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STAGE MANAGEMENT NOTES

I INTRODUCTION

1.
 - a) A Stage Management team normally consists of (in order of seniority) one Stage Manager, one Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) and one or more Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs).
 - b) The team is collectively responsible for the stage management of the production and the prime responsibility falls on the Stage Manager as senior member of the team.
 - c) There are no hard and fast rules as to the division of responsibility within the team, but duties are commonly allotted as follows: -
2. Stage Manager
 - a) Overall responsibility for the team.
 - b) During rehearsal & production period co-ordinates technical departments and makes sure all elements of the production are in the right place at the right time and correct according to the Director's requirements depending on the scale of the production much of this work may be undertaken by a Production Manager, or fall exclusively to the SM.
 - c) During the run the SM has overall responsibility for keeping every performance in line with the Director's original production.
 - d) Ideally the SM should avoid having specific performance duties, so as to remain free to watch scenes from in front or deal with emergencies.
3. Company Manager
 - a) In some cases the Stage Manager also undertakes the duties of Company Manager and is known as "Company & Stage Manager".
 - b) The Company Manager acts as a liaison between the producer or management and the performing company and is responsible for business and financial matters and for the welfare of the company.
4. Deputy Stage Manager
 - a) During rehearsals one member of the team must be present whenever the Director is working with the cast. This is usually the DSM, whose duties naturally arise from knowledge of the Director's intentions. Duties therefore include: -
 - b) Preparing and marking up the Prompt Script.
 - c) Prompting.
 - d) Calling artists for rehearsals and fittings.
 - e) Passing on the Director's requirements to the SM, Designer, Technical Departments etc..

- f) During performances, the DSM having been responsible for the Prompt Script in rehearsal, is the natural person to run the show from the prompt corner or SM control point in Technical Dress Rehearsals and performances.

5. Assistant Stage Manager

- a) Working with the SM to gather all props and furniture required for the production.
- b) Should be present in rehearsal room as much as possible in order to back up the DSM by taking messages, phone calls etc., running up rehearsal props and assisting in general.
- c) Helping Director and artists with errands etc. when they cannot spare their own time, (but avoid becoming a dogs-body for all and sundry).
- d) Checking props, furniture etc. during rehearsals and during the run of the show. Depending on the degree of staffing and union organisation in the particular theatre, this can mean anything from checking the work of the staff without actually touching anything, to doing it all yourself.
- e) Sound operating is sometimes part of the stage management's duties and is usually done by the ASM. or 'book' if computerized.

6. The above is in no way an exclusive list of stage management duties. The basic duty of the stage management is to prevent anything from adversely affecting the production and to facilitate the best possible conditions for the production to be realised according to its full potential.

Having distributed the duties within the team, the members should make themselves familiar with each other's duties in order to cover each other if need be.

7. Production Manager

A key figure in the production process is the Production Manager.

In a producing theatre s/he will be in charge of all production departments, including stage management and so will be technically your line manager.

In any case they will be the first point of contact with the designer – probably while stage management are still working on the previous show or before they are engaged – and will prepare the detailed budget and organise and run production meetings.

The stage manager will agree with them a SM budget and the detail of what it will cover. For example petty cash, props (to make or to buy) and running costs for the show. They may also be responsible for approving any SM overtime which might be incurred.

Production Managers need to know everything that is going on as it is their job to have an overview of the production and liaise between departments. They must have copies of all rehearsal notes and if there is anything which looks as though it may have serious cost implications or is a major change to the design then it might be a good idea to have a word with them first before you circulate the note to the relevant department.

They will also prepare and oversee the first get-in and fit-up prepare a production schedule and be responsible for making sure that it is kept to. They will depend on stage management to help them with this – particularly once the actors arrive and during the technical rehearsal.

At the end of each day in the theatre they (perhaps with the director) will give technical notes and modify the schedule to make sure that there is time to do them. At least one member of the SM team (probably the DSM) must be at that meeting and ensure that the revised information is passed on and that the actors know their next call.

Remember that however well you are getting on with the director, designer, the actors and your other HODs it is the Production Manager who will be held responsible for any overspend or overrun. Make sure that you keep him/her well informed and they will prove to be a support for you when you have difficult decisions to take.

II BEFORE REHEARSALS

1. Obtain a copy of the script.

If it is a large cast play with many scenes, make a plot showing which characters appear in which scenes, this will simplify rehearsal calls later on.

Make lists of props, and any special effects which appear in the text.

2. Meet the Director.

Try to discover what part they like the Stage Management to play in rehearsals.

Find out how they would like the rehearsal room arranged for the first reading.

Obtain their basic scheme for rehearsal schedules.

3. Meet the rest of the Stage Management team, the Designer, Wardrobe staff and as many others concerned with the production as possible, e.g. Musical Director, Choreographer etc.

4. Attend Production Meetings.

Study ground plans and models, so that you have a clear idea what things will look like. Also get an idea of the Lighting Designer and Sound Consultants' intentions.

5. Arrange with the Designer, who is going to obtain what in the way of furniture and props. The degree of responsibility will vary with the particular Designer and the needs of the production. In any case all props, furniture and set dressings will have to be approved by the Designer and Director.

6. Obtain a Cash Float.

Before purchasing or ordering props etc. find out the Management's methods, whether sanction has to be sought for purchases over a certain sum, policy of hiring or buying, who holds order books etc.

Keep accurate and readily understandable accounts, where receipts are unobtainable fill in a Petty Cash Voucher immediately. Keep copies of all your accounts.

7. Assist with Auditions. (see Section IV)

8. Prepare a list of addresses and telephone numbers of artists and their agents, management offices, director, designer, Stage Management and Wardrobe staff, costumiers, scenic studios and all others relevant to the production. Have sufficient copies to distribute to all concerned. Please ensure that those whose details are on the contact sheets know who they will be distributed to and are happy with that.

9. Prepare a list of dates when artists (by arrangement with the management and the director) are not available for rehearsal. Also any costume or wig fitting appointments that may have been made in advance.

10. Ensure that scripts are issued as soon as possible.
Scripts should be numbered and a check list kept of who they are issued to.

11. Prepare the Prompt Script (see Section III)

12. Make sure that all relevant departments have copies of the final Ground Plan.

Mark your Ground Plan in a manner to assist marking out the Rehearsal Room.

13. Find out whether the Management will pay for refreshments at rehearsals.

14. Check the Rehearsal Room(s). Hours available.

Check heating and lighting or lack/excess of.

Get details of spare keys if you are left to lock up yourselves, and an emergency number if, for example the fire alarm went off without cause and nobody was around with the code to switch it off.

Make sure that there is a telephone (and circulate the number to all concerned).

Check that there are sufficient chairs, tables and any other necessary rehearsal furniture, including waste bins and ash trays. (Is smoking allowed?)

Find out what refreshment facilities are available, and whether you will need to bring a kettle, cups, etc.

Find out where the nearest pubs and restaurants are.

Check the toilets and washing and changing facilities.

Find out what power supplies are available for tape-decks etc.

Try to arrange safe storage for props etc., preferably lockable.

If possible, mark out the floor in advance.

Dancers may need rosin-boxes.

Put up some signage on the first day with show name and arrows to indicate the floor/room being used, as it may not be exclusive to the show, and prevents losing actors.

Company welcome packs are another useful thing to have prepared for first day of rehearsals, containing contact details, schedules, local information etc.

15. Arrange for any special rehearsal furniture, pianos, etc. to be delivered to the Rehearsal Room.
Arrange piano tuner.
16. Obtain as many rehearsal props as possible in advance.
17. Make sure that all artists have been called for the first Reading or Rehearsal, this will often be done by the Management through the agent for the first call, but it may be advisable for you to check personally with the artists and make sure they know where to go. If the location is at all out of the way it might be helpful to circulate a map of the area.

Also check that all others required to attend know the time and place.

18. Get plenty of rest before Rehearsals start.

III THE PROMPT SCRIPT

The Prompt Script should be a complete guide to the production. The text itself should be accurate, and every cue or call given from the prompt corner must be shown.

Everything should be set out so clearly that a new Stage Manager taking over the corner in an emergency will have no difficulty whatever in understanding what is meant. It is, therefore, important that no private shorthand or signs be used, and that all writing should be legible.

Preparing the Book

There is no standard way of preparing a Prompt Script. Much will depend on whether the original script is typewritten, duplicated or printed and the Stage Manager running the corner must select the method they find easiest to use when running the performance.

A hard cover should be provided, of a type which will open flat.

Sufficient space must be provided to enter all moves, cues and calls clearly.

Writing up the Script

Here again, there is no standard method, but the cardinal rule applies – it must be readily understandable by anyone picking it up.

During rehearsals, all entries must be written in soft pencil which can be erased easily.

The prompt copy must be kept up to date and show the moves as they have been finalised at the end of each day's rehearsal.

Plots

Copies of lighting and property plots etc. should be kept with the Prompt Script.

Care of the Prompt Script

The Stage Manager who runs the prompt corner should look after the prompt script. This should be a personal responsibility that he/she does not delegate. When not in use it should be left where its whereabouts are known to the other members of the stage management.

THE PROMPT SCRIPT SHOULD NEVER, IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, BE ALLOWED TO BE TAKEN OUT OF THE THEATRE.

Duplicate Prompt Script

It is always desirable to have a duplicate prompt script. This should be prepared by the ASM and may be used by them if they are relieving the person normally running the corner BUT it must be a duplicate in every respect and kept up to date.

IV AUDITIONS

1. Auditioning is nerve racking for artists. Treat them with tact and courtesy.
2. Two stage management are usually required. One to look after the artists waiting and one to be on stage to introduce them and read in as necessary.
3. Timing is important so that artists have time to relax and read over the script etc., but are not kept waiting too long with a lot of others.
4. Arrange a comfortable waiting area, out of earshot of the auditions with access to toilet and washing facilities and a public phone.
5. Dancers will require changing facilities. They are usually called to audition in groups.
6. Have enough scripts with the parts to be read clearly marked.
7. Check artists' names, phone numbers and agents on arrival
8. Director, management and perhaps author will be sitting in the stalls. Provide coffee etc. and find out where the nearest sandwich shop is!
9. Arrange for suitable stage lighting in advance.
10. Introduce each artist as they come on stage.
11. If required to read in parts, do so with colour and pace giving the artist something to play against but don't upstage.
12. For singing auditions, make sure the piano is tuned and set so that pianists can see the singer and the music is adequately lit.

V THE FIRST READING AND/OR REHEARSAL

1. Bring with you:

chalk
drawing pins
PVC tape for marking in different colours
2 tape measures
ruler
change for tea & coffee machine, if there is one
notebook
scrap paper
pencil sharpener
rubber
stop-watch
scale rule

An ample supply of pencils (with rubbers) for the cast (you will never see these again)

First Aid box & accident book

a sufficient supply of tea, coffee, milk, sugar etc., mugs, teacups, spoons, kettle, etc. (if necessary)

spare scripts

(you will not have forgotten your own Ground Plan, notepad(s) or the Prompt Script).

2. Mark out the plan of the set(s) on the floor.

If there is to be frequent change of rehearsal room or the marks have to be removed daily, it is a good plan to mark out on stage cloth, so long as it is anchored securely. (Not suitable for dancers.)

3. Arrange rehearsal furniture or chairs for reading, as discussed previously with the Director.

4. Arrange table(s) for the Director and Stage Management.

5. Place a suitable table for the display of the model and designs, if these are to be shown. An anglepoise light is usually needed to light a model box and it is usually stage management who need to find one!

6. Prepare refreshments, if these are desired by the Director to break the ice and start off proceedings informally.

7. Explain to the Director on arrival, how you have marked out the set.

8. Introduce yourself to the artists as they arrive, also introduce other members of the cast and staff. Make sure you know who everyone is.
9. Check that all addresses and telephone numbers on your list are correct.
10. Mark any cuts or alterations in the Prompt Script that the Director may announce during the read through.
11. Time the lengths of each scene and act during the read through.
12. Calls for next rehearsal.

VI REHEARSALS

1. Arrive at the Rehearsal Room in good time to mark out and set up the furniture and props.

Props should be set as nearly as possible to where they will be on set on stage, in relation to entrances, etc.

2. Have a clear list of the day's rehearsal call to hand and check that the artists called are there. If anyone is missing try to trace them before they are needed.
3. Make sure that all artists know where their props are and what substitute props and furniture represent.

Take note of how artists prefer their props to be set to facilitate their handling of them.

4. Once the rehearsal has started, ensure that absolute quiet is kept in the rehearsal room.
and mobiles are switched off.
5. There should ideally be at least two members of the Stage Management in the rehearsal room at all times. One will be on the book. The other will deal with props, answer the telephone, organise refreshments etc.. Very often, it will not be possible to have the ASM in the rehearsal room as s/he will be too busy propping with the SM. In that case, make sure the SM or ASM is there at the beginning and end of each rehearsal, at the lunch break if possible, and during any runs in order to assist in resetting and taking any necessary messages or notes.
6. Mark all moves in the prompt script, if there are a lot of people on stage, a small plan in the script can be helpful.
If there are still many plotting stages being made once the cast have started to rehearse without scripts, it may be necessary for an ASM to prompt while you are marking down moves. The ASM's script must be up to date.
7. Mark pauses in the script to avoid unnecessary prompts, particularly when a substitute is on the book.
8. In the later stages of rehearsals, check with the actors individually whether they want prompts unless they directly ask for them. Inform the Director about this.
9. Keep in touch with all other departments and pass on information concerning any changes or additional requirements immediately. This is usually done by the DSM producing rehearsal notes at the end of each day of rehearsals which are circulated to all departments concerned.
10. Watch out for quick costume changes and draw the Director's attention to the fact if you can see any obvious hang-ups. This may happen when large cuts are made in the text.
11. Keep an up to date Props List and get the actual props to be used as soon as possible. Liaise with the designer here as he/she may be arranging for major items to be made by a props studio.

If the designer is not directly involved with obtaining props make sure that nothing acquired is out of keeping with the style of the production and that period detail is

accurate. However, be sensitive to the needs of the actors as well as the character they are playing, and make sure that they are happy with their props.

If there are any props that are fragile or perishable (or indeed destroyed in the course of the action) try and ensure a secure supply of replacements and that props that have to be remade for each performance are kept as simple as possible.

There should always be spares of any china and glass and if cheap lines have been bought bear in mind that they may go out of stock very quickly and buy enough right at the start.

Many firms will supply goods in exchange for a Credit in the programme, when arranging this make a careful note of the wording they require and ensure that it is included in the programme copy as soon as possible. Send a programme when this becomes available. Complimentary tickets are useful in this direction, if in line with Management's policy.

12. Prepare Prop Plots

These should include detailed lists of props on stage for each Act or scene, making sure that you have enough detail as most actors like things to be set in exactly the same way each time and even a minor change can be upsetting. Off stage props should be, of course, on the correct side and, unless too large, set on a table in the same position every time. It can be helpful to mark the table with tape making a space for each prop, this also helps when checking props and if done on a soft cover can be carried from theatre to theatre when necessary.

13. Make sure that personal props are retrieved at the end of each rehearsal session.

VII THE PRODUCTION PERIOD

1. Before leaving the Rehearsal Room

- a) Check that the company know time of first call at the theatre and how to get there. Get their digs addresses and phone numbers if touring.
- b) In the event of members of the cast intending to travel by car together, mention this to the Company Manager. An accident involving principals as well as their understudies could jeopardise the show's opening.
- c) Pack all props carefully to prevent breakage, with inventories showing what is packed in where.
- d) Check that nothing has been left behind. Remove marks from floor and leave the place as clean and tidy as possible.

2. On Arrival at the Theatre

- a) Familiarise yourself with the building, dressing rooms, toilet facilities etc. and where to get refreshments.
 - b) Dressing Room List. Obtain beforehand from the Management an authoritative order of precedence of the company. Also note from your own observation, who gets on with whom and who doesn't. Before finalising the dressing room list, get the Director and any representative of the Management to vet it. Type copies for notice board, stage door keeper, wardrobe and wig departments. Type cards or labels for dressing room doors. Also post performance times on notice board.
 - c) Get to know local staff and learn their names. Initially work through H.O.D.s though later, when you get to know the whole crew, it may be more sensible sometimes to deal directly with them, without seeming to go behind the H.O.D.'s back.
 - d) Get to know what the Flyman looks like. You will get to know him well in the next 48 hours, but only as a disembodied voice from above. It will be embarrassing if you don't recognise him next time you actually see him.
3. Props. Find out where to unpack props and do repairs, washing-up etc. out of everyone's way. Later, when fit-up is complete, arrange for prop tables to be set in the wings as required.
4. Familiarise yourself with the Prompt Corner. Arrange for any extra cue-lights you will need.
5. Quick-Change Rooms. Requirements for these should have been established with the theatre in advance. The actual setting-up may need tactful persistence, as three busy departments are involved: - stage for the room, props for chairs, table, mirror etc. and electrics for light.
6. Plots. Props list, setting plot, stage running order, fly plot etc.. Make sure these are all clear and up to date. Remember the local staff don't know the show.
7. Lighting. During cue plotting, DSM stays with Lighting Designer and marks cues in Prompt Copy. Also make simplified notes of what happens on each cue, so mistakes can be spotted subsequently. ASMs stand by on stage for "walking".

8. Arrival of the Company. However deep you are in the throes of technical problems, don't let on that actors are the last people you want to see. Greet them gladly and try to find time to tell them where everything is and deal with requests and complaints on the spot. It is quite useful to allow for time to walk the company round the entrances/runarounds etc. together before the tech starts.
9. First Technical Run. The person in the Prompt Corner is in charge. Don't hesitate to stop and go back over things that need it. Use your judgment about those you can simply note and correct next time round. When going back, give clear instructions to actors where you want them to start. Keep the Director and others in front informed of the reason for any delay. Remember the Director is seeing the set lit and dressed for the first time. When they yell that something is all wrong when you have done it exactly as plotted, they may have changed their mind for good reason, though without telling you. Grit your teeth, re-mark the script and plough on.
10. Dress Rehearsals. Treat these as far as possible as actual performances. Make half-hour and other calls as usual. Do your normal round of dressing rooms. Deal with things like off-stage noise politely but firmly. Many cast like to sit in the auditorium during dresses, check with the director (and wardrobe) how they feel about this and advise cast accordingly. Production shots are often taken at first or second dress, so advise all departments and cast of this well in advance.
11. First Night. At this stage it is the actors who are all important. They are the ones who have to face the audience who has paid to see them. Bear with them patiently and helpfully. Find time to put on clean clothes, it will help give the impression that everything is under control. You may need to exercise tactful control over excesses of an over-excitable director. Five minutes before curtain-up is not the time to be giving notes to actors, nor is it helpful if he/she comes storming through the pass-door while you are sorting out something that has gone wrong. A firm, but soft, word should turn away wrath. Post-mortems must wait until after the show.

VIII THE RUN

1. Checking Stage, Props, etc. Check before the “half-hour” and again just before curtain-up, in case anything has been moved. Stick to a routine, so that you don’t forget any item. Remember that the front stalls see the stage from low down, so take a look from this angle for things like webbing hanging down under chairs. Cigarette lighters sometimes fail. Set matches as a standby. Always set match boxes with two or three matches sticking out, so that the actor doesn’t actually have to open the box.
2. Checking Artists Present. After the half has been called check with the Stage Door keeper or round the dressing rooms that everyone is in the theatre. Big companies sometimes “sign-in” in a book at the stage door. If anyone is absent, inform the Company Manager and phone to find out if they are on the way. Warn the understudy, the wardrobe department and the dance captain if applicable. If an understudy has to go on, the audience must be informed by an announcement if there is no time to slip the programmes, so the decision must be made before the performance starts, even if the character concerned does not appear until later in the play. Make sure the rest of the cast, the Front of House Manager and, in a musical the Musical Director, know.
3. Calling and Cueing. Keep the same routine at every performance. Call actors at the same point in the play, even if you know they are in the wings – someone else may rely on that particular call as a warning before their own call. Give calls in formal terms (“Miss So & So and Mr. So & So, your call please”). Always repeat everything said in your calls.

If any call or warning turns out to be unnecessarily long liaise with the person concerned before deciding to change it.

Give verbal cues clearly and in the same form each time. Say the word “Go” last, e.g. “LX Cue 9 Go” not “Go LX Cue 9”. If there is a danger of verbal cues being heard by the audience – e.g. from speakers in the flies, keep them short.

Cue Lights Never remove your finger from the “go” (green) switch while it’s on. This way you will not leave it on by mistake and the operator at the other end will not think he has been given the next cue.

4. Calling the next show. Remind the company after the performance of the time of the next call and whether there is a matinee the following day. It is also common practice to inform the company of the running time from the show just undertaken.
5. Show Reports. Keep a record of performance times and remarks on a show report, with copies for Management and Director as required. Remarks must include understudies going on, as well as any other special happening and rehearsals called during the day. Accidents usually have to be entered in a special accident book as well as the show report.
6. Lighting Have a copy of the lighting master plot in the prompt corner, so that you can check errors in cues, blown lamps, etc.. Mention discrepancies tactfully to the board operator. He probably already knows, but will be grateful if you can identify a blown lamp that cannot be seen from the switchboard. Refer to lamps by their circuit numbers. When actors say “The lighting looks different” they are usually right, so investigate the cause.

7. Understudies Ideally the understudies should be fully rehearsed and ready to go by the first night, but there is seldom time. It is the Stage Manager's responsibility to rehearse understudies, but it is encouraging for them if the Director takes some of the rehearsals. Although nowadays an Assistant Director is often employed to take responsibility of the understudies. Rehearsals should be called as often as possible until fully rehearsed and then once a week to keep up to scratch. Check with H.O.D.s before calling daytime rehearsals on stage during the run. For regular understudy calls, it's helpful to all to set a regular day for this, as it's easily remembered and saves confusion.
8. Rehearsal Calls All calls must be posted on the notice board, but it is courteous and saves embarrassing absences if you also tell those concerned personally. This applies particularly to the older members of the Company, who don't always have their reading glasses on when passing the notice board. It is vital that all the theatre departments via the H.O.D.'s are informed at the same time as the actors (if not before) about the calls as they may have working hours that overlap/conflict with the call hours, meaning either the call has to be changed/abandoned or staff overtime incurred.
9. Prevention of Staleness. The Stage Manager is responsible for seeing the show remains fresh through a long run. Keep looking at Scenery, Props and Costumes with a critical eye and arrange for cleaning, re-painting, and repairs when necessary. If appropriate, fight calls and warm-ups need to be scheduled in on a daily basis from a safety point of view.

Keeping the artists' performances fresh is probably the most difficult part of a Stage Manager's job and depends on two basic requirements:

- a) During rehearsals, becoming thoroughly familiar with the production as the Director and Actor develop it.
- b) During the Run, retaining a fresh eye, which can detect and correct any changes for the worse that creep in to performances, before they become established. If an actor disagrees that a change is "for the worse" the problem must be referred to the Director.

Keeping a fresh eye is where the main difficulty lies. It requires much self discipline and the ability to divorce oneself from the routine performance pattern. The Stage Manager should, in any case, take on as few routine performance duties as possible, because they must keep themselves free to deal with emergencies and to cover for any of the team in case of illness, but this freedom from routine, while enabling them to watch the show from the front as often as necessary, is also essential to keep an objective view of the performance.

IX ON TOUR

1. Details to be arranged in advance with theatres.

- a) Each theatre will need to know the number of stage crew required, and for which department; i.e. extra lighting and prop staff, scene change hands etc.. Also number of dressers and if quick-change rooms are needed backstage.
- b) Stage plans, hanging plot and lighting plots (including gel colours) need to be sent to the relevant departments.
- c) The local fire authority need to be informed of any possible fire hazards. Generally, permission needs to be obtained from each local authority for the use of naked flame on stage, firearms and pyrotechnics.
- d) Obtain digs lists from the theatres where possible and circulate copies to the company well in advance.
- e) Risk Assessments on scenery and props used for the show, as well as other paperwork as needed (weight of hanging pieces etc.) should be forwarded; some of this paperwork will be compiled by the Production Manager, some by the Stage Manager.

2. During rehearsals:

- a) Beware of any delicate props or furniture to be toured. It may be necessary to prepare special packing materials, padded covers, etc.. If the play is only touring for a few weeks, it may not be worth spending much money on this, but for a longer tour it could be a wise investment.
- b) Props are generally packed in skips, usually corrugated cardboard. Make sure that every delicate item is wrapped separately and that nothing is loose in the skip, as it could rub against other objects and damage them.
- c) If there are a lot of props, it may be worth touring folding props tables, which can be marked up showing all the props. Most theatres though can supply some tables. The tops of the skips can also be used if need be.
- d) For a long tour, be sure to have plenty of spares of any items likely to be damaged and difficult to replace. Keep a list of your local suppliers, prop makers etc., in case you need to re-order items to be sent out to you.

3. Cue sheets:

- a) Prepare cue sheets for relevant departments, i.e. flies, props, stage-crew etc.. If they are unlikely to change they can be mounted on card with plastic covers, but duplicate sheets may be better if local notes will need to be added.

4. On arrival

- a) Once the scenery, lighting, props and costumes have been unloaded, prepare the dressing room list and put it on the theatre notice board. The earlier this is done the better, as it affects the working of several departments.
- b) Meet the heads of departments and introduce the stage management team.
- c) Once the set is up and lighting is rigged, you may need your ASMs to walk for

the lights. Try to think ahead when staff are needed and arrange coffee and meal breaks accordingly. If it seems that stage management will have to work late on the day of arrival, ensure they have some opportunity to get to their digs before they are likely to be given up for lost.

- d) Check the prompt corner and arrange for any extra cue lights to be rigged if necessary.
- e) Make any amendments necessary to the prompt copy due to local conditions. If there are any major changes in setting, scene changes, etc. make a note to inform any of the cast involved.
- f) Check local F.O.H. procedure and give the F.O.H. Manager the running times, number of intervals etc. theatre policy as to when the curtain should rise varies. Some managements want the curtain up exactly on time, regardless, others prefer to wait until all the house is in. (Touring managements also hold views on this.....). Latecomers policy should be discussed (most theatres ask what the company wants, which is the Director's decision, but occasionally a theatre has a strict policy on these things), also, one needs to establish at this point how stage management get FOH clearance.
- g) Meet the local fire officer and demonstrate any special FX that come under his jurisdiction. He may also flame test any drapes, scenery or props. Flame proofing may have to be re-done during the course of a long tour.

5. When the cast arrive:

- a) Allow time for the actors to walk over the set. There may also be a rehearsal call to give them a chance to "get the feel" of the theatre. All props, furniture, etc. should be set ready before this call if possible. Many tour dates require a publicity call with cast or at least leading artistes on their arrival at the theatre and this should be set up discussed and agreed in advance.
- b) By the end of the first performance (at the latest) there should be a list made of where each member of the company is staying locally. (Ideally this should be done at the end of the previous week).

P.S. Make sure you know how to contact the local doctor, dentist etc. in case of emergencies. If firearms, weapons, valuables etc. are being toured, find a safe place for them to be locked away after each performance. Many cast like to have stage management collect their valuables before the start of a performance for safekeeping. Most theatres will have somewhere safe that you can lock them away.

X THE GET-OUT

1. Preparation

- a) Before the first get-out, estimate how many skips are required for all the small props and dressing, plus an extra one for Stage management equipment and order in plenty of time.
- b) Acquire packing materials - newspaper, bubble wrap, small cardboard boxes, Marker pens, labels for furniture, parcel tape, gaffer tape.
- c) Attach large labels with Production name onto skips, ready to write a list of what skip contains.
- d) Before last performance, pack anything not required for performance, i.e. extra props, dead props, running props, SM equipment.
- e) Arrange with Stage HOD a place in wings or near stage for the SMs to pack the props out of the way of set striking.

2. During last Performance

- a) As props exit stage for the last time, they can be packed, away from the stage area, time allowing of course. *NB. Always concentrate on the performance not the get-out, it is easy to get carried away and miss cues as a consequence.*
- b) One ASM must be responsible for collecting all personal props from Actors

3. The Curtain falls

- a) It is crucial that the Stage Manager does not allow the crew to start taking the set down before all props and dressing are safely removed. If necessary enlist a couple of crew to help remove props.
- b) When all props and dressing are safely in the wing the packing can begin. Generally the DSM and ASMs pack the props and dressing while the SM oversees the set get-out and looks after larger pieces like carpets, window dressings etc.
- c) Furniture should all be individually marked and sometimes wrapped in bubble wrap to protect it during transportation. In some cases wooden boxes are built to carry fragile or expensive pieces.
- d) Remember to mark clearly where everything is packed.
- e) When everything is packed, Check the dressing rooms are clear of props or personal belongings and are clean/tidy.
- f) The prompt copy should be packed in the CM locked office box. If possible send a copy with the DSM as it is possible (just) to do a show with no props and costumes, but not with no book.
- g) When all the skips and furniture are packed on the lorry, check the stage area and wings for anything left behind.

XI HEALTH AND SAFETY

The law (HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974) requires that every workplace should have and display a written health and safety policy. This policy should identify the chain of responsibility, and the procedures concerning accident reporting, first aid, fire and general safety.

Everyone should inform him/herself of the law and how it should be applied. Every individual is responsible for his/her own health and safety at work. One is also required to consider the potential effect of one's actions on other colleagues.

While the SM is not necessarily responsible for the company's safety, one should make oneself aware of the possible hazards in the workplace, and prepare courses of action. For example anything that the cast brings into the theatre which has a plug on it should be tested by the LX or maintenance department.

Individuals can apply the rules for Risk Assessment and common sense-

- Identify the hazard(s) - potential or actual.
- Decide who might be harmed and how.
- Decide what course(s) of action will be appropriate.
- Identify the precautions and decide if they are adequate.
- Do or say something if you decide they are inadequate.
- Record your findings.
- Review your assessment at appropriate intervals and revise as necessary.

For example, in a rehearsal room one should try to establish (amongst others)

- the position of Fire Exits and the emergency evacuation drill.
- the presence (if any) of a Qualified First Aider, in the company or in the building, and how to make contact.
- the safe condition of any portable electrical equipment (e.g. kettle, tape recorder)

If you have any concerns about safety you should make them known to a responsible person. Do not take risks by undertaking something that is beyond your capabilities.

Useful Contacts -

The Health and Safety Executive (Information line 08701 545 500, www.hse.gov.uk) produce many informative pamphlets including

Facts for Freelancers Ref INDG 217 (free).

The SMA office (Tel. 020 7242 9250, www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk) can advise on further sources of information.

The Association of British Theatre Technicians (Tel. 020 7242 9200, www.abtt.org.uk) have many papers on a range of topics, including a Guidance Note 'Risk Assessment: Scenery' and one called 'Fire Risk Checklist for Production & Stage Staff'

Equity (Tel. 020 7379 6000, www.equity.org.uk) have a very helpful and concise Guide to Health and Safety for members.

Also the excellent 'Code of Practice for Health and Safety Demonstrations for Performers and Stage Management' published by the Theatre Safety Committee is available through Equity and the SMA.

Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph & Theatre Union (Tel. 020 7437 8506, www.bectu.org.uk) also produce safety guides for members.

