



INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

Using This Handbook

This document was created to provide guidance and uniformity in management of the Memorial Auditorium house for all Gaieties performances, but with specifics included for Gaieties productions. Any questions or clarifications that remain after reviewing this document should be directed to Olivia Haas (ohaas@stanford.edu) or Ross Williams (rpwilliams@stanford.edu).

Background

Ram's Head Theatrical Society's production of Gaieties has traditionally been one of the most fun, but certainly one of the most crazy theatrical events on campus. Every year, much attention is given to nearly every aspect of the show, with one exception: house management. One of the most easily overlooked aspects of a production, house management requires just as much forethought and careful attention as any other element of a show. It is essential to ensuring the safety of the audience, cast, and crew. This document is meant to aid in the preparation and execution of house management for Gaieties specifically, but can certainly be used for the Spring Show production, or any other large-scale show produced on the Memorial Auditorium stage.

HOUSE MANAGEMENT

House management staff

HOUSE MANAGER (1 per night): The house manager is in charge of overseeing the house management. This means supervising the ushers, fielding ticket and seating questions before and during the show, patrolling all doors and lobbies to prevent people from sneaking in (pre-show), keeping an eye out for belligerent audience members, and, most importantly, remaining *in the lobby* for the duration of the show. This last element is particularly important and should be emphasized to anyone who volunteers to house manage. If you are unable to easily find House Managers for any of the performances, turn to the Ram's Head Board of Directors for volunteers. It is their job to assist with your show when needed.

USHERS (7-8 per night): The ushers help with taking tickets, handing out programs, and directing audience members to their sections. Once the show begins, they may find a place to sit or stand in the house and watch the show. During the show, ushers should be able to keep an eye out for any seriously problematic audience members, and should report them to the house manager if unable to quiet them or confiscate problematic materials (such as large quantities of alcohol or smoking devices).

BOX OFFICE (2-3 people): I found it very helpful to have additional help at the box office table(s) all three nights. If you are unable to easily find volunteers, again, turn to the Board.

Pre-production: 2 – 3 weeks before Opening Night

One to two weeks before the show, the producer should send out a feeler email asking for students interested in *ushering* or assisting with the *box office*, offering them compensation of one free ticket. I used the following email template for my solicitation email:

INTERESTED IN USHERING or ASSISTING WITH BOX OFFICE FOR GAITIES 2009?

Who: anyone who wants a free ticket to *Gaities 2009: Apocalypse Cal!*

What: Ushers and Box Office assistants are required to show up an hour before the show, work pre-show taking tickets, assisting guests, and patrolling the lobby, and then get to enjoy the show...for FREE!

When: **Wednesday, 11/18, Thursday 11/19, and Friday 11/20**

Shows @ 8 pm (volunteers needed @ 7 pm, 6:45 pm for Friday) in MemAud.

Contact Producer Olivia Haas (ohaas@stanford.edu) with questions or to sign up.

Ideally, the producer should have a good friend or two (or three), who are either a) involved in the theater community, or b) reliable and trustworthy. These are the people who you should ask to *house manage*. Begin soliciting for House Managers two to three weeks before opening night. For Gaities 2009, my opening night House Manager ushered for the Thursday and Friday night shows. Similarly, one of the older, theatrically experienced opening night ushers then stepped up to House Manage Thursday night etc.

NOTE: *Of all the nights, Friday (Freshman night) is by far the craziest, both in terms of belligerent audience (Gaities alums), and with regards to sheer numbers. Be sure to assemble your most trusted and confident team for Friday night. Having Freshmen usher is fine, but be aware that they are sure to be distracted by all their arriving peers.*

Pre-Production: Load-In

During load-in, the producer or an assistant producer (in my case I did it) should organize the necessary materials for front of house management. You will need the following:

- Three long folding tables
- Two to four folding chairs
- Two lamps on poles
- Several long extension cords
- Lots of gaffers or duct tape
- Ticket sales/Will-Call signs
- At least 10 paper copies of the night's respective group seating chart
- Small boxes/baskets for ticket stubs

These things can be obtained from Kenny (ask nicely!), except for the tape, which Ram's Head should provide. The "Ticket Sales" and "Will Call" signs can be found buried in the Ram's Head EPC closet (there are a few of them). They are white. Once you have picked up the tables from under the stage, they can be stored behind the pew/benches in the lobby of MemAud for the duration of the production.

Performance night:

6 pm: Send a team of assistant producers or any available tech to the lobby to set up. The necessary set up is as follows:

- One table set up on either side of the top of the MemAud stairs outside, one for Will-Call and one for Ticket Sales. Each table should have at least one folding chair
- One pole light at each table
- Extension cords running from just inside the lobby doors to the pole lamps
NOTE: *the extension cords should be neatly taped where ground meets wall wherever possible to ensure no one will trip on the cords.*
- The “Ticket Sales” and “Will-Call” signs taped up in the appropriate locations, directing patrons to the respective tables
- The third folding table can be set up in the lobby between the two main house doors for additional program distribution. Programs can be arranged on this table at this time.

6:45 pm: For the Wednesday and Thursday performances, ask that your House Manager arrive at 6:45pm. For the Friday (Freshman night) show, ask that he or she arrive no later than 6:30pm. Once your House Manager has arrived, familiarize them with the group seating so that they are ready to direct groups in the right direction. Go over general rules with them regarding keeping an eye out for obvious alcoholic containers, show them all the possible entrances for them to patrol (including doors facing the Business School and all other doors to the outside of MemAud), and be sure to remind them that they have the authority to ask any audience members to get rid of drinks, smoking devices, and other problematic instruments. For Friday night, be sure to inform them of the expected Gaieties alum, and how they might prove problematic.

7 pm: For the Wednesday and Thursday performances, ask that your ushers arrive at 7pm. For the Friday show, ask that they arrive no later than 6:45pm. Once they have arrived, designate who will be in the following locations: 4 at the main door taking tickets, 2 at the main house (theater) doors with programs/seating charts, and 2 at the stairs (one at either staircase) with programs and seating charts. If you do not have 8 ushers for a particular night, or if you have not sold balcony tickets, adjust accordingly. The most important jobs of the ushers are to direct groups to their sections and ensure no one without a ticket slips in.

7:30pm: If your cast and crew are ready, you should be able to open the house at 7:30. Have the ushers at the door rip tickets etc. **NOTE:** *Be sure to have all house management staff keep an eye out for large containers of alcohol, musical instruments, or other potentially problematic devices, and have them confiscated if necessary.*

8pm: You should aim to start the show at 8pm. Depending on the night, this may or may not happen. For the Friday night performance of Gaieties 2009, we sold out and held the show until at least 8:10 to ensure that everyone on the waiting list got in (and was seated).

During the show: Once the house lights are dimmed, the ushers can be released to find seats in the auditorium. It is imperative that there be at least two ushers seated upstairs (if you have sold balcony tickets for that night's performance) and that they are aware that they are still expected to keep an eye on the audience during the performance. The House Manager can take over at the box office to handle any ticket sales once the show has started. Once it is clear that no more late comers are arriving, the House Manager should pack up the cash box and store it in a secure location. The House Manager should then remain in the lobby for the duration of the show. **NOTE:** *The Friday night performance is also traditionally Gaieties "alums" night, when many past Gaieties cast members attend the show. They are typically quite drunk and get very rowdy. It is recommended that a confident and commanding usher be seated upstairs in order to ask the alums to be seated etc, as they always sit in the balcony and can be quite disruptive to the other audience members. The Friday night House Manager should also be aware that alums usually try to run onstage during or near the finale, and he or she should therefore be prepared to hold them off from running down the aisles until after the finale.*

During intermission: If possible, send a crew team to the lobby to collapse the tables, store them behind the benches, store the chairs, pack up and store the light poles (in the light booth), and properly store all extension cords. The Ticket Sales and Will Call signs can also be removed at this time and stored in the Green Room. Obtain the cash box from the House Manager. Check to make sure that no audience members have been unnecessarily rude and disruptive. If they have, feel free to ask them to be more respectful of the other audience members. This particularly applies to drunk fraternity members on Thursday night, and drunk Gaieties alums on Friday night.

Post-show: Before vacating the auditorium, send a crew member or assistant producer (or yourself) to do a sweep of the lobby and outside stairs for any remaining house management supplies. And don't forget: THANK YOUR SUPERVISOR!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact numbers

Should you encounter any problems before, during, or after the show that cannot be solved by that night's supervisor, call the following numbers:

- **Facilities Emergency number:** (650) 723-2281 – *This number should be used for maintenance problems such as clogged toilets etc.*
- **Campus emergency number:** (650) 321-4433 – *This number should be used if security reinforcement is absolutely necessary (unlikely). Campus security typically sends a night patrolman to keep an eye on the building, as there are many people in attendance.*
- **Ross Williams:** (650) 740-3933 – *It is a good idea to program Ross' number into your (the producer's) phone in case any questions arise that cannot be answered by the provided supervisor.*