

Stage Management at the Theatre of Western Springs

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Stage Management is the coordination of the action on the stage with the tasks performed back stage and with the movement of the audience in and out of the auditorium. The stage manager has many responsibilities during the rehearsal process. He is in charge of communicating to the cast and crew the scheduling of rehearsals. He will also take notes on the blocking of the play as specified by the director. He will follow the script and will correct actors if they deviate from the script. The stage manager is the person ultimately responsible for all aspects of the show when it moves from rehearsal into production. The stage manager needs very good interpersonal skills, since he deals with everyone in the cast and crew and beyond. The stage manager usually works with one or more assistant stage managers to whom he will assign some of the stage management tasks. A key job of the stage manager is to call the cues during the performances of the play. The stage manager makes practical and artistic choices as to when to call a cue (e.g. when the audience is settled in the auditorium or when laughter has just peaked). A stage manager is likely to have significant experience on stage and working in backstage crews.

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The Scope of Stage Management

Stage Management is the coordination of the action on the stage with the tasks performed back stage and with the movement of the audience in and out of the auditorium. The stage manager works closely with the director in organizing the who, what and where of rehearsals. He communicates their plan to the cast and crew. He will also take notes on the blocking of the play and on technical matters of the play as specified by the director. He will be “on book.” That is, he will follow the script and give actors “lines” that they may miss while rehearsing. The stage manager will assign tasks to the assistant stage managers. The stage manager is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the show when it moves from rehearsal into production. A key job of the stage manager is calling the cues during the performances of the play.

Desired Skills for a Stage Manager

A stage manager should have the following skills:

- **Good listener:** It is too easy to quickly tell a cast or crew member what should be done. Misunderstandings, or incomplete understandings, of a situation can result. Wait to hear the whole story. Keep your mouth closed more than it is open.
- **Prioritize:** The number of demands at any given moment can become overwhelming. The difficult can be done immediately, the impossible might take a day or two.

- **Problem Solving:** Offer alternatives to problems. Conflict resolution is best achieved by mediation. No one should feel that they've been frozen out of a fair deal.
- **Anticipate the Workload:** Stay well ahead of the calendar. No surprises, is the name of this game. Unexpected things will still happen, but with a little luck there will be some time to deal with them.
- **Good Delegator:** The stage manager has his assistant Stage Managers and Crew Chiefs whom he can ask for help. The crew chiefs are often in a better position to solve a problem. For example, if a piece of furniture is needed for a rehearsal, the props crew chief may know where best to find the piece or may have already set one aside.
- **Solid Technical Background:** The stage manager needs experience in technical theater practices.

The Responsibilities of the Stage Manager

The job of the stage manager, with the help of assistant stage manager(s), is to manage the production of a play. This includes, but is not limited to, scheduling, communication, coordination, running rehearsals, recording blocking, prompting lines, creating a [cue list](#) and a [cue script](#) and running the performances, including the calling of cues.

At the Theatre of Western Springs, the stage manager also has building security responsibilities. This includes unlocking the theatre and turning on needed lights before a rehearsal or show. After a show or a rehearsal, he will insure that lights and equipment are turned off and doors are locked.

The stage manager will insure that rehearsal spaces are set up with the proper set pieces for a rehearsal. Afterward he may need to clear away the set pieces and props.

Other responsibilities include:

- Meet with the Director and Assistant Stage Manager, as needed, before, after or outside of rehearsal/performance time frames or venues.
- Recruit an Assistant Stage Manager and mentor as needed.
- Attend the pre-production, mid-production and cue meetings.
- Attend all rehearsals and performances.

- Maintain a production calendar which includes call dates, times, locations, purpose of the call and any personnel who are excepted from the call.
- Record all blocking in master script in pencil or delegate to an Assistant Stage Manager and consult with cast members to reconcile their blocking notes.
- Ensure that someone is available at each rehearsal to give lines.
- Take technical notes for all departments.
- Produce and distribute [rehearsal reports](#) within twenty-four hours of the rehearsals.

Sample Production Schedule

MS3 --- "Leading Ladies"

Critical Dates

Date	Day	Call Time	Activity
11/21	Sat.	10:00 AM	Pre-Production Meeting with Crew (Cast Welcome)
		12:00 N	First Read-thru
12/12	Sat.	1:15 PM	First Rehearsal
12/14	Mon.	7:30 PM	Construction Begins
12/22	Tues.	7:00 PM	Publicity Photos
1/1	Fri.	5:00 PM	Final date for bios and crew lists to program editors
1/2	Sat.	10:00 AM	Mid-Production Mtg
1/6	Wed.	7:15 PM	Actors on-stage and crews should start attending rehearsals
1/7	Thurs.	7:15 PM	Designer Run-thru w/crew chiefs' mtg afterwards
1/10	Sun.	TBD	Q2Q Mtg --- Director, TD, SM, ASM, Lights & Sound
		4:30 PM	RSVP to SM with number of attendees for Sandwich Sunday
1/14	Thurs.	7:15 PM	Dry Tech and Makeup Training for Cast
1/15	Fri.	7:00 PM	Start asap - Wet Tech
1/16	Sat.	1:15 PM	2:30 Start - Full Dress Rehearsal
1/17	Sun.	1:30 PM	2:30 Start - Sandwich Sunday
1/18	Mon.	7:00 PM	8:00 pm Start - Dress Rehearsal
1/19	Tues.	7:00 PM	8:00 pm Start - Invited Dress Rehearsal (moved to Wed if no benefit perf)
1/20	Wed.	6:30 PM	7:30 PM Start - Benefit Performance [United Church of Hinsdale]
1/21	Thurs.	7:00 PM	8:00 OPENING NIGHT + talk-back
1/22	Fri.	7:00 PM	8:00 Performance
1/23	Sat.	3:30 PM	4:30 PM Start - Archive Photos (call & start times may change)
		7:00 PM	8:00 Performance
1/24	Sun.	1:30 PM	2:30 Performance
		6:30 PM	7:30 Performance
1/25	Mon.	OFF	
1/26	Tues.	OFF	
1/27	Wed.	7:00 PM	(Line run-thru)
1/28	Thurs.	7:00 PM	8:00 Performance + talk-back
1/29	Fri.	7:00 PM	8:00 Performance
1/30	Sat.	1:30 PM	2:30 Performance
		7:00 PM	8:00 Performance
1/31	Sun.	1:30 PM	2:30 Performance & Strike
2/6	Sat.	10:00 AM	Post-Production Mtg

Sample TWS REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Man Who Came to Dinner

Mar. 8, 2015 1:15 PM - 4:00 PM

2nd Rehearsal — pages 5-22 were blocked

Reported by Denny Wise, Stage Manager

GENERAL (everyone please read)

All program bios due to Debbie Angelillo and all crew lists due to Dennis Fry as soon as possible. Final submission date is March 27th.

Beginning immediately, weekday rehearsals are scheduled to begin at 7:15 PM, and weekend rehearsals will start at 1:00 PM. There was some confusion regarding starting times, so please arrive by these times.

One of our men, Dave Trzcinski, has had to drop out. His roles will be covered by the remaining men: Jason Blackwell becomes a Deputy in Act III, Gene Leeb becomes the 2nd Radio Man in Act II, and John Mueller becomes Mr. Baker in Act I. Congratulations on your promotions!

Everyone who is “new” to acting or chairing at TWS needs to have a headshot taken for the program and lobby display. Bill Hammack will be taking pictures in the Lauren Wilson Room on Saturday, Mar. 21st when he completes his bit as Prof. Metz. If you are receiving this report and have not had your picture taken, please plan to be at the theatre on the 21st around 2:00 PM.

COSTUMES / MAKE-UP

Publicity photos will be taken on Tues., Mar. 24th at 7:00 PM. Rehearsal will begin at 7:15 PM and work around the photos.

The play is set in late 1940, so plan accordingly. (My previous time frame was ambiguous and could have meant 1948 or '49. I knew what I meant, I just didn't communicate it correctly. Sorry!)

Please note the additional costumes and make-up that will be needed for Blackwell, Leeb, and Mueller.

LIGHTS / SOUND

Nothing new.

SET CONSTRUCTION / PAINTING

Nothing new.

SET DRESSING / PROPS

We'll need a basket for the wheelchair and the convicts should be chained together.

FRONT OF HOUSE (Hospitality / House Manager / Box Office / Program)

Nothing new.

NEXT MEETINGS

Rehearsal Tues., Mar. 10, at 7:15 PM will be on the MainStage as the Cattell floor is being painted. We will be on a "hot set" for Ramona Quimby, so caution must be exercised. We will continue blocking Act I, scene 2, pages 22-32. The following characters are expected: Whiteside, all five Stanleys, Maggie, John, Sarah, Miss Preen, Dr. Bradley.

Wed., Mar. 11th we will be back in the Cattell Theatre. Call is 7:15 PM for those on pages 33-47 (up to Beverly's entrance.)

NOTE: If you do not wish to be included in these reports, please email me. Thanks!

Denny

Laying Out the Show as a Sequence of Cues

The actors could just walk out on stage, say their lines and act out the play. However, the use of the many technical elements in a play require coordination between the actors and the tech crews. That coordination is laid out in a cue sheet (see [sample cue sheet on next page](#)) and directed by the stage manager during the show. Lighting is one of those technical elements. The timing of the lighting in a show is determined by stage directions in the script, artistic choices of the lighting designer and the director and practical choices of the stage manager.

There is a meeting about two weeks before opening night, the purpose of which is to create a cue sheet. The participants for this meeting are the director, the stage manager, the sound designer, and the lighting designer. Costumes and props might have an interest in the meeting, but attend only infrequently. Going into this meeting the stage manager should have a good idea of the cues he will have to call. During the rehearsal process, he should note when an actor will need a cue from him to go on stage. He should also have a general idea of when light and sound cues will need to be called. As well, he should be discussing cues with the director during the rehearsal process.

Cues for any show begin before the curtain goes up, but the group at the cue meeting starts at the beginning of the script and identifies, in order, all the events which trigger something in tech. These triggers are primarily lines in dialogue, but they also include events like exits, pratfalls or gestures. These triggers are cues; they are numbered and assembled in a single document called a [cue sheet](#).

The intent of the cue meeting is to create a complete cue sheet. However, over the next week, the cues are revised and elaborated on as omissions and mistakes are discovered. The cue sheet is an abstraction; the director and designers need to see and hear the technical elements as an integral part of the play. This begins with a rehearsal called Dry Tech, a cue-to-cue rehearsal (*i.e. all cues on the cue sheet are executed in order*) that excludes actors in favor of discovering if the tech functions as anticipated. The first tweaking of tech occurs here. Dry Tech is followed by a Wet Tech rehearsal at which, for the first time, the sound and light cues will be executed while the actors run through the play. This is often a long rehearsal and although the intent is to run through the whole play there usually is a lot of stop-and-go. From the Dry Tech on, the stage manager will be in the booth calling the show. Wet Tech and the following rehearsals is a prime time for the stage manager to train the assistant stage managers.

Sample Cue Sheet

Cue #	Who	Lights	Sound	SM/ASM	Pg. #	Notes
1	L / S	Warmers / House up	Music up		1	Act 1: Scene 1
2	L / S	House to half	Music out / Announcement			
3	S		Announcement out			
4	L / S	Blackout	Music up		5	Actors in place (they come in during blackout)
5	L / S	Lights up	Music fade		5	<i>Quick Change Room</i>
6	L	Blackout			6	Act 1: Scene 2
7	L	Lights up			6	<i>Sergey addressing Company</i>
8	L	Lights fade to blackout / up at 2 count			7	Act 1: Scene 2 to 3 <i>Quick Change Room</i>
9	S		Buzzer		7	Act 1: Scene 3
10	S		Audience laughter		11	After L: "I mean... love... That's all."
11	L	Lights fade to blackout / up at 2 count			11	Act 1: Scene 3 to 4 <i>Telephone</i>
12	L / S	Blackout	Music		12	Act 1: Scene 4 to 5
12.5	L / S	Lights up	Music out		12	<i>Office</i>
13	L / S	Blackout, 1 count	Music up		13	Set up for QCR N/S scene
14	L / S	Dim lights up, 3 count	Music fade		13	Act 1: Scene 6
15	L	Additional lights up			14	<i>Quick Change Room</i>

The [cue sheet](#), and its subsequent revisions, are distributed to at least the director, sound and lighting designers and the assistant stage managers. If costumes and/or props have specific cues they, too, need copies. This is to facilitate identifying cues by number instead of a verbal description, which can be ambiguous. Once created, the cue sheet is primarily a communications tool. Its utility in “calling a show” is limited.

“Calling a show” is the process of telling the tech crew when to execute each cue. The tech crew needs to be warned that such a thing is about to happen, so each cue needs both a warning and a telling. Further, the stage manager needs to keep track of the context of each cue within the script to minimize problems if a cue fails or if actors drop lines. Although it is possible to call a show off a cue sheet, this is rarely done. Instead, all the warnings and cues are transcribed onto a clean copy of the script. Typically, the stage manager wants to get a copy of the script with very wide margins. In the margins the stage manager writes the cues and his notes. This is known as a [cue script](#). The [cue script](#) is vitally important to the stage manager. It is his route map for navigating through the play.

Sample Cue Script Page

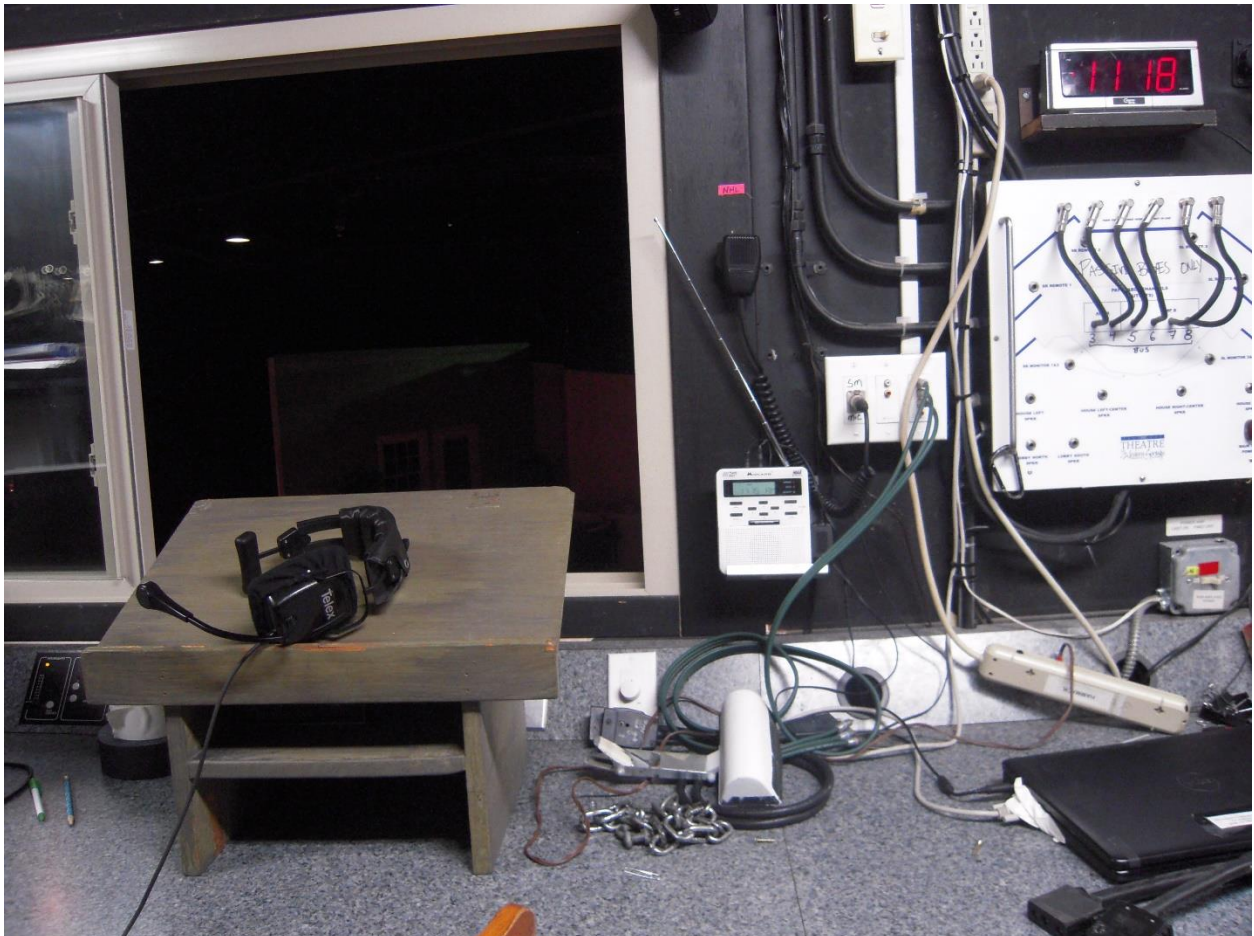
sc. 1] KING LEAR 99	Standby Sound Q3
And from some knowledge and assurance offer This office to you. <i>Gent.</i> I will talk further with you. <i>Kent.</i> No, do not. For confirmation that I am much more Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take 45 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,— As fear not but you shall—show her this ring, And she will tell you who that fellow is That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm! I will go seek the King. 50	Sound Q3 GO [Thunder]
<i>Gent.</i> Give me your hand. Have you no more to say? <i>Kent.</i> Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet; That, when we have found the King, in which your pain That way, I'll this, he that first lights on him Holla the other. <i>[Exeunt severally.]</i> 55	Standby LX Qs 10-14 and Sound Qs 4-6 LX Q 10 GO [Dim scene change]
SCENE II.— <i>[Another part of the Heath.] Storm still.</i> <i>Enter LEAR and Fool.</i>	<i>When the stage is clear</i> LX Q 11 GO [Heath state – dim]
<i>Lear.</i> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, 5 Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world! Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once That makes ingrateful man!	LXQ 12 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q4 GO [Thunder rumble] LXQ13 GO [Lightning flash]
<i>Fool.</i> O Nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better 10 than this rain-water out o'door. Good Nuncle, in, ask thy daughters blessing; here's a night pities neither wise men nor Fools.	Follow on Sound Q5 GO [Thunder crack]
<i>Lear.</i> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain! Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters: I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness; I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children, You owe me no subscription: then let fall Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave, A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man. 20 But yet I call you servile ministers, That will with two pernicious daughters join Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul.	LXQ14 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q6 GO [Thunder rumble]
<i>Fool.</i> He that has a house to put's head in has a good 25 head-piece. The cod-piece that will house Before the head has any, The head and he shall louse; So beggars marry many. 30	

Running the Show

The stage manager is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the show when it moves into production. His main responsibilities are: 1) making sure all cast and crew members are present and ready for the performance 2) coordinating with the house manager to get the audience in and out of the auditorium 3) calling the cues. The stage manager runs the show from his station in the booth. During the run of the show the stage manager and all backstage crew members dress in all black.

The Mainstage Stage Manager Station

The Stage Manager's Station is on the left side of the Light & Sound Booth at the back of the Mainstage Auditorium. The entrance to the booth is from the Lobby. The photo below shows the stage manager's station.



The Mainstage Stage Manager Station.

The stage manager can see the play through the window in front of his station.

Key items at the stage manager's station are:

1. The headset through which the stage manager can talk to and hear the lighting operator, the sound operator and the assistant stage manager. Controls for the headset are mounted under the countertop on the left. There is a volume knob and buttons for talk, listen and call.
2. To the right of the window is a hand microphone for the intercom with which the stage manager can address the actors in the dressing rooms and in the Lauren Wilson room.
3. The clock on the wall to the right. The stage manager needs to start the show on time and to control the length of the intermission.
4. The emergency weather radio with silver antenna on the wall to the right of the window. If the radio sends out an alert of hazardous weather near the theatre, then the stage manager will coordinate moving the audience, the cast and the crew to a safe area in the theatre.

Before the show the stage manager has the following tasks to perform.

Pre-Show Check-List

1. Arrive a half-hour before scheduled rehearsals and performances call time to unlock building, turn on lights and prepare rehearsal space.
2. Check that the required number of booth headsets are hooked up, operational and that the wireless belt-pack batteries are recharged daily.
3. Perform backstage headset sound checks with Assistant Stage Manager and booth personnel.
4. Check the intercom system that broadcasts to the dressing rooms
5. Decide with House Manager when to open the house.
6. Assign an Assistant Stage Manager to lead the cast in warm ups one-half hour before each performance.
7. Confirm that the light and sound operators have their systems up and ready. Have the operators go into cue 1 at 30 minutes prior to curtain.
8. Direct the Assistant Stage Manager to give pre-curtain calls at 30, 15, 10 minutes and places at 5 minutes.
9. Tell House Manager the show is starting and to close the lobby doors.

Calling the Show

After going through the pre-show check list you are ready to run the show. Put on your headphones and check that light and sound operators and the assistant stage manager can hear you and you can hear them.

The stage manager will be calling the show. This is the process of telling the tech crew (*i.e. lighting and sound operators*) when to execute each cue. For each cue, the tech crew needs both a warning and a telling. The stage manager follows where the play is going by watching the action on the stage. He also follows where the play should be going by following his [cue script](#). The stage manager has to think on his feet and make quick decisions if a cue fails to execute or if an actor drops a line. He has to decide to call the cue again or to skip the cue and move on.

At about one half hour before curtain the stage manager will tell lights and sound to go into cue 1. He might say, "Warning on cue 1," then pause a while and then say, "cue 1 go." When he says, "...go", the light and/or sound operator will execute cue 1. Cue 1 typically starts the walk-in music playing and the "warmers" coming up. The show will be in cue 1 for about 30 minutes as the audience enters the auditorium.

This is the basic sequence for calling the cues. At curtain time, the stage manager will say something like "Warning on cue 2." wait for the exact right time and then say "Cue 2 go." Cues will be given for lights, sound and the assistant stage manager. The cues given to the assistant stage manager are often relayed to an actor to make an entrance. The cues may have to be executed in quick succession and the stage manager may give the warning for several cues at once. For example, he might say "Warning for lights cue 2, sound cue 3, lights cue 4 and sound cue 5." For proper synchronization of the lights and sound with the stage action, the stage manager must allow the time it takes for the operator to execute the cues and for the time it takes for a light to come up or for a sound to start playing. Also, the stage manager must time his cue calling to allow for the time it takes for applause or laughter from the audience to start subsiding before he calls a subsequent cue.

After the show the stage manager has the following tasks to perform.

Post-Show Check-List

1. Record the runtime of the show.
2. Check with running crews if any technical problems or malfunctions arose during the show that they cannot adequately address. Note such problems for inclusion in the performance report.
3. Check that house light and work light controls have been switched for backstage activation.
4. Make sure all doors are locked and interior building lights are out, except for security lights.

Running a show in the Cattell theatre is mostly the same as on the mainstage. Below is some information specific to the Cattell theatre.

The Cattell Stage Manager Station

The Light & Sound Booth for Cattell is on the southeast side of the Cattell Auditorium, with its entrance from the Children's Theatre office area. The photo below shows the stage manager's station.



Cattell Stage Manager Station

The monitor to the right is for a video feed. Since the booth is in the front of the auditorium, the booth's windows are blacked out and kept shut during a show. The video feed shows the action on stage. Other key items at the stage manager's station are:

1. The headset through which the stage manager can talk and hear the lighting operator, the sound operator and the assistant stage manager. Controls for the headset are mounted under the countertop on the right. There is a volume knob and buttons for talk, listen and call.

2. Just above the monitor mounted on the right window frame is a hand microphone for the intercom with which the stage manager can address the actors in the dressing rooms and in the Lauren Wilson room.
3. The clock is on the wall to the right. The stage manager needs to start the show on time and to control the length of the intermission.
4. The emergency weather radio is mounted on the left window frame and has a silver antenna. If the radio sends out an alert of hazardous weather near the theatre, then the stage manager will coordinate moving the audience, cast and crew to a safe area in the theatre.

Strike

The production run ends with the last performance of the play and strike. After the last performance, everything on the stage is taken down and put away. The furniture and props are removed from the stage. Costumes are put away. The set is disassembled (“struck”). Lighting and sound equipment is put away. At strike the Stage Manager returns the light booth headsets to their storage area and cleans away any personal items he has at his station.

Contacts:

If you are interested in working as a stage manager or an assistant stage manager or just want to know more about stage management, feel free to contact one of the persons listed below.

1. Production Coordinator

Janet Gassmann

janet.healthiswealth@gmail.com

2. Executive Artistic Director

Eddie Sugarman

ead@theatrewesternsprings.com

References:

1. [AACT - Stage Management](#)
2. [wikihow to Become-a-Good-Stage-Manager](#)
3. [AACT - Theatre Terms](#)

Terminology:

Working as a stage manager requires learning some terminology. Below are some commonly used terms.

Blocking	The director's work of positioning actors onstage and setting their entrances, exits, and other movements. Blocking provides the framework for the movement in a scene, and is recorded in the cue script by the stage manager.
Call	The time at which the actors are scheduled to be in the theatre.
Calling Cues	This is the process of telling the tech crew (<i>i.e. lighting and sound operators</i>) when to execute each cue. Also known as calling the show.
Cue Script	A copy of the script onto which all the warnings and cues are transcribed. Typically, this copy of the script has very wide margins.
Curtain	The time at which the play is scheduled to start.
Give Lines	To give the actors the correct lines from the script when needed or asked for.
Hot Set	A theatre that is completely set up for the running of dress rehearsals or shows.
Notes	Notes taken by the director during a rehearsal regarding changes to be made by the cast or crew. They are typically relayed to the cast and crew at the end of the rehearsal.
On Book	To follow along with the script as the actors rehearse on stage with the purpose of correcting the actors when needed.
Rehearsal / Performance Report	A written report of what was done in the last rehearsal or performance and what needs to be done for the next rehearsal or performance.
Strike	After the last performance, everything on the stage is taken down and put away. The furniture and props are removed from the stage. Costumes are put away. The set is disassembled ("struck"). Lighting and sound equipment is put away.

Warmers

This refers to the lighting instruments that are on before the show and at intermission. The effect is to give a somewhat subdued view of the set, at a much lower light level than the normal lighting.

Warm-ups

Special exercises to prepare the actors' minds, bodies and voices for performing on stage.