** to the performer. (See **Take stage**)
 - b. *Giving focus* is when actors turn or position themselves to direct the audience's attention to another actor or to another part of the stage. (See **Counter**)
 - c. *Holding focus* is when an actor, through presence, position onstage, attitude, energy, movement, and all that comes with performing, keeps the audience's attention on him- or herself.

Focusing lights At one time focusing lights required two stage technicians from the electric department to adjust the lighting instruments. One stage technician worked up at the different lighting instruments, while the other remained on the floor of the stage. The stage technician above aimed each lighting instrument so the beam of light floods into the prescribed area on the stage, according to the light plot and design. The stage technician on deck stood in the place where each lighting instrument is to be directed and told the stage technician above when the hottest or brightest part of the light (the **hot spot**) was shining in his or her eyes or perfectly on a large prop or piece of scenery.

Today with intelligent lighting, after the instrument is hung and generally aimed in the direction it is to light, the computer operator from the console does all the rest. However, with conventional lighting units without any intelligent features, the two-stage-technician method is still a viable way of shuttering or focusing light units such as **PAR cans**, **Fresnels**, or **Lekos**.

Fog machine, smoke machine, hazer These are all units designed to fill the stage with different densities of smoke. Primarily, the fog machine is designed to create a dense white smoke that will lie close to the stage floor (most effectively used in *Phantom of the Opera* in the boat scene). The dry-ice method gives the most dense, low-riding effect. Dry ice is really CO₂, and it pushes the oxygen in air out of the way; if an actor becomes incased in it, such as the musicians in the orchestra pit, it can be deadly. (See **Haze machine**; **Smoke machine**)

Follow cue A cue that comes immediately after another. When an SM is calling cues for the show, there is only a beat in time, no more than a second long, before the follow cue is called. Follow cues are used to create the split-second timing that is sometimes needed to have technical things happen correctly on the stage and to create the illusion or magic seen in a live performance. With the sophistication of today's system of setting light cues, a follow cue can be written into the main part of a cue and then automatically executed at the prescribed time, without the SM having to call the cue.

Follow script

1. During rehearsals, the SM or some other designated person follows the dialogue in the script as the performers speak their lines from memory. If an actor forgets some dialogue, the person following script must be ready to verbally give the line upon request from the actor. The script follower must also remain alert and correct any wrong words or lines of dialogue being said.
2. During a performance the SM also follows script, but this time for the purpose of **calling cues** for the performance.

Follow spot A lighting unit emitting a strong and intense beam of light that usually is brighter than any of the lights **focused** on the stage. This instrument is placed on a stand that can swivel and tilt, thus enabling the person operating the light to follow the performers onstage. (See **Carbon arc spotlight**; **Limelight**)

With the advent of intelligent, moving luminaries set onstage or out in the theatre on the **balcony rail**, those lights too can be used as follow spots. However, while the follow spot operator up in the booth follows the performer, the performer is required to follow the moving spot.

Footlights, the foots Lights that are placed on the floor at the front edge or **apron** of the stage. In older theaters, these lights are built into the floor of the stage. In newer theaters, the lighting designer may choose to place strip light units in this position. A drawback to this kind of lighting is the shadows cast across the backdrop or on the scenery as the performer moves about the stage in front of the foots. Older performers like footlights because they give them a more youthful appearance. Lighting designers seldom use footlights except for a special look or effect, or when doing a vaudeville or variety show.

Fouled

1. When a rope in the **fly system** gets kinked or tangled and prevents a drop or piece of scenery from flying in or out.
2. Similarly, stage technicians will use this term when a drop or piece of scenery gets caught or hooked on to something in the flys and cannot be flown in or out. (See **Hung up**)

Fourth wall The **proscenium** opening, through which the audience views the play, is the fourth wall. Prior to the nineteenth century, plays were presentational in style with the performers speaking their dialogue out to the audience even if their words were being directed to another character on the stage. By the twentieth century, naturalism and realism had become the modern form of play writing and presentation. With the works of Chekhov, Stanislavsky, and Eugene O'Neill, the convention of the fourth wall became even more important, giving the audience the feeling that they were observing life, seeing it through the fourth wall of a room. (See **Box set; Breaking the fourth wall**)

Four walls “Four walling it,” in its purest form, is when a show moves into a theatre or performance site bringing with it everything the show needs. The theatre provides only the four walls and the permanent technical parts of the theatre and backstage, and the parts of the building such as the lobby, audience seating, and stage area. The rest, including box office, ushering, parking, security, and janitorial staff, is provided by the producing company of the show. There are, however, wide variations on this theme and most theaters today provide much more than just the four walls.

Freezing the show The point at which the director, producer, and performers stop changing and improving the show and perform it the same way each time it is presented. Once the show has been frozen, it becomes the SM’s job to keep the show at performing level, seeing that changes made are minimal, in alliance with the director’s work, and within the artistic integrity of the show.

French scenes Plays are divided into acts and scenes within the acts. French scenes are smaller scenes within each scene. They are not indicated in the script. A French scene begins when a character physically enters the stage. It ends and a new French scene begins with the entrance or exit of a character, be it the same character who just entered, a new character entering, or a character that was already on the stage. A French scene may be short, with no dialogue, and only a bit of **business** before someone enters or exits the stage, or it may be many pages long, during which no one enters or exits. Dividing the play into French scenes is useful to the director and SM in setting up a rehearsal schedule.

Fresnel lamp A stage lighting instrument whose light passes through a Fresnel lens. This unit can be focused to give off a **spot** or **flood** of light into a diffused beam on the stage without a defined edge as would the hard edge of a spotlight.

Front curtain The curtain that hangs on the stage, just behind the **proscenium** arch, covering the opening of the stage and preventing the audience from seeing anything onstage until the curtain opens or is raised. (See **Act curtain**)

Front lights The lighting units that are placed in front of the **proscenium** and out in the **house**. These are the instruments in the **anti-pros**, the **box booms**, the **balcony lights**, and whatever spotlights the show might be using.

Front of the house (FOH) Any part of the theatre that is in front of the stage: the seating area, lobby, foyer, box office, marquee, and often the manager’s office and executive offices for the theatre.

Frosted gel A translucent gel placed in the front part of a lighting instrument that diffuses and softens the light falling on the stage or an actor. (See **Gels**)

Full dress, full dress rehearsal A rehearsal done in the theatre with costume, makeup, and hairstyles after all the other technical elements have been added to the show. Full dress rehearsals take place in the last few days of **technical rehearsals**, after the **dress parade**, and just before the preview performances or **opening night**. Full dress rehearsals are performed nonstop, as if an audience were present. When it is time to have a full dress rehearsal and things are going well, the director and producer may invite guests to watch.

G

Gain The volume or level at which sound is set; the intensity or decibel output of the sound. To raise or lower the gain on the speakers/monitors is to make the sound louder or softer. To raise or lower the gain on the mics is to give the mics a greater capacity to receive the sound. If the gain is set too high, it can result in **feedback**.

Gel burnout This is when the intensity of the light passing through the **gel** burns a hole in the gel or melts it to the point where the white light of the bulb is being projected on to the stage rather than the color from the gel.

Gel frames Devices to hold the colored **gels**. A gel frame is a two-flapped metal frame hinged together like a book. A square piece of gel is placed between the flaps, the flaps are closed, and the frame is slipped into slots at the front part of a stage lighting instrument.

Gels, color filters To get the various colors of light on the stage, a clear, transparent, and colored plastic material is slipped into a slot at the front part of the lighting instruments. Originally, gels were made from a gelatin substance, thus the abbreviated name **gel**. Today, they are made from a polymer, acetate, or vinyl, each with their own ability to withstand the heat of the lamp before they melt or burn out.

As long as conventional light units are still used on the stage, gels will remain an important part of theatrical lighting. However, with the advancement of LED light units and smart/intelligent lighting units, there will surely come a time when the smallest and simplest light unit will have its own built-in color producing system, and at that time gels will become museum pieces.

Gels, no-color These are gels that have a very faint or small amount of color—the are not saturated with color. There are no-color blues and no-color ambers. When combined they give off the effect of sunlight or moonlight. For example, if you use a no-color blue from one side of the area and no-color amber from the left, from the audience's point of view it is natural light.

George Spelvin This is a pseudonym used in programs for any number of reasons:

1. An actor does not want to be credited or have his or her name in the program.
2. An actor is playing two or more roles and the producer and actor prefer the audience not know this.
3. An actor is a member of Actors' Equity but is working in a nonunion show/contract and does not want to be penalized.
4. Or there is a character who is named or talked about in the show but is never really heard or seen onstage.

Getting the show on its feet The entire process of lifting the show from the written page to the live performance: setting the **blocking**, developing the characters, or adding the technical elements. (See **On your feet**)

Ghosting When the lights onstage are quickly turned off, as in a **blackout**, but there remains for one or two seconds more a slight glow of light before the lamp goes out completely. During this brief moment, the audience can still see whatever is onstage. Actors, SMs, and technicians must remain aware of this ghosting effect and wait for the stage to go completely dark before making their next moves. To see the actors scurrying to leave the stage or the stage technicians starting to move props and scenery spoils whatever illusion of reality may have been created for the audience.

Ghosting is a term also used when a stage light is dimmed to black but there remains some light even though the dimmer is completely in the off position.

Ghost light, Equity light This is a single light left on the stage after everyone has left the theatre—a night light. Traditionally, this light is a bare bulb surrounded by a wire cage, is placed on a pole or stand, and is set in the middle of the stage. More commonly today, the ghost light is a single light that hangs from above. Its purpose is to prevent anyone who might be passing over the stage from bumping into props or scenery or falling into the orchestra pit. Superstition has it that a light must be left on for the ghosts and spirits of actors past, who have worked the theatre and come out at night to repeat their performances. The handle *Equity light* is a carryover to Actors' Equity's requirement to have safe illumination backstage for the performers.

Gig This term seems to have originated with jazz musicians in reference of having a job. At first it meant a short-term job, lasting for one night or maybe a week. Eventually, it was used to refer to any job a musician got. The term quickly spread and became accepted language among all musicians, including those who performed in the classics. Actors and people working in the theatre, especially those working in musical theatre, picked up the term and have made it part of their jargon.

Give a line During rehearsals, when an actor forgets a line of dialogue and asks for the line, the person *following script* gives the exact wording of the line. (See [Line reading](#))

Give stage A performer onstage moves or turns in such a way that the central point of interest is directed to another actor or part of the stage. (See [Take stage](#))

Giving acting notes (See [Acting notes](#); [Line reading](#))

Giving a line reading (See [Line reading](#))

Giving focus (See [Focus](#))

Glow tape, glo-tape A luminous tape that glows in the dark. It becomes saturated and is activated in the presence of light, but then when the lights are out it glows. This tape is used backstage to mark pathways and is placed on the edges of steps or at eye level on pieces of scenery. Despite the adhesive backing, it is often stapled to ensure permanent placement.

Gobo A pattern, image, or design cut out on a thin plate of metal or aluminum. This plate is placed into the front part of a lighting instrument, more specifically in a *Leko*, between the lamp and the lens. When the light passes through the cut-out, it projects the image on whatever part of the stage the designer or director chooses. There are some light units designed specifically for this purpose that may also have a motor built into them to make the cutout move, such as one projecting images of clouds in the sky. Gobos are effective in creating rays of sunlight, patterns of leaves, or shadows from moonlight. Images from gobos can suggest locations such as the bars of a prison or the grid of a dungeon. Gobos can also have a subliminal effect and induce strong feeling and emotions, such as a Star of David, a Red Cross, or a swastika.

Gobos are as readily used along with *projections*, adding another layer of color, image, and design. In theatre, the term *gobo* is an acronym that stands for “go before optics.” More and more glass gobos are being used and in time will probably become part of the smart, intelligent lighting units, offering places for several gobos of different images to be used within the production.

GO! cue This is the all-important cue the SM gives in calling cues for the performance. This is the third and final part in the SM's *calling a cue*. The SM gives the first part—the *warning*—and the second part—the *stand by*. Each part is important in preparing for the cue, but the GO! is most important. It is what governs the technical timing of the show and has a direct effect on the performance.

God mic A microphone placed in the audience for a director, producer, or casting person to use as they speak to the performers onstage during rehearsals or auditions. Technicians and SMs quickly came to name this mic the God mic because the person speaking was often in the darkened theatre and seemed to be a disembodied voice, booming from

the darkness. Before recorded preshow announcements, a God mic was also placed on or near the SM's console backstage.

Gofer, runner, production assistant This usually is a young, energetic person who aspires to work in show business. The gofer often has few to no credits and is looking to start somewhere. Being a gofer is the proverbial getting-your-foot-in-the-door job. The term *gofer* is a combination of the words *go* and *for* (go for this, go for that), and while the word *gofer* is often used, the terms *runner* or *production assistant* are preferred. The production assistant works mostly with the producer, director, and SM, running errands and going for things.

Go up on a line Anytime an actor forgets a line of dialogue. The most intense and terrorizing application of this phrase is when an actor goes up on a line during performance. (See **Up**)

Grand drape The *front curtain*, also called the *act curtain* or the *house curtain*. It hangs just upstage of the *proscenium* arch and is used to close the acting/stage area from the audience's view when the acting area is not supposed to be seen. It can be grand in design, with folds and fringe, or simply pleated, perhaps in a deep lush color.

Greenroom A designated room or place in the theatre where guests may come to meet the performers after the performance. Most times it is backstage and convenient to the dressing rooms, in which case the greenroom also becomes the assembling place for the actors during the performance. Company meetings are often held in this room, and it is a favorite place for the director to assemble the cast to give *notes*. Greenrooms are seldom green. One story has it that when theatre was an open-air affair, the actors were sent off into a nearby field or "green" to get into costume or wait until it was time for them to be onstage. Then when theatre became enclosed, the name *greenroom* evolved. Another story is that the greenroom got its name from a room at Covent Garden in London, at the turn of the century, that happened to be painted green. Some greenrooms are elaborate and beautifully decorated. Many are comfortable and homey, with old prop furniture and very distinct evidence of long use.

Grid The framework of pipes or wooden beams built high up into the *fly tower* above the stage that is the support system for the *pulleys*, *pipes*, and cables that are all part of the *fly system*. (See **Fly gallery**)

Grip A stage technician who moves the set pieces and units. The term has its roots in film, referring to the person who was hired specifically to move and carry lighting equipment, and sometimes props and scenery. (See **Schlep**)

Ground cloth A large canvas cloth that is laid out on the rehearsal room floor, having painted or taped on it the dimensions, boundaries, and limits of the set. This cloth can be folded or rolled up and taken anywhere, and then laid out again so the actors can rehearse. For *one-set shows* and in situations where the rehearsals are moved from one location to another, this is a very workable idea. Today, with multiset musicals, ground cloths are less practical and are seldom used. Instead, each setting of scenery is taped to the rehearsal room floor with different colored tape, and great effort is made to secure the same rehearsal room for the entire period of rehearsals.

Ground plans (See **Floor plans**)

Ground row

1. Several units of *border lights* or strip light units placed on the floor of the stage in a single row and at the foot of the *cyclorama*. These lights are focused up on the cyc to give it color. The best effects created by the ground row of lights are sunrises, sunsets, and full-stage silhouettes.
2. A ground row is also a strip of low, cut-out scenery placed on the floor of the stage and at the foot of the cyc. Sometimes the cut-outs are made to look like distant hills, rocks, a fence, or vegetation. This scenery helps give dimension or a finished look to the set, but is made mostly to hide the ground row of lights, which might be just behind.

Guy line, guide line A length of rope or line attached to a pipe, a large prop, or a piece of scenery that must be raised or lowered up or down from the *flys*. As the item travels, a stage technician holds the rope *guiding* the object off in one way or the other, preventing it from twisting, turning, or getting *hung up* on anything that might be nearby.

Gypsy A familial and loving term dancers use for themselves. This term describes the style of their professional lives —moving from show to show, traveling with touring shows going from town to town, and setting up a home in

whatever housing is provided.

H

Half-hour call The latest time a performer is allowed to arrive at the theatre for a performance. This period of time is regulated by Equity rule and is strongly enforced by the SM. It is during this time the actors prepare for the performance by getting into costume, makeup, hair, and character. If actors require more time to prepare, they come to the theatre earlier; however, they are only responsible and accountable to the SM at half-hour.

At the beginning of the half-hour call the SM counts heads to ensure everyone is present for the performance. If someone is missing, the SM first checks to see if the person is somewhere else in the theatre or calls their cell phone. If the actor is not found or contacted, the SM then alerts the *understudy*, *standby actor*, *swing dancer*, or dance captain. If a performer arrives any later than the half-hour call, that performer is questioned, officially written up in the SM's logbook and/or show report, and warned about tardiness.

Halogen lamp A halogen lamp, also known as a tungsten-halogen, is an incandescent lamp that has a small amount of a halogen added. The combination of the halogen and the tungsten filament creates a reaction, producing a high intensity of light. This lamp has replaced the carbon rods used in the *carbon arc spotlight*. The rays of light coming from these lamps cannot be turned on as with most bulbs and lamps. They need time to warm up to reach their full intensity. There is no one standard of lamp used in lighting instruments. This varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, some using xenon, others krypton. For the SM, the most important thing to know is that lamps today are much different from the incandescent lamps of yesterday. Today, the lamps used emit a bright and high intensity of bluish-white light as opposed to the warm tungsten light of yesterday's incandescent lamps.

Ham A person who enjoys performing and does so at any given opportunity, be it formally onstage or informally in private or social situations. This term can be used negatively to criticize a pretentious or overbearing performer. Other times it can be a compliment, expressing a performer's ability to be entertaining.

Hand cue Sometimes when the SM is calling cues for a performance, it may be easier or necessary to give a hand cue instead of giving the cue verbally. Of course the person executing the cue must be within viewing range and must be able to see the SM clearly. In all such cases, the SM still goes through the three steps required in calling cues: the *warning*, the *stand by*, and the *GO!* For the warning the SM makes visual contact with the person. A hand over the head is the standby cue. For the GO! the SM brings the hand down in a large gesture so there is no doubt that the GO! has been called.

Handle In terms of acting and performing, a handle is a little extra something an actor puts into the dialogue or character. This could be a sigh, an exclamatory word, or a catch phrase—something that is not written into the script. Sometimes actors will use a handle for coloring of character, to get timing, to sound real and conversational, or just to give them time to think of their next line. SMs must watch to see that the performer does not overuse this device.

Before beginning work on the play or the character, some directors and actors need to first find something on which to base their work. They need to study and analyze the play or character, perhaps finding a premise, a motivating thread, the author's intent, or just creating something of their own. Once they find their handle, the director or actor can begin to develop the play or create the role.

Hand props Size and ease of handling during the performance determines what is a hand prop. This rule, however, is not always clear and steadfast. A drinking glass; a large, wrapped present; food substances; or hats used in a dance are classic examples of hand props. Yet a small wooden chair or footstool, though easily handled during a performance, is not considered a hand prop. The difference between what is a hand prop and a regular prop is not crucial to the show. The classification of hand props in a show happens at the whim and discretion of the prop person and SM.

Hand winches, hand-cranked winches At one time all winches were hand-cranked winches. With the advent of automation, they are less used but not completely gone from the backstage. They still have their value and worth in

smaller productions and theatres and sometimes in musicals where multiple pieces of scenery need to be moved on to the stage at one time. (See **Winch**)

Hanging lights The act of a stage technician attaching lighting instruments to pipes and poles and plugging them into their various circuits.

Hanging the show An all-inclusive expression that describes the act of stage technicians hanging drops, set pieces, flats, curtains, and the lights for the show. Hanging the show is usually the first step in setting up a show on the stage and is done before the set and props are put into place.

Hard edge Having to do with focusing lights. (See **Sharp edge**)

Hard limit, soft limit These are terms an automation technician might use; hard limit means that when a stage unit is being brought on to stage, it is brought to a very specific mark. If the unit is brought to a soft limit, it will stop a few inches either way of the point at which it is to stop. (See **Winch**)

Hard wall, hard-wall set construction Scenery, set pieces, and flats covered with a thin veneer, Masonite, or plywood. Hard-wall set construction got its start in films and television. This kind of construction requires more bracing, which makes the set pieces stronger but heavier to handle. On the other hand, the set is more durable, can withstand greater use, wear and tear, and the rigors of traveling with a touring show. Hard-wall construction for interior scenes also maintains greater reality in that the walls don't flap when a door opens or closes, or when the actors go up and down stairs.

Haze machines, hazers Units mounted high up on the stage where the lighting units are hung. They go hand in hand with the design of lighting, emitting a thin layer of smoke or haze and filling the air, bringing definition to the rays and shafts of lights and the beams of lasers. (See **Fog machines**; **Smoke machines**)

Head high A direction given to the stage technician operating the ropes for the *flys*. It tells the person to fly in or fly out a drop, set piece, or curtain to about seven to eight feet above the stage floor. In rehearsals, this allows people onstage to continue working without hitting their heads. (See **Clear!**)

Heads! or Heads up! A safety call made from backstage, warning the people onstage to look up because something is being flown in or out from the *flys*. Upon hearing this call, experienced people in theatre know to stop immediately, see if they are in any danger, and take themselves out of harm's way. The tone of voice used in making this safety call is an excellent indicator of the urgency and degree of danger. Even a soft drop or curtain can cause injury, because steel pipes or chains are often placed into the hems of these items.

Head shot An eight-by-ten-inch glossy photograph of a performer. Usually a close shot from the waist or shoulders up. Actors submit these pictures along with their resumes at auditions. Head shots are an important aid and tool in casting and help the casting people remember the different performers. These are often the pictures that are included in the program or playbill.

Heavy prop show Just as the phrase suggests, this is a show that uses a lot of props and furniture.

Hemp The material most commonly used in the early days of theatre to make up the ropes used in the *fly system*. Today, the ropes are made mostly of synthetic materials that are more durable, do not easily stretch, and are smoother to the hands. (See **Hemp house**)

Hemp house An old term for a theatre that still uses *hemp* ropes and *sandbags* as their *flys* and *counterweight system*. Chances are *very slim* that today's SM will encounter such a theatre—perhaps if touring in Europe. If so, be sure to study it and see how it was in the old days.

High trim Having to do with the *fly system*, this is the highest point at which a drop, curtain, piece of scenery, and so on, can be placed on the stage during the performance. Sometimes the high trim refers to the highest point the drop or set piece is set and still showing to the audience. Other times it is the point at which the drop is completely out of sight. (See **Trim**)

Hi-hat, top-hat A device that can be slipped in front of most lighting instruments. When held in the hand, this device looks like a man's top hat, as worn in the early part of the nineteenth century, but with the top cut out. When slipped in front of a lighting instrument, the hi-hat narrows the beams of light hitting the stage to a smaller and more specific area. The longer or taller the shaft of the hi-hat, the narrower the area of light projected on to the stage. While the hi-hat is still used on conventional lights, it is no longer needed with smart/intelligent units because they are capable of being electronically narrowed by command from the lighting designer or computer operator.

Hit your mark For actors, hitting their mark means to cross to an established point onstage without looking down to see if they are in the correct position. These marks are taped or painted on the stage floor with an X or a T. These points are established by the director or choreographer and are usually crucial for lighting, *sight lines*, or the overall picture and composition of the stage. (See **Spike marks**)

Hold A term mostly used backstage when the SM, director, or stage technician wants someone to stop what they are doing, remain in place, and stand by to continue. "Hold, please!"

Hold book, be on book, be on script (See **Follow script; Give a line**)

Holding focus (See **Focus**)

Hold the curtain Delaying raising the curtain for the performance to begin.

Hook Actors and directors sometimes like to find an idea, a premise, a motivating factor, the author's intent, or just create something of their own that becomes the basis for their creative work on a character or the play. (See **Handle**)

Horseshoe stage A stage surrounded on three sides by the audience. It can be rounded or squared off. (See **Arena stage; Thrust stage**)

Hot spot The brightest or most intense part of a light projected on the stage. Actors are often asked to find the hot spot of the light in which they are standing for better audience viewing. SMs too must learn to find hot spots. Many times when traveling with a touring show, the SM is asked to help in *focusing* the conventional lights.

House For people working in theatre, the house is that part of the theatre where the audience sits to watch the show. (See **Front of the house**)

House crew The house crew includes the technical department heads and stage technicians hired by the theatre to maintain the facility and work whatever shows come to that facility. (See **Local crew**)

House curtain, main curtain The curtain or drape hung just behind the *proscenium* arch. This curtain is a permanent part of the theatre and is used to cover the opening of the stage as the audience enters to be seated. This curtain differs from a *show curtain* in that a show curtain is brought in by the show performing at the theatre and is often designed to complement the scenery or look of the show. For the SM, the house curtain or show curtain is an item that will be dealt with at least two times during a performance, if not four or more times. This curtain can be made of plush velvet and elaborately pleated, or it can be plain and simple, made of relatively inexpensive material. (See **Grand drape**)

House lights The lights that light up the theatre as the audience is entering or leaving.

House man This term is reserved for the person who is technically in charge of the care and maintenance of the stage, theatre, and possibly the building in which the theatre is housed. The *technical director* of the show remains concerned with the care and maintenance of the show, while the house man is the person to turn to with problems having to do with the theatre itself. People in theatre may also use this term in reference to the house manager, the person in charge of the jobs and activities of the box office, the lobby, the marquee, and the ushering staff. (See **House crew**)

House right, house left These positions are determined from the audience's point of view as they sit facing the stage. *Stage right and stage left* are the opposite and are determined from the actors' point of view as they face the audience. Novice performers and beginning SMs often get the two mixed up.

House seats Prime *orchestra seats* set aside for each performance that are used as complimentary seats for VIPs or guests, or sold to members of the company for their guests, friends, or business associates. A day or two before each performance, whatever house seats remain unused usually go on sale to the general public.

House speakers Sound speakers placed in the audience, either at the sides of the *proscenium* or above just in front of the proscenium. Their purpose is to enhance the audience's hearing by having broadcast through the speakers the dialogue spoken by the actors onstage, the music played in the orchestra pit, or the prerecorded music and sound effects played from the sound booth. (*See Monitors*)

Hung up Getting caught or hooked on something else. Scenery being moved on and off stage can get hung up on the stage curtains. As items fly in and out from the *flys*, they sometimes get hung up on items hanging nearby. (*See Fouled*)

I

Iambic pentameter Five beats or accents within a line or section of dialogue; dialogue that is written and delivered with five beats or accents for each grouping of words. All of Shakespeare's plays are written in iambic pentameter. "Shall **I compare thee to a summer's day?**" While the bold words or parts of words are stressed, the art of delivering this line and all of Shakespeare's dialogue is to be aware of the *five beats* but not deliver them in staccato fashion, but smoothly as if in conversation.

IATSE or IA The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. IATSE members work in all forms of live theatre, motion picture and television production, trade shows and exhibitions, television broadcasting, and concerts, as well as in the equipment and construction shops that support all these areas of the entertainment industry. Important to the SM and with whom he or she will be in closest contact will be the stage technicians, wardrobe, child wrangler, and to a lesser degree the scenic artists and the equipment and construction shops.

Idler wheel More commonly called a *pizza cutter*. This is a device attached at the bottom corners of a *slider* (a *flat* that moves on and off stage by way of automation). It is designed with a polymer wheel that sits into a thin cut in the *stage deck* to keep the slider traveling in a straight line and not fishtailing as it travels on or off stage.

Imaginary wall (*See Fourth wall*)

Improvise To perform without benefit of script or rehearsal. To create dialogue, music, or action as it comes to mind rather than having it planned or mapped out ahead of time.

Infrared camera In simplest terms possible, the infrared camera can pick up the part of color/light that we cannot see. All objects emit heat energy, even an ice cube. The infrared camera picks up that energy and converts it into an electronic signal, which is transmitted to a video monitor.

In most professional theatres the SM will have as part of the console a monitor that is attached to an infrared camera placed out in the audience, usually on the balcony rail. With this camera/monitor, the SM sees clearly the stage when all the lights are out, aiding him or her with scene changes done in *blackouts*.

Ingénue, soubrette Young lead or supporting female roles. An ingénue differs from a soubrette in that an ingénue's character is simpler and more innocent, while a soubrette is pert and more coquettish.

In one (*First see Wings*) *In one* describes the performing area onstage closest to the audience. It starts with and includes the first *wing*. It crosses the stage to the first wing on the opposite side and goes down to the edge or *apron* of the stage. Thus, anyone performing in this area is performing in one. This term has its roots in vaudeville and burlesque, where comics and small acts were placed with a curtain or drop hanging closely behind. Meanwhile, beyond the drop or curtain, props and scenery were being set up for a larger, more elaborate act or scene. This technique is especially effective in today's multiscene musical shows. Playing a scene in one creates a closer, more intimate feeling with the audience.

In sync The term *sync* is an abbreviation for *synchronize* or *synchronization*. Being in sync is when two or more elements of the show are working together in a compatible relationship—as when the live music from the orchestra pit is playing together with the prerecorded music. For the SM, having all parts of the production performing in sync is the most meaningful and important form of this definition. (See **Click track; Lip sync**)

Intelligent lighting, moving lights Lighting fixtures (*luminaires*) that can be controlled by consoles. They pan, sweep, swivel, tilt, focus, project images, change colors, and provide lighting to the stage that once required twelve to sixteen conventional lighting instruments. (See **IQ or I-Cue intelligent mirror**)

In the round (See **Black box theatre; Theatrein-the-round**)

Iridescent colors (See **Fluorescent, iridescent colors**)

Iris A mechanism built into spotlights and some stage lighting instruments that allows a stage technician to adjust the size of the circle of light coming out of the instrument and hitting the stage. (See **Douser**)

IQ or I-Cue intelligent mirror This is a lightweight unit that can be slipped in front of a conventional light where the *gel fame* would be placed. It gives some of the benefits of a moving light. It has a reflective mirror lens that can move with the ability to pan and tilt. If a *gobo* is put into the unit, the pattern of the gobo can be projected on to the stage. It is quiet in its moves and has a pan range of 230 degrees and a tilt range of 57 degrees. But keep in mind that the unit needs to be hooked into the DMX setup so that it can be controlled by the computer operator setting the cues.

J

Jumping the gun Anticipating and executing a cue or line of dialogue before its proper time. Doing something before the time as set by the director.

Juvenile Young lead and supporting roles.

K

Key light When areas of lighting onstage are lit with two or more lighting instruments, the instrument emitting the brightest light and covering most of the area is the key light. Performers are asked to find and stand in their key light for better audience viewing. If the stage were lit with only key lights, its appearance would be flat and washed out. Other lights set at different intensities, from different angles, from the sides, and at the back give depth, dimension, and greater form to the actors, scenery, and objects that appear onstage. (See **Back lighting; Fill light; Hot spot**)

Kickers, shin busters These are lighting instruments, usually *Lekos*, that are placed on the floor of the stage. Sometimes they are placed at the foot of the stage and off to the extreme sides. Most times they are placed in the *wings* with their light projecting across the stage. When used in this way, these lights create a surrealistic pattern of *cross lighting* or *side lighting*. Kickers are commonly used in ballet and dance concerts. Not only do these lights create dramatic mood, effect, color, and design, but they light the dancers, emphasizing and revealing in greater detail the line and form of the body.

The terms *kickers* and *shin busters* come from the humor of stagehands, because these side lights emphasize the dancer's legs as they move and kick. In a second and perhaps more literal meaning, these sidelights give a "kick" to the lights already onstage. As a third meaning, when these lights are placed on the floor, they are easily kicked or bumped, sometimes causing a bruise or minor cut on the shins.

Kill In theatre, the term *kill* means to stop doing or using something: "Kill the chair in the second act"; "Kill the business with the glass in the restaurant scene"; "Kill the lights on the stage left side"; "Kill the sound, please."

Knife, dog knife A metal implement or device used in automation to keep a pallet on track and traveling in a straight line. (See **Dog**)

L

Ladder (See **Light ladder; Light towers**)

Lamp This term can refer to either the entire lighting fixture or only the bulb inside. At home we use bulbs. In theatrical lighting they are more correctly called lamps. More and more, lamps filled with **halogen, xenon**, or **krypton** are being used, especially in moving and intelligent light units. **LED** light units of course do not use lamps; they have their **diodes**.

Laser lights In its simplest definition, a laser light is *a tight, concentrated, amplified, focused beam of light*. A more technical definition is really for an electrician who works with lasers. For an SM, it is sufficient just to know that it is *a tight, concentrated, amplified, focused beam of light*.

Lashed together Two **flats** tied together with a thin rope or **sash cord**, which is also called **lash line**.

Lash line A thin rope or **sash cord** that is used to tie or lash **flats** together.

Lavalier microphone A wireless mic. (See **Body mic; Wireless**)

LED light units Sometimes called **luminaires**, LED stands for light emitting **diode**. LED lights are an efficient, energy-saving method of light production, bringing more intensified and brighter light to the stage. In LED light units the diode is the replacement of the incandescent or **halogen** lamp. (See **Video wall**)

LED tape A thin strip or run of **LED** lights placed in a row. There are many sections of **diodes** to a strip of LED tape. Each section, about eight inches long, is soldered to the next section. If the tape needs to be made longer or shorter, it has to be added to or cut at the soldered point, otherwise the section that was cut in the middle will no longer emit light. LED tape is easily concealed and yet can flood an area with a large amount of light. The diodes are mounted on a woven cloth, which makes it flexible, and it has a sticky backing that allows it to be applied to most surfaces.

Legit house A theatre that presents only plays and Broadway musicals—not vaudeville, burlesque, or other types of live stage shows.

Legitimate theatre A term that distinguishes plays and Broadway musicals from vaudeville, burlesque, or other live stage performances.

Legs, tormentors The long curtains or tall flats that dress each side of the stage. They create the different **wings** from which the performers and pieces of scenery can enter or leave the stage. Legs and tormentors also prevent the audience from seeing into the backstage area. When flats are used, some technicians and designers may call them portals.

Lekolite, Leko The Lekolite is an ellipsoidal reflector spotlight (ERS) that was introduced in 1933. To understand the *ellipsoidal reflector* part and how it all works inside is a course of study for an SM at another time. Presently, it is sufficient to know that the Leko fast became the lighting instrument of choice for its strong, well-defined beam of light, throw distance, control of the beam, ease of focusing, ability to be tightly focused on to a part of the set or a prop, ability to create a circular patten of light that can be used as a spotlight or a pool of light, and ability to project directly from above. With even greater improvement and use of a high-intensity **lamp** giving off a cooler beam, it has morphed into the Source Four lamp that has fast become the lighting instrument of choice for conventional fixtures. (See **Source Four Leko**)

Levels

1. Stage level is anything that is on the same floor or level as the stage. The backstage area and some dressing rooms are at stage level. The orchestra pit is below stage level.
2. Platforms or risers are structures that create different levels for the scenery and on which the actors perform.
3. Performance level is the pitch and intensity at which an actor performs for an audience. Actors are often asked to do rehearsals at performance level.
4. Light levels are the amount of brightness or intensity of a light onstage that helps create the mood, atmosphere, or effect.
5. Sound levels are the loudness or softness of the sound—the volume, the **gain**.

Libretto The script to a musical.

Lightboard or dimmer board With the advent of digital technology, these terms have become antiquated and with time will fade from the lexicon. More accurate now is the **lighting console**.

Lightboard operator This technician is part of the electric department. During technical rehearsals he or she sits at the lighting console, programming all that the director or lighting designer chooses—everything that the intelligent light fixtures onstage are capable of performing. Then during performance this operator executes the light cues as they are called by the SM. (*See Lighting console*)

Lighting console Today's lighting console has replaced what was once a giant unit weighing thousands of pounds that took up a good part of one of the walls backstage. Each light was connected to a **dimmer**, which was controlled and operated by a lever. Today, the lighting console is a desktop, computerized, electronic unit operated by a technician highly knowledgeable in operating the program that goes with it. By way of **DMX cable**, data controlling the light fixture is delivered to a **dimmer rack** cabinet stored somewhere in the backstage area. Within the dimmer rack are **dimmer bays** or drawers containing two dimmers. Each dimmer is connected to a lighting instrument onstage and, literally, the whole show is programmed and preset.

Lighting design The selection, layout, and arrangement of all lighting instruments that light the stage, including their placement, the movement of the instrument if it is an intelligent unit, the angle of projection for the conventional units, and the intensity at which all lights light the scenery, performing areas, and actors. At the same time, the lighting designer is choosing the color of light or the gels to be used. The lighting designer paints the stage with lights. The designer's use of lights establishes an environment, sets a mood, creates special effects, and lights the stage for audience viewing interest and pleasure. In making these choices, the designer must also complement the scenery, costumes, actors, and the play itself.

Light ladder or ladder truss A frame of **piping** with crossbars placed well above heads in the **wings** upon which lighting instruments and sound speakers can be hung. (*See Booms; Light towers; Light tree*)

Light movement, the movement of light The lights changing onstage during the performance and seen by the audience. Light designers and directors use the movement of light to enhance and complement the show. Each time the SM calls a light cue during a performance, the SM checks onstage to see the lights change as they move from one cue to the next. (*See Moving lights*)

Light plot A drafted **drawing** that notes the placement and layout of all the lighting instruments and the colors to be used. (*See Lighting design*)

Light spill Unwanted light spilling on to something or into another area.

Light towers A flat grid of pipes welded together on which lighting instruments are hung. These towers usually are placed backstage in the **wings** and hang overhead with their lights focused on the stage to create **side lighting**. Light towers can also be placed in the audience off to the far sides of the stage and become the **box boom lights**. (*See Ladder; Light tree*)

Light tree (boom) A single, free-standing pole screwed into a heavy metal base. Along the top half of the pole stage lighting instruments are clamped. These trees usually are placed in the **wings** just behind the wing curtains or portals. They are set out of view of the audience and out of the way of the performers, as well as out of the way of the pieces

of scenery that must move through the wings. Light trees are convenient to create **side lighting** or for hanging lighting instruments where there is no other way to hang them.

Limbo A place or space onstage that has no distinctive setting or environment that relates to the play or scenery. Most times this place is off to either side of the stage, in front of the **proscenium**, and if used during the performance, it may be lit by a **spotlight** or **pool of light**. Narrators, announcers, or characters who speak directly to the audience are often placed in such an area. Sometimes, when a set is backed by curtains or nondescript flats, the space above the set is referred to as limbo.

Limelight To be *in the limelight* is a theatrical and colloquial expression meaning to be in a prominent position where a person can be seen by others and has their focus and attention—to be highlighted, singled out, or in prominent view. The term *limelight* comes from the first spotlights used in theatre when electricity was first used as stage lighting. Lime was placed in a metal container and, when mixed with an electrical current, a bright glow was created. With the use of a mirror and lens, that glow was reflected on to the stage, creating a very intense and strong circular pattern of light, thus a **spotlight** and the term “limelight”. The limelight was eventually replaced by the safer, **carbon arc spotlight**, which is now being replaced by the more efficient, high-intensity **lamps** such as HDI, HMI, and **xenon** lamps.

Line, please! During rehearsals, an actor may ask the SM or the person holding the book for a line of dialogue that the actor cannot remember.

Line reading

1. The way an actor says a line of dialogue. A line reading is the meaning, feeling, intent, expression, inflection, tune, tone, motivation, attitude, personal experience, and character study that influences how an actor will say a line of dialogue.
2. Giving a line reading means telling an actor how to say a line of dialogue. Most performers dislike this approach; they prefer talking about the meaning, feeling, intent, motivation, personal experience, or character study. Some directors direct by giving line readings. Others will use a line reading only as a last resort. SMs should make it a standing rule never to give line readings.

Line rehearsal A rehearsal in which the emphasis is on saying the lines of dialogue in the play, leaving out the physical action or movement of the play. Directors and SMs will have this kind of rehearsal to help the actors remember and memorize their lines. A line rehearsal is also useful in refreshing the actors' memories after they have had time off from performing the show.

Lines

1. The dialogue written in the script. The words the actors speak.
2. In the technical world of stagehands, a line is any length of rope.

Lip sync An actor silently mouthing the words to a song that has been prerecorded, giving the impression that the actor is actually singing the song. Many times the prere-corded voice is the performer's own, and the choice to lip sync instead of performing the number live may be to save the actor's voice when performing a difficult show or to allow the actor to do a strenuous dance and appear to sing at the same time.

Live Stage technicians use this term when explaining where things are placed backstage—the place and space a thing occupies: “The prop table on stage right will live just behind the kitchen wall of the set”; “The porch unit will live in the stage left wing for the entire show, ready to be moved on and off stage when it is needed.” (See **Store**)

Load-in, load-out Terms commonly used by stage technicians when they are bringing in or taking out of the theatre or performance site the set props and all the technical elements of the show. (See **Drag-in, drag out**)

Local crew The stage technicians hired in each town to work a touring show. The show will travel with its own technical department heads, who are called the **show crew** or **road crew**. It is, however, more economical for the producer to hire stagehands in each town rather than having the expense of traveling and housing all of the stagehands needed to set up the show and run it.

Long line, short line The long line and the short line are the ropes or *lines* that the stage technicians operate to fly curtains, drops, and so forth, in and out—to and from the stage. These ropes travel through the *fly system* and are attached to pipes hanging in the *fly space* above the stage. To hold the pipes suspended above the stage and parallel to the floor, each pipe must have at least two ropes or lines attached to it. One line is at the right end of the pipe, the other at the left end—the long line and the short line.

Either rope can be the long line or the short line, depending on which side of the backstage the *fly gallery* is placed—the place where the stage technicians stand to operate the ropes. The rope that travels the longest distance from the stagehand, through the fly system, across the stage, and over to the far end of the pipe is the long line. The short line then is the rope traveling the shortest distance and closest to the side where the stagehand is standing.

There will be times when a drop or curtain is hanging at an angle and not parallel to the stage floor. This is easily corrected by having a stage technician adjust either the long line or the short line until the object is straight. To communicate this quickly and effectively, it is important the SM know which line is which.

Having said all of this, with today's *counterweight system*, the long and short lines are permanently fixed into place with little to no chance of their becoming unadjusted. There are, however, still some theaters without upgraded fly systems. In those theaters the SM may be called on to deal with such problems and apply this knowledge of the long line and the short line.

Low-profile casters These are a hard rubber or polymer cylinder mounted within a metal frame or plate under the plywood flooring of a pallet. Thus, this rubber or polymer cylinder becomes a *cylindrical wheel* upon which the pallet travels as it is being pulled by the *wire rope* under the stage deck. With such a low-profile caster, the pallet itself can be slim and have a low profile.

Low trim Having to do with the *fly system* and the lowest point at which a drop, curtain, or piece of scenery is placed on the stage during the performance. (See **Trim**)

Lumen The measurement of light or the intensity of light coming from a lighting instrument. A lumen is the measurement of light itself—the intensity, the brightness. In times past we might have talked in terms of watts. Watts are the *electrical* measurement. (See **Luminaire**; **Luminous flux**)

Luminaire

1. This is a term widely used in Europe. Some US lighting manufacturers have adopted this term, especially for intelligent fixtures. However, for the American SM, lighting designers, directors, and stage technicians still use the terms *lighting instrument*, *light unit*, or simply *light fixture*.
2. For those who favor the term *luminaire*, this could be a light that is projected on to the stage to look as if it is coming from a lamp, or sunlight through a window, or a wall sconce, or the light that would come from a lit fire, or light coming through a grid structure that leaves a pattern on the stage... but that too could be a *gobo*. Even after adopting the term *luminaire*, it is used differently in different parts of the country and even across the world. So it is the affable SM who picks up on the local terminology to fit in and not be a standout. (See **Lumen**; **Luminous flux**)

Luminous flux The flowing out of light from a light fixture (a *luminaire*). It is the amount of *visible* light seen, the brightness that comes from the bulb or *lamp*. In days past, it was called watts. (See **Lumen**)

Lyrics The words of a song. (See **Libretto**)

M

Main curtain (See **Act curtain**)

Male plug The two- or three-prong end of an electric cable, extension cord, or lighting instrument that is inserted into a *female plug* to get electricity.

Management An all-inclusive term for the producing company, the producer, the company managers, and their staff. The counterpart to management is the employee. The director remains independent but is often considered management. Being a member of Equity, the SM is an employee, and Equity expects loyalty from the SM. However, due to the nature of the SM's work, the cast members and director see the SM as management, as does the producer, who also expects the SM's loyalty.

Mark it

1. Direction given to a stagehand to record on a cue sheet the level or position of a thing, such as light intensity, sound level, or placement onstage. (See **Spike marks**)
2. In rehearsals, the director may ask an actor to *half-perform* a scene or a moment in the play, either to conserve the actor's energy or to pass over something that may need to be changed or fixed at a later time.

Mask, masking

1. There is the kind of mask that is placed over a person's face to change, cover, conceal, or disguise the person's identity.
2. In backstage talk, to mask something is to cover over an area or space that should not be seen by the audience, to hide from view of the audience the backstage area with a *curtain*, *flat*, or piece of scenery.
3. Masking is also the item or material used. Such things as *curtains*, *flats*, *borders*, *teasers*, *portals*, *tormentors*, pieces of scenery, or strips of material can be used as masking. The areas that most often require masking on the set are open doorways, hallways, behind windows, the wing spaces, and the equipment and rigging hanging overhead, above the stage.

Master Electrician Another title for the head electrician, the supervising electrician on a production, the person responsible for all other electricians, *luminaires*, and related equipment having to do with the electrical department.

Master of ceremonies (MC) A person or performer who hosts a show. Most commonly used for *variety shows*, this is usually a comic performer who comes out to *warm up* the audience by welcoming them, perhaps telling jokes, and ultimately introducing the different acts or various portions of the show.

Measurements The primary definition of this term for the SM is in dealing with costumes. Within the first days of rehearsals, or even before, as soon as an actor has signed a contract, it is important to the *costumer* to get the actor's measurements so the costumer can start making the costumes or pull them from the rack at the costume shop and begin alterations.

Melodramas Simple morality plays presented at the turn of the twentieth century and depicting one-dimensional characters: the hero and heroine (the lovers), the villain, the beleaguered or disabled parent, the child or baby, and the comic or buffoon. The acting was stylistic, broad in gesture, and presentational in dialogue. The themes were almost always of goodness and evil, purity and piety, honesty, faithfulness, devotion, and for greater dramatic effect, all of the above.

Mezzanine If a theatre has more than one balcony, the first balcony is referred to as the mezzanine. If there is only one balcony and it is divided into sections, the first part may be called the mezzanine, while the rest is called the balcony or upper balcony.

Mic An abbreviated term for microphone. (See **Lavalier mic**; **Body mic**; **Wireless**)

Mic pack (See **Lavalier mic**; **Body mic**; **Wireless**)

Microphone (See **Lavalier mic**; **Body mic**; **Wireless**)

Midstage traveler A curtain placed somewhere in the middle of the stage between the *downstage* edge and the last curtain or drop *upstage*. It is a curtain that can be opened or closed on cue. (See **Traveler**)

Midtrim, intermediate trim (See Trim)

Milking, milking the audience A performer getting the most possible reaction from the audience by extending and playing on something that brings the audience pleasure or moves them emotionally. When done well, milking can be a positive thing for the performer and the show. However, a little milking goes a long way, and performers not good in the art easily step over the line, making it distracting and negative.

Mixer

1. A piece of electronic sound equipment that enables a technician to artistically mix, blend, and balance the sound the audience hears through the **house speakers**. The mix can be simple, mixing and balancing a few **body mics** or **stage mics** to amplifying the actors' dialogue, or it can be involved as in a musical, mixing together a full orchestra, prere-corded music, the lead singers, and perhaps a chorus. Mixers and sound consoles are as sophisticated and computerized as lighting consoles. They still require the "ear" of an operator, no matter how much they are programmed.
2. The term *mixer* is also used when referring to the technician who operates the mixing console during the performance.

Mix sound, sound mix To balance and control all the elements of what makes good and clear sound before it is broadcast through the speakers; to combine, through a piece of electronic equipment, the singer on the stage with the music being played from the orchestra pit so each element does not overpower the other; to artistically select what elements of the sound should dominate, blend, or be subdued. (See **Mixer**)

Monitors, sound, computer, video

1. *Sound monitors* are speakers strategically placed in the audience and throughout the backstage to transmit the dialogue or music being performed on the stage. In musical shows, monitors may also be placed on the **apron** of the stage or in the **wings** facing the performers to enable them to hear the music from the orchestra, the solo singers, or themselves singing.
2. The sound monitors placed throughout the backstage areas are called **show monitors** or **program monitors**. They are usually smaller speakers of lesser quality and are placed in hallways, in dressing rooms, in the greenroom, at the SM's console, and in strategic places for the crew and technical heads to hear the performance. (See **Biscuit monitors**; **Public address system**)
3. *Video monitors* are now standard equipment on the SM's console, in the greenroom, and generally each side of the stage and in musicals mounted on the balcony rail for the performers to follow the lead of the conductor.
4. And of course *monitors* can simply refer to computer monitors.

Monologue, soliloquy A group of lines spoken by an actor/character without interruption from another character. When spoken directly to the audience, it is called a monologue. When delivered to no one in particular (as if to oneself), representing the mind and thoughts of the character, it is called a soliloquy.

Motivation

1. The character's inner drives and feelings. As the actors discover and develop their characters, they find the things that make the characters act, behave, and respond as they do.
2. The impetus or force behind an actor's or director's work.

Mounting the show A term used to describe the overall work of technically putting the show together, combining the sets, costumes, lights, sound, and props with the actors and the work they created at the rehearsal hall. (See **Technical rehearsals**)

Movement

1. For the SM, movement is anything that moves on the stage: the blocking, dancing, scenery and props, or lighting changes.

2. Movement can also mean the speed, pace, and tempo at which the plot, storyline, action, or actor's performance moves.

Movement of light (See Light movement)

Moving lights Computerized electronic and motorized stage light units (*luminaires*), commonly called *intelligent lights*. The units can be programmed to change their projection of light to any part of the stage. Each unit can work independently or in combination with other such units, creating spectacular displays and movement of light onstage. These instruments got their start in rock concerts but quickly moved into the lighting design in *legitimate theatre* presentations. There are *spot* units and *wash* units. The spot can be equipped with a moving yolk on which the unit is mounted, or it can have a moving mirror fixture. Only spot fixtures can have *gobos*. The wash fixtures can change color and adjust the size of the wash and diffusion.

Mugging A performer making broad, overt, or unnecessary facial expressions. Only in cases where mugging is done by design is it an acceptable thing, otherwise mugging can take away from the reality and believability of a character or the play. If done while another actor is performing, it will pull the audience's attention and *focus* away and direct it to the person doing the mugging.

Music stands Black metal stands that are placed before each musician in the orchestra. They are made to hold music scores and sheet music. In the absence of an SM's console on which to put the *cueing script*, a music stand is ideal for use during the performance. The prop department usually is responsible for setting up the music stands in the orchestra pit and is the source to go to when one is needed. Music stands set up in a circle or semicircle are also good for the first reading of the script on the first day of rehearsals.

Muslin A cream-colored, durable, tightly woven cotton material. It is stretched and attached to the wooden frame of a *flat*, which usually is made into scenery. Before the scenic artist can apply paints, the muslin must first be stiffened and sealed with *sizing*, which also shrinks the material, pulling it even more tightly over the frame. The muslin can then be easily painted on.

N

No-color gels (See Gels, no-color)

Notes Telling an actor or technician something complimentary or critical about their work. A complimentary note reinforces good work. A critical note points out something that is not appropriate for the performance or show and asks for a change. As long as the director is with the show, notes come from the director. Once the director leaves, all notes must go through the SM. (See *Acting notes*)

Notices (See Reviewer, critic; Reviews, notices)

Number one, number two, number three electrics (See First electrics)

O

Off book, on book Being off book is the time during rehearsals when actors know their *lines* well enough and do not need to work with the script in hand. However, when an actor gets off book, the SM or some designated person needs to get on book. The person on book must follow the script carefully and be prepared to *give a line* at any moment. (See *Follow script*)

Olio A comic sketch used mostly in *melodramas*. They were always presented on the front part of the stage with a drop or curtain placed closely behind, called the olio drop or olio curtain. An olio's subject matter had nothing to do

with the play. Their purpose was to keep the audience entertained while, behind the curtain or drop, the scenery and props were being changed for the next scene. (See **Roll curtain**)

On a one (two, three, etc.) count A direction given mostly to an actor, technician, or SM. A one-count is a **beat** or about one second long; thus a three-count is three beats or about three seconds long. When given a direction of this kind, the person knows the length of time to take in executing a cue or an action during the show. Because of the **ghosting effect** of the lights when the stage is brought to black, the SM may ask the actors or technicians to hold for a count of two after the lights go out and before they start to leave the stage or change the scenery.

On cue, on my cue, on the GO! cue These are variations of a phrase an SM uses when instructing a stage technician or actor. This direction tells the person not to execute the cue until the SM gives a signal or tells them verbally to execute the cue—when to **GO!**

One-nighters, one-night stands Touring shows that perform in a town for one night.

One-set show, unit set In its purest form, a oneset show is a show in which the **action** of the entire play takes place in one location and in one setting without a shift or change of scenery. There are, however, sets that are divided into two, or sometimes three, different locations. All parts of the set remain onstage for the whole performance and the audience is moved from one location to the other by a change in lighting and the actors' movement. These sets too may be called one-set shows.

On its feet

1. A colloquial expression. In its literal sense, it is the director getting the actors up on their feet and **blocking** the show—physically placing and moving the actors on the stage.
2. In a less literal sense, this expression is used when a scene or the entire play is blocked and the actors are able to recite their lines from memory and everyone is ready to continue rehearsals to refine and develop their performances and the show as a whole.

On point A dance term describing dancers as they rehearse or perform while standing on their toes (*en pointe*). **On point** can also mean that that the person is spot on—on target. (See **Pointe dancer**)

Onstage From the audience's point of view, being onstage is being the area in which the performance takes place. This could include the backstage area. However, for all who work the show, being onstage means in the area the audience can see, the space in which the actors perform, the space that is defined by the curtains, drops, and scenery. The backstage remains separate to people working in theatre, and they never generalize by using the term *onstage* to include the backstage area.

On your feet Asking the actors to stand and move about the stage or rehearsal room as they say their lines of dialogue. This movement sometimes starts as improvisation, as it comes to the minds of the actors, but eventually becomes **blocking** that is formally set by the director and entered into the SM's **blocking script**.

Opaque Materials and substances you cannot see through and through which no light can pass.

Open auditions, open calls, cattle calls Auditions that are open to union and nonunion performers alike. Shows being produced under an Equity contract are required to have an open call. Open calls are designed by Equity to give its members the opportunity to audition for all roles in the show. Advertisements of these auditions inform the actors of the day, time, and place. Seldom are the auditions set up by appointments, but rather the actors show up at their convenience within the advertised time.

A standing rule for all Equity open calls is that the Equity members are auditioned first. All non-Equity actors must wait until there are no other Equity members present or until the end of the day.

Open calls for musicals and shows that are popular and promise long-term employment often turn into what actors call cattle calls. The term is derived in part from the large number of actors who show up for the audition, but comes mostly from the way the actors feel as they are herded through the audition, often at a fast pace, with their audition

time and interview cut to a minimum. In recent years Equity has negotiated with producers that the performer at least be given an opportunity to be interviewed, sing part of their song, or read before being dismissed.

Open-end run A show that is booked into a theatre without a planned closing date. The show will perform until the box office receipts are down and the theatre and producer deem the run no longer financially viable.

Open flames Any fire or flame appearing onstage or being used backstage that is not contained in some way to help prevent or delay the fire from spreading. The open flame of a match or candle has the potential of quickly igniting other flammable objects, while a cigarette or hurricane lantern, although just as deadly, if handled carelessly, is less threatening.

Opening night The first official performance open to the public, signaling that the show is ready to be seen and reviewed by the press. Opening nights can become gala events and are often celebrated with a party by all who have worked on the show.

Orchestra

1. A group of musicians who play at concerts, operas, or plays. An orchestra is distinguished by the use of violins and other string instruments. (*See Orchestra pit*)
2. Seating on the main floor of the theatre. In ancient Greek theatre, this was the semicircular space in front of the stage where the Greek chorus performed. In Roman times, this space was reserved to seat senators and other persons of distinction. (*See Orchestra seats*)

Orchestra pit Generally speaking, the orchestra pit is the place in the theatre where the musicians are placed to play the music for the show. In times of old, the orchestra was the area just in front of the stage between the audience and the stage. More often than not, today the orchestra is placed under the stage, thus the term *pit*. Only the conductor is positioned so be seen by the musicians in the pit, the performers onstage, and the people in the audience. Even at that, with the use of cameras and monitors, it is no longer necessary for the performers onstage to have the conductor in view. They can now see him or her on strategically placed monitors. In addition, with today's sound ability, orchestras can be in one or more rooms under the stage or in another part of the building. This is common on Broadway now.

Orchestra seats The audience seats on the first floor of the theatre or seating on the same floor level as the stage. Viewing a performance from these seats puts the patron at a more natural eye level, while seats in the other parts of the theatre put a viewer at an extreme and less natural viewing angle. Orchestra seats are considered prime seating for which patrons pay a premium price.

Out front For the people backstage, out front is any part of the theatre beyond the *main curtain* and *apron* of the stage. Out front includes where the audience sits, as well as the lobby, foyer, box office, marquee, public phones, taxi stand, or passenger unloading zone.

Out, in the out position Anything not in view of the audience. Things that are in the *wings*, backstage, or up in the *flys* are out or in the out position. This also means to take something out of the play—to not use it in the show. (*See Trim*)

P

Pace The speed at which a show is performed or the speed at which actors perform their individual parts. When actors are told to pick up the pace, they are being asked to perform everything that has been set by the director, but to do it more quickly, within a shorter period of time. This period of time is a matter of a few seconds, but it makes a difference in holding the audience's attention and keeping them entertained. Actors will sometimes confuse pace with *rushing*.

Page Aside from being a sheet of paper that makes up a script, for people in the theatre, a page also means having someone stand behind a curtain without being seen by the audience and pull the curtain apart or to the side just

enough so as not to reveal too much of what is behind, but at the same time allowing space for a person or piece of scenery to pass through without getting entangled or **hung up** in the curtain. An SM will often page a curtain for a speaker to get on or off stage, for a producer or director who might go out before or after a show to talk to the audience, or for a stage technician who is moving a prop or piece of scenery. (See **Walk the curtain**)

Paging system The **public address system** set up backstage with speakers in hallways, corridors, and dressing rooms. The paging system enables the SM to speak to the members of the company and give the calls before the show begins and during intermission.

Pallet A low-profile platform brought on to the stage from one of the **wings**. It has any number of uses. On it can be some props upon which the actors will perform a scene, or it can have scenic walls, signifying another location, or it can just become part of the overall scenery of the entire stage.

Pallets were once called **wagons** and served the same purpose. They were not as low profile, standing about four inches high. For the most part, pallets move on and off stage by way of the **automation** system that is used in most productions, especially if the show is a multiset/multilocation production or a musical. They can, however, also be cranked on and off stage by a **hand winch** manually operated by a stage technician.

To fully know and understand pallets, it is important that the SM also become familiar with these terms, all having to do with the function and operation of the pallet: **wire rope, dog, knife, low-profile casters**.

Pan To severely criticize a play or piece of entertainment, a term closely associated with critics and **reviewers**. A pan can sometimes mean the difference between the success or failure of a show. (See **Reviews**)

Paper tech A meeting prior to **technical rehearsals** in which the SM, director, various technical department heads, and sometimes the producer gather in conference to plan, discuss, and work out on paper the technical elements of the show. This includes set changes, placement of important or large props, and entering some or all of the light and sound cues in the SM's **cueing script**.

PAR cans Light units that look like a gallon can opened at one end. Placed inside is a sealed beam **lamp** that puts out a strong beam of light. Depending on the desired effect, the lighting designer might choose a spot seal beam that confines the light to a condensed area or a flood that spreads and defuses the light. These lamps are good for **back lighting** or to create a general **wash** across the stage. **PAR** is a acronym for parabolic aluminized reflector.

Passarelle (See **Ramp; Runway**)

Per diem Latin for “per day.” An allowance of money paid to cover expenses while out on the road with a touring show, in addition to the SM’s salary.

Performance level A quality and standard of work ready to be seen by an audience; an actor performing with the **intensity, pitch, and delivery** as set in rehearsals and established by the director and actor; a high level in **timing, pace, and tempo**, which holds the audience’s interest and attention and provides the entertainment they came to experience.

Performing area, playing area In general, this is the space onstage that includes the set and placement of props as well as the space in which the actors move and perform. More specifically, the performing or playing area is the space left over after the sets and props have been put into place—the space in which the actors can move about the stage during the performance.

Period play, period piece A play set in another period of history, requiring costumes and settings that reflect the period.

Personal props Any small prop that is left in the actor’s care throughout the run of a show. The actor is responsible for bringing the prop onstage or having it in place to use during the performance. These include such props as a pocket watch, eyeglasses, a handkerchief, or a piece of jewelry. Sometimes it is an actual personally owned prop belonging to the performer.

Personal-size floor plans These are the floor plans the SM creates on eight-and-a-half-by-eleven-inch paper of the different sets for the different scenes in the show. The SM takes the information from the set designer’s floor plan

drawings but reduces the **scale** down to a quarter inch or three-eighths of an inch so all the information can fit on the smaller page. Having the floor plans reduced to this size is convenient in many ways; they can be put in scripts or production notebooks, distributed to actors and technicians, and aid in setting props and in doing scene changes in a multiset musical.

Perspective drawings Drawings made by the set designer that render a three-dimensional picture of the set and scenery, giving the height, width, and depth as seen by the audience. Most times these are freehand sketches of the designer's conception that are done in pencil, charcoal, or watercolor. Other times they are carefully drafted, drawn to **scale**, and include specific details and measurements.

Petty cash This is a cash amount of money given to the SM from the production office to spend on miscellaneous or unexpected daily expenses. The SM is highly accountable for this money, and it must be returned in the form of receipts or leftover cash.

Picking up the cue, pick up the cue This is when a performer is putting too much time between the line just delivered and the line that the performer is about to deliver. It goes hand in hand with **pace**. It can also be directed to the SM when calling cues for the show.

Pink noise At each new performance site in which the show plays, the sound department needs about an hour of quiet time in the theatre to balance or equalize the sound. During this time the sound technician broadcasts through the speakers a loud, annoying, hissing, static-like sound—pink noise. This noise contains all frequency bands, and it is the sound person's job to see that all the frequencies are equal in volume. The most important information an SM needs to know about pink noise is that the sound technician needs the hour of quiet time and the SM may need to include that time on the schedule.

Pin rail The pin rail is the part of the **fly system** backstage where the technicians tie off the ropes after having flown in or out a drop, curtain, and so forth. (*See Fly rail*)

Pin spot A very tight circle of light projected on to the stage. Sometimes this falls on a prop or part of the set; other times the beam of light may encompass all or some of a performer, but then as the scene or song is ending, the light narrows down to shine only on the performer's face.

Pipes Pipes in theatre play their most important role in the **fly system**. They hang in the **fly space** above the stage from ropes or steel cables. In the early days, when the fly system was first used in theatre, these pipes were long lengths of wood about the size of a two-by-four and were called **battens**. From these pipes or battens the drops, curtains, pieces of scenery, electrical instruments, and so forth are hung.

Pipes are also slipped into the bottom hems of drops to keep the drops flat and free of wrinkles, and to help the drops fly in a straight path without the least little breeze blowing them, causing them to get **hung up** on neighboring drops or pieces of scenery as they fly in and out.

Pit (*See Orchestra pit*)

Pit singers Singers who sing unseen by the audience, added to a musical number for a greater and fuller sound to musical numbers. In times past, they would go to the orchestra pit to stand before microphones as they could follow the conductor's lead—thus the term *pit singers*. Today, with the use of **wireless microphones** and **video monitors**, the ensemble performers can remain virtually anywhere backstage, even in some out-of-the-way place or room, having their individual mics turned up and following the conductor's lead on flat-screen monitors. Having the pit singers backstage is easier and more convenient when they must also do other things in the show.

Pizza cutter (*See Idler wheel*)

Places, places, please! Before the rise of the curtain during a performance or in a rehearsal, the SM calls, "Places, places, please!" to tell the actors that are part of the opening of the show or are in the first scene to take their places, whether that be onstage or waiting backstage.

Platforms (*See Risers*)

Playback Sound effects or music previously recorded and then played back through speakers and **monitors** during a performance. (See **Prerecord**)

Playbill The program that is given to patrons, free of charge, as they enter the theatre to take their seats. This program is not to be confused with **show programs**, which are more elaborate, include production photographs, and are sold to the patrons. Between pages of advertisements in the playbill appear the title credit page, the page that lists the characters and the actors who play the characters, the technical credits page (of which the SMs head the list), and pages containing pictures and short biographies of the principal and supporting performers along with the creators and designers of the show.

Play doctor (See **Scene doctor**)

Playing area (See **Performing area**)

Plug

1. The kind with which we are most familiar is the electrical plug attached to **lamps**, appliances, extension cords, and cables used in the electric department.
2. A plug in theatre is also a small unit or piece of scenery. It is constructed to fit into an already existing space in the scenery, such as a window, doorway, or hallway. When the plug is put into place it changes the look of the set, and with the rearrangement or changing of props, furniture, lighting, and with theatrical license, the audience is moved to another setting and into another scene.

Podium, speaker's podium A stand or theatrically designed piece of scenery behind which a person can stand to address the audience. An SM will have many occasions to deal with this item: having it set onstage, lighting it, or asking the sound person to bring up the sound on the speaker's podium. There is also the **conductor's podium**, which is placed in the **orchestra pit** for the conductor.

Point cue A light cue that comes between two consecutively numbered cues. Often, after the lighting designer has numbered the light cues in the show, the decision is made to add one or more cues between two particular cues. Instead of renumbering all the cues that follow, the lighting designer labels the added cues as point cues—for example, Q13.1, Q13.2, and so forth. Since the advent of computer-operated lightboards, numbering added cues in this manner has become standard practice. Prior to the use of computers, point cues were often labeled as Q13a, Q13b, and so on.

Pointe dancer A classically trained ballet dancer who, with the use of special hard-toe ballet slippers, dances on his or her toes.

Point of view (POV) The SM frequently abbreviates this as POV. This is a term from film and television that describes a camera angle showing the viewing audience what the character sees. With the tremendous crossover of film, TV, and stage actors, this term has become a part of the actors' and directors' conversation during rehearsals.

Pool of light A small, isolated area of light in which a performer can stand. Usually the rest of the stage is dimly lit or in total darkness. This pool of light can consist of one **lamp** or several lamps, but the light is restricted to the small area. A pool of light can also be a circle of light coming from one lamp directly above. (See **Special**)

Portals (See **Legs; Wings**)

PR The abbreviation for **public relations**.

Practical, a practical A prop or piece of scenery that functions as it does in real life. Sometimes an actor can use and operate these during the performance: a door that opens and closes, a lamp that can be switched on and off, matches or a cigarette lighter, a smart phone or computer or tablet, running water in a sink, a stove (be it electric or gas), a workable refrigerator, or a stem iron.

Prerecord, playback Sound effects or music that has been previously recorded and can be played back during a performance. Most of the time the prerecord and **playback** is music. When the music is used in straight plays such as comedies or dramas, it can be played as the audience enters and is being seated, during intermission, at the end as the

audience leaves, or during the performance to complement or enhance the mood or feeling. In musicals, the prerecord and playback is used more extensively and in different ways. Sometimes it is arranged to complement the orchestra as it plays during the performance, giving it a fuller sound. Other times it is used in place of the orchestra. In still other cases it is arranged to accompany performers as they sing, dance, or play a musical instrument, or a prerecord and playback can be of the performer singing, allowing the performer to **lip sync** during the actual performance.

The techniques of prerecord, playback, and lip sync have their roots in film and television. More and more, prerecord and playback are becoming accepted parts of **legitimate theatre** production and part of the SM's vocabulary. (See **Click track**)

Preset

1. Anything that is set and put into place before the show starts and remains there ready to be used during the performance. Props are preset on the stage or off in the **wings** ready for the actors to use. Pieces of scenery are preset backstage, ready for the next scene change, and costumes are preset in the **quick-change booth** ready for a quick change in a forthcoming scene.
2. The lights set on the curtain or on an open stage as the audience enters to see the play are also called a preset. (See **Curtain warmers**)
3. During the performance, the light cue coming up waiting to be executed is in preset.

Preshow announcement This is the announcement made to the audience just before the show is to start. Most times it is pretty straightforward, asking the audience to turn off all cell phones and electronic devices and take no pictures or recordings in any way, and points out the exits in case of emergency. Some shows get a little more creative and do the announcement in the character of the show, such as with *Guys and Dolls* or *Bullets Over Broadway* where one of the New York mobster-type characters talks to the audience in typical threatening fashion.

Press These are the writers and commentators from news media who will do articles on the show and make their critical judgments. They are often invited to see the show on the **opening night** or within the first week. Their work and attention can help make or break the show. (See **Public relations; Reviewer, critic; Reviews, notices**)

Preview, preview performance Performances of the show immediately following the technical rehearsals and before the opening performance. For the cast and crew, there is no difference between a preview performance and a performance done on opening night and thereafter. The purpose of previews is to get audience reaction and to work out problem areas within the show before the official opening and before the **press** and **reviewers** come to see the show. People who come to see preview performances are either invited guests or patrons who pay discounted prices for their tickets.

Production assistant (PA) Usually a young, energetic person who aspires to work in show business. In most cases, the title of production assistant is more prestigious than **runner** or **gofer**. However, the PA does the same work as they do. If PAs have experience at the job and a good working knowledge of theatre and production work, they may be given tasks from the SM, director, or producer that might ordinarily be delegated to their assistants.

Production book The SM begins assembling this book on the first day of work on a show and continues adding to it until the show closes. The production book is a compilation of all the information the SM creates and assembles on the production (charts, plots, plans, lists, reports) having to do with practically all aspects and departments. This book is divided into four specific groupings:

1. Rehearsal/**Blocking script**
2. **Cueing script**
3. Loose-leaf notebook (**production notebook**) in which all the charts, plots, plans, lists, reports, drawings, vendor information, CDs, and audio recordings are kept.
4. Information kept in the SM's filing system.

At the close of the show, all parts are combined into one big book and turned over to the producer or production office. This book becomes everything anyone ever wanted to know about the production. The information in this book is important for future reference, especially if the show was new or produced on Broadway for the first time.

Production meeting A meeting where the **production staff** gathers to discuss, plan, coordinate, schedule, work out, and report on the progress and problems of each department. The first of these meetings takes place either before rehearsals begin or within the first week. Then, depending on the extent of the production, there may also be periodic production meetings. They can be short and daily with only the SM, director, and whatever department needs attention on that day, or they can take up a whole morning or afternoon with the entire production staff in attendance.

Production notebook The SM's production notebook is a loose-leaf notebook containing all charts, plots, plans, drawings, lists, vendor information, CDs, disks, and audio recordings having to do with a particular show. The SM begins assembling this book on the first day of working on the show. During rehearsals and the run of the show, the production notebook is the SM's bible of information and should be within arm's reach at all times for quick reference. At the close of the show, much of the information in this notebook is duplicated and placed into the **production book**, which the SM turns in to the producer.

Production numbers In a musical show, production numbers are songs and/or dances that are staged with greater **production value** than the other songs and dances. In a musical play, when a character's feelings heighten and can no longer be expressed in words, the character sings and/or dances. The same holds true for a production number. When a song or dance can no longer be expressed in just lyrics or in simple movement, the director and choreographer heighten its production values, adding more performers, creating extensive and complicated choreography, perhaps using special costumes, incorporating props, and almost always using lighting effects to support and enhance the mood and visual look.

On occasion a production number can involve only one person, such as the "Make 'Em Laugh" song and tap-dance number in *Singing in the Rain*. A production number can also be soft, lovely, and lyrical, such as the dream ballet "The Carousel Waltz" in *Carousel*. Or a production number can seem simple, such as the clever and rhythmical hand-slapping, hand-clapping, toe-tapping number in *The Will Rogers Follies*, where the performers remain seated in a row across the stage, using isolated parts of their bodies as the choreography.

Production pictures, production shots, production stills Digital shots kept on file to be used for publicity and advertisements or eight-by-ten-inch photographs of the actors in various scenes from the show. Sometimes these shots are set up specifically for the camera. Other times they are taken as the actors perform their parts in a dress rehearsal or during a performance. They are used for press releases, in advertisements, and as a historical record of the show.

Production staff The creative, artistic, administrative, and technical people required to produce a show, including the producer, author/writer, director, designers, choreographer, musical director, SMs, heads of technical departments, accountants, publicity people, production office staff, and all assistants.

Production stage manager (PSM) The head or lead SM. This more elaborate title got its start with musical shows where two or more SMs were needed and eventually required by Equity.

Production tables Tabletops or large pieces of plywood laid across the seats throughout the theatre during **technical rehearsals**. At each table the different designers and technical department heads sit, along with the director and PSM having a table of their own. It is important that these tables are set up with power strips to plug in one or two desk lamps, laptops, and whatever other electronic devices the staff might use. Also, there must be a microphone at the PSM's and director's tables with an on/off switch, the **God mic**, and headsets for the different departments to communicate with each other along with the ASMs backstage.

Production values The quality of artistic and technical support given either to the show as a whole or to particular segments, such as song and dance numbers.

Program monitors (See Monitors)

Projections, scenic projections Images projected on to the stage. Projections started off simply with slide projectors, motion-picture projectors, and **gobos**. Then with the advent of moving and intelligent light units, projections became a separate department and permanent part of theatre design. Now, especially in musicals, projected images and designs are splattered upon scenery, on backdrops, on the stage floor, around the **proscenium**, and even out on to the walls of the theatre to bring the audience more into the mood/environment of the play, making them a greater part of the illusion and experience of going to the theatre.

Projects can be anything an artist can imagine, anything a photo-shopped picture can enhance, combine, manipulate, or distort: perhaps a darkened or enchanted forest, or a simple pattern of colorful leaves falling in the breeze, maybe filling the stage with snow, or bringing the audience into an enclosure that would have required major set building. Projection is not going to replace scenic design, it is just going to enhance what is there, making it more visually stimulating and exciting. (See **DLP digital projector**)

Prologue The prologue comes at the beginning of the play, before the first scene. Its purpose is to set up the audience for the action, plot, mood, characters, or all of the above. The prologue's counterpart is the **epilogue**, which comes at the end of the play. Examples of prologues and epilogues are easily found in Greek plays, Shakespeare's plays, and many of the plays written in the nineteenth century.

Prompt

1. To give an actor a forgotten line of dialogue.
2. To sit in a rehearsal with an actor, reading the other character's lines in a play, while the actor performs lines from memory.

Prompt book, prompt script The term *prompt book* originates from theatre in the nineteenth century when a person, during performance, sat with a script in the **wings** or below stage level in the center of the stage in the **apron** and followed the script. It was this person's job to be ready at any moment to give actors a line of dialogue or remind them of a bit of **business** should they forget something. This term remains in use today, but people now use it when referring to the script the SM uses during performance to call the cues. For greater clarification, in this book the prompt script is called the **cueing script**.

Prop box The container in which small props and **hand props** are placed for safekeeping when the show is not in performance. This may also be the container in which the prop person keeps tools and supplies to work the job and to repair and maintain the performing condition of the different props.

Propman, prop person, prop master, property master Terms that name the person in charge of the props or properties within a show. (See **Props, properties**)

Props, properties Items used by the performers in the play. Props are used to enhance the action, plot, or characterization and to create an illusion of reality. Props are not to be confused with **set dressing** or **set decoration**, which are items not used by the actors but are present merely for appearance in decoration and design. (See **Hand props**)

Prop tables Tables set off each side of the stage on which small **props** and **hand props** are placed in readiness for the performance. The prop person sets the props on the table in the same place and in the same way for each performance, and during the performance the actors are required to pick up and return to the table whatever props they can.

Proscenium, proscenium arch, proscenium opening These are terms that define the frame surrounding the opening of the stage through which the audience views the show—the opening of the stage by which the audience views the play. It can be simply or elaborately framed. *Pro*, meaning before, *scenium*, meaning scenery or that place before the scenery. (See **Fourth wall; Breaking the fourth wall**)

PSM The abbreviation for **production stage manager**.

Public address system (PA) The PA system is spread throughout the entire backstage by monitor speakers. This system is used primarily by the SM to communicate with the cast and crew. During the performance, sound from the stage is patched into the PA system, thus making the speaker monitors also **show monitors** or **program monitors**.

Public relations (PR), publicity department In most theatre producing companies the public relations and publicity departments are one and the same. Most often, this department consists of a desk tucked away in some corner of the production office, with one person doing the job of a full staff. It is this department's job to create or generate anything that presents the show in a favorable light and sells tickets. This is done through newspaper ads or television commercials, creatively taking favorable quotes from reviews and publishing them, generating magazine articles, doing behind-the-scenes video, or setting up interviews and guest appearances with the stars on local radio and TV

programs. One of the more successful methods is to create a poster and logo that are highly recognizable and identify the show at a single glance, such as the ones created for *Les Misérables*, *Cats*, or *Phantom of the Opera*.

Pulleys In its simplest form, a pulley is a metal wheel with a hook or device that allows the pulley to be secured to a solid object, such as a wall, ceiling, or beam. One end of a rope is slipped through the pulley, over the wheel, and brought down to a stage technician at floor level. At the other end of the rope an object or payload is attached. When the stage technician pulls the loose end of the rope, the rope glides through the pulley and rides over the wheel, making it easier for the stage technician to hoist the object up into the air. If the payload is heavy and the stagehand is unable to change hand positions while pulling, two or more stage technicians will be needed to hoist the object or it will come crashing to the floor. Pulleys are an important part of the ***fly system***. A close relative to the pulley is the ***block and tackle***.

Pulling focus (*See Focus*)

Push/pull pole, push stick A pole attached at the offstage end of a scenic ***pallet*** to hand push the unit on and off stage. Used only when there is no ***automation*** system in place or a ***hand winch***.

Put-in rehearsal A rehearsal held to put in an under-study or a new performer. This kind of rehearsal usually comes after the show has opened and been in its run.

Pyrotechnics, pyro Anything used onstage that is explosive, flashes, produces smoke, has flames, shoots flames, or produces fireworks of some kind. Special training and licensing is required. Oftentimes the property master on the show is licensed and is used for smaller pyro effects, but for a show that uses larger effects such as airbursts, preloaded smoke pots, fire falls, fire balls, flash pots, or a squib that represents a bullet hit, an expert needs to be brought in.

Q

Quick change This phrase most often refers to a costume change during performance that needs to be completed in a very short time. Quick changes develop within a show when an actor in a scene leaves the stage and needs to reappear onstage dressed in another costume within a very short period of time. (*See Dresser; Quick-change room*)

Quick-change room A small, enclosed area backstage, placed close to the set, which allows an actor to come off stage, quickly change into another costume, and return to the stage for the next appearance. Often this room is created by assembling two or more stage ***flats*** together. Sometimes bed sheets or blankets are all that is available and are strung up with ropes. The bare essentials for a quick-change room are a low-wattage light, a covering for the floor to protect the costumes from getting dirty, and a ***dresser*** to assist the performer in the ***quick change***. A more elaborate setup would include hooks for clothes or a clothes rack, a mirror, a table and chair, makeup, hair supplies, and drinking water.

R

Radio pack (*See Body mic; Wireless*)

Rag A slang or colloquial term used by stage technicians when referring to the main curtain or ***house curtain***.

Rail system (*See all definitions under Fly*)

Rain curtain A network of water spouts or valves, evenly spaced, one after the other. They are placed above the stage across the entire length of the stage. When the valves are opened, water falls from above to create a wall or curtain that looks like rain falling. The water at the bottom is caught in a trough, and can either be drained away or recycled to continue the effect.

Raised deck (*See* Deck)

Rake To angle or tilt a prop, piece of furniture, scenery, or any object on the stage for better viewing by the audience.

Raked stage A stage that slants down toward the audience. A traditional design found mostly in older European theatres and theatres in America built before 1920, its purpose was to afford the audience a better view of the stage picture. However, a raked stage was unnatural for the actors to walk on, very difficult for dancing, and terrible for placing scenery and props without having to anchor them down.

Because performing on a raked stage can be hazardous to the performer, the Theatre Safety Committee of Equity has issued a comprehensive guideline discussing the degree of the stage being raked, movement on the stage, its surface, the kind of soles on footwear, use of props, wearing of costumes, and even the breaks necessary for Equity members. This guideline is not in the Equity Rulebook, nor is it in the SM's Equity Packet. It can be gotten directly from an Equity office or on the Internet by searching for "Theatre Safety Committee—Equity."

Ramp

1. A platform or walkway that starts at floor level or zero degrees and slopes up on an angle to a higher level. An incline.
2. A second kind of ramp in theatre is a platform. It can range from three to six feet wide and is constructed for actors to walk and perform on. Some ramps are extensions of the stage, jutting straight out into the audience, such as a **runway** or **thrust stage**. Others start at one side of the stage, circle or arch around into the audience, and end up attached to the stage at the opposite side. Ramps are used mostly in musicals, burlesque, vaudeville, or variety act shows. Traditionally, ramps are used in the musical plays *Gypsy* and *Hello, Dolly!* as part of the set design.

Reaction time The fraction of time it takes for a person to react after being told to execute a cue. When calling cues during a performance, every SM learns to include reaction time in the calculation of timing to increase precision and accuracy in having the cue or effect happen onstage.

Reading

1. At an audition, an actor may be asked to read a scene from the script. This is called a reading. (*See* **Cold reading**)
2. A reading of the play often takes place in the first or second day of rehearsals when the cast of actors first gets together. At that time they will all sit and read the play from the script. (*See* **Table read**)
3. Another type of reading of the play might happen in a more formal situation with the actors possibly sitting on stools, reading the play from their scripts for a paying or nonpaying audience, or for a group of people who are potential backers/investors.

Read-through (read-thru) When the cast sits and reads through a scene or the entire play without performing any of the physical action or movement of the play. This is usually done on the first day of rehearsals. (*See* **Table read**)

Rehearsal furniture, rehearsal food In its simplest and cheapest form, rehearsal furniture can be folding chairs or bridge chairs placed together side by side to make a sofa, a park bench, or the front seat of an automobile. Rehearsal furniture can be various wooden boxes that act as a coffee table, a tree stump, or a soapbox. When the chairs and boxes are combined, they can become a four-poster bed, a twelve-foot conference room table, or a sumptuous banquet spread.

In more elaborate form and in high-budget productions, rehearsal furniture can be old and used furniture that is close to what the actor will be using during the performance. Similarly, rehearsal food can be a slice of bread with a plastic knife and fork to represent steak being eaten at a fine restaurant, a Styrofoam cup of grape juice for a fine glass of vintage wine, or carrot sticks as crunchy snack food.

Rehearsal report (*See* Daily rehearsal report)

Rehearsal script, blocking script This is the script the SM uses during the rehearsal period. In it the SM notes **blocking**, technical *cues*, *set changes*, and any information that will be needed when putting the show together in the **technical rehearsals**. During technical rehearsals, the blocking script is temporarily put aside while the **cueing script** is created and used for calling cues during the performance. However, once the show opens, the SM returns to the blocking script, updates it with whatever changes were made during technical rehearsals, then uses this script for understudy rehearsals, replacing actors, and reminding actors of the original blocking when they forget or change their blocking. When the show closes, the SM either keeps the rehearsal script or includes it in the **production book** that is given to the producer or production company.

Rendings The designer's **drawings** or **sketches**, usually depicting the set or costumes. Some will be done in color and in great detail. Others may be pencil, ink, or charcoal sketches. (*See Floor plans*)

Repertory A group or repertoire of plays presented in a season by the same producing company and using the same group of actors. Sometimes each play is presented for a short period of time within the season and then closes. Other times, the plays are alternated, presenting a different show each week, and then repeating the list of shows until the season is completed. Still other times, the entire repertoire of plays may be presented within a week, sometimes one play being performed in a matinee and another in the evening.

Repertory company A group or company of actors hired to perform in several plays that are presented within a season of plays. In one play, an actor may be cast in a lead role, playing the hero. In another, he may be the villain or have only a **walk-on part**. (*See Resident company*)

Repertory theatre A theatre presenting to the public a season of plays in which the same group of actors is used in the different plays.

Reprise (Pronounced *re-freez*) In musicals, a reprise is a song, dance, or piece of music that is performed for a second time in the show, either in part or in whole. The reprise can be performed by the same character, exactly as it had been the first time, or it can be arranged differently in presentation, perhaps with new lyrics to fit the moment of the play and performed by another character.

Resident company A group of actors hired to perform a season of plays for a theatre or producing company. This term is freely interchanged with the **repertory company** and **repertory theatre**.

Resistance dimmer board These were large black boards that took up a wall backstage, weighing two and three thousand pounds, which had built into them large resistant **dimmers** that were operated and controlled by levers that moved up and down to reduce or maximize the electricity being sent to the lighting instrument that was installed onstage. On an easy show, with little lighting cues, this board required at least two stage technicians to operate. On more involved shows, such as musicals, there could be as many as six stage technicians, raising and lowering levers. If there should still be one in a theatre in which you work, know that it stands dormant as a relic and dinosaur.

Restore cue A lighting cue that brings the lights back or restores the lights to a previous setting. In some plays, the writer may stop the action of the play for characters to speak their thoughts or talk directly to the audience as in a **monologue** or soliloquy. At this point, the lighting designer or director may choose to change the lights to give greater focus to the character who is speaking. After the monologue or soliloquy, the lights are restored to the previous setting and the action of the play continues.

Return A **flat** or wall of scenery. Returns are most commonly used at the ends of a **set unit** or a **box set**. Sometimes they are painted to look like part of the scenery to give the illusion that the setting continues offstage, beyond the audience's view. Other times they are flats painted black or in a dark color to give a finished look to the set. In practical terms, a return is used to cover the unsightly and distracting activity taking place backstage. The term *return* is often used interchangeably with **masking** and **tab**.

Reviewer, critic A news media person who professionally comments, gives an opinion, or passes judgment on the merits of a play or piece of entertainment. (*See Reviews, notices*)

Reviews, notices Articles or commentaries presented in the news on the merits of a play or piece of entertainment. Reviews can sometimes make the difference between the success or failure of a play. There are, however, some very

famous plays that have survived bad reviews, gone on to be box office successes, and become part of theatre history, such as *My Fair Lady* and *The Sound of Music*.

Revolve, revolving stage, turntable A circular part of the stage floor that turns at least 180 degrees, but usually a full 360 degrees. A revolve or turntable is used mostly in musical shows but is also used effectively in straight plays such as the production of *Act One* at the Lincoln Center in 2014.

Revolving stages change the scene and scenery, or give the illusion of traveling from one location to another. While a scene is playing on the front half of a revolve (the part facing the audience), props, furniture, and other scenery can be placed on the back half. Then, on the SM's cue, the table is turned and the new scene is quickly moved into place. This change is often done in view of the audience, creating theatre magic and requiring impeccable timing from the SM and stage technicians as they execute the change. Sometimes a stage may have two or more turntables, each having different scenes on them. Other times the tables work in conjunction with each other, creating one big scene to fill the entire stage.

RGBW An acronym standing for red, green, blue, white. The color of *diodes* found in an **LED** light unit (or *luminaire*). They come in clusters and with their presence a designer or lighting technician can get any desired color of light. This grouping of colors and clusters is also found in LED flat-screen *monitors*. (See **Video wall**)

Rheostat dimmer The type of dimmers used in the old dimmer boards. They had a coil of copper material that, when passed through a field of electricity, allowed the lights onstage to be raised or lowered in brightness or intensity.

Rhythm The combination of beats or repeated accents within a measure of music. Similarly, rhythm in acting and directing is a combination of repeated beats and silences performers use in the delivery of their words, lines of dialogue, movements, or comic *bits* of *business*.

Rig A sturdy, well-assembled structure up above the stage that is put into place to hold and house lighting instruments, scenery, cables, ropes, pulleys, motors, or any other kind of equipment needed in the production of a show.

Ring down the curtain The action of flying in the *main curtain*, usually done quickly. Sometimes this is done for effect by choice of the director. Other times, it may be done because of fire or an accident onstage.

Risers, platforms, levels Generally speaking, these are wooden, boxlike structures or units that are built at various heights and sizes, creating performing areas or levels higher than the stage floor. These units can be used separately for a small scene or in conjunction with each other to create different areas such as the rooms of a home. They can also be used together to create one set and location across the entire stage.

Road crew (See **Show crew**)

Roadies The stage technicians or stage crew members who travel with a touring show.

Road show A show that is designed and set up to travel and perform in different towns and theatres. Most times the scenery is a simpler version of what might have been presented on Broadway. In most situations, the scenery travels by truck while the actors travel by van, bus, or plane.

Rococo The elaborate and decorative design of swirls, twirls, frills, and flourishes from the Rococo period of architecture and design in the eighteenth century. In theatre this term is more generally used to describe the elaborate and decorative design of scenery, props, costumes, and sometimes the acting style of an actor.

Roll curtain (drop), olio curtain (drop) A roll curtain is not the traditional curtain with pleats and folds but rather a piece of material hung flat across the stage. Instead of flying in or out or parting in the middle, this curtain rolls from the bottom as it travels upward.

Roll curtains are most popular in *melodramas* and vaudeville. Most times roll curtains have a design or scene painted on them. When used at the front of the stage to cover the *proscenium* opening, it more than likely will be called a curtain, but when used further back on the stage to back a scene, it may be called a drop. Stage technicians will use the terms interchangeably. Furthermore, when a roll curtain is used to back a comic sketch (*olio*), as in a melodrama, it

will be called an olio drop or curtain. Roll curtains are most effective and convenient in theatres where there is no rail system or ***fly space***.

Rosin box A low-cut box containing rosin powder, usually placed in or near one of the **wings** for the dancers and actors to use before entering the stage. The box is big enough for the performers to stand in to accumulate the rosin powder on the soles of their shoes. This powder gives the performers better traction on the stage. To a great degree, it prevents them from slipping and becoming injured.

Run a line Technician's jargon, meaning to attach a rope at one place and then bring it across or over to another place.

Run a scene In rehearsals, after a scene has been **blocked**, the director may ask to run the scene for the performers to get the experience of the newly blocked scene, and for the director to make changes or refine what is already there.

Rundown (*See Running order*)

Run lines The actors reciting their dialogue, but doing little to none of the action or movement that usually goes along with their dialogue. Directors and SMs have the actors run lines either to help them memorize their lines or to refresh their memories after having been away from the play for a time.

Runner (*See Gofer; Production assistant*)

Running order, rundown of the show The chronological order of acts and scenes within the show.

Running time The length of time it takes to perform a scene, an act, or the entire play. For each performance, the SM is responsible for noting the running time on the ***show report***.

Run of the play, run of the show The length of time or number of performances a show has. This can be as short as one performance, or it can be for as many performances as the public will continue to purchase tickets for. A run of the play is from the opening performance to its last performance. (*See Run-of-the-play contract*)

Run-of-the-play contract A contract in which an actor or SM agrees to stay with a show for at least a year's time. Under Equity rules, the contract must be renegotiated at the end of the year's time. There are important terms included in this kind of an agreement and SMs should be familiar with the various points, not only for themselves, but to better deal with actors and producers on this matter.

Run the show

1. The SM sitting at the cueing console calling cues during the performance.
2. After the producer and director turn the show over to the SM for safe keeping, the SM is in charge of running the show—keeping it as it has been directed and set by its creators and designers.
3. During rehearsals, to run the show is to allow the actors to go through the entire show as if in a performance without stopping to direct, correct, fix, or clean.

Run-through (run-thru) In rehearsals, the director will let the actors perform a scene, an act, or the entire play nonstop, to give them a sense of continuity and flow, to help them get their timing, and to give them the experience of performing the show.

Runway A walkway ranging from three to six feet wide that is an extension of the main part of the stage. Some runways extend straight out into the audience. Others start at one side of the stage, circle or arch around into the audience, and end on the opposite side of the stage. This arching kind is also called a passarelle. Runways are commonly used in fashion shows, burlesque shows, and in some musicals, such as *Gypsy*, *Hello, Dolly!*, and most recently *Something Rotten*. (*See Ramp; Thrust stage*)

Rushing

1. The tempo or speed of whatever is being performed is moving too quickly. The ***timing*** or ***delivery*** is too fast and some of the entertainment value is being lost.
2. Sometimes rushing is referring to a singer ahead of the music.

3. Sometimes it is the orchestra/conductor rushing the music in a song or dance number.

S

Safety chain A chain attached to things that hang above the onstage area or over the heads of the audience. It is required that each lighting instrument have a safety chain to prevent a lamp from crashing down on an actor or members of the audience.

Sandbags Canvas bags filled with sand that were primarily used as counterweights in the old days when the **fly system** was first used in the theatre. (See **Counterweight system; Flys**)

Sash cord A sturdy, thin rope, usually made of fine cotton or nylon, that is used mostly for opening or closing window curtains, window blinds, or lightweight stage curtains. Stage technicians, however, will use this cord in many other ways. (See **Ties; Tie lines**)

Scale drawings Used mostly in the *drawings* detailing the design of the set, the **floor plans**, and the placement of the scenery. To get the full dimensions of the scenery for a scene on to a sheet of paper that is convenient to handle (as in the designer's drawings), the actual dimensions of the stage and set must be downsized. In the professional drawings the set designer creates, every foot of real space on the stage is noted on paper as one inch, or sometimes a half-inch. For even greater convenience, the SM might downsize the drawings even further on letter-size sheets of paper using quarter- or three-eighths-inch scale. (See **Drawn to scale**)

Scale model A three-dimensional, scaled-down miniature of the set. These models are made by the set designer and are usually preferred over the designer's sketches. Scale models are a good representation of the space used, the performing area, and the relationship of set pieces, drops, and furniture props to each other. (See **Drawn to scale; Scale drawings; White scale model**)

Scene change, scene shift, set change Moving or changing the scenery and props on the stage. Sometimes it is only a matter of moving things to a different placement on the stage; other times, as in musicals, a scene change is taking the scenery of one scene off the stage and replacing it with different scenery for the next scene. A scene change takes the audience to another time and location. Sometimes scene changes take place in full view of the audience, and sometimes they are done in the dark.

Scene dock, scene dock doors

1. The place outside the theatre, either to the side or at the back of the building, where trucks loaded with scenery, props, costumes, sound equipment, and so forth can back up to the building and unload. In most newer theatres and civic center buildings, the scene dock doors lead into the backstage storage or work area. In older theatres, the doors may open directly into the backstage.
2. Some theatres have a backstage area in which sets can be constructed and drops painted. This is often called the scene dock, but is also referred to as the **construction shop**, the scene shop, or simply the shop.

Scene doctor, play doctor A director, producer, or writer who has the ability and talent to rework, fix, and save a scene or an entire show from failure after all attempts have been made by the original director, producer, or writer to fix and save the scene or show.

Scene shift (See **Scene change**)

Scene shop (See **Construction shop; Scene dock**)

Scene stealing, stealing the scene, stole the scene/show These are phrases with negative and positive meanings at different times, depending on the situation. They can be compliments, criticisms, or insults.

1. It is a compliment when actors do such a good job in performance that they inadvertently stand out, taking the focus and attention away from their fellow performers and their performances.

- As a criticism or insult to the actor's work and professional integrity, to steal the scene or show is when an actor intentionally takes the focus and attention at a time when it is inappropriate, distracting, or harmful to the play and his fellow performers.

There is an old actors' adage that warns against performing with children or animals, for they will steal the scene. Scene stealing can be done intentionally through ego or unintentionally through talent. An SM learns to recognize the difference. If the SM feels that a case of scene stealing is harmful to the show, a consultation with the producer or director is in order. Depending on who is committing the offense and the severity of the act, the producer or director may deal with the situation or leave it for the SM to handle.

Scenic charge artist, charge scenic artist The person who more than just paints the scenery. This person is responsible for the reproduction of color, design, pattern, and texture and ageing of all surfaces. He or she leads the crew of scenic artists and is in charge of overseeing all that needs to be painted on the stage, creating illusion and depth where there is none: from wallpaper, moldings, carpeting, concrete, or cinder-block walls, to a backdrop of a deep and layered woods of many trees, to the *rococo* design on a piano or piece of furniture, stained glass, singles, wood grain, or wood paneling. Working within a budget, the scenic charge artist gets the most authentic and realistic look of something that might cost a *lot* of money to purchase. It is the scenic charge artist's job to confer with the scenic designer to get the correct color palette, style, and texture to achieve the designer's vision.

Scenic pallet (See [Automation](#); [Pallet](#))

Schlep A colorful Yiddish term that has crept into the theatre vernacular (especially on the East and West Coasts) that means to carry or drag along.

Schmoozing A colorful Yiddish term that means talking, in different situations and for different reasons—fun talk, social talk, small talk, sweet talk, amorous talk, business talk, talk done with hidden meaning, or talk to manipulate or get something. SMs are witness to all kinds of schmoozing and may themselves take part in some.

Schtick, doing schtick Doing comedic *business*—a little comic routine. Schtick is a Yiddish term that has its roots in vaudeville and burlesque. Schtick is often associated with *slapstick*, burlesque, or hokey comedy. In theatre, when schtick is used at the right time and place, it is highly effective. However, when it is used to draw attention or get laughs that are not right for the moment, the character, or the play, it can be distracting and take away from the entertainment value and show in general. (See [Stage business](#))

Scissor lift (See [Elevator lift](#))

Scrim A gauzelike drop that, when lit from the front, appears solid and opaque. Designs or scenes may be painted on the front. However, when the lights in front of the scrim are faded out and the lights in the back of the scrim are faded up, the scrim and its paintings seem to disappear, becoming transparent and allowing the audience to see through to the scenery and action taking place behind the scrim.

Season tickets, subscription tickets Theatre tickets sold in advance for a group of plays that a theatre company is presenting for a particular season. Patrons who purchase tickets for a season purchase them at a discounted rate and are offered preferred seating. These patrons are referred to as *subscribers*. Their tickets are distinguished from others sold at the *box office* as subscription tickets.

Second electrics (See [First electrics](#))

Section Within a set of floor plans is another set of drawings called sections. These are side views of the stage as if you are standing in the wings looking on to the stage. With these drawings you get to see the spacing between set pieces and drops as they are placed on the stage. These drawings also show you how high or low a set piece might be. (See [Floor plans](#); [Elevations](#))

Set The scenery placed on the stage.

Set change (See [Scene change](#))

Set designer's floor plan drawings (See [Drawings](#))

Set dressing, set decorating This can be furniture, curtains, rugs, pictures, lamps, knickknacks, and plants—all the things used to decorate the set to make it look more interesting. If any of these items are handled or used by the performers, they become **props**. It is the set dressing and decorating that creates the illusion of reality and helps bring authenticity to a certain period, time, or place.

Set floor plan drawings (See Drawings)

Set piece In most cases this term refers to a piece of the overall set: the railing to a staircase or the latticework to a porch or garden scene. Stage technicians will sometimes generalize and call a **set unit** a set piece.

Set the scene

1. The work a director and actors do in rehearsals, creating and developing the **movement**, **business**, and **action** for a scene, and creating and developing the character and interpretation, getting the scene ready for public viewing.
2. A brief explanation or description written into the script by the author, either at the beginning of the play or at the beginning of each scene. These descriptions give just enough information about the plot, characters, action, feelings, mood, time, place, or technical effects to lead the reader into the play or scene.
3. On the first day of rehearsals, the cast traditionally reads the play together for the first time. During that reading, either the director or the SM will set the scenes by reading aloud the information at the beginning of each scene.
4. In rehearsals, when the director asks the SM to set the scene, the director is asking that the rehearsal props and furniture be put into place. (See **Set the stage**)

Set the stage To get the scenery and props ready and into place for a rehearsal or performance.

Setting A term used loosely and in different ways:

1. The place or location where a scene takes place.
2. The paragraph of information written in the script at the beginning of each scene. (See **Set the scene**)
3. The placement of the scenery, props, and set dressing for a scene.

Setting lights, setting light cues This happens in the early part of the **technical rehearsals**. The lighting designer and the director sit in the darkened theatre picking and choosing the lights, the colors, and the intensities that will be used for each scene in the play. Each group of lights chosen becomes a **cue** and is given a number. The SM enters these numbers in the **cueing script** and is told where and when in the script these cues are to be executed. Setting lights is like painting the stage with light and color. Designers and directors who are good at it are like artists applying paint to canvas.

Set unit A piece of scenery smaller than the overall set that stands alone. Sometimes a set unit is an addition to the set, such as a gazebo in a park scene. Other times it is a piece of scenery flown in from the **flys** or rolled in on a platform or **pallet**, which is isolated by stage lighting and used for a small scene.

Sharp edge, hard edge, soft edge In terms of stage lighting, some light units when focused on the stage leave a circle of light that is clearly seen and distinctively defined by a sharp or hard edge. A **Leko** light unit is a good example of this kind of light. Other light units, such as a **Fresnel lamp** or a **PAR can**, leave on the stage a soft and defused light edge.

Shin busters Lighting instruments placed on the floor of the stage in the wings. Used for cross lighting to give depth and definition to the performers onstage. Used mostly for dance concerts or for effect in lighting design.

Shop (See Construction shop; Scene dock)

Short line (See Long line, short line)

Show crew The stage technicians who travel with the show. This crew usually consists of the heads of each technical department. The rest of the crew is picked up locally in each town. (See **House crew**; **Local crew**)

Show curtain The show curtain is different from the **main curtain**, **house curtain**, or the **grand drape** that permanently hangs in the theatre, just behind the **proscenium**, to cover the stage as the audience enters. The show curtain also hangs at the proscenium and covers the stage but is designed specifically for the show and will be taken down when the show leaves the theatre. Stage technicians, however, will sometimes call any curtain covering the stage the show curtain. For clarity in communication, the SM should be specific and not mix the terms.

Show monitors (See **Monitors**)

Show portal (See **False proscenium**)

Show program A more elaborate version of the free **playbill** program that is given to the theatre patrons as they enter to take their seats. Show programs are created by the producing company of the show and are sold to the patrons. Show programs include colored **production photographs** and more detailed information about the show, its history, and the creators, designers, staff, and actors.

Show report A document the SM fills out for each performance. On it is noted the date and place of the performance, the time each act begins and ends, any mistakes or problems that occurred during the performance, or anything different or special with the company from the time they came in at the **half-hour call**.

While the SM keeps each report on file, a copy is usually emailed to the producer. The SM may include the director if the director so chooses. There is no real need for the SM to send it out to anyone else in the company unless the producer has deemed it so. On the report may be some personal things that might have happened with the company or a person, or might contain a thought or observation from the SM that is for the producer only.

Showstopper Anything that is part of the performance and is extremely pleasing to the audience, which brings them to prolonged applause and even to their feet. Arias in opera can be showstoppers. Showstoppers are more apt to happen in musicals with perhaps a song or musical number. (See **Production number**)

Shutter A device built into many lighting fixture, be they smart or conventional units. There are four sides to a shutter. With the smart/intelligent units, the keyboard operator sets and adjusts the different sides. With the conventional units, an electrician manually adjusts the different sides of the shutter while up at the unit. The shutters are designed to cut off part of the beam of light falling onstage. This gives the lighting designer control to cover a specific thing or area. It also allows the designer to take away light that spills into another area or on an object nearby.

Side A very abbreviated form of the script containing only the scene and dialogue of a particular character. Traditionally, sides were five by seven inches in size. They were commonly used until the middle of the twentieth century. With the improvement of copying machines and with the change in acting style and approach in studying for a part, actors insisted on having the entire script. Today, if sides are given out they are given only to actors playing small roles, and for sure at auditions for the performers to look over the scene before they give a reading.

Side lighting, side lights Any stage lighting that comes from the side. Most times this is lighting that comes from light units hung high in the **wings** on **trees** or **ladders**, or in the **box booms**. When used alone, they create dramatic highlights and shadows. When used in combination with other lights onstage, they help things onstage stand out that might otherwise appear flat if lit only from the front.

Sight lines The line of vision each audience member has while seated and looking at the stage. The more up front and off to the sides a person sits, the worse the sight line becomes; the side of the stage closest to the person is cut off from the line of vision, blocking any action that takes place on that part of the stage. Conversely, while sitting in the same extreme side seat, the audience member is able to see very well across the stage to the opposite side. Unfortunately, while watching a musical show where **legs** or **portals** make up the **wings** on each side of the stage, this same audience member can often see through to the distracting activity backstage.

Actors, directors, and SMs are aware of the sight-line problems for the audience. Each time the show gets on a new stage, they check and make whatever adjustments are necessary in the **blocking**. An excellent rule of sight lines for actors to follow during performance is this: *If from the corners of their eyes the actors can see the seats on the ends of the first row, they can be certain everyone in the audience can see them and that they are performing within the sight lines.*

People backstage, working or standing in the wings, must continually be aware of the sight-line problems from their point of view. If they can see any member of the audience from where they are standing, they can be sure the audience member can see them. They need to stand or work farther back until they can no longer see any audience member. Every SM should frequently remind technicians as well as cast members of this problem by saying, “If you can see any of the audience, the audience can see you.”

Sitting on their hands A phrase used to explain a lack of response, reaction, or applause from the audience.

Sitzprobe (sitz probe) This is the first meeting between the orchestra and the cast. It is in this rehearsal that the cast and the orchestra sing and play through the show without any staging or other production elements. The term *sitzprobe* comes to common usage from German and is believed to have originated in opera.

Sizing A paste-like mixture that is painted on muslin-or canvas-covered flats and dries to a clear and somewhat rough finish. The sizing shrinks the material, making it tighter over the frame of the flat. It also seals the material, making it stiffer and less porous. When dried, the flats are ready to be painted by the **scenic charge artist**.

Skeleton crew A minimum number of stage technicians and not the full complement of crew members that is used when setting up a show or during the performance. An SM may ask for a skeleton crew for a rehearsal being held onstage when sets, props, and possibly lights are being used.

Sketch Aside from being an artist’s rough drawing, a sketch is also a short comical scene. Sketches have their roots in vaudeville and burlesque, and have carried over into television in the variety-type shows.

Sketches Drawings, renderings; the designer’s/artist’s concept of what either the set or costumes will look like. Sometimes sketches are done in watercolor, other times in ink, pencil, or charcoal. Some drawings will be detailed and look very close to what they will be in real life. Others may be quick renditions, showing a general look and giving a splash of color.

Slapstick Broad physical comedy, cultivated in the music halls of Europe, perfected in vaudeville and burlesque, and brought to an art form by Charlie Chaplin and others in films. The Three Stooges took the term literally and made slapstick more physical and outrageous.

Sliders All part of the **automation** system, sliders are motor-driven flat pieces of scenery on **travelers** that move on and off stage and are set into different positions. A slider can be a single flat that glides across the stage from one side to the other or two flats that meet in the middle. Sometimes they are designed to cover the entire stage as perhaps a drop from the **flys** would. When in the offstage position they look like the dividing curtains or flats that create the **wings**.

They are sometimes designed or painted plain to accept whatever projection the set designer might choose to have put on them. To control the sliders and keep them on track, they are spiked into the track on the stage deck with a device called a **pizza cutter**—more technically, an **idler wheel**. The handle of this idler wheel is attached at both bottom ends on each slider, while the round part of the pizza cutter sits within the slot on the deck.

Smart caster The wheels (**casters**) that swivel and turn in whatever direction a set unit, platform, wagon, or pallet is being pushed—as oppose to directional casters that allow for units to be pushed forward or backward.

Smoke machine, fog machine, hazer The smoke machine is related to the **fog** and **haze machines**. While the fog machine is designed to create a white billowy collection of fog that lays low on the stage and the hazer fills the air from up above with a thin layer or film of haze with the express purpose showing the beams of light, the smoke machine sits right in the middle, providing a medium density of smoke on the stage. All three machines have in them heating units. For both the smoke and haze machine a saline solution is used. For best results and for that thick low-lying fog, dry ice is best.

Sneak it in, sneak it out During performances things go wrong and mistakes are made. When an SM must make a minor correction on the stage in full view of the audience, the SM may ask a stage technician to slowly take out that that is incorrect and put in that that is correct. Sneaking in or sneaking out minor mistakes such as light cues or sound cues can be done without major distraction to the play, actors, or audience. Scenery and prop mistakes, no matter how

minor, are more obvious and distracting. In all such cases, it is better to leave the mistake and not try to sneak it in or out.

Snow machine At one time the creation of a show onstage was done roughly and crudely with a snow cradle—a device that hung in the *flys* above the stage and out of view of the audience. Snow cradles were usually made of cloth and hung like a sling or cradle. Within the sling or cradle was the material that, from the audience's point of view, could be interpreted as snowflakes. Throughout the cloth of the sling were holes through which small amounts of the snow material could pass. When the sling or cradle was jiggled or moved in a rolling fashion, the snow material passed through.

Then came the motorized units that revolved. They were mostly enclosed cylinders with holes or slits along the surface. Inside were lightweight plastic flakes that look more like snowflakes. Both of these types of snow-making unit were good if you wanted a collection of snow onstage.

Today, snow machines work similar to bubble-making machines. The snow fluid is blown through a fabric to create thousands of tiny bubbles. These bubbles clump together and float gently to the ground, creating a realistic looking snow that disappears after a few seconds. For best results the snow-making unit should be mounted high above so the snow can gently float downward.

Soft edge Having to do with focusing lights. (*See Sharp edge*)

Soft opening When a show performs for a paying public before the official opening date and before the critics are asked to come to pass their judgment and make their commentary. Producers use this approach with difficult and expensive shows to work out problem areas and ensure critical success.

Soliloquy (*See Monologue*)

Soubrette Minor female role—pert, coy, or coquette in character. (*See Ingénue*)

Sound (*See Mixer*)

Sound check There are four types of sound checks:

1. The SM has little to no involvement in the first type of sound check, which is done when a show first sets up in a theatre or performance site. It is for the sound designer and the sound technicians to balance and equalize the sound. (*See Pink noise*)
2. For a musical show, there is a sound check between the orchestra and the sound department. As the orchestra plays, the sound department adjusts the levels for the mics set up with the different instruments and balances the sound the audience will hear during the performance. Again this involves the sound designer and the sound technicians.
3. The third kind is for the performers while onstage. The SM is responsible for scheduling and facilitating this event and seeing that the actors speak their lines as they move about the stage. Depending on the production, the actors may be wearing *body microphones*, have only the use of stage mics that are strategically placed about the stage, or have a combination of the two.
4. For musicals or variety arts shows, the sound check is done in combination with the music/orchestra and the artist singing. Also during this kind of a sound check, the level of the monitor speakers onstage through which the artists can hear the music and/or their own voices is adjusted.

Sound monitors Sound speakers to amplify the dialogue, music, or sound effects during the performance. (*See Monitors; Speakers*)

Source Four Leko A much-improved Leko lighting unit that has become the lighting instrument of choice for conventional fixtures. Attachments such as a *color changers*, *moving mirrors*, *projection*, or *follow spot handles* are some of the things that make the unit even more favorable. (*See Lekolite*)

Spacing The placement and space between people, props, and scenery on the stage. Spacing is the layout, the composition, and the overall picture as seen by the audience. Directors, choreographers, and SMs are most concerned

with spacing, especially when a large number of people are onstage. To ensure that the spacing and stage picture remains the same for each performance, **spike marks** may be placed on the stage and **dance numbers** on the **apron** at the edge of the stage.

Speakers Units that broadcast sound out to the audience. The terms *speakers* and *monitors* are used interchangeably, but for the SM it is best to keep the terms separate, using *speakers* for the sound being delivered to the audience and *monitors* for the sound being delivered to the performers onstage and the cast and crew backstage.

Special A small area or **pool of light** on the stage to highlight or single out something. Specials usually consist of one light unit or sometimes two, but seldom more. Specials can be used alone with no other lighting onstage or in conjunction with other lights.

Speech Several lines spoken by an actor without the interruption of another character's dialogue. A speech with more than several lines can become a **monologue**.

Spelvin, George A fictitious name that appears in the program in place of an actor's real name. Actors will sometimes use this name when performing in a show that is not sanctioned by Equity. Producers and actors also will use this name when an actor is playing more than one role in a show and they don't want the audience to know the real identity of the actor playing the additional role. The name George Spelvin is an inside joke among the people in theatre, and its use and purpose are not commonly known to the public.

Spike marks Pieces of tape or paint marks placed on the stage floor to mark the positions of the set, set pieces, platforms, props, furniture, and where actors are to stand. With these marks, items can be properly placed every time for every performance. (*See Hit your mark*)

Spill, spill light Unwanted light onstage that is falling on an object or into another area.

Spot An abbreviated term for spotlight.

Spot lamp A bulb or lighting unit that confines and concentrates the intensity of light to a specific and small area, as opposed to flooding and distributing the light into a larger and undefined area.

Spotlight (*See Carbon arc spotlight; Follow spot; Limelight*)

Spotting A technique dancers use when doing a series of turns to help keep their balance, remain in one place on the stage, and keep from getting dizzy. The dancers choose a spot to look at and, as they turn their bodies, try to keep their eyes focused on the spot as long possible. When it becomes physically impossible for their eyes to remain fixed on the spot, they release their gaze, whip their heads around, and return their focus to the same spot. They will repeat this action as long as they continue their turns. Similarly, the spot chosen can be a bright lamp from the balcony rail or even the light coming from the sound or lighting console away at the back part of the theatre.

SRO (standing room only) Theatres used to be designed and constructed with a space at the back of the audience just behind the orchestra seating. This space was part of the pathway or walkway for patrons to use as they were going to their seats or leaving to go to the lobby. If a show was a sellout, producers would paste in large letters across the **three-sheet posters** in front of the theatre, "SRO," and sell more tickets, at a reduced price, to patrons who were willing to stand at the back to see the show. This was permissible as long as the aisles, emergency fire-escape routes, and exits were not blocked. Today, the construction of theatres has changed. There is no longer that space at the back and with the enforcement of stricter fire laws, no one is permitted to stand to watch the show regardless of what space might be available at the back of the theatre. However, people in theatre continue to use this term simply to indicate that the show is a sellout.

Stage business An all-encompassing term that includes the **movement**, **action**, and **timing** of anything that happens on the stage during the performance. This is primarily the physical part of the play: the actor's **blocking**, the dancers' **choreography**, or the changing of props and scenery. Stage business comes mostly from the storyline and the inventive minds of the actors and director. It adds interest, continues the illusion of reality, and can heighten the drama or comedy.

Stage clamp, squeeze clamp A device that operates like a pair of pliers or scissors. However, a stage clamp has great tension between the handles and requires squeezing to open rather than being easily manipulated with the fingers. A stage clamp is used to hold things firmly together. The part that is clamped on to things is designed with serrated teeth for better gripping and holding. This tool is a favorite with technicians and SMs, for it is a quick fix to hold flats together or pinch a split in a curtain that should remain closed.

Stage deck While the actual stage floor is often called the deck, the term *deck* today refers mostly to the stage flooring that is built on top of the actual stage floor. The purpose of this built-up flooring is to house beneath it the apparatus for the function and operation of *automation*—the motor-driven moving of *scenery, flats, sliders*, and *pallets* electronically. (See **Dog; Knife; Winch**)

Stage directions Information included in a script in addition to the dialogue. At the beginning of an act or scene, the stage directions may give information to help set up the plot, storyline, mood, atmosphere, scenic layout, or characters. The stage directions written within the scene, in parentheses and between the lines of dialogue, give information dealing specifically with the character.

In an original, unproduced script, the stage directions are written by the author. In a play that has been produced and then published, much of the stage directions come from the director and actors as it was created and performed in the show—the *blocking*.

Stage level Anything that is placed on the same floor or level as the stage. The backstage area is, of course, on stage level. The star's dressing room may be on stage level, while the others may be on floors above or below.

Stage mics Microphones placed at the edge of the stage or hanging from above to help amplify and support the actors in projecting their dialogue out to the audience.

Stage mother, stage parent A parent, guardian, or assigned adult who is in charge of and responsible for a child performer, or a performer who is a minor. By state law, a responsible adult is required to be with the minor at auditions, during rehearsals, and during all performances.

Stage picture The overall look and composition of the stage as viewed from the audience. This includes both the scenery and the placement of actors. (See **Blocking**)

Stage right (SR), stage left (SL) Split the stage in half by first finding the center of the stage and then running an imaginary line from the *apron* edge up to the back. All parts of the stage that fall on either side of that line become SR and SL. However, SR and SL are always from the actor's point of view as the actor is facing out toward the audience.

In our Western society, where we read and view things from left to right, it becomes a natural thing to view the stage in the same way, placing stage left on our left and stage right on our right. But SR and SL is never determined from the audience's point of view. People first working in the theatre often become confused, and it sometimes takes a while for them to make the change in concept and view. SMs must get this information fixed firmly in their minds and know it as surely as they know their names. (See **House right, house left**)

Stage setting The design and layout of the stage. The scenery, props, dressing, lighting, and sometimes the performers used to create the overall picture onstage.

Stage whisper Actors saying their dialogue as if whispering, but loud enough for the body mics to pick up the sound and be amplified to the people sitting at the back of the theatre.

Staging The arrangement and order of the physical *movement* and *action* of the play as created by the director and actors. Creating composition and design on the stage with the use of technical elements as well as the physical presence of the actors. (See **Blocking**)

Stand by

1. To ask an actor or stagehand to remain nearby, waiting, and ready to do a part of their job.
2. For the SM *calling cues* during a performance, the phrase *stand by* is the second part of a three-part phase. First is the *warning*, second is the stand by, and third is the *GO!*

3. A standby is also an actor who has been rehearsed in a particular role and who remains available to step in at any time. Some standby actors are required to come to the theatre for each performance. Others are free to do as they choose as long as they remain available when called upon. Actors who accept standby status usually are compensated for keeping themselves available, usually are standing by for a star or lead role, and often are themselves actors with some celebrity status.

Standing room only (*See SRO*)

Star shows Shows that have cast in them a star performer. Also an expression used to further categorize the type of shows on which an SM works. (*See Star vehicle*)

Start at the top (*See At the top*)

Star vehicle A show in which a star playing the main character is pivotal and important to the storyline and action of the play. Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl* was a star vehicle for Barbra Streisand. The characters Felix and Oscar in *The Odd Couple* are star vehicles for the actors playing those roles. *Phantom of the Opera* is less of a star vehicle because the Phantom, Christina, and Raoul share the importance in storyline and action. *A Chorus Line* is not a star vehicle. (*See Star shows*)

Step on a line, step on someone's line To overlap and sometimes cut off another actor's speech or business before they are finished speaking. In life, people regularly cut into what other people are saying. Onstage, it is the job and craft of the actor to create the illusion of real and spontaneous conversation, and at the same time not step on someone's line, *action*, or *business*.

Stills (*See Production pictures*)

Stock, stock company, summer stock, stock contract Theatre performed mostly during the summer months. Shows produced in towns that attract a tourist or vacationing crowd. Shows performed in stock usually are re-creations of originals, scaled down in *production values*, and usually are produced on a smaller budget. Stock is a good source of work for actors and SMs during a time of the year when there is apt to be fewer shows being produced for Broadway or in regional theatres. (*See Repertory theatre; Resident company*)

Stop-and-go rehearsals In rehearsals as the actors *run a scene*, the director may stop the actors to clean up or correct parts of the scene. The director will then have the actors run the change and continue with the scene until the next moment arrives that the director feels needs fixing. (*See Work through*)

Store/storage The places backstage where things are kept before they are brought out to be used in the performance. "The train unit will store behind the cyc until we are ready to use it in the second act." (*See Live*)

Straight plays An expression used to separate comedy and drama plays from musical plays.

Strike Strike has several uses in theatre—primarily it is to remove something.

1. To take the set down and more than likely out of the theatre. To strike the show.
2. To remove a prop or a piece of scenery from the stage or from out of the show entirely.
3. To remove lines of dialogue from the script.
4. And then there is the "strike" that the performers, writers, or technicians can inflict on the producers in a stalemate of contract negotiations

Strip lights (*See Border lights*)

Strobe light A lighting instrument placed at the front of the stage, either on the floor or hung from above. A strobe light is designed to pulsate or flicker on and off at different rates per second. This light works best on a dark stage with no other lights. As the performers move naturally under this light, they appear to move in short, choppy, or jerky movements, creating an eerie, comical, or old-time movie effect. The effect is simply done. Each time the light goes out, the audience does not see the movement made in the dark. The dark moment is so brief that the brain discounts the dark and connects together only the lighted moments, thus creating the choppy, old-time movie effect.

Stylus A penlike implement used on the screen of an electronic device where the finger is not sufficient to control or activate things on the electronic screen. It is used mostly by the **automation** operator to ensure that when the screen is touched to execute a cue it will happen, where the finger might not have been hard enough or too large.

Subscribers Theatre patrons who purchase tickets for a season of plays by paying in advance. (See **Season tickets**)

Subscription tickets (See **Season tickets**)

Summer Stock (See **Stock**)

Supernumerary, super A term commonly used in opera. Performers who speak no lines and are there to create crowd scenes and simply dress the stage. (See **Atmosphere people**)

Swag, swag drapes Anything that is hung in a rounded or looped fashion. A rope, chain, or electrical cable can be hung in a swag. More commonly, the top part of a curtain can be pulled back into a swag while the bottom part continues to hang downward, more than likely in pleats. (See **Tab curtain**)

Swatch of material A small piece of material or fabric—a sample piece. Costume designers often attach to their **sketches** swatches of material to give the producer, director, performers, and even the set designer an idea of the look and color of the costumes before they are constructed.

Swing dancer One of the members of the chorus/ensemble is hired and gets paid extra to know all the dance parts in the musical numbers and is ready to step into any position should someone be ill or injured. There is the dance captain, but the swing dancer is separate from that position.

Swivel casters (See **Casters**)

Sync or synchronization (See **Click track; In sync; Lip sync**)

T

Tab A flat, a curtain, or a piece of material placed on the stage to block or mask the audience's view of the backstage areas. (See **Return**)

Tab a curtain back To tab a curtain back is to have a person stand behind a curtain, concealed from the audience's view, and at a prescribed time, pull the curtain back or to the side. The curtain is opened just far enough to allow someone or something to pass through without getting entangled or **hung up** in the curtain. (See **Page**)

Tab curtain, tab drapes A certain way a curtain opens and remains hanging. As the rope is pulled to open a tab curtain, the curtain parts in the middle. Halfway down the opening in the middle of the curtain, when the stage technician pulls the rope, each side pulls upward and off to their respective sides into **swags**. As the swags are being formed, the bottom parts to each side travel along but remain hanging downward, bunching together into pleats and folds. On occasion, instead of the curtain parting in the middle, the tab will start at the far side of the curtain and pull into one large swag. Tab curtains and drapes are most commonly used to frame **prosceniums**, windows, or archways.

Tableaux A picture created by the performers in which they remain totally still. This is most effective at the end of a scene, either as the lights fade to black or the lights quickly go to black as in a **blackout**. (See **Button; Tag**)

Table read The cast, director, SM, and sometimes the producer and writers, all seated around a table or group of tables, usually in the rehearsal hall, to read the play for the first time. This term originated in television and then made its way to theatre.

Tab out An expression used mostly by designers, directors, technicians, or SMs asking that the **tab curtain** open in its normal tabbing fashion in view of the audience and then disappear from the stage up into the **flys**.

Tab show A cut-down version of a play or musical in which the actors perform only parts of the scenes. If the show is a musical, the actors do the important story-line/dialogue, and then go into the songs.

Tag Something added on to the end. A tag is a small or short addition to the main body of a scene, a song, or a piece of music. Its purpose is to punctuate, emphasize, or bring finality. In a play it can be one word, a line of dialogue, or a very short scene. In a musical a tag can be a note, a chord, or a few bars at the end of a song or instrumental number. (*See Button; Reprise*)

Take a beat A second in time—a *one-count*. Actors may be told to take a beat before saying their next line or doing their next piece of *business*. An SM may take a beat before calling the next cue.

Take it out

1. Usually an order given to a stage technician who is working on the rail requesting that a drop, curtain, piece of scenery, or something that is presently on the stage be flown out and taken from view.
2. Take it out can also be a direction to an actor to remove something from the performance—something that is not playing well, that does not fit the character, or that the performer has added but the producer, director, or SM has decided should not be in the show.

Take stage An actor who enters the stage or scene in character and with authority. An actor who moves about the stage with ease, assurance, and comfort, commanding the audience's attention and focus. Ninety-eight percent of the time, taking stage is good and part of the actor's craft in performing. Only when it is motivated from the ego or designed to bring attention to oneself as in *mugging*, doing *schtick*, or trying to *steal the scene* is it wrong and not wanted.

Taking focus (*See Focus*)

Taping the set This is strictly SM's work. Before the rehearsals begin, it is the SM's job to tape on the rehearsal room floor the life-size dimensions of the set and performing area. In a *one-set show* this is a relatively easy task. For multiscene musicals with different settings, the SM must overlay each set with a different colored tape to distinguish one from the other. At times there can be as many as five different colors on the floor. However, once the rehearsal furniture is in place for a scene and the actors are told which color to follow, there are relatively few problems with this technique.

Target The point to which a piece of scenery, a slider, or a pallet is brought onstage. (*See Hard limit, soft limit*)

Teasers (*See Borders; Valance*)

Tech Abbreviation for *technical*.

Technical rehearsals (techs) The period during rehearsals in which the technical elements of the show are brought together in the theatre and combined with the work done by the director and actors in the rehearsal hall. The term *mounting the show* is also used to describe this period in rehearsals.

Once all the cues are set into the SM's *cueing script* and the technical elements are in place, technical rehearsals become *dress rehearsals*. Technical rehearsals usually end once a show opens. However, if a show is heading to Broadway, technical rehearsals will continue intermittently to incorporate changes that affect the technical elements of the show.

Template

1. A flat cut-out of an object as viewed from above. It usually is made from *card stock* or a thin plastic. SMs will make a template of a large prop, a *turntable*, *platform*, or *set unit* that is used in many scenes or gets moved to various positions on the stage. The SM draws and cuts out the template to scale to fit into the SM's own *personal floor plans*. The template can be used as a stencil or a handy tool by laying it on the floor plan and showing the actors, director, and technicians how the object fits into the various settings, or how it travels to different positions.

2. Another kind of template shows up in the electrical department. It usually is a square piece of tin with a pattern or design cut out within the square. This tin is placed into the lighting instrument between the lens and the lamp and as the light passes through the cutout its pattern is projected on to the stage. (*See Gobo*)
3. Today, as the SM creates all the forms, lists, charts, plots, plans, reports in the computer, they are kept as templates. Then when working on a particular

Tempo

1. The speed at which the rhythmic beat of a measure of music is played.
2. In acting, tempo is the pace or speed at which the actor performs: the pace and speed at which the actor delivers dialogue and performs the **blocking** in the various moments and scenes throughout the play.

Ten out of twelve (hours) Normally, an actor's workday is eight and a half hours long, from the time they are called in to the time they are excused to go home. This includes seven hours for work and a one-and-a-half-hour meal break.

When it is time to go into **technical rehearsals**, because of the amount of work that must be done during this period, the actors' union, Equity, has agreed with producers to extend the actors' workday to ten hours with two hours for a meal break. The actors' workday, from the time they are called in to the time they are excused, is now twelve hours long. Thus, the term *ten out of twelve*.

Theatre-in-the-round This is theatre in which the audience seats completely surround the stage. (*See Black box theatre; In the round*)

Theatre is dark

1. This is when a theatre is closed, having no event or production performing in it.
2. For the people working in a show, the theatre goes dark on their days off—the days the cast does not perform the show. Most dark days are on Monday.

Theatrical license A liberty taken onstage and in a play that may not be true to real life.

The best example of theatrical license is **timing**. In many plays, the amount of time it takes for the action and storyline to be completed is shorter than the amount of time it would take in real life. An actor striking a match, putting it to wood in a fireplace, and then having an electric light come on to represent the glow of the fire or perhaps a fan blowing shredded colored silks to represent the flame of a fire, is theatrical license. In most cases, the audience accepts whatever theatrical license is given to them and does not let it take away from their sense of reality or distract them from the performance or their entertainment.

Third electrics (*See First electrics*)

Three-sheet poster The large forty-one-by-eighty-one-inch posters placed in glass cases or on billboards outside in front of the theatre. The term *three-sheet* comes from the fact that in times past printers had to print these posters in three separate pieces. The pieces were then pasted up in front of the theatre to make one large poster. With the improvement of printing presses and reproductions of pictures and artwork, a three-sheet poster is now printed in one piece. (*See Window cards*)

Throw a line A colloquial expression used by actors, directors, and SMs. During rehearsals, actors sometimes forget a line of dialogue. Upon request from the actor or director, it is the SM's job to give (or throw) the line that cannot be remembered.

Throw it away

1. A direction given mostly to performers telling them to give less emphasis or importance to a line of dialogue, an **action**, a reaction, or piece of **business**.
2. A throwaway line is a line of dialogue that the director or actor decides is not important and is written into the script more for coloring or expression of character.

Thrust stage A stage in which a good portion of the floor goes past the **proscenium** arch and out into the audience, covering what might have been an **orchestra pit**. If the thrust is not too wide and if it projects far enough out into the audience, patrons may be seated on the three sides of the thrust.

Runways are a form of a thrust stage, but narrower. A runway, however, does not best describe a thrust stage. For clarity in communicating, the SM should keep the terms separate.

Ties, tie lines Short lengths of sturdy, thin rope twelve to eighteen inches long. Along the tops of curtains and drops are grommet eyelet openings. These lengths of tie line are knotted into each grommet opening, leaving two loose ends of equal lengths. To hang the curtains or drops in the **flys**, pipes are lowered and the loose ends of the tie lines are tied to the pipes. Tie line is also important in the electric department in tying cables together or tying electric cable along pipes in the flys.

Timing

1. Having to do with the actual length in minutes of a scene or the entire play.
2. The speed, pace, and tempo at which a scene plays.
3. The actor's delivery. Through timing, an actor gets the most impact, value, and entertainment out of the dialogue or the business in the performance.
4. The SM's calling cues during the performance at precisely the correct time.
5. Creating the illusion of real time and yet taking **theatrical license** to keep the show moving at an entertaining pace.

Tormentors Tall **flats**, pieces of scenery, or long curtains (about eight to ten feet wide) that are placed on each side of the stage to make up the **wings** and hide the activity of the backstage from the view of the audience. The term *mentor* is also used when describing the **borders** or **teasers** hanging overhead—the narrow flats or curtains that run across the length of the stage, covering the technical equipment hanging above.

Touring show (See Road show)

Track

1. A steel track hanging up in the **flys** the length of the stage. Built into it are the components and mechanisms that give the ability to move curtains or scenery on, off, or across the stage.
2. Another kind of track is a groove cut into the floor of a raised deck—a slot enabling a piece of stage scenery or a pallet to become attached to the **automation** winching system beneath the deck and to guide scenery or pallets on and off stage.

Trades, trade papers Newspapers, magazines, and other publications dealing with theatre, show business, or entertainment in general. In addition to articles about theatre, many of these publications list auditions for actors, talk about upcoming shows, and sometimes advertise for SMs.

Translucent A material that allows light to pass through but cannot be seen through, such as frosted glass, some plastic materials, or thin **muslin**. When lit from the front, translucent materials appear solid or **opaque**. When lit from the back, the light passing through becomes defused, leaving a glow. When translucent material is lit from the back and a performer steps into that light, a very clear and distinctive shadow or silhouette is created. (See **Transparent**)

Transmitter pack (See Body Mic; Lavalier mic; Wireless)

Transparent Materials or substances that allow light to pass through so that things beyond or behind can be seen. (See **Opaque**; **Translucent**)

Trap doors (traps) A cut-out in the stage floor through which performers, props, scenery, or special effects can pass, either entering or exiting the stage. When covered with the same material as the stage floor, the trap doors become barely visible to the audience. Magicians use trap doors effectively. Stage technicians shorten the term to **traps**. Trapdoors are synonymous with **elevators** and **lifts**, used effectively and extensively at Radio City Music Hall and in rock concerts to bring about the entrance and appearance of the star performer.

Traveler, traveler curtain

1. The term *traveler* refers to the steel mechanism or rod that is above the stage and hidden from view of the audience and on which the curtains or drops are hung.
2. A *traveler* is a curtain that splits in the middle and each half glides off to its respective side. The traveler can be operated manually or by electric motor.
3. On some occasions, a traveler curtain may start at one end of the stage and travel across the entire length to the other side. In some theatres when there is no *fly space* above the stage, this kind of traveler is especially useful. Drops as well as curtains can be hung on it and moved on and off stage when needed.

Trim, high trim, mid trim, low trim, out position Speaking in terms of the *fly system*, trim is the various levels or heights at which the drops, curtains, and so forth are set and seen by the audience. The levels or heights are set according to the bottom line of the item hanging.

1. When the item is hanging in the flys out of sight, the trim is in the *out position*. When needed onstage, the piece is brought to the *low trim*, which means that the bottom line of the item is set down on the stage floor. The *high trim* and a midtrim are heights in between and can be seen by the audience.

A good example of these trims takes place in the opening scene of the musical *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*. The character Finch enters on a scaffold from above the stage. The scaffold starts up in the flys in the out position. Just before the performance starts, the actor gets on the scaffold. On cue from the SM, the scaffold is brought first to a high trim for the initial entrance and to begin the opening song. On further cues, the scaffold is lowered to a midtrim for the middle part of the song, and then to the low trim so the actor can get off. In its final move, the scaffold is brought back up into the flys and into the out position.

2. For SMs, directors, designers, and technicians, *trim* also means that the bottom line of any item hanging on stage from the flys is straight and parallel to the stage floor. In days of old when the fly system consisted of two and sometimes three ropes (the *long line and the short line*), one of the ropes could slip out of position causing the drop to hang askew and not be parallel to the stage floor. It was then someone's job (sometimes the SM) to stand out in the audience while a stage technician adjusted whatever line was out of whack and the person out in the audience would yell out instructions until the bottom of the drop was parallel to the stage floor. Today, with the *counterweight system*, the lines are locked in so this is not a problem. However, an SM of many jobs and in many places and theatres may run across the old system and have to deal with the problem.

Trip line A rope or wire that is pulled or tugged to release a catch or hook, which in turn releases something to fall, drop, shoot out, or pop open.

Truck, hand truck (*See Dolly, truck*)

Truss A grid of aluminum tubing bars on which lighting fixtures and heavy equipment such as sound speakers can be safely hung. The grid may be suspended above the stage in the *flys* or out in front of the *proscenium*, hanging in full view of the audience and over the heads of those sitting in the first rows of the *orchestra seating*. Trusses are also used onstage as decorative pieces, holding light units, which are all part of the design of a set.

Tryouts

1. This term is most commonly used today when talking about the out-of-town performances of a new show before going to Broadway.
2. This term is also used in place of *auditions*, mostly by people not in theatre.

Turkey, flop A failed show. *Turkey* is a more derogatory term and implies that the show was bad. A flop can sometimes be a critical success but a financial failure at the box office.

Turnaround time

1. A period of time between the end of one event and the start of another—for example, the time it takes at the end of one performance for the stage crew, SM, and actors to set up and be ready for another performance.

2. The amount of time off that labor unions have established between the end of one day's work and the start of the next. For the actors, Equity has established twelve hours. For the stage technicians, IATSE has made it eight. If either the group as a whole or the individual members are called in any sooner, the producer is required to pay overtime and possibly a penalty.

Turntable (See Revolve)

Twofold or threefold flats, booking flats Two or three ten-foot-high-by-four-foot-wide **flats** hinged or **lashed** together. Twofolds and threefolds are able to stand freely by themselves. They are convenient and useful for the SM in many ways and situations. They can be set up quickly as a backing to hide distracting backstage activity from view of the audience, and are especially useful in setting up a **quick-change** dressing area.

Two-for (Pronounced *too-fer*) A short electric cable that has two female plugs spliced in at one end, which allows two items to be plugged in at the same time. At the other end there is one male plug that is plugged into one power source, supplying power to the two female plugs.

Type casting Choosing actors because of their physical appearance, qualities, or characteristics; choosing actors to play certain roles because they have successfully played them in the past. Sometimes a certain type of role is what they do best. Other times, it is the only part they can play. Still other times it is the only part producers, directors, or casting people can imagine an actor playing.

U

Ultraviolet light (UV) (See Blacklight)

Understudies Actors chosen and paid to learn the various principal roles within a show that are being performed by another actor. Understudies within a show usually are actors already hired to play a smaller role, or they are members of the **ensemble**. If for any reason the regular actor cannot perform, the understudy must be ready to perform the role at a moment's notice. Understudies are the producer's insurance policy that the show will go on. In many situations, it is the SM's job to rehearse the understudies and get them **up** on their roles. (See **Stand by**)

Unit, set unit, wagon, pallet A unit or **set unit** is a piece of scenery that fits into part of the main set or is made to stand on its own. They are usually built on a wagon or pallet and move on and off stage from the wings electronically by an **automation** operator, or can be manually hand-cranked on by a stage technician. These units are used for smaller scenes while the lights go dark on the rest of the set and stage. Sometimes flats are also flown in to meet up with the set unit to make a more complete setting.

Unit set A Basic set that remains on the stage for the entire play. As the play progresses and scenes change, different pieces of scenery may be brought in and props and furniture may be changed to give the set a different look.

Up

1. For performers to be up on their lines is for them to have the lines memorized and be able to recite them without lapses of memory. Similarly, for performers to be up on their parts means that they are ready to perform them.
2. To say a performer *went up on the lines* can mean the performer forgot lines, got them mixed up, or jumped ahead several lines or pages of dialogue.

Up on your feet Directors and SMs use this expression in the early part of rehearsals, when placing the actors onstage, adding **movement** to the show—adding the **blocking** and **business**. Similarly, a director gets a scene or the entire play up on its feet.

Up stage (US)

1. The direction an actor travels onstage when moving away from the audience and up toward the back part of the stage. A direction given to actors as the director blocks the show—"Cross upstage to the sofa."
2. A different use of this term is when an actor during performance stands just slightly upstage of another to deliver dialogue. There is no problem with this positioning until the actor standing farther downstage must speak lines. This actor is forced to turn upstage to say the lines, thus facing away from the audience. In most **blocking** situations, this is neither comfortable for audience viewing nor desirable to the actor who must turn upstage. In blocking the show, directors and actors are careful to avoid this.

Standing *upstage* with the other actors onstage having their backs to the audience is a strong position and brings the attention and focus to the actor standing upstage. For a particular moment in a scene, a director might choose to position the actors in such a manner. Sometimes, intentionally or unintentionally, during a scene of dialogue an actor may move one or two steps farther upstage. If done continually, the other actors will complain bitterly to the SM, and it becomes a situation the SM must resolve without delay.

V

Valance In the world of curtains and drapery, a valance is the material at the top that is separate from the rest of the curtain. A valance adds design interest and helps frame the curtain or opening in which it is hung. Sometimes the material of the valance hangs straight down in pleats or folds. Other times the valance is draped in a **bunting** or **swag** design.

Vamp This is a musical term. It is a short section of music played over and over until the singer is ready to sing or an action is ready to be performed.

Variety act A performing artist, such as a singer, dancer, mime artist, magician, juggler, and so forth, who has put together a piece of entertainment that can be put into a show.

Variety show A show in which there are various types of acts, singers, dancers, comics, jugglers, magicians, or whoever a producer or director might put together for an audience's entertainment.

VariLite One of the first moving and intelligent lights to be used in theatre. While VariLite is a company name, it was for a time the common name used for a moving light fixture. Like most things in our world of fast-moving, fast-developing technology, other lighting instruments and company moved in and became the lighting of choice. However, an SM may hear the name used from time to time, especially by a stage technician who has been around for some years. (See **DLP digital projector**; **Moving lights**; **Source Four Leko**)

Velour A velvety material made of good-quality cotton. (See **Duvetyn**)

Velours A general term used for the curtains or drapes that hang onstage and are made of **velour**, **duvetyn**, or **velveeteen** material.

Velveteen A material that looks and feels like velvet but is not of the same quality. (See **Blacks**; **Duvetyn**; **Velour**)

Video monitors (See **Monitor**)

Video wall This is a large **LED** panel screen that may fill some or all of the upstage area where the **cyc** would be. A video wall is an LED flat screen made up of sections or panels. Each panel has within it hundreds of tiny squares grouped together side by side, containing clusters of **RGB** (Red, Green, Blue) **diodes**. They are all placed evenly and closely together creating one pixel. As you may know, a pixel is one of many thousands of squares that, when standing side by side with other pixels, will make a picture.

Vignette A short scene or sketch.

W

Wagon, pallet Wagons have become pallets. They are, however, one and the same. They still have placed on them props, scenery, and sometimes the performers—moving things on and off stage from the **wings** on each side of the stage. Both are winched on to the stage either through a keyboard operator in **automation** or hand-cranked on by stage technician. The wagon is more like a platform or riser and stands about four inches off the floor. The pallet is streamline, has a low profile, and stands only a couple of inches off the stage floor.

Walk on, walk-on part (*See Bit parts*)

Walk the curtain To stand behind one of the ends of a curtain, out of view of the audience, and walk with the curtain as it is opening or closing, and possibly guiding it around set pieces, props, or pieces of furniture that might be placed on or near the **curtain line**. (*See Page*)

Walk through (walk thru) To go through a scene, an act, or the entire show, doing everything that is done during a performance, but doing it at half the intensity or **performance level**. Directors may choose to do this with the cast to conserve their energy. An SM may do this as a refresher rehearsal, after the cast has been away from performing the show for several or more days. (*See Read-through; Run-through; Work-through*)

Warm up

1. An SM or a director asks the dancers and singers to warm up by physical and vocal exercise before a rehearsal or performance so they won't injure their bodies or voices.
2. A person who steps out onstage before the show begins to talk to the audience, welcome them, put them in a good mood, and set them up for the performance they are about to see. This might be done by the producer, director, or even the star of the show, for dress rehearsals that are attended by an audience, or for preview performances. In regional theatre, where much of the audience is made up of season ticket holders, the producer, artistic director, or figurehead of the organization might come out before each performance to talk to the audience. Unlike the **master of ceremonies**, the warm-up person is not seen during the show and may or may not return at the end of the performance.

Warnings For the SM, the warning is the first part of the three-part phase in **calling cues**. First is the warning, second is the **stand by**, and third is the **GO!** Warnings are important because they alert the technicians that a cue is coming up and allow them time to prepare to execute the cue.

Wash General stage lighting that covers or washes across the entire stage and set. A wash is flat and uninteresting lighting. It must be used with other lights that bring color, depth, and dimension to the set and performers. A wash can also be one color, like a red wash or a blue wash.

White noise, room noise An SM may hear this term used by one of the technicians in the sound department. In simplest terms, white noise is general ambient sound or the sound that is present in a quiet room. This term has no relevance or effect on the SM's job. The term **pink noise** does.

White scale model This is a scale model of the set the set designer makes, oftentimes out of foamcore board. It is the preliminary look at the set before painting in color and any kind of pattern and design. The white model brings a strong visual sense of what the set will look like in real life, directing everyone's attention to the size, space and relationship of things to each other. Sometimes the white model is enough, but on a major production, possibly a show bound for Broadway, the designer will then go off and make a second model that will include every aspect of the set, bringing in the details of color, pattern, and design.

Winch There is the winch that is motorized and fully operated by an **automation** keyboard operator, and there is the hand-cranked kind, manually operated by a stage technician and brutal force. Both require a set up of a raised **stage deck, wire ropes**, a **dog**, a **knife**, and the **pallets, wagons**, or pieces of scenery that the winch will bring on to the stage and then take off. (*See Hard limit, soft limit*)

Window cards Replica copies of the show poster, but downsized to twenty-two by fourteen inches. They are printed on heavy **card stock**, distributed to businesses and merchants. The window cards are usually placed in storefront windows or in places where the patrons of the different establishments can easily see the card. (See **Three-sheet poster**)

Winging it A performer working extemporaneously or by **improvisation**, performing without previous planning or rehearsal—sometimes without benefit of a script. In a moment of emergency, a performer may be asked to go onstage to hold the audience's attention while the problem is being resolved. Whatever the performer does during that time is called winging it.

Actors also wing it when they forget the planned/rehearsed parts of their performance, such as the **blocking** and dialogue, but continue to perform until they find their way back, or until someone comes to save them and lead them back.

Wings The openings on each side of the stage through which the actors and scenery can enter or exit the stage. The wings are the spaces created by the curtains or flats hung on each side of the stage. The wings are intermediate spaces between being onstage and being backstage. They are the area in which actors and scenery wait, remaining unseen by the audience. Wings are commonly seen and part of the set design in musicals. (See **In one; Legs, tormentors; Sight lines**)

Wireless

1. When this term first came into use and became important in an SM's life, it meant only one thing: the miniature microphone that actors wear during their performance. There are no visible wires leading from the microphone head or from the actor. Instead, the actor wears a radio pack. The radio pack transmits the sound signals to a receiver. The receiver sends the signal to the amplifier, and it is then broadcast through speakers. (See **Body mic; Lavalier mic**)
2. *Wireless*, however, has taken on greater meaning with wireless **dimmers**, backstage communication systems, and of course wireless connectivity for our electronic devices through Wi-Fi.

Wire rope A sturdy cable under the raised **stage deck** that is part of the **automation** system and is the main physical part of moving **wagons, pallets**, and pieces of scenery on and off stage from the **wings**. (See **Dog; Hard limit, soft limit; Knife**)

Work in progress Creating a show in a rehearsal or workshop environment. Creative artists joining together, improvising, acting out a skeleton script, or taking a thread of an idea and building it into a scene and eventually into a show. This way of working was most effectively done in the creation of the musical *A Chorus Line*, the script of which reflects many of the personal stories the actors brought to the workshop.

Working a scene In rehearsals, the director and actors perform some or all of a scene, stopping and starting, refining and changing, to improve their work and the overall scene. (See **Cleaning**)

Working drawings Scale **drawings** created by the set designer detailing the design, measurements, and placements of the scenery, drops, furniture, and large props. From these drawings, the artisans and craftspeople construct the set and make or gather the props and furniture. The **light plot**, although separate and not included with the set drawings, serves as the working drawing for the lighting technicians.

Working the show In rehearsals, the director and actors perform some or all of the show, stopping and starting, refining and changing, to improve their work and the overall show. (See **Working a scene**)

Work lights

1. Lighting used onstage during rehearsals, when setting the stage with props and scenery for a performance, or when doing technical repairs. When ready to begin teching the show or going into performance, the SM may ask electrics to **take out** the work lights, thus leaving the blue work lights purposely set for all to see in the dark backstage during performance.

2. The work light is also the one light, required by law, that is left lit on the stage after everyone has left the theatre. This is a safety light, sort of a night light, or as people in theatre have come to call it, the **ghost light**.

Work-through (work-thru) Rehearsals in which the director will stop to fix, clean up, and refine all elements of the actors' performance. A work-thru rehearsal will take place after the actors and director have **blocked** the scene, an act, or the entire play. Work-thrus are effective after the lines and blocking have been memorized and the actors have had a chance to develop and interpret their characters. A work-thru is similar to a **stop-and-go rehearsal**. (See **Cleaning; Run through; Walk-through; Working the show**)

X

Xenon lamp A lamp filled with xenon gas used in spotlights, taking the place of the carbon rods used in **carbon arch spotlights**. (See **Halogen lamp**)

Y

Z

Zip cord Household-gauge electrical wire; wire used for extension cords. Zip cords are not designed to power high-wattage lighting instruments such as the ones used to light the stage. A heavier-gauge wire or cable is needed and is safer for theatrical use. Also a zip cord does not have a ground for protection.

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